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## ARTICLE IV.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE, IN ITSELF,  
AND IN ITS RELATIONS AND USES.

BY DR. BENJAMIN W. DWIGHT, NEW YORK CITY

SOCIETY is ever slowly oscillating in matters of public opinion and of public feeling from one extreme to another. In reference to principles of state polity, it vibrates to and fro, continually, from authority to liberty. In religious doctrine, the orthodox evangelical portion of it rests quite habitually in a fixed, strongly declared, outward estimate of the fact of God's sovereignty, standing by itself alone; while yet a few earnest minds make always an equally imperative demand for a full recognition, at the same time, of the unimpaired, inherent freedom of the human will in harmonious connection with it. It is natural to glorify power. Brahma, or Force personified, under whatever softer name, has ever been the god of the heathen, ancient and modern; and to quite too many minds in Christendom, also, does power seem to be the highest of the divine attributes.

Although the movements of the human heart, in the gross, are so little directed towards God, that it would be an overwrought statement to describe it as oscillating at different periods from scepticism to credulity, or better, if it might be so said, to faith itself, yet there have been at different times marked tendencies to great theological reaction from the plain gospel standard of doctrine and feeling among the educated classes. Such a strong reactionary tendency is very manifest now throughout the civilized world. On no one theme does it need to be met and baffled more fully than on the great doctrine of God's providence. Says Westcott well: "The belief in providence is the necessary supplement to the belief in inspiration."

The highest culmination of right religious thought and

feeling of any individual mind appears in its full, habitual, all-controlling realization of God's direct personal providence. A present God is the one great want of our natures; and the constantly quickening and inspiring consciousness of that Presence, in all its untold riches of power, wisdom, love and grace, is the greatest attainment of sanctified humanity, here or in heaven. "Let him that glorieth," saith God, "glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." In no respect is the piety of modern Christians more weak than in the habitual possession of a serene, uplifting sense of an ever-felt, though unseen, God, waiting to bestow himself, with his gifts, and infinitely beyond them, upon all his creatures. How much, in this relation, did the religious development of David and of the prophets and apostles, so long ago, transcend the type of spiritual strength and joy prevailing now, under the brighter light of the "New Covenant."

The imagination exerts its highest power, and so has its grandest function and value, not, as is so generally conceived, in idealizing to itself or to the thoughts of others more perfect combinations of the elements of individual or related forms than are found represented in nature, or in giving to any of the great generalizations or abstractions of the human mind the force of corresponding concrete realities in any heart expanding with welcome effort to receive them; but in the capability and the disposition to bring home to the inmost consciousness of the soul, with ever new vitalizing energy upon all its springs of action, the invisible and immortal objects of revealed faith. God is the true and only proper object of the imagination, as of reason, faith, and love. Differences of natural or acquired power of conception and realization will determine wonderful degrees of variation in the scope, strength, and style of true religious sentiment and of fervid religious feeling in different minds, which are yet all baptized from above, although with different measures of grace, into Christ. The highest ministries of the imagination are ministries to faith, to elevation of moral feeling, and

to the conscious ardor of a purified heart to rise ever upwards, in inward life and feeling, more and more towards God. Next to its power of drawing eternal things into full, overshadowing vision by the soul, and making the great invisibilities of eternity clear and palpable to the inward sight of faith, before which angels stand, eye to eye, gazing with undiminished wonder and joy forever, is its power of revealing God to the awakened and adoring heart of the believer, as present in the actual world around and within him,—present, indeed, as a Creator and Administrator of his universal affairs, but much more also, as a Father and a Friend,—executing great, ever-varied and ever-unfolding plans of love for his children in this world, and that as all preparatory to a grander display of his infinite affection towards them, beyond and above. Thus is the human mind beautifully constructed for the practice of virtue, in all its apparatus of sensibilities and of functional activities—as, in its luminousness of reason, its grasp of faith, its ardor of hope, its power of will, its airy freedom of imagination—and, when fully bent and strained to right action, all its accordant ministries of mutually dependent and harmonious graces. The true and only authorized use of the imagination, as of the reason, is religious; and they are both designed to be employed, when in their constant legitimate exercise, in generating and sustaining ever fresh and ever beautiful exercises of faith in the heart and life. So manifestly is the human mind correlated with God in all its many quick susceptibilities of influence from him, as also in its many qualifications for outward effort and co-operation with him. Man, each man, was made directly for his God, for his gratification, company, smile, and aid forever. All our powers were skilfully contrived by him to open into right action towards him, by our own conscious consent and purpose at first, and afterwards with a sweet spontaneity of their own, acquired by the long habit of right action; and with all the force of not only deep inward preparedness for his overflowing fulness of approach to us, but of ever growing consciousness, also, of its blessed necessity.

God is thus declared, in the mechanism of our being itself, to be its great necessary counterpart. The finite demands, by the very terms of its nature, the infinite for its completion. With unceasing consciousness of their absolute need of him who is "the Desire of all nations," our natures are ever groping, however weakly or blindly, and with whatever indistinct cognizance of the causes of our constant inward pain without him, yet groping really, and often sadly without effect, because with no true moral energy, for his manifestation of himself to the soul. "God alone is great"; and we are great only and so far as we draw near to him, and as we feel, in consequence, that he draws near to us; for, "draw nigh," he saith, "unto me, and I will draw nigh unto you." Thorough absorption in his work on earth; felt unity of aspiration, plan, and labor with him; the full, purposed, happy marriage of the heart with his—these are the simple but high terms of all true and grand human attainment. Without him no one can be his proper self, since we were not made for any independent existence from him, but only to be united in him, with all other finite beings, into one harmonious, eternal society, vital in every part with love, with ever new, accumulative demonstrations of interest on his part in us, and ever enlarging appreciation and improvement of them on our part to our good, and so to his glory.

Our capabilities for realizing great divine truths, and appropriating them to our own manly strength and moral growth, and diffusing them in their fulness of power and value among others, we cannot divine, until we come into complete and constant contact of heart, in all our modes of daily living and acting, with God: "committing our way unto him," in all things, "doing whatsoever we do, heartily, as unto the Lord," and literally "casting every care and burden upon him." "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for those that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." The unconverted man, the declaration of this passage is, has no conception of

the festive fulness of feeling with which God dwells in the heart of him, here on earth, who says to his soul, as he stands at the door and knocks (Rev. iii. 20) for entrance: "lift up your heads ye everlasting gates, that the King of Glory may come in."

True indeed is the maxim, rightly understood, which some of the mockers of evangelism would use in quite another sense: "pectus est quod theologum facit." "He that doeth the will of God," saith Christ, "shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God." As is any one's idea of God, in himself and in all his plans and actions, such are life and death, time and eternity, duty and pleasure, to him; and such is he likewise to all who know him.

The following synopsis presents the leading points of this Article :

- I. The fact of God's providence among men.
  - II. Its characteristic external features.
  - III. The interior principles of its administration.
  - IV. Its connection with other things.
  - V. Its great generic forms of manifestation.
  - VI. The power of true views of it on the life and character.
- I. The fact of God's providence.

The sentiment of this great, delightful truth is the very aroma of every page of the Bible. No other doctrine exhales its sweetness so unflinchingly, from every part of it, to the gladdened sense of him who is "the friend of God." Deeply did the Hebrew prophets feel its power; and in their clear, responsive, joyous appreciation of its truth lay no small part of their inward anointing from on high for the prophetic office. In their many and specific foretokenings of wrath from Heaven upon the cities of the old world, in such terrific succession, when at the height of their power, the key is furnished us to the otherwise strange overthrow of so many of the great kingdoms of antiquity. It was God, they teach us, that toppled down their towers of pride, and opened their two-leaved gates of brass to his appointed ministers of wrath. The pages of prophecy were thus but pages in

advance, from the hand of God himself, of the volume of ancient history; given for the purpose of teaching all nations that "he puts down one and sets up another, as seemeth to him good." This great truth is presented in the scriptures in every variety of form, general and particular, didactic and anecdotal, in proverbs and in psalms, in threatenings and in promises, in history and in prophecy.

But there is strong positive testimony from human experience, as well as from revelation, to the reality of God's providence among men. The stunning sense of absolute, all-ordering Fate, and the wide-spread fear of an avenging Nemesis, ever on the watch to chastise evil doers, which pervaded the minds of the ancient Greeks and Romans, as the idea of fate broods now so darkly everywhere over the thoughts of the heathen and Mohammedan world, are striking proofs of the universality of this conviction, in all ages and countries, that a higher hand than man's strikes, as it wills, the chords of human weal and wo. No theological doctrine receives, so uniformly, in Christendom such abounding consent to its truth, as that of God's supreme, all-disposing sovereignty. Men will become theological martyrs quicker for this one idea than for any other; and so welcome is it to the hearts of mankind generally, that the tendency to overstatement, and to false and injurious conceptions of the real scope of this doctrine, so grand and delightful when understood in its actual relations, is exceedingly strong. How successfully has God thus impressed the human race, in all countries and ages, with the actuality of his busy, determinative agency in all their affairs!

Christianity is also, now, as the full-volumed expression of God's providence over the race, for its spiritual good and growth,—an impressive Historical Manifestation, in all its features, of the Divine heart and hand. How complete is the testimony furnished, in its ever-during and ever-advancing strength and beauty, to the divine origination and management of the present order of things for the promotion of human virtue and of human happiness! The lessons

of history, which are endlessly repeated, are ever the same, although so slowly learned, and resolve themselves, in their moral aspects, into this one great and precious maxim of all true state policy: "Blessed is that people whose God is the Lord." A scale of the nations, arranged according to their manifest regard for God's word and their observance of his sabbaths, would be, in equal degrees, a scale of their relative order in national advancement.

When looking at God's providence, at any one angle of observation, in whatever age or country, we see it, at best, in but an incomplete and partially self-interpreting condition; but that providence, like everything else of his ordering, contains within itself its own determinate elements and processes of progressive development. It has, in different parts of its course, its swellings and subsidences of tidal energy, and its times and modes of collecting as well as of expending its strength, as well as its varied beginnings, crises, periods, and issues; and when "the fulness of times" shall have come, everything dark in it will be enlightened, everything crooked made straight; and every voice in the universe will unite, either with spontaneous gladness or with necessitated obedience to the irresistible demands of an intensely vitalized conscience, in declaring of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords: "Righteous art thou altogether, O Lord God of hosts!" His providence, rightly viewed, includes in it these threefold subjects of reflection, in one broad, united expanse of moral beauty, — his modes and forms of action, at any time, in man's behalf; his system of direct personal treatment of him; and his modes of personal self-manifestation to him on earth. We often speak, justly, of "the ways of God's providence." There are too many disturbing influences in every man's own bosom, as well as in the world around him, that the current of any one's experience should not be full of changes and surprises, and crises. Although it be not at all true that "the course of true love never runs smooth," it is altogether so that the course of manly duty and of godly action never long runs so upon earth.



In the distribution of profit and pleasure through all orders of the animate creation, and of innumerable sources and facilities for their procurement, throughout the inanimate; in the interlinking of all things together in bonds of mutual dependence and serviceableness, so that nothing lives or dies for itself alone; and in the manifest subordination of all things to man, and the grand harmonization of their many uses and benefits in him — we have so many clear and ample testimonies to the fact of God's providential government, and of the moral ends and bearings of that government.

The natural sciences, also, are wonderfully demonstrative of the fact of God's universal providence. Natural philosophy shows that the facts and forces of the physical universe have been fashioned in themselves, and adjusted to each other, according to the most exact mechanical principles. By chemistry we are taught that the forms of matter are all mixed, as if "weighed in a balance," in definite atomic proportions and their multiples. Geology testifies, with marvellous clearness and fulness of evidence, not only to the fact of God's creative hand, but also to his large and careful provision for men's wants in every age and country, in earth's successive strata of stones, minerals, metals, coal, salt, lime and marl. These varied materials and means, and others like them, of human civilization and comfort, how has he not only spread with singular equableness over every land, but also tilted those otherwise out of man's reach, by their low primordial position, to the very surface of the earth's crust. Astronomy shows us that not only centripetal and centrifugal forces of inconceivable power and scope are blended together in the sidereal heavens, under the law that every particle of matter attracts every other directly as its bulk and inversely as the square of its distance, but also that every perturbation, great and small, is both accommodated to the universal harmony, and necessary to its existence. Physiology reveals the most varied and complicated adaptations and combinations of inward structure and of out-

ward function in vegetable and animal structures, wonders of skilful and loving design for the best state and mutual serviceableness of each one of the myriad specimens of material organism. Everywhere contrivance reveals the great Contriver. The philosophy, poetry, and art of nature are all equally divine and human — divine in their origin and human in their uses and issues.

II. The characteristic external features of God's providence.

1st. Its origination in the infinite humanity of his heart. For man, all for man, — this is the explanation, as tender as it is true, of everything done upon earth by God, or that he will yet do, from the first foundation-stone of its structure, in the furthest geologic period of the past, to the last moral top-stone that shall be set, with shoutings, in the remotest ages, by the Angel of the Covenant, to the praise of God, upon the finished temple of the world's history. As our glory consists in the divinity of our aims and temper, so his glory consists, to human eyes at least, if not also to the whole intelligent universe besides, in his ineffable humanity. He made each one of us in order to love us, and to be loved by us. Each newly-created moral agent is directly ushered by him into being, because of the exuberant delight of his heart in making ever-new channels for the infinitely eager bestowal of his love; just as any true artist, poet, or orator declares himself to others from an inward compulsion of his nature too sweet to be resisted. This is the moral meaning of the perpetual multiplication by the divine hand of new worlds in space, in all the ages of a past eternity, for the inhabitation of new hosts and orders of happy intelligences, and of the introduction of successive generations of human beings into this world. While God takes inconceivably great pleasure in all his own acts, as being perfectly right and true and best in themselves, and only good in all their own proper influences and issues; there are none in which he takes such exceeding delight as in those which are most directly and fully paternal in form and effect towards his

dependent, and at the same time loving, children. He delights inconceivably more in giving than we can in receiving, and in forgiving, than we can in being forgiven. How tenderly touching are the terms chosen by himself to express his infinite sympathy with us, if only really turning at heart to our duty and to him, with whatever manifest weakness at the time, or with whatever previous waywardness! He is "the God of patience and of consolation," full of "long-suffering," "tender compassion," "tender mercies," "loving-kindness," and "the riches of his forbearance." "He knoweth those that are his"; "he taketh pleasure in his people"; "his delight is with the sons of men."

The great, central, *inward*, divine fact of all true theology, —inward, because resting in the bosom of God himself,— and the source and inspiration of all his plans and provisions for man's good, is the fact of *his own infinite humanity*, his indescribable tenderness of personal interest in every human being as his child. The great corresponding *outward* fact of all true theology is the sublime expression of the humanity of the divine heart in the incarnation and atonement of Christ, as governmental expedients, both needful in themselves, and generously offered by God for man's possible restoration to his forgiveness and favor. These two grand ideas, inward and outward, in their mutual bearings, are beautifully blended to our view in that most moving of all scriptural declarations: "God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but might have everlasting life."

2d. The vast comprehensiveness of the plan of his providence. It embraces all space and all time, all worlds and all their inhabitants. The universe is a unity, a harmony, yea, rather a divine organism. Each part in it is related, directly or remotely, by various complications, however subtile in themselves or occasional in their action, to every other. Nothing is isolated in the conditions of its existence. Not only have all things upon earth the momentum, like the freight

of a moving vessel, of God's continually advancing plans for man's complete historic development; but all are needful, formative parts, whether humble or sublime, and whether in sight or hidden from view, of one unique, divinely-fashioned, moral structure, contrived for the greatest good of each one, on the presupposition of perpetual right action on his part, of all his intelligent creatures. Jesus Christ himself is the chief corner-stone of both the separate and combined systems of creation, providence, and redemption: "in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." He is not only the actual, efficient "upholder of all things, by the word of his power"; but the direct, potential worker, also, in all; as he will be to the end of his mediatorial reign, when he will lay down all authority and power, and the "Son himself shall be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." The dynamics of nature are all interior, spiritual, and divine. Could any one make a darker or sadder picture for his imagination than that of humanity without a providence, and man without a God?

The divine providence on earth may be defined to be *God in action, in all the power of his nature, and in the full splendor of his moral excellence, as well as of his personal kindness, among men and for them.* It is, in its vast and varied unfoldings, a many-leaved, gorgeous commentary upon his character, as well as upon his own express declarations concerning himself, and his wishes, plans, and purposes; although he never tarries anywhere for our appreciation, or even for our comprehension of him or of his counsels.

How do the illimitable correlations of each man's existence and destiny with those of all other moral beings intensify the value of his right condition and conduct to the whole assemblage of finite intelligences in all worlds, and give magnitude and majesty to what might otherwise be deemed the trivial circumstances of his mortal life.

3d. The government of the world by general laws. This is one of the most marked, as it is one of the most benevo-

lent, and at the same time most needful, of the great, characteristic features of his providence; and yet the very regularity of the seasons, and the uniformity of the modes and processes of atomic, chemical, mechanical, meteorological, and vital agencies are perverted by many minds to an utter dismissal from their thoughts of all sense of the handiwork, and even of the very existence, of that Infinite Mechanician who contrived them, and that not merely as necessary parts of a perfect system of world-making, but also as the expression of an infinite personal interest in each one of our race, for whom, alike individually and in the aggregate, he built the world. In the fixed order of inanimate things, and the steady sequences along the lines of cause and effect that pervade their various relations one to the other, as likewise in the sure action of the laws of reproductive life throughout the vegetable and animal kingdoms of nature, and their complete subjection to the ordination of human choice, a full and strong basis is laid for definite, rewardable, human calculation; and God thus puts the times and seasons of the world, which in themselves are his, into our hands, to stimulate and guide our forms of personal industry, as well as the reactive processes of our own manly and godly development, while engaged in them. He who can fail to see a great designing hand, exhibiting wondrous fertility of resources, amazing energy of action, and, at the same time, most tender and ever-wakeful interest in the usefulness and happiness of all his dependent creatures, cannot claim, in self-defence, any want of needful opportunities or faculties of observation, but voluntarily smothers the light of his own divinely-endowed reason in the choke-damp of sceptical speculation. Everything has received from him its own definite substance, form, and nature; and whatever has life possesses from his hand its own specific and beautiful conditions of germination, growth, dissemination, and perpetuation. God's constructive providence embraces an inconceivably wide array of marvellous details of prospective wisdom, in respect to indi-

vidual life, the perpetuation of the human species, the general, social development of the world unto the end, and the triumph of the Redeemer's kingdom over all the earth. The planning and working, alike, of so vast and ramified a system of providence gives him endless occasions for ever-new combinations of infinite skill, forethought, care, patience, and love. By the general laws and principles of his providential administration God presents to mankind at large, in lavish abundance, a vast average sum of good, to which each one who will skilfully, diligently, prayerfully, and believingly seek for it has complete and divinely welcome access. Wonderful, indeed, are the compensations and equalizations of his providence among men. Every employment has its advantages and its drawbacks; the former always seen beforehand, and the latter as uniformly found and felt afterwards. "God hath put the day of adversity over against the day of prosperity, to the end that man may find nothing after him." "The like afflictions are accomplished in our brethren that are in the world." God's providence provides inevitably, indeed, in whatever form or stage of society for a favored class. Most must toil among material things; the many must go on their own feet wherever they move; few can travel, to see the wonders of nature or the beauties of art; few can possess books, cheap as they are, to any considerable extent; and only an elect few can secure a high education, or range at will through upper spheres of thought and feeling. But the continual evolution, by many and complicated social forces, of this specially favored class has been contrived by the great Maker of all, not merely as a matter of distinguishing mercy to them, but also as such to all those less favored beneath them, as a divinely prepared foundation for a system of privileged co-operation on their part with him, in the effort to elevate the mass of mankind to true and high habits of moral thoughtfulness and aspiration. Fearful indeed are the responsibilities, as ordained of God, of the wise, the powerful, and the rich to all less favored than themselves.

And then, again, how often is it forgotten that the great common pleasures of the heart (common because offered to all, although realized by but few, since not possessing hearts purified by grace and filled with God) are not only open to each one's attainment, but, with infinite kindness and earnestness combined, pressed upon it; compared with which treasures all others are the merest trifles. As God, moreover, made man at the outset in his own image, that he might become by his own choice his free and happy child forever, he has fashioned the elements both of nature and of human life to the presupposition of an active use of the intelligence and virtue in each one which it is his desire to develop in the end to full perfection. While the special ends of God's providence are often manifestly quite various, at one time aiming at individual good, and at another at some larger social result, now immediate and then remote in their bearings, here aiding and developing a given style of action and there disciplining and educating the minds of men to a newer and better one,—its great obvious drift in all ages has been towards the promotion of human virtue, human happiness, and human advancement.

4th. His positive subsidizing of all things to the successful issue, in the end, of his scheme of universal providence.

The system of redemption is the grandest demonstration made by God of himself to the universe; and this not for man's sake alone; but "to the intent, also, that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Here, veiled in mortal flesh, lived, for more than thirty years, the Son of God as man's Pattern, and died in the end as man's Atonement. Here, the angels, those "hosts" denoted in Jehovah's title, "the Lord of hosts," are "all" of them employed as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation." Small as is the island-universe in the sidereal heavens to which we belong, compared with many others slowly moving with it around the central "Pleiades," with their "sweet influences," and little especially

as is this world alone in it, still all the lines of historic and prophetic interest and progress in the whole vast circumference of created things are represented in the scriptures as unitedly and intensely converging here. On the brief periods of probation allotted to separate human lives on earth, following each other like summer clouds, in such rapid succession, they gather together their strength of light and interest.

How natural and how unanswerable the argument to one who knows how to estimate Christ at his true significance : " He who spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not with him freely give us all things " ! But to his children God directly declares : " All things are yours. " They own the universe in fee simple, by direct investiture and charter from above. Better than that, they own God himself, the glory of the universe, not only within it everywhere, but also everywhere without it, and above it, and greater than it, however vast, by the same term that he is greater than man himself, " the lord of this lower world, " of whom it is said, that " before Him all nations are as nothing, and less than nothing. " As vast, therefore, as are the combined resources of the whole creation, in all its physical, intellectual, and moral wealth, and as vast as are the unfathomable riches of God's nature, of which all that yet is presents but a petty image of what he can and will ordain to appear hereafter, in ever-new successions of created good, and on continually higher planes of his own ever expanding but never terminating self-manifestation to finite beings, for their greater happiness and glory, — so absolute is the certainty that none of his plans will lack their needful succors, or fail to answer their expected ends.

5th. His own inexorable withdrawal from human view in the management of his providence.

The discipline of this life is inevitably, to each one of the race, from first to last, a discipline of faith. We can, if we will, neglect or refuse to see the many convincing proofs of his busy presence with us, or we may distress ourselves



with a sense of the many mysteries of our brief being here, and of the but partially uncurtained future beyond; and still he maintains a voiceless silence, as he stands, unseen, at our very side. The heart that loves him most, and eagerly longs for the vision of his Father and his God, face to face, in the upper glory, must content itself without any manifest divine approach, in this world, to its senses. So imperturbably calm is he, amid earth's fiercest tumults of thought and feeling, that he seems, perchance, to multitudes almost or quite unimpressible alike to human want and wo, as well as to all their fearful causes and occasions. By nothing else so baffling to human thought and feeling is the fact of his perpetual, purposed invisibility to human eyes paralleled, unless it be the utter impenetrability of that vast and solemn future towards which all things human are so irresistibly tending. Does not "the hiding" of his presence, at all points, from the human race seem in itself as awfully divine as, on any other scale of observation, appear the greatest wonders of his power and skill?

6th. His immeasurable patience in the execution of his purposes. The Infinite Mind is never in a hurry. "A thousand years are in his sight but as yesterday" is to us, "when it is past." But God not only waits for "the appointed hour" in his plans, however far off from human vision; he meets also with infinite ease the all but infinite difficulty of quiet and serene forbearance with human waywardness and wantonness over all the earth, in every moment of its history. But while, in the revelation of his justice towards the guilty, he is thus for a time persistently self-restrained, even to the utmost possible self-denial, he is patient, "with a will"; terrible is the method of his silence; and his wrath is only gathering all the more heat by its temporary inaction. "Fill ye up, then, the measure of your fathers," is the plain, practical sense of his jealous posture of waiting upon any man, or any generation of men, to complete the elements of their doom. Thus mockers at his falsely supposed indifference to their conduct are ever busy, with strange,

delirious zeal, in "heaping up wrath for themselves against the day of wrath." That forbearance with the wicked for a season, which they, with presumptuous haste, count his "slackness concerning his promise," is altogether moral in its source, and has, in its highest aspects, great redemptive ends in view, even the furtherance of his church on earth. Therefore says Paul (Rom. ix. 22) : "What if God, though willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, yet endured, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, *even in order that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.*" The summer heats and favoring showers, under which the tares grew to troublesome luxuriousness, were meant, not for them, but for "the plants of righteousness" that grew by their side.

There are two leading anthropomorphic conceptions of God's providence, and widely diverse one from the other, in themselves and in their influence : the one, and that most widely prevalent, frigid enough to suit a heart estranged from all divine ideas, — the conception of God as an infinite mechanician, who, after making the world with wonderful care and skill, thousands of years ago, passed it to a great degree out of his heart, if not out of his hands — as men relinquish to others' direction the working of machines, which they have made at the outset to work aright — contenting himself, after pronouncing his handiwork, in the first "days of creation," to have been "good," with looking on as an indifferent or idle, if critical, spectator of its subsequent history. The other conception, which is true in itself, and which exerts a deeply quickening influence upon any heart that holds it, and which is everywhere in the Bible imaged in full beauty to our thoughts, is that of an infinitely loving, all-watchful, and all-bestowing Householder, occupying every part of the universe with his active presence, power, skill, and affection ; tenderly yearning at all times after the immediate and lasting good of each one of his great family of intelligent creatures, and with inexhaustible generosity, edu-

cating them continually, in every way possible, for his own future company and communion forever. His providence is often spoken of as both general and special. It is general, in reference to the whole all-embracing plan, of which it is said in holy writ that he is the "All in all." It is special, not in reference so much, commonly, to his own acts or feelings in the case, as to the outward modes or objects of its demonstration in our eyes; his special providences being but specific forms of his general providence. "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from the Father of lights"; those never seen or remembered, as well as those that are. "What hast thou," saith inspiration to each of us, "that thou hast not received"? His all-surrounding, ever-busy, all-pervading, and shining bounteousness of immeasurable good-will to each and every man is an unfailing exhibition, at all times, on the broadest scale possible, of the same personal interest, for kind, in the welfare of each one of us individually, which any occasional specialties of succor or favor, however remarkable, could be supposed to manifest. The constant care, the unceasing radiance of his happy presence among them, and his purposed and perpetual self-bestowals upon his household reveal the special love of any true and noble parent upon earth to his family far more than can any fugitive tokens of his remembrance and regard, with whatever observation they may be given or received.

### III. The interior principles of its administration.

First, they are twofold in their form or style.

1st. That of direct divine agency.

2nd. That of simple divine permission.

1st. God's direct divine ordinations or decrees all belong to the sphere of his own separate, uncombined, absolute efficiency. They include all his direct personal acts, of whatever kind, to or for his creatures; their own acts they, of course, perform and ordain. The different classes of direct divine decrees are such as these:

§ 1. All acts of creation. These include all worlds and all the beings that people them, as well as whatever objects and

resources surrounding them are adapted to their use, enjoyment, improvement, and efficient influence.

§ 2. The constitutional bestowments and limitations, in any form, of free, moral agency. With these must be connected also the natural, probationary trials and tests of character, which are not of designed or undesigned origination, by other finite beings, and which compose the elements of our present mortal state, as ordered of the Lord; together with the appointed metes and bounds of human life.

§ 3. All governmental acts, statutes, rewards, and penalties on the part of God. Here cluster together all the forms of his declared will; all measures of redemptive wisdom, energy, and love; and all his own direct approaches of kindness to any and every one of the race, in whatever forms of admonition, or of beckoning invitation to his favor.

§ 4. All the ordained results of voluntary human agency. These are such as those of diligence and idleness, skill and ignorance, wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, in any part of our compound nature, physical, intellectual, and moral; and whether originating in our own persons, or coming upon us by the laws of descent or of social affiliation.

§ 5. All the contingent alternatives of human choice, presented to each individual moral agent upon earth. The forms of our personal agency, as also their times and directions, are often greatly modified, and even determined, by the acts and influence of others; but their inward moral essence is always ever the same, according to the answer to the question: God, or self? In appointing these supreme alternatives as one of them, according to our choice, the end and inspiration, exclusive of the other, of every action of whatever sort of each human being, from the first dawn of moral action in his soul, the liberty of the creature is in no way impeded or assailed at any time.

§ 6. The patient acceptance, in the gross, of the incidental evils entailed upon the intelligent universe from the abuse by so many, on earth and in hell, of the high endowment of free, moral agency. The occurrence of these evils

was fully foreseen by God from the first, but accepted by him, while infinitely disliked in themselves, rather than that he should not adopt the present moral system, with all its surpassing volume of good in the end. But for the creation of finite beings in his own image the whole universe must have been an utter and voiceless blank of space; and, though everywhere beaming, to God's eye, with the intense, all-diffused brightness of his own infinite being, yet, alas! manifest to the vision of no other. Men are "now," as truly as was Adam (James iii. 9), "made in the similitude of God": not, like matter, unreflecting and immobile, but capacitated for the highest style of action possible to any being, — to choose or refuse, at their own option, good or evil; while they are invited, and even commanded in love, and for his sake only as for theirs, to embrace and honor him, freely, fully, and forever, as their Father and their Friend. How empty and frigid and utterly unendurable, beyond all human appreciation of the fact, would be to the great Infinite heart of the universe, with its immeasurable fulness of social feeling and affection, a world full of forced, mechanical natures, seeming to love God, only because compelled to do so by his own resistless hand. One willing child's true, unbought, spontaneous, radiant, exulting love is worth more to an earthly parent than would be all the necessitated smiles of a myriad of overawed human beings, whose feelings and actions were determined by some irresistible force from without.

God's direct decrees are relatively of two sorts, not in themselves indeed, but in their application: those which are unconditional and absolute, as the creation of the world and of man as its inhabitant, and his endowment with all the elements of moral agency, which, like "the gifts and calling of God," universally, "are without repentance" in his heart; and those which are conditional, as all God's acts in conformity with the variable forms and elements of human conduct, which themselves are left, by the very terms of man's nature and of God's mode of governing him, to each one's own decision.

God's own future acts at any time were of course known to him from the beginning, from the infinite scope of his prescience; and so were all the variable acts of his creatures, both in their own contingent nature, and in the determinative force and issue of each of their own foreseen acts of choice. God's intuitive foresight of what men will actually do in each and every case, and which would be just the same if God did not foreknow it, affects in no way whatever the originally ordained, and still in all respects completely preserved, freedom of their moral action; since that foreknowledge is wholly objective and outward to them, and known to them only as a matter of formal revelation; and this not to modify their own agency at all, in either style or degree, but only to give them truer conceptions of God, as he really is. "Whatsoever the Lord hath pleased" (Ps. cxxxv. 6) "he hath done in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in all deep places." Yes, indeed, but it is equally true that he hath never pleased to contradict himself, in his word or in his works. After having purposely endowed man with full powers of free, moral agency, like his own, he never has annulled his own plan and work, and never will, by unmaking his nature, which he fashioned at the first as he desired and decreed that it should be forever.

2d. The forms and directions of God's permissive providence.

§ 1. He allows the devil and his angels unrestrained freedom of action upon earth for a season, as in hell, in direct antagonism to his cause and kingdom.

§ 2. He allows full scope to imperfect, mistaken, evil human action. He has not only endowed us with free-will, but given full range for its exercise; and wonderful is his forbearance towards the many varied forms of folly, caprice, waywardness, wantonness, and malice witnessed among men. But more than this, as Christ "came to his own, and his own received him not," so God pictures himself everywhere in his word, as a petitioner at the door of his

own world, as also at that of each man's own heart, at whose vestibule he stands and beseeches the recognition of his rights as a sovereign, and of his honor as a Father. "Am I a father," he saith, "and where is my honor"? "Behold," saith Christ, who is "one with the father," "Behold, I stand at the door and knock! If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." Urgent as is his desire, from his infinite compassionateness towards each human soul, to be its guest, he will never force the door, but enter it only as it is willingly opened to him. We ourselves carefully abstain from hearts and habitations where we are not welcomed. "Turn unto me," he saith, "and I will turn unto you," and "be ye reconciled to God." Are these seemingly earnest words of love but mere unfeeling taunts of our weakness, as poor, crippled beings who lost their original, constitutional faculties as men in Adam; and who, though bidden to open the door of their heart to God, cannot possibly rise to do it? Are they but bitter tantalizations to us, as we awake at any time to a sense of our lost estate, or are they rather the earnest, tender, winning words of an infinite friend, desirous of setting up within us, anew, the broken pillars of our immortal humanity? Can any one, not under the strange spell of some delusive theory, who reads with conscientious simplicity of heart the word of God, doubt that he utterly abominates any and every sin? And yet what uninterrupted license has sin ever had to ravage earth and despoil heaven!

§ 3. He allows men to sway, with absolute determinateness, the circumstances, relations, activities, characters, fortunes, and destinies of others. Parental, personal, didactic, social, governmental, administrative, and monetary forces and influences form, by their mutual interlacings, each with the other, the vital organisms of the family, the state, and the church. Potent for good in their true use, they are, when perverted, equally potent, each and all of them, for evil. The untoward issues that flow from their abuse are,

wherever they appear, like the moral blindness of the heathen, "without excuse."

How plastic and impressible is childhood made to external influences ; in whose brief period of necessarily unripe ideas and imperfect aims and efforts, at the best, all questions of personal character, industry, skill, power, efficiency, and usefulness in after life must be irreversibly determined. When we realize that the children of mankind, at large, are, each and all, his, both in fact and at heart, and only loaned in every case to their parents, to be trained for him, and that the highest degree of love possible on their part is not, compared with his, even as a drop to the ocean : — how strange seems it, that he resigns, on so large a scale, the casting of the die of their precious destiny to such unworthy hands. What lasting damage, and what immitigable sorrow, are drunken husbands and fathers allowed to entail upon their innocent, suffering, praying households. How do the victims of vice and crime wound society, even more than themselves. Men of passion and violence tear ruthlessly in pieces the cherished hopes and happiness of the good ; and weak and wicked rulers often impose upon their weary subjects tasks and burdens, utterly abhorrent not only to them but also to God. Thus fearfully is one man often in the power of another, who, purposely or negligently, crushes all the better instincts of his nature, breaks off wantonly all the budding hopes of his being, and tramples the germs of immortal joy and honor in his nature into utter ruin under his feet. In the general order of social relations, influences, and sequences,—skilfully established for the world's good, and sure to eventuate largely in it, both in general and in detail, if only each one of the great whole acts rightly his allotted part, — God "visits the iniquities of fathers upon their children to the third and fourth generation, but shows mercy unto thousands of those that love him and keep his commandments." It is wonderful that a system of perpetuated covenant blessings, so wide-reaching in its scope, and so energetic in its action, should, when perverted by human



misconduct, narrow-in its force for evil through all the forms and laws of personal inheritance of blood and bone, of home-education, and of the power of personal example and influence, from "thousands of generations," as it is to those who love God, to the contracted limits of "the third and fourth generation of those that hate him."

So, too, what immense injury has God suffered to be inflicted on society, in all ages and countries, by mistaken theories of religious truth, of social order, of governmental policy, and of individual duty. Conscientious visionaries, bigots, and fools have turned the world everywhere upside down. What an outflow and overflow of evils in all the earth would a little more logic or even good common sense have often saved to mankind.

§ 4. He has allowed vast negations of easily discoverable and attainable good to all preceding generations.

The ignorance and destitution of men in former days, in respect alike to matters of personal comfort and of social progress and prosperity, he suffered, with seemingly unheeding indifference, to remain undisturbed. The very word *invent* teaches us that mankind have, thus far, stumbled upon their forms of individual and social improvement; so, the word *discover* implies that a treasure which, though in plain view, had before remained untouched, had now, for the first time, revealed its riches to him who had lifted up its cover. Nature held forth to men thousands of years ago the same bounties and beauties, with open fulness of bestowment, so many of which have just been seized by the eager hand of science or of art. But how — as a savage walks unconsciously over a mine of gold, or though staring upon a printed page, full of words of light and love, sees naught but blank confusion there — have those of former days died unblessed, amid an abundance of the elements of human improvement and enjoyment surrounding them, and lying in near, delightful prospect to them, which yet they never touched, because never for a moment comprehending that they had any relation to their possibilities of better

action, growth, and usefulness. There is indeed a grand philosophical unity in the conception of the progressive development of the human mind, by the laws of its own self-active growth, in clearness of perception, force of reasoning, strength of purpose, objectiveness of aim, and elevation of sentiment, from absolute original ignorance and inexperience to the highest attainable excellence of the church and state combined, in the end; but at what a fearful sacrifice of the means of personal and social advancement has the weary march of the ages hitherto been allowed to move so tardily, and with such slow and small accumulations of gain in all upward directions. When we think of the ease with which the divine hand could, at any time, point the eyes of men towards the before concealed treasures of his goodness, lovingly prepared by himself ages ago for their use, and set purposely at ready points of access before them; or, how easily he could burst the light seals that held their contents out of human sight,—how strange, and even perchance unresolvable, seem to us the deliberate negations of his permissive providence, and the inactive reserve of his infinite good-will to the race; the indulgence of which, on the broadest scale possible, is so manifest in the magnificent preparations of his providence for the ultimate perfectibility of the human species.

§ 5. He allows very great inequalities of condition in human experience. Some are born poor and others rich; some weak and others strong; some under the most kindly parental influence, and some to be driven about by misfortunes, like dry leaves before autumn winds, from the first hour of life to the last, with no helper but that divine Father whom they have never been taught to love or to seek or even to know. Who can guess what shall become of his children, however well provided for now, or of his property or his good name after he has left the land of the living? Who can foresee what withering blast may suddenly, at any moment, like a simoom of the desert, dry up every green thing in his outward estate of good, or what overwhelming

ruin of all things else may unexpectedly leave him alone with himself and his God. The eventful history of others will make any thoughtful observer of it serious, although by grace serene, and modest in all his earthly expectations, however earnest in following them for the glory of God.

Secondly, The final end of God's providence, whether decretory or permissive, is, to promote the greatest good of the greatest number of his intelligent creatures.

The arithmetic of love in God's bosom is the arithmetic of the entire moral universe. His nature is no more unbounded than his heart: "his tender mercies are over all his works." From the very infinitude of his being, he can be satisfied with nothing partial or incomplete. Our natures aspire, in proportion as they are lofty in their bearing, to great generalizations of conception, and to grand, all-embracing sentiments and purposes of life; and so, not only the divine intuitions, but also the divine sensibilities and affections, turn, full-orbed and mighty in their action, towards all the works of his hands.

The great, manifest drift of God's providence, as well as all its secret undertow, is, in general, towards the vindication of universal justice; while, in particular, it flows full and strong towards each individual upon earth, in an almost unrestrained tide of mercy.

1st. The individual is never slighted or forgotten amid the magnificence of his thoughts or plans.

It is the glory of science, art, and administrative talent among men, to seize, combine, and use the minutest details with effect for great ends. To God nothing is great, since it came directly and wholly from his own hand; and to him, for the same reason, is nothing small. He acts for and upon each individual man, in order to promote his highest good, upon the following scale of principles:

§ 1. According to the mental, moral, and even physical elements of each one's separate personality, as well as according to the outward and social circumstances of his

earthly lot. Infinite adaptation and art does God employ in all his moral workmanship.

§ 2. So as, if unresisted, much more welcomed, to lead him, even amid the dim light of nature, directly and powerfully along the line of his largest development in the spirit of duty, and of true, courageous, persistent, buoyant faith in God. Wherever "day unto day utters speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge," in all the earth, "the invisible things of God are clearly seen, even his eternal power and Godhead," so that even the unrepentant heathen are "without excuse." The normal effect of God's providential treatment of each one, amid the blessings of Christianity, is the creation in his heart of a positive, eager, and continually intensified desire for spiritual attainments and pleasures. Thus "the goodness of God" ever legitimately "leadeth to repentance," or a new life; and "all things work together for good to those that love God."

§ 3. So as to bestow himself, in ever larger measures of joyous beneficence, upon each one, as his chosen friend and ally forever. The end of God's providence, as of creation itself, is the direct and full education of each one of his moral creatures for his own everlasting companionship.

2d. In all seeming outward change God himself is ever the same immutable being, in his elements of feeling and principles of action.

He is accordingly equally immutable in the maintenance and management of his great, unvarying, and, because absolutely perfect, invariable plan of all things. With him, "there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"—which does not mean that his outward forms of demonstration and action towards his creatures are unvarying. The very immutability of his character necessitates ever-changing modes of treating them, according to the changes of their conduct. The same father that smiles upon his obedient child, frowns upon him, if of a right and true character himself, when he is disobedient. God is ever gloriously the same good, wise, perfect, all-loving, infinite being. Whatever he has been at

any time in the eternal past, and however he has manifested himself to any being in the universe heretofore, that same great, true, majestic, beauteous selfhood he maintains unaltered still. It is a cardinal idea among the many that must be blended in one, in the great composite conception of the true God of heaven and earth, as he really is, that "he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever"; not only in the necessary elements of his self-existence, as God, but also in his own moral habitudes and purposes, affections, and actions. God therefore now "loves those that love him," as greatly as he ever loved any of the prophets or apostles of elder days for a similar reason; and Christ is as tender at heart in our days to any one of us, as he was to "the beloved disciple," if we lean in spirit as fondly as he upon Christ's bosom.

#### IV. The connection of God's providence with other things.

First, with the course of nature.

In the conceptions of many, the order of the outer world is altogether mechanical. Such an absolute organism does it seem to them to be that they even exclude, in their thoughts of it, the Maker and Contriver of all things from his own works. How do they forget that to make is immeasurably more than to manage; as also that, however skilfully made at the first, so ponderous a machine, as they deem universal nature to be, and of so many complicated parts and relations, could not, with safety to the unnumbered intelligent beings concerned in its right condition and action, be left to its own unguided movements.

1st. The course of nature was itself fore-ordained, as a part of God's providence.

The world, prepared at the outset as a vast storehouse of varied resources for man's great and ever-increasing wants, in every department of his compound being, is — in all its record of geologic facts and chemic agencies, in the range of its various philosophies, natural and supernatural, in the diversified forms of its physical history, and in the ever augmenting pomp of the seasons from winter to autumn —

a grand, harmonious display of sublime divine care for man's perpetual, inward, and outward welfare. Here we behold the fact and fulness of God's providence revealed in large, open, fixed type, for the reading of all eyes, to his praise; set up, indeed, in that far-off "beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth," and kept fresh and bright to the present hour.

2d. The course of nature is now vitalized everywhere with the present, immediate, active will of God.

"My Father worketh hitherto," said Christ, "and I work." The order of things, as we term the ever-recurring uniformities of state or relation or sequence in the objects that surround us, is, in its final analysis and description, but the steady unbroken flow of the divine will in the same perfect channels of desire and purpose concerning them. The uniformity of nature is therefore but the constant physical expression of the unceasingly perfect habitude of the divine mind towards the same things in the same relations. He can neither desire nor do anything, at any time, either mentally or morally, that is not exactly right and best in itself, and can never therefore improve in the smallest degree upon himself. The uniform steadiness of his hand in "upholding all things by the word of his power," as well as in moving them harmoniously onwards in their constituted connections and successions, is what men generally call "the course of nature." "Nature" seems, strangely, a more acceptable term, somehow, to the hearts of most men — poor, blind, inert nature, — than the name of the great living God of nature, and of all its contents.

3d. If men are free, amid the so-called "bands of nature," — parents and friends, the great and the mighty, — to give good things unto others; "how much more" is God free and able "to give good things to those that ask him." Nature is to his, not only indwelling but also everywhere outspreading, infinite spirit, a hinderance, in any of its elements or forms, to his free, full action, through it and with it, for the good of any or all of his creatures, inconceivably less

than our bodies now are, or our perfected, spiritual bodies will be, elastic and glowing in every fibre of their ethereal essence, to the execution of our highest and best purposes of good to others. If we conceive of God as inhabiting all parts of the material universe with his omnipresent being as we do our corporeal frames, we think of the mode of his universal existence in a figure, helpful indeed to our weak ideas of his greatness, but yet ineffably inferior to the great reality of his ubiquitous consciousness, energy, and authority.

4th. The supreme blessings of life are spiritual.

In the deep, secret well-springs of pleasure, within our inmost being, which none but God's hand can open; in felt contact of soul with him, and felt resemblance to him; and in that sweet, continual bliss, like his own, which God causes to abound unto those that love him, what a heritage of good does he that walks with God possess, compared with any of the gross things that we can "touch, taste, or handle," which are all, in the contrast, but mere husks and offals.

5th. God has many unseen ways and agencies, by which to confer good, without the use of what we term the outward visible course of nature at all.

He who can walk at will within the inner chambers of our consciousness, as in his own temple, and be cognizant of everything passing there without even any knowledge, at the time, on our part of his being there, can surely awake feelings within us, all our own, which but for his agency would remain dormant. Bright, kindling thoughts, which those who have them most so often describe as "coming to them," may flash from his hand in full flame, within the bounds of our witnessing presence; and whence they come who shall tell? The mind has a spontaneous, self-illuminating power of its own; or it may receive light within its palatial windows, as if from torches borne by angel-hands, in passing by; or from the great God himself, who made the tablets of the human heart on purpose to write on them, with welcome on our part, his thoughts of love; on which

he may kindly drop at any time the sweetest flowers from the paradise above.

How easily also can he, by silently opening or closing, at any time, by day or by night, the fountains of health in our bosoms, favor or check any of our cherished plans, and alter all the combinations in the elements of our earthly experience. How, by mere changes of the weather, can he, without any violation of nature, modify our movements, or those of others, and so use nature for the furtherance of his moral plans and purposes. And who shall describe the scope and force of angelic agencies, of whom it is said that they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation"; and again: "He shall give his angels charge over thee, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone"; and still again: "Take heed that ye offend not one of these little ones, for I say unto you that their angels do always behold the face of my Father, which is in heaven." Gratitude to the angels for deliverances and benefits unknown here as such, but thankfully recognized hereafter, will constitute a large element in the joy of the ransomed on high. But greater than all other divine gifts is the bestowal of his Spirit: that Spirit is man's appointed Comforter; his manifested presence is heaven in the soul. Through nature, as also without it, streams, like sunbeams from above, his quickening influence upon the heart.

Secondly, The connection of God's providence with free human agency. Its harmony with the constitution of the human mind is as complete as it is unique. The God of nature and providence is plainly the God of revelation. The evidences of the unity of his existence, attributes, and character are, like those of the unity of his purposes, plans, and laws, everywhere multitudinous and overwhelming. His modes of action do not anywhere tend to repress, in any way, the freedom of human agency, much less to revoke that high bestowment which he gave to us at the beginning, in the very making of our nature, in everlasting perpetuity.

The presupposition of a sovereign God, having all power



in heaven and on earth, is necessary to any just conceptions of the structure of the intellectual and moral universe. But God's sovereignty is never to be thought of as being, actively or passively, set against any man's true interests, but as being only and altogether for him; not as crushing or depressing his moral activity or force, but as inviting and urging the highest and best use of his faculties at all times.

There are but three possible ways of conceiving of what is, when rightly viewed, not only the grand but also the precious doctrine of divine sovereignty: as directly exclusive of man's freedom (a view which some audaciously hold, nor seem to be appalled by its fearful logical consequences); as probably consistent with the exercise of man's free-will, although the mode of it be unintelligible to us, since both doctrines are clearly revealed in the scriptures; or, last and best of all, as manifestly and beautifully harmonious with human freedom and directly stimulative and helpful to our right action in everything. God has established the order of the heavens by the mutual reaction of centripetal and centrifugal forces; the order of bodily health, by the right mingling of the acids and alkalies of the system; and the order of the state, by the natural blending of the conservative and progressive elements of society; but, in theology, the qualifying elements of thought, out of whose mingled interaction the stability and beauty of divine truth are to be realized in the thoughts and hearts of men, few seem to be capable of holding together in their mutual correlations.

The great Father of all has none of that desire to make an ostentatious display of the power of his wrath which many do him the high injustice to imagine. "Meekness," on our part "is an ornament of great price, in his sight"; and it is one that he himself possesses in his own great nature, in infinite beauty. "Learn of me," said the God-man, who himself declared "he that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also," — "learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." It is his "gentleness, which hath made us great," each and all, in our privileges or prospects.

The practical connections of divine with human agency are threefold : *anticipative* (or preparatory, and so, stimulative, suggestive and beckoning in their influence) ; *concurrent* (and so helpful of right and successful human action at the time) ; or *retrospective* (bestowing added favor and success upon previous human effort, made with love to God and prayerfulness and waiting faith and hope).

1st. Grace is the constant, cherished form of his sovereign good-will to men.

§ 1. He delights in the widest possible exercise, as the form of his own greatest moral influence for good, of quickening and converting grace. It is his joy at all times to draw as many as possible of Adam's lost sons to himself, since " he will have all men come unto the knowledge of the truth."

§ 2. Restraining grace is another precious form of divine benefaction. The checks of divine providence to human ignorance and haste, and to human weakness and wantonness, are numberless ; and what deliverances, unknown to us, we have each had from physical danger, and from the power of the wicked, who can guess ? The sense of these many and great, but now invisible, helps and benefits from the divine hand will, like the perception here of seasonable escape from some impending danger, unrealized at the time, awaken in us, in the life beyond, mingled awe and thankfulness forever.

2d. The immediate design of God's providence is the formation and perfection of personal virtue in the heart of each one of his intelligent creatures.

" All things work together for good to those that love God " ; and they would work together for good everywhere else, if not resisted and perverted. " Godliness is " in itself and in all its constituted rewards, " profitable for the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come." The physical universe is, in every part and particle of it, for the behoof of the moral universe contained within its boundaries. Everything material is as positively under the law of attraction, by its moral uses, to the central throne and controlling will

of God, as it is also, more observably to the senses, under the law of perpetual tendency towards earth's centre of gravity. God has no ends of action, and from the infinite perfection of his nature and the absolute independence of his being, can have none, in whatever acts of creation, providence, or redemption, but those determined by the present and abiding welfare of each and all his creatures, who, instinctively if irrational, or of earnest, set purpose if intelligent, fill out the appointed measure of their being. How manifest is the mighty, ever-moving drift of God's providences towards nations, as towards individuals, in favor of right and justice, and of humanity and "the progress of the age."

3d. Man's powers of interpreting and appreciating the form and features of God's providence are small.

The common conviction concerning his providence is, that it is strangely mysterious. Many doubt, others fear, and some murmur; and there are those that even deride all divine interest in human affairs, and all supernatural agency concerning them.

§ 1. All such forget how inadequate and unworthy are the habits of moral appraisal, and even of moral survey, evinced by the best of men towards the things of God. A humble estimate of our own individual capacities and characters is one of the first essentials to all right mental, as well as moral, exercises and habitudes.

§ 2. They forget that however full, in reference to our previous ignorance, the disclosure made of God or of his ways to the soul may at any time, here or hereafter, be, there must be, by necessity, a vast remainder left of the unseen and the unintelligible in the Infinite to the eye of the finite.

§ 3. They forget the spirituality of God's providence, as of his law, and are continually looking for visible or material aspects and issues, instead of looking beyond and above them for higher and broader results that are moral and eternal. The discipline of life is often seemingly adverse, while in the end promotive of the highest results for good to

individuals and communities. "No affliction, for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to those that are exercised thereby." "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." In no instance whatever is it the fault of the great Contriver of spiritual occasions, forces, and tendencies, that men do not get a larger and quicker product of good from them.

§ 4. They forget the fact of the needful composition of many forces in combination, to the production of given providential results. All the blessings of life, as health, strength, usefulness, success, enjoyment, or whatever else any one may covet, are, to a degree beyond which any hasty thinker could guess, compound in their origin. Any one of the combining elements, in the entire productive agency necessary to the final result may, by its absence or by a change of its order as to time or place, greatly qualify, and even wholly neutralize, the mingled efficiency of the rest. God's providence and human experience are full of mutually interlocked conditions and dependences.

§ 5. They forget the vast and universal bearings of God's providence. Partial ends, otherwise desirable, are often sacrificed by God, as by man, for general ones. Nothing in the government of God can be rightly understood out of its relations. Multiform indeed is often the plexus of complications, reaching from eternity to eternity, that God holds in his hand, and manages with infinite ease and effect to his glory, as the infinite well-wisher of the universe. Every part of the whole is managed for the whole ; and the proper action of any part, however minute, may find its designed result, in some far-reaching connection, out of sight to every one but him who knows the end of all things from the beginning. Petty indeed is the segment of the vast circumference of God's universal affairs that stretches at any time, from side to side, across the boundaries of our vision. "We are of yesterday and know nothing." The larger our area of observation, the more full our comprehension of universal

history and of universal experience, the better will be our means of rightly estimating the manifestations of God's work and will among all human things.

The tendency to perverted views of God's providence is, in weak minds, to superstitiousness; and in those of mingled ardor with their weakness, to presumptuous fancies in favor of themselves or against their enemies. In intellects of a stronger mould, there is likewise a double tendency to perversion at the opposite poles of thought and temperament, — to scepticism, in those disliking the limitations to their own wills of even divine authority; and in those of a conscientious and religious turn of mind, to a sense of all-constraining fate, which to some seems overshadowing and terrific, while others even declare their admiration of so hideous a conception of that God whose name is not infinite power but infinite love.

Great is the folly of undertaking to read God's providences in advance. In the bold effort to interpret the prophecies in detail, with a full scroll of personal names and dates and historical connections at hand — rushing forth with them, as a willing guide to others — how many have speedily signalized their manifest ignorance of the things that they have spoken. The scale of prophecy is too vast in itself, as well as too general, to be handled by any one with flippant freedom or hasty earnestness. And yet when considering the introductory salutation of "the book of Revelation" to its readers: "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein," — we cannot, like some others, decry the disposition and effort to pry eagerly into the wonders of church history, pictured in such gorgeous or startling symbols there.

Here belongs also, properly, a brief consideration of the function and value of miracles. These have always a specific moral use, as desirable and even necessary attests of a divine communication, through human hands, to mankind, which must be otherwise left unauthenticated, and so inope-

rative to the ends designed to be accomplished. The vaunted antagonism of reason to Christian faith is much paraded before the world by infidels ; but God ever appeals to human reason, in the most complete and earnest manner, in all his demands of obedience and trust. The logic of nature, as a witness for him, is to a true heart irresistible, as is also that of providence and of human experience. So is likewise the logic of miracles, which are vouchers from God himself that those who profess to speak in his name have actually come with a message from him.

Prophets, if not miracle-workers also, would have no claim, beyond that of their personal worth and good sense, to a respectful hearing at the time of their appearance ; while to those of subsequent ages their very prophecies themselves are, when realized in all their breadth of details over widely separated intervals of time and space, certificates from on high, of the same nature and value as miracles, of their divine delegation. As important as is the divine errand itself, on which any elect one of earth may at any time be commissioned to come to the race, is the adequate ascertainment of the fact ; as important as is God's loving approach to us, for our good, is the sure proof that he has in fact approached us. Miracles are therefore to be expected in all communications from God to man, and are not only authorized but necessitated by them. They are not simply expressions of generous pity for the feebleness of our sense of God's active presence at all times ; they are also direct testimonies to human reason, in its most critical exercise, of the reality of the word spoken from above.

Thirdly, The connection of God's providence with his own feelings concerning it.

" All things are and were created for his pleasure." At the end of each of the days of creation " he saw " his works, that " they were all very good." He was at the first infinitely joyous in planning the present system of things, as he is now, also, in managing it. As the style of a palatial mansion and of its furnishings reveals not only the taste, but

the heart also, of its builder; and the whole atmosphere of a festive occasion is full of the spirit of him who prepares it; and a picture shows the very soul of the artist, in its lights and shades, — so is it easy to see and to feel, wherever we look, that he who framed this world enjoyed his own work, and that the presence, with which he surrounds man in his sin and shame is a loving presence, joying in his joy. A warm hand is everywhere extended to man; a bright eye beams everywhere upon him; the world is garlanded and festooned with beauty; nature is in a universal frolic of gladness, around and over him.

1st. What a royal redundancy of life abounds everywhere! The real inhabitants of the world, for number beyond all number, are too small, even when aggregated in masses, for the human eye to discover. What elegance often in their microscopic forms, or what exquisite beauty of attire; all for the joy of art to the divine mind in their construction, although no other eye should behold the tracery of skill and kindness on their tiny forms and wings.

2d. What an unstinted supply of resources exists everywhere for all the wants of every creature. Every creature has its well-adapted food placed, in all needful abundance, where it can be readily obtained, with its feeble powers of appropriation and locomotion. "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." For man, especially, how abundant the provision. The two hundred generations that have come and gone, in such swift succession hitherto, have but touched the outer surface of the abundant store of good, still in reserve for the full and ever-expanding use of as many generations more, if God shall indulge the human race with so protracted a term of existence.

If by the sweat of our brow we must each get our bread; that involves no more effort than is necessary to draw after it the mingled joy of action, aim, and attainment, as the brow is the first and easiest place of all to perspire. Who

is not glad, when he sees what perverted uses men generally make of the means that they gather, that the accumulation of gain has been made no easier. Surely he who fitted up the world with such infinite liberality for the inhabitation of his earthly children, took great pleasure in all the acts of his own bounteousness in their behalf, and felt also a deep interest in their prosperity and pleasure.

3d. How ever-present, and ever-pressing upon every open sense of our being, has he made the demonstration of his love of beauty.

Beauty of form and color, beauty in detail, and beauty in grouping, beauty of individual presentation, and beauty of natural association and of touching suggestion: beauty in various degrees, outer and inner, for all, from those most rude to those whose inner sense is full of the soft, sweet light of eternity, he has scattered with an unsparing wealth of good will, and with evidently equal inward satisfaction, over all the earth. True and tender, indeed, is the language of flowers; not that sickly, sentimental language which poetasters or foolish lovers are fond of ascribing to them; but language redolent of God. As we adorn our grounds and persons, our houses and festive halls, with them, and lay them, alike, in wreaths of unforgetful affection on the altar to which we lead our loved ones in marriage, and the bier, where we gaze for the last time on the forms of the dear departed, — so God places flowers by the wayside of life, to cheer us as we toil in the dust and heat of daily duty ever upwards towards himself. He bids us to “consider” them, as well as to get the passing good that we can from them; and this is the argument that we are to draw to ourselves, as we consider, that, if God so carefully etches and embroiders the leaf of a passing flower, and guards its tender life so securely through all successions of time and of outward circumstance and change, he will, much more, think of us and bless us with his bounty and himself, if our hearts only open their golden leaves to his heart shining upon them, as the flower lifts up its face towards his on high.



4th. Even thorns and briars, reptiles and vermin, have their moral uses, and bear a benediction in them.

In a depraved world, repellent influences from evil are as potent, and precious sometimes, as those which are attractive to good. Hope draws and fear drives; and they can be readily combined in unity of action and of issue. The same God that rewards diligence, scourges also laziness; and those who will not be of their own accord cleanly, must be driven, when other means fail, even by vermin, to decent self-treatment.

Many baneful, hideous, and disgusting objects in nature, that have no other palpable profit to our eyes, answer a high moral end, in their natural use for purposes of moral symbolism. Our feelings run much more in the channels of real or fancied analogies than we at first imagine; and as God communicated to the Jewish mind, and through it, in the end, to all mankind, by a long course of many and minute ceremonial observances the moral ideas which they imaged, and therefore "abolished" them when Christ came, as the result intended by their use had been gained,—so there is a grand moral use in many of the unsightly and fearful forms of nature, animate and inanimate, that help, by easy suggestion, both the imagination and the reason to a more quick and positive sense of the intrinsic odiousness of moral evil; and in positive aversion from sin is one of the strongest possible safeguards to virtue. But for serpents and dragons, how different would be the quality of our conceptions of "the serpent," the devil, whose "head the heel of the seed of the woman was to crush." But for devouring lions, how little would we appreciate the fury of his heart against mankind, who "goeth about, as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." With no knowledge of a wolf, how feebly should we think of a hypocrite who had not harmed us, whom now we remember "as a wolf in sheep's clothing." The greatest Bible truths lie couched in figures, intended quite as much to sway the feelings of all men in right directions as to enlighten their conceptions of their significance.

But the noisome animals of the world, as we deem them, are, in actual fact, among its most special and needful benefactors. God has not only made nature full of mutual checks to over growth and over action, and so, by counterbalancing one thing with another, established a grand universal harmony of mutual antagonisms ; but, by a general as well as most minutely ramified system of scavenger-action ever busily employed by myriads of animals of all sorts, and of animalculae, keeps the world, with all its multitudinous forms of ever newly beginning decay, clean, bright, and beautiful, like a carefully swept palace. Although, therefore, countless hosts of creatures of every varied size, as well as vegetable products of all kinds, are everywhere dissolving back again into their elemental dust, nature seldom, even in her forest wilds, reeks with offensive odors. He who has been sickened by the pestilential vapors of a single narrow battlefield, notwithstanding the quick burial of the dead, can easily guess what a scene of general desolation and corruption the universal decay of nature would everywhere present, and what a vast charnel-house earth, now so "gay with life and eloquent with bliss," would become to the wearied heart of every one of its inhabitants. Flies, gnats, mosquitoes, wasps, ants, beetles, worms, snakes and scorpions, are all busy, happy, indispensable laborers for man. By the drainage wrought through hills and dales by bountiful showers from above, together with the purifying power of frost and lightning, and the ever busy industry of God's great host of appointed workers, large and small, for cleansing, by day and by night, the air, the earth, and the sea, in connection with the grand daily awakening of the world's agencies to action by the sun, as the mighty magnetic source of all its light and life, the physical world is kept, at all times, in a state as near like that of Eden as with man's depravity is possible for his good. The earth contains nothing which has not been placed in it by direct design for some specific end, tributary to the highest ultimate good of all : as we purposely put each article of furni-

ture into our houses, or each item of wearing apparel upon our persons. In the smallest or meanest specimens of vegetable or animal life there are more skill and adaptation of various parts and offices one to the other than in the most elaborate contrivances of human ingenuity. Everywhere is there perfection of workmanship, and everywhere beauty of inward structure as of outward aspect.

5th. Diseases too, of which many think only as unmitigated calamities, or even curses, are needful lessons to us of the evils of breaking or ignoring necessary laws. We are made, though finite, with faculties capable of boundless expansion. In order that we should achieve any purposed personal culture, we must not only think and intend and labor and pray, but we must also conform in our work to the nature of things and their legitimate tendencies, influences, and issues; we must follow rules, and be wise in the selection of our means and processes. And how does God educate us to this true sense of our real inward interests by the palpable and speedy visitation of physical evils upon us, from the transgression, whether heedlessly or designedly, by us of physical laws. His mode of training us, each and all, to right mental and moral action is as decisive and inexorable, as it is manifold. Our eyes could have been made to gaze, like the eagle's, unshrinking at the sun; our stomachs might have received swinish strength to digest food at all hours and of all kinds; our sensual appetites might have been fleshed with greater endurance, as well as desire, by indulgence; we might have been made capable of standing unharmed, like the beasts of the field, in midnight dews and winter rains;—but how then should we ever have learned to be cautious and thoughtful? how, ever have learned to live for ends out of sight? to adopt wise principles of action? to wait patiently for desired results, trustful in truth and time and God? How should we have ever come to feel that it is noble to sacrifice present to future good, and to struggle continually upwards, out of the physical into the spiritual,—“using this world as not abusing it”?

Diseases are also not only trainers of the character, in their legitimate influence, to true, moral, law-abiding dispositions, in every direction of interest and duty; they are likewise, when occurring in those who are dear to us, powerful awakeners of personal sympathy and kindness. Sickness is thus, at the same time, a part of the physical heritage of Adam's original transgression, and one of the necessary elements of the world's moral education and renovation. Maternal anticipations of danger, or realizations of anguish, are not the only preparatives, appointed from infinite desire for the child's highest good, in the end, with such severe kindness by God, in order that she who is to be specially honored with the responsibility of standing in God's place to the child, to train it for him, may be sure to feel the sacredness and solemnity of the great immortal trust committed to her care. The inherent feebleness and unavoidable exposures and constant sicknesses and frequent deaths of childhood are all so many new and powerful reminders to every thoughtful parent, that children are not household toys or mere pretty fondlings of earthly affection or of parental pride; but candidates for eternity, placed here, for a little while, to be better prepared for the company of the blessed. Parents must travail in spiritual birth, in the depths of their hearts, for the intellectual and moral development of their children, as does the mother physically for their emergence from embryonic into outward, open life; and the fact that so few parents ever thus struggle inwardly before God for their highest well-being, is the reason why so few children ever attain to any great mental or religious excellence. The most menial offices of love to children and invalids form a necessary part also of the world's outfit for men's highest moral training. Performed for moral reasons, and with gracious aims and affections, they may be made not only dignified, however humble in themselves, but also heroic; and the more distasteful they are in their own character, the more self-forgetful and beautiful be the spirit of him who cheerfully and constantly renders them. Was ever a lesson from God

to man taught to the race with more strange impressiveness than that of happy service to others, in whatever lowly way may be demanded or convenient, when the Maker and Saviour of the world washed the disciples' feet and said: "If I, your Lord and Master, wash your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Physical experiences form the greater part of the life of most men, and physical kindnesses are not only within the power of all men, but form also the chief opportunities of usefulness that most men possess.

6th. By what mighty forces, as "secondary causes," molecular, igneous, electric, magnetic, aerial, hydraulic, and meteorological, does he hold the physical elements of earth in quiet position and harmonious action for man's good.

How does he keep them, although like furious beasts in themselves, yet calm and meek-eyed in their leashes. The mild beauty of nature, who can fail to see and feel and admire. Even poor, apostatized, heathenish men have been ever constrained by its sweet influences, in all ages and countries, to bow in worship, if not to its great Creator, yet to itself, in their blindness, as his image. The sense of the universal "*Κόσμος*" (order) has had almost the force of a native instinct in the human heart, so irresistible are its appeals to the natural sensibilities of all men. The ocean he binds in its place with a rope of sand. The ever-moving air, of strength enough to hurl into atoms any structure that man can erect in the dust, and which he sometimes lets sufficiently loose from his hand to remind us of its all-conquering power, he softens habitually so much, as not to let it smite too roughly the cheek of a little child, or even to shake off from their tender stems the sweet ripe fruits of summer. When storms do come, as come they sometimes must, to purify the air, it is but to shake up its elements, as in a bottle, that they may be the better mixed for human respiration. "He rideth on the wings of the wind" and "ruleth the raging of the sea," all from love to man and all for man.

## V. The great, generic forms of God's providence.

These should be viewed as they are, both at large and also specifically, in ever growing abundance of good to men; especially when joined, by their own choice, in close connection at heart with him.

1st. The direct, continued maintenance of the course of nature. This is but another name for the course of providence; the one denoting results, and the other, their living source in the will of God; the one describing appearances as such to man's eye, and the other, actual, determinate forms of immediate divine activity. So the doctrine of "the saints' perseverance," as it is generally called, when viewed in its subjective aspects, is often described, in a better form of statement, objectively, as that of the saints' divine preservation to the end.

2d. The establishment and maintenance of the great laws of social life, order, and development, and of the appointed results of human labor and character. The facts and forces of true, social philosophy are nearly or quite as marvellous, when gauged by the most thorough rules of scientific, Christian measurement, as those of outward nature itself. In society at large there is not only a stable order of things constructed, as in the sidereal heavens, out of very unstable elements, but one also perpetually and grandly progressive. Vast and complicated as is the real, although invisible, enginery of God's providence, it is yet all harmonious in its workings and issues. Its aims and objects are those that concern not only individuals, as such, in their constant activity and growth of power, feeling, and purpose, but society, likewise, as a vast vitalized organism of mutual agencies, influences, and issues, and more immediately and absolutely the church, as God's cherished and ultimate object of interest and effort among all things earthly.

3d. The "giving of our daily bread," and of "all those things that our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of," and which "if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," we may be sure "shall be added unto us."

In the constancy, variety, and superabundance of the provision thus made for each man, with proper toil, skill, prayer, and faith on his part, in combination, how has God shown not only wonderful forethought, and fore-love, for every individual of the race, but also immediate, ever-active, abounding interest in his present personal welfare.

In the very perishableness of human food, even beyond that of animals, there is not only a constant, designed provocative to industry, but also, as in the daily bestowal and daily perishableness of the manna in the desert, a perpetual repetition of the lesson of our unceasing dependence upon God for life and breath and all things. How may each of all earth's vast population say: "He loadeth me with benefits"; "my cup runneth over." "Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights." "What hast thou, that thou hast not received"?

In what way does the father of a family show his worthiness of headship in the household, and his own deep personal love to each and all its members, as in the ever-flowing, all-pervading fulness of his personal zeal to supply, at all times, the wants of all, and of each one differently, according to their several degrees of strength and development, in ever new forms of love and taste and joyous generosity of feeling towards them? What are occasional presents, however magnificent in themselves, compared with the multitudinous kindnesses that are scattered at every moment, through all the year, from his heart and hand, like dew on summer flowers, on every inmate of his happy home? Such, for kind, but in infinitely greater wealth of bestowment, is God's daily bounty; which yet so few ever mention with exulting thankfulness to him, or even to their fellows concerning him, or, in fact, ever seem themselves to behold. How should such constant and surpassing bounteousness of personal good-will, in such widely ramified relations of desire and want, attainment and enjoyment, affect their hearts with ever fresh delight in God, as well as in his gifts,

far beyond any of those startling deliverances from evil, or pleasing surprises of benefaction, or of success, which, from their greatness or suddenness combined, convince them at any time powerfully of God's remembrance of them for good.

4th. Divine revelation, with its formal attestations, and with the Spirit, not only in the word, but also, in answer to specific, earnest, persistent, believing prayer, in the heart of him who is not only willing but eager also to understand it in its true sense and spirit.

It is a necessary moral inference, from the style in which the world was made and stored for the intelligent beings that were to be placed within it, and from the high intellectual and moral structure of man's own nature, that God would communicate to mankind, in a clear, certified form, both his own will, and, with their acceptance of him in his true relations, his own self.

5th. The incarnation, which, in itself and in all its bearings, is the highest demonstration made by God of himself to man, and probably also to the moral universe at large, and the foundation of all man's means of recovery, or of his hopes of it, from without or from within. He is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life," to everything good on earth and to everything prepared in heaven for mortal man.

6th. The church, purposely and skilfully constructed of God, as the living body of Christ, "holding forth the word of life" for him in this dark world, executing his will, presenting his image to all mankind, and ever saying, with "the Spirit and the bride," to all men, "come,"—come to glory and to God.

7th. The perpetual dispensation of the Spirit, — called a dispensation, both because of the breadth of its bestowal on the world at large, and specially on the church as such; and also because of the continual renewal of its influences in every age to all mankind. "The Spirit of promise," man's appointed "Comforter," is ever lovingly busy, except when grieved away from any sinner by the wanton and continued rejection of his love, in pressing moral truth, in every possible



form, with all his own love and grace and skill, on the open and welcome acceptance of each one of the race.

8th. Time and opportunity to all; or probationary privileges and responsibilities of all kinds, including the preservation of life and of the mental faculties, scope for their use, personal trials and temptations, as tests and strengtheners of the character, and all the forms of each one's personal experience.

9th. The ever-enlarging, inward manifestation of God unto the soul that seeks and accepts him as its constant treasure and joy here, and as here so also by promise forever. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them," saith Christ, "he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him"; and again: "If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him."

How much wider is the term, the providence of God, than the narrow, restricted sense in which it is so commonly used. It is the outward, full-orbed demonstration, and to angelic eyes the moving panorama, since it is ever in motion towards a grand and glorious finality, of the great scheme of redemption, through which all the precious benefits and influences of that scheme, temporal and eternal, are offered and secured to mankind.

Thoughtful men sometimes speak of themselves as "children of providence": so are we all, children of an ever-thoughtful, ever-kind, and ever-active Providence. Who does not feel, in a review of his life, that he has been led in a way that he knew not. "The heart of man," it is every one's experience, "deviseth his way; but the Lord directeth his steps." Some of our most favorite plans in life, and most favorite ideas of ourselves, have been perpetually crossed; and we are now greatly glad that it has been so ordered by One who knew us better and loved us more than we did ourselves. On what pivot-points, for minuteness, has our

destiny often turned,—the merest incidents by the wayside of life, and the most casual deeds, and even words, of others. Who would dare to leave such a freight of personal interests as he bears in his life and bosom to the unforeseen and unguided chances of earth's changeful experience?

If we may well draw stores of moral wisdom to ourselves from the revelation which God makes in "animated nature" of what is right and best, in the all but prophetic though unreasoning habits of many brute creatures, in various, sanitary, economical, and prudential directions; how much more, when we can actually see God presenting himself anywhere to view as a formal governor of mankind, should we at once learn directly from him, with eager haste, true views of national polity, honor, safety, and prosperity. In the facts and features of the Jewish theocracy we have such a privilege. In his loving and, for that reason, self-assumed management of the affairs of his chosen people, we behold a perfect system of social order and vitality, adjusted to the public preparedness of that day for it, and beautifully adapted to the fuller development of Christianity, in the end. The evident design of his direct administration of their affairs, next to blessing them unto the end with his own immediate guidance and favor, was to impress them, throughout all generations, with a deep, abiding sense of the reality and world-wide scope of his providence. In managing the national forces and destinies of the only nation upon earth whose manifest king he ever offered to be, and of whose gracious direction of their affairs they soon, to their shame, wearied, he aimed, in all his commands, promises, threatenings, and bestowment or withholdment of good from them, to create and fix in the hearts of all men a just appreciation of himself. Were he the formal, acknowledged king of any people now, he would seek, now as then, to impress the same great practical lesson upon its mass of living hearts; and we may justly expect the successive stages of growth in the religious development of the race, for which

alone it was created or is kept in being, to be made unto the end in the same way and by the same means. While the Bible might, from its divine many-sidedness, be justly designated by various descriptive names, as, the great spiritual book of the world; or the book of universal humanity; or the book of heaven's own statutes; or the book of divine love; or the book of life and death, — it may be, quite as aptly, entitled the book of God's universal providence. Its historical books are actual delineations of that providence. Job is a wonderful dramatic picture of its reality and temporary mysteriousness, but of the clear, ultimate triumph of justice and humanity in it; the Psalms are songs of the bounty and beauty of his providence, and of the joy of a deeply pious heart, revelling in it and in its author; the Proverbs are precepts of providence; and the Prophecies are foretokenings of its course of development, in clear vision, in the yet unopened future.

There is far too little earnest, eager, exulting effort in the pulpit of our day to bring God perpetually into view, as the Light of Life to each individual in everything and to every nation in all its affairs, great and small. He is the alpha and omega of the universe, and fills in heaven, to each enraptured heart, the whole horizon of delighted vision and of ever happy thought and feeling. The eye of the eldest and noblest seraph never tires in gazing there at the fulness of his splendor; the ear never wearies in hearing of the greatness of his being, or of the beauty of his character. There, praise is pastime; and the joy of eternity is joy forever in God. In that upper world they need no sun nor moon to enlighten them, for "the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof." If there, where the growth of thought and of conscious excellence and force is so rapid, perpetual, and vast, the riches of God's being never pall upon the ravished sense; no human heart on earth need feel afraid of any want of resource in the nature, character, ways, and works of God, for ever fresh and joyous thought, for itself or for others.

The doctrine of God's providence, as it is in itself, has thus far been under consideration. The developing power of true views of it upon the life and character, or the subjective relations and uses of this great doctrine, which is the necessary complement of its objective characteristics, as herein presented, is a branch of the subject reserved for a subsequent Article.

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## ARTICLE V.

### WHEDON ON THE WILL.<sup>1</sup>

BY F. H. NEWHALL, PROFESSOR IN WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MIDDLETOWN, CT.

THE deepest and most fascinating problems of philosophy arise from the struggle, or rather the antithesis, between our moral and intellectual faculties. The loftiest and profoundest speculations of which human nature is capable, have been elicited, the highest powers of the very mightiest sons of men have been taxed to the utmost tension, to harmonize man's logical deductions with his moral intuitions. In fact, it is the instinctive effort for this harmony that has given rise to the whole fabric of metaphysical theology.

The work of Dr. Whedon is one more contribution towards the settlement of one form of this manifold problem, namely, "the reconciliation of the sense of responsibility with our intellectual conclusions concerning the nature of choice" (Preface). Although for many ages this problem has been slowly approximating solution, yet the sphinx still propounds her riddle, and devours the souls of men. Dr. Whedon does not step forth as the Oedipus that is to

<sup>1</sup> *The Freedom of the Will, as a Basis of Human Responsibility and a Divine Government*, elucidated and maintained in its issue with the Necessitarian Theories of Hobbes, Edwards, the Princeton Essayists, and other leading Advocates. By D. D. Whedon, D. D. 8vo. pp. 488. New York: Carlton and Porter. 1864.