

We take Christ as a leader so far as we take any man as a leader." It is enough to add that whenever the name of Theodore Parker was mentioned, and whenever anything was said against Jesus Christ, the convention greeted it with rapturous applause. We may presume, then, that by-and-by rationalism will everywhere have the honesty to discard the name of Christian, and be known, as it seemed almost willing to be known in this convention, by its appropriate name. There is no safe position between that taken by Theodore Parker and that held by Adoniram Judson. He who begins to rationalize away the word of God, even at a single point, is in danger of dashing through the entire course till he is precipitated upon the rocks of infidelity. We have no hesitation, therefore, in concluding that the type of ministers which the world still needs is substantially that which is represented in Adoniram Judson.

ARTICLE V.

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

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PART II.¹—ITS SUBJECTIVE ASPECTS; OR, THE DEVELOPING POWER UPON THE HEART AND LIFE OF TRUE VIEWS OF ITS NATURE AND WORKINGS.

EVERY truth has its value in its uses. It becomes in itself, as such, as soon as it is discovered, a law of action in higher or lower relations, in the physical, intellectual, or moral direction in which it manifests its existence. He who is continually discovering new truths is in the same measure discovering new responsibilities.

We shall the more easily comprehend the true practical bearings of the doctrine of God's providence if we gather about our minds, more closely, ere we proceed to their consid-

¹ For Part I. see Vol. xxi p. 584.

eration, some of the leading truths most intimately connected with its scope and management. Wonderful are the analogies in the divine ordinances of nature and of human experience. The unity of design in the creation of all things, apparent alike to the hasty observer and to the most scientific explorer, is paralleled by an equally remarkable unity of management by the great Administrator of the world and its affairs. So many and great are the evident correspondences in the physical world with things moral and spiritual, that nature seems to a discerning eye to be a vast mass of moral symbolism.¹

The aims of God's providential government are as grand as his heart can fashion them, the aims of perfect righteousness, wisdom, truth, and love, mingled in infinite fulness in his will. The Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian economies were but different stages of the successively unfolded display of his infinite interest in man, and of his eternal purpose to bless him to the extent of his moral capabilities, both individually and in the mass, to receive the bestowals of his love. So also whatever can be done throughout the cycles of the immeasurable future, for the good of those who here sought to know God and to do his will, will be surely done, as the fuller form of that unceasingly cherishing and educating love that has been shown to mankind from the first.

As previously adequate views of divine justice form the necessary basis for a right appreciation of the divine mercy,

¹ Good things require everywhere in nature, as in human experience, constantly watchful care and culture; while evil things grow readily without our wish or consent, and at times against much painstaking on our part for their overthrow. Life is in the outer world, as in the world of conscious thought, a perpetual struggle; and in both spheres of development the alternative rules in full force of constant activity and progression on the one hand, or of sure and rapid decay on the other. Everywhere the law is revealed of universal harmony, and only on the basis of universal individual utility. In both spheres of manifestation, the law of stability is a balance of advantages and disadvantages. In both, life and death are strangely commingled, each being continually transformed into the other; and within each sphere equally "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now."

the great judicial doctrine of "eye for eye and tooth for tooth" stood out everywhere, flaming, in the front of God's first system of formal lessons concerning himself, as the moral Governor of mankind, in full parallelism with the threatened penalty of his broken law: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." But with what sublime majesty did the Lamb of God who "came to take away the sins of the world," destroy at a touch "the hand-writing of ordinances" against all who put their trust in him. Nature and experience abound alike in mingled voices of wrath and mercy; and so human fate and fortune are full of changes, and "time and chance happen unto all."

The delays of God's providence are a conspicuous part of his own chosen form of self-manifestation to the human race in all ages and countries, even where to human eyes no elements of hope for any improvement of them appear. "Since the fathers fell asleep," say infidels, "all things continue as they were." Christianity, they declare accordingly, to be but an effete institution belonging to the dead past. With reckless hardihood they speak of Christ and his cause as the mere fossil curiosities of an immature and now superseded period of human development.

The methods of his providence deserve also remembrance here. He delights in reaching desired results by gradually developing processes, rather than by direct means. How vast and intermixed, and yet how harmonious, the complications of agency and influence which he has everywhere established! The end aimed at is often remote. Ever new opportunities of skilful combination and of effective management are perpetually recurring in all those forms of unceasing divine activity to which Christ referred, when he said: "My Father worketh hitherto." He delights in arranging, by checks and compensations and balancings of one thing with another, the distribution of good and evil to the children of men, so as neither to give nor to refuse all the good things of his hand to any one age or nation or man. He delights especially in the use of moral forces and appliances, in commanding and

inviting thought, in plying motives, in beckoning the whole nature of each one, in whatever form of demonstration, onwards and upwards to himself. He delights in conditioning the most cherished objects of desire to his heart, here on earth, on the active, wise, hearty, and continual co-operation of his creatures. He delights in condescension, patience, and continual manifestations of infinite loving-kindness and self-forgetfulness, while engaged in promoting the ends of his manifold providence. So much is said by some at times about God's seeking his own glory in all his acts of creation, providence, and moral government, that many have come, insensibly to themselves, to entertain quite false views of his character. But what perpetual drafts upon his inexhaustible, compassionate good-will does he allow, and even deliberately plan to allow! His infinite condescension is infinite joy to his own heart. He is himself our great practical exemplar of the precept: "He that would be the greatest of all must be the servant of all." The universe is in its intellectual and moral structure a grand harmonious system of mutually connected beings, agencies, and influences, whose summit and crown is God, regnant over all by the very supremacy of his nature in its unlimited fulness of strength and beauty, and for all, by the swift and exulting choice of his own great heart. Every creature beneath him was made for the express purpose of being tributary to his directive, moulding will which is unceasingly active in behalf of the greatest good of all, and is, when performing its proper functional activities, directly ministrant to it.

The lessons of God's providence are as grand as they are simple. They are such as these: "Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Each man is the direct arbiter of his own character and destiny; the elements of personal efficiency and development are subject in all things to direct positive law, that law being in reference to every action, the written word, wherever it exists, and where it does not, the handwriting of God in the human heart; mankind can be rightly

developed only as one vast harmonious brotherhood, to which focal point all the manifest tendencies of providence and history converge; human society at large is, however slowly, yet in truth grandly, progressive towards a more and more perfect state.

Two leading characteristics of God's providence must never be forgotten: the one, that it is educational in all its plans and processes; the other, that it is managed so as to necessitate and evoke in the best manner possible man's full free-agency in combination with God's. All its ends are moral; their true intent and influence being to draw each heart to God, to make it like him, and to prepare it for his eternal companionship. The processes adopted to secure these high results are thus significantly stated by Christ: "Every branch that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth, that it may bring forth more fruit."

What, now, is the question, will be the legitimate influence of such true views of God, in his personal and governmental relations to mankind, upon one who habitually cherishes them in his heart as his normal principles of thought and action, whose whole soul is at one with him, and who desires to please him in every way, and to live for him and with him in all things here and forever.

Our subject demands that we consider,

I. The kinds of influence exerted by true views of God's providence on the heart and life of their possessor.

II. The specific results for good obtained by such an one in the end.

I. Among the kinds of influence exerted by true views of divine providence, stands first in value, as in fact, that

1. They are stimulative to true thought and feeling.

What could be more inspiring to noble purposes and endeavors than a right and deep impression habitually of God's perpetual, practical interest in the whole human race, and in each of its individual members, in their history, condition, and destiny? From the very constitution of human nature

and the facts of our earthly condition, adequate outward occasions of action for each of the many faculties and susceptibilities of the mind, with a full array of corresponding excitants to aspiration and effort, might be and must be presupposed. Not only so, but the actual universe, just as it is, is also a necessary presupposition in theory, as the appropriate counterpart and supplement of the existence of the human race. The outer world, likewise, of nature, with its wide apparatus of facts, relations, agencies, and influences, and with all its voluminous moral symbolism, — as the image in physical forms and aspects of man's inward experiences, and of God's universal administration of mingled law and mercy, — all unite in postulating, as a foregone necessity, the existence of human beings, such as we are, as the counterpart and only possible explanation of the physical universe surrounding us.

The disclosure which God makes of himself in nature is powerfully stimulative to tender religious thoughtfulness. Not in vain does he there seek to display the object-lessons of his wisdom, power, and love, but designs, in even so partial a form of revelation, to touch and draw every sensibility of our natures into sweet accord with his will, and into lively emotions of pleasure towards himself. But in his active providence, or the wide-spread, ever-busy, practical unfoldings of his infinite humanity, he passes before each one in all but open sight and hearing, with the direct purpose — next after that of delighting his own heart with the fatherly care of his needy, dependent creatures, who must perish at once if he forgets them — of lifting up their thoughts by his goodness to himself: from the bountifulness of his gifts to their munificent giver. Constant, earnest, happy thinking of God and his will is our true, normal, intellectual condition, as designed of him in the very construction of our being. How continual are the appeals that he makes in his providence to our thoughtful consideration, on the dark side and on the bright, in great forms and degrees and in small, and as well in the accordant successions of our ordinary experience, as in any of the sudden surprises of good or evil.

God's agency is never repressive, and much less suppressive, of man's in any right moral direction. It is restrictive only and always of evil, in one form or another, but stimulative in its influence, and nourishing to everything "beautiful, true, and of good report." Nor is his agency substitutive for our own, but only supplemental to it. It is never adjusted at all to the idea of releasing any individual or community from the felt necessity of thorough labor, skill, patience, faith, and heroism, each in their highest elemental form, and all in the fullest and grandest combinations that human ingenuity can invent, or human energy sustain. The narrow and yet decisive discriminations made by our Maker between attainment and disappointment, success and failure, sickness and health, life and death, salvation and perdition, make the necessity of wakeful care and effort on the part of every one an ever-constant quantity in the problem of life.

2. True views of God's providence give to their possessor, in connection with his practical conformity to them in his conduct, the sense of being divinely directed in his inward and outward life.

Natures of a high intellectual organism, and of much momentum in the sphere of moral feeling, are quite addicted to describing themselves as moved, in proportion to the amount of their thoughtfulness and conscientiousness combined, by an inward divine impulse or an outward divine hand to the work of life. The sense of their own destiny, or of their appointed mission in life, or of God's manifest will concerning them, rules all their aspirations, energies, enterprises, plans, and experiences. God too, they feel, is with them, and they are mighty. According to their faith is it unto them.

(1) God guides all who seek aright for such wisdom, and with deep conscious satisfaction to themselves, to the best form, place, and style of earthly occupation, and to the best ways and means of daily duty in all things.

Earnest, persistent, believing prayer, full of self-renouncement and of joy in God, is the appointed and sure pathway

to such divine benefits. As he had a specific end harmonious with all others and subservient to them, in making every human being, and "we are" each of us now "his offspring," as absolutely as was Adam; and as he desires with infinite strength of feeling that that end should be exactly and completely met, he will surely, if we also desire its accomplishment, answer with a glorious fulness of good-will our earnest supplications for finding the way to secure it, provided that in our prayers as well as in the whole spirit of our lives, in thought and word and deed, we aim at his glory; without which high and all-prevailing purpose we can do nothing to his praise or our own. A mind which is in the habit of always looking thus simply and confidently up to God, will have an all-supporting and ever deeply quickening sense of guidance from him. Its own divinely authorized and divinely animated convictions will be a tower of strength to it. Its will will be set by them to all right action, its courage will become high and steady, its ardor flaming, and its joy deep and pervading.

(2) God delivers those who look to him for guidance and blessing from injury by outward dangers and difficulties. Life is to every one a conflict in some form; to all at more points or less with temptations, disappointments, and bafflings of strong desires and cherished hopes; while to some the trials of poor health, to others the loss of property or of social position and power, and to others the unkindness of friends and relatives and neighbors, and to others still many and great personal evils, and hidden perchance carefully in their own hearts, make the stream of daily consciousness one of dark and bitter waters. Perpetual rebuffs occur to our pride, and perpetual reminders of our inexperience, ignorance, and folly; in our most intimate social and even family connections constant compromises are necessary, as well as ever new calculations of wisdom, and new combinations of skill.

God would train us, by both unceasing activity on our part against outward difficulties and temptations, and by the con-

tinual up-looking of our hearts to him for guidance and for help, to a high manly and godly bearing of ourselves. While some are greatly favored and others greatly hindered in their outward circumstances, all can become, against whatever obstacles, magnanimous and heroic and Christian in their life and spirit. All the virtues, as faith, hope, courage, perseverance, earnestness, gentleness, and meekness, are obvious reactions against difficulties and temptations. Strength, enterprise, conquest, progress, success, are all matters of active effort and accumulation. The path appointed of God for his chosen people to the promised land has ever been a path through the wilderness. What a succession of tremendous hazards and of hair-breadth escapes have the lovers of liberty and of the people had to encounter in all ages. "The tree of liberty has been always watered with blood," and "God has been always 'glorified' by his people 'in the fires.'"

Two cardinal principles pertaining to the true Christian philosophy of life should never be, and by a heart of the right mould will never be, forgotten: one, that there is in all cases of seeming or real evil "a way of escape," an appointed way; and the other, that in every form of earthly experience, however adverse or distasteful in itself, there is a positive element of spiritual advantage, which it needs only patient, prayerful, trustful energy of will to eliminate in copious abundance; so that "all things work together for good to those that love God."

The point of view which men generally assume for surveying the bearings of God's providence upon themselves is grossly materialistic. All desire to be rich in the things of this world, and consider themselves "blessed" when their goods are increased; but in God's eye none of our possessions are riches or ornaments but those which are spiritual. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." "A meek and quiet spirit is in his sight an ornament of great price." "The meek are" one day "to inherit the earth." A gentle, tender, loving, self-forgetful spirit

will be, we are thus taught, not only the highest form and fact, but be everywhere honored and cherished as such by all beholders, of the world's final, most complete type of social exaltation. "Learn of me," saith our great Master, "for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

God, therefore, often shows us the most love when he crosses most our previous habits, impulses, and desires; and so Christ bids us, for our good, wrestle sternly and prevailingly with ourselves, saying: "He that would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." In ancient days, in the intellectual and moral immaturity of the race, God, as in Hezekiah's case, relieved more frequently than now-a-days his children from the outward evils that oppressed them, in answer to prayer. In these latter days of larger moral growth and strength, he, ordinarily, as in the case of Paul, and always, when it is best for the good of the sufferer, lets the evil, which the patient would fain escape, continue, and it may be augment in force, but gives inward strength to rise above it, and grace to convert the seeming outward ill into a real inward blessing. "Thrice," saith Paul, who was inspired from above, and had the special seal of apostleship in his power to work miracles in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, "thrice I besought the Lord that it ('the thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure') might depart from me." And what was his answer from the Lord? "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore," said the great apostle, with equal logic and devotion, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

Contentment is heart-wealth; he is rich that feels rich. God knows that it is but little that we can bear at the best of either trial or prosperity; for "though the spirit is willing the flesh is weak," and therefore he tempers both judgment and mercy to the moral stature and strength of each of

his children; and "he remembers our frame, that it is but dust."

He foreknew, indeed, when he endowed human nature with its sensibilities, impulses, and passions, how many would greatly pervert them and their own consequent destiny, forever; but just as it was benevolence in him to add the elements of fire and water to the composition of the world, although he well knew how many would be from first to last the victims of both, so, in bestowing upon each human being the full powers of free, moral agency with the complete though unwelcome foresight of the general and wide-spread abuse of them by the race hitherto, he was only and greatly kind in all his moral intentions towards us and for us. Everything in the earth and of it is so constructed, and in such a harmony of relations and uses to man, that, if each one conforms to the laws appointed alike for all, the world will seem to him to be everywhere full of brightness, and beauty, and of every good and joy. These laws are few, simple, and necessary, and are always carefully kept by God himself in his relations to men. If only each man also will obey them in his sphere of personal activity, his life will be outwardly a continual poem of praise to God, and inwardly to his own consciousness a perpetual summer stream of gladness. God will abide in such a heart as a self-invited and so a doubly welcomed guest, and he will make his presence here, as above, an unending illumination to the happy soul that will seem to itself to be ever basking in it, and render our brief life, like the illimitable one beyond, a constant festival of bliss.

As a true sense of the origin and conditions of all personal excellence is expressed in the words of the apostle: "By the grace of God I am what I am," so a true comprehension of the source and security of all natural and social advantages points the mind directly and delightfully to him, as "the author of every good and perfect gift."

Many conceive, without careful deliberation, that the providential evils visited upon those who break the laws of health,

or virtue, or success, pertaining to this world and our brief life in it, constitute in themselves a portion at least of the formal penalty of God's broken law. They are, on the contrary, but the sanctions of laws necessary for the regulation of our mortal life here, and are educational in their influence and design, and not penal. God's moral law will receive its formal and unending vindication in the life beyond. The only system of moral retribution upon earth is that which the mind visits upon itself, in the felt pain of conscious guilt as an inward subjective confirmation of the law of right, in correspondence beforehand with that which is to be made in a full awe-inspiring form hereafter by the Divine Mind.

In every form of moral conflict or of moral endurance, we need, for the invigoration of our virtue, to know that God is ever near, and ready to help us. The sense of our governmentally and personally restored connection with him by grace is the vital bond of all real religiousness of spirit. The conception of a God that, however great in himself, is yet not present at all times in the world, with conscious energy of desire and purpose concerning everything earthly, is too destitute of all elements of quickening influence to project itself with any impressiveness, even as the shadow of a great truth, upon the human heart. Without the foil of an earnest faith in the actual, complete, and loving providence of God, it is impossible to escape the seductions of sceptical philosophy. With the charmed words repeated ever with trustful affection to his ear: "Thou God seest me!" seest me to know my need of thee, my desire for thee, and my humble but calm and happy confidence in thee! we can enter if we must the darkest places of temptation with holy boldness, and go unscathed through the fires of any earthly trial in which fools who say in their hearts "No God," must fall and perish in the heat. With the strong thought and the happy feeling, thou God, my God, art with me and for me, as I am humbly for thee and with thee, only with infinitely purer and stronger love, what cannot the human mind do, what not bear? How often is it well said that "man's extremity is

God's opportunity?" He makes extremities for us on purpose to lead us to look to him for the escape or the supply that we need. No less true is that other maxim so often repeated: "He who will watch providences will have providences to watch."

(3) God leads those continually who co-operate with him in their own improvement, away "from the power of Satan unto God," by successive steps of advancement towards the fulness of perfect manhood in Christ at last in heaven.

This is the salvation spoken of in the gospel, towards which the whole power of his providence, as the outward machinery of his great system of redemption, converges, in its designed and practical action in reference to each one of the race. As his providence has throughout an educating aim and force, 'if we are without chastisement, then are we (treated as) bastards and not sons.' The problem of his providence is evermore how to lead in each individual case a selfish, sinful heart to the fullest possession and manifestation possible of each and every moral virtue, and how to lead society in the aggregate to the most exalted style of moral culture and of social excellence. The steps by which he leads each one to the desired consummation are often quite diverse from the line of their previous conceptions and desires, and at times directly opposed to them. As the ends of his providence are always spiritual, they qualify and determine the style and amount of his material gifts. While 'not afflicting us willingly,' he does yet "chastise us," when we go astray, "for our profit." But while we should when suffering trials be critical in judging ourselves, so as to reap the profit intended by them, we should be equally careful to be gentle and liberal in interpreting the faults and afflictions of others. Judgments, both personal and national, furrow out the needful channels for the outflow and overflow of God's selectest mercies to the world. "It is God's manner," says Edwards, truly, "when he hath very great mercies to bestow on a visible people, first to fit them for such mercies, and then to confer them." Who does not thank God on the

review of his life for all his disappointments, difficulties, and trials? Who would dare to withdraw one of them from the moral agencies and influences employed in the divine culture of his character hitherto?

3. Right views of God's providence encourage the highest and best style of human effort.

(1) They diffuse through the soul sweet satisfaction with that providence, and with the work of life. Rest of soul in God is one of the strongest of all foundations on which any man can stand to do the duties and meet the endurances of each one of his brief days of mortality. The sense of right, of duty, and of felt dependence upon God — each of which is among the higher senses of our immortal natures — will be all met in one, and combined in full, strong union, in the heart of him who is rightly affected, both actively and passively, towards God's providence.

(2) They strengthen the heart with the sense of the constant presence and help of God. How have some sceptical critics put contempt, by their mechanical philosophy concerning the facts of universal experience and the action of social laws and forces, upon the scriptural representations of divine agency in human affairs! It is especially against the idea of God's perpetual, complete, providential administration of human affairs that infidelity lifts up its crest of opposition. But the Bible teaches us, as does the testimony of good men, that we may draw at our own will the deep and mighty tide of God's providences, which is ever heaving for or against the children of men according to their characters, into all the water-courses of our earthly and immortal welfare. Whole-heartedness in one's spirit of consecration to him, of trust in him, and of service towards him is essential to any high sense of the outward or inward riches of his kingdom. With one of such divine temper he co-operates when desired in all right efforts, and richly rewards the sympathetic leaning of his heart upon him with the joy of his manifested presence. He delights to bestow personal favors, and is infinitely responsive to every appeal to his

personal friendship. But more than this, he invites our co-operation with himself, and demands it, and waits for it; and he conditions upon it results of the greatest importance to his own plans for the world's good. The whole problem of the continued existence and growth of his church is seemingly made to rest by him on the rendition of full measures of earnest, skilful, human effort in right relations and degrees.

4. Right views of God's providence are consolatory in all experiences of trial and sorrow. How is the human will, when illuminated and electrified by a just sense of God's providence, quickened to assert its divinely endowed sovereignty over the waywardness of caprice, the rage of passion, the power of pride, the fires of lust, and all the depressing and degrading influences of care and doubt, anxiety and fear! While we cannot directly excite our feelings by an act of volition, we can always in such a way, especially when fortified by added aid from above, subdue them.

Next to the deadening effect upon every grace and virtue of the heart, of habitually materialistic ideas and of selfish aims and hopes in life, there is no one hinderance to the right sense and right use of the great facts of God's providence like the so general and inordinate fear of death, which is in the hearts of any of God's children but a wickedly, or at least weakly, perverted form of the strong and needful instinct of self-preservation. How many are kept by it, all their life-time, subject to bondage! But death is among the Christian's greatest treasures, and holds a prominent place in the divine inventory of them; as is declared in 1 Cor. iii. 22: "All things are yours, whether life or death, things present or things to come: all are yours," etc. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Death is the porter of heaven's gate — a friend, a servitor to the righteous, and his usher into the presence of the King of kings. Nor is that special fear of sudden death from which so many suffer, either godly or manly in its origin or influence. How greatly preferable is a sudden, easy exit

from earth to the skies, to one thitherward through much tribulation of the flesh!

So, too, the strong tendencies to subjective habits of theological thinking and of continual religious self-measurement, which Edwards did so much by his great intellect and his style of high and holy living to establish in the American mind, are quite unfavorable, in some of their relations, to a simple, practical appreciation and appropriation to one's own heart and life of the facts of God's providence. There is happily now a strong manifest reaction, in the religious community generally, towards objective searches after truth, duty, and happiness. Grand, indeed, will be the result of every such search to each individual mind that sets wholly and delightedly before itself, as the object of every thought, feeling, action, and aspiration, the almighty, all-wise, and all-loving God of heaven and earth.

The rule for obtaining guidance or grace or good in any form from God, at any and all times, as his adopted child, and fondly favored by him, is this: "Acknowledge him in all thy ways, and he will direct thy steps." We must fully and forever "commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing." If in everything we "make known our requests by prayer and supplication, the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall rule our hearts in Christ Jesus." Thus, if we lack wisdom, and ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, it shall be given to us, provided we ask in faith, without wavering. How simple and sufficient, therefore, are the means afforded us of appropriating to ourselves the benefits of God's providence in all its fulness of bounty and beauty! Our smallest interests and affairs we should carry with filial freedom into his presence. The very act will enrich our hearts with holy gladness; and he will fill our hands with blessings beyond his promises. Abandon of heart to him, eagerness of devotion to his will, and serene, prayerful trustfulness in him are the conditions of the highest moral greatness and moral happiness. We must not cling at heart to any form or

degree of wickedness; "for, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," in this world, as truly in this world as in the next; they shall see him, feel him, possess him, everywhere, here and forever.

II. The specific results or forms of benefit realized from right views of God's providence and right action in accordance with them.

1. They promote true, continual, earnest faith in God.

Our faith is our glory. It is the highest exercise possible of reason, imagination, desire, will, and hope combined, towards the highest of all objects of thought, feeling, and action. Assent to mathematical evidence, in which so many glory as an exalted act of the intellect, far higher, as they vauntingly pretend, because resting on "positive science," than assent to "moral or probable evidence," — which yet demands for its full, hearty reception the united action of all our higher faculties in one: the heart as well as the understanding, and wide, comprehensive, well-balanced, harmonious, mental and moral processes of mind in combination — is yet in itself a mere mental necessity, as in matters of intuition themselves. But faith is not compulsory in any mind, even at the hands of its great Maker; but is only and always voluntary. It possesses in its higher forms not only the elements of moral rectitude, but also those of moral magnanimity. But where does faith find its full, appropriate field of exercise, but in the sphere of God's all-abounding providence of mingled justice and mercy.

If God is not thought of in his absolute, complex personality, as he really is, but is only dimly shadowed to the mind as a mere mighty Principle or Force, however widely diffused or blindly potential in the universe, he is entirely misapprehended. The idea of his personality is the basis of all other just conceptions of him. Hence came, in the earlier forms of his ever-expanding revelation of his character and kingdom to mankind, the carefully reiterated announcement of himself: "I am, that I am," or the ever-

living God, in opposition to all the dead, unreal gods of heathendom. Next came the disclosure of himself as the Creator of all things, and mighty beyond human thought; and then of his glorious governance of the world and of all its affairs; and so of point after point, in ever glowing and growing succession, to the fulness of the revelation made in Christ of his tender, fatherly feelings and of his wondrous plans of love in behalf of the whole human race.

Any justifiable existence of pantheism was thus effectually foreclosed at the outset, in the very form of the revelation made of himself by God. But is theoretic orthodoxy with regard to God's existence and agency of any higher moral value than pantheism, when mixed, and deadened by the mixture, with practical atheism, or the disposition to see God nowhere, instead of allowing or alleging, with the pantheist, that he is very indistinctly and unimpressively everywhere visible — not as "the All *in* all" of power, riches, goodness, grace, and glory, but as the dumb, impassible, and infinitely inefficient All *of* all!

How much is there within the very church of God itself of ill-concealed unbelief in the actuality, scope, and force of God's providence! Good men believe, to a strange degree, often, in the desirableness and necessity of management and address and policy, and very little sometimes in the value of simple and earnest straightforwardness, and in the steady sequences of cause and effect, as appointed of God. The doors of divine providence do not, indeed, open to any man at a mere talismanic touch. We must ourselves often try to open them, and push, if need be, and push hard, and pray and watch and work and strive, and then look to God for all the good that we hope to obtain, and thank him for it when procured as his gift.

How often is the alleged remark of Napoleon quoted with a telling smile of approval by even Christ's own supposed people, "that he had always observed that God was on the side of the strongest battalions." If that great soldier and civilian alike ever deliberately expressed such a judgment

as a finality, he declared untrue what the Bible asserts in the most explicit terms to be true, that "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." It is true, indeed, that God has many other laws co-operative with the law of prayer, to which it is itself subsidiary and complementary. They are not in any sense opposed to it, but promotive in all their legitimate tendencies of its exercise and power. God rewards energy, diligence, skill, patience, foresight, watchfulness, and different degrees of constructive and administrative talent as truly as prayerfulness. The forms and issues of life's experiences are much more compound in their elementary origin than those of partial, narrow habits of thinking imagine. Said Napoleon himself of his defeat in Russia, in the calmness of his solitary meditations at St. Helena: "I defeated armies; but I could not conquer the flames and the frost, stupefaction and death"; and so said he of Waterloo: "I ought to have gained the victory. Never have any of my battles presented less doubt to my mind; nor can I now account for what happened. Such is the power of fatality. I saw three times in the course of three days the destiny of France and of Europe escape from my hands."

What right-minded observer of the courses and issues of his own history will not say: "Thy gentleness hath made me great," great in all the privileges and possibilities of the present hour, and great in the prospect and promise of future good, if true now to God and ourselves. What power of thought, feeling, and purpose has he who realizes at all times deeply the fact of God's providence! One who is thus in a state habitually of conscious nearness to God possesses positive convictions about his own highest duties and interests, and the most quickening conceptions of the spiritual facts, relations, and results of life. His sense of God's personal reality, authority, presence, power, and affection fills, as with a flood-tide of holy feeling, every avenue and recess of his inmost being. Without a complete, trustful, all-influential sense of the universality, minuteness, and spirituality of

God's providence, it is impossible that there should be any just responsiveness to the facts of one's own intellectual and moral structure, or to those of his divinely-fashioned circumstances. In proportion as such a legitimate accordance in one's inward state and outward activity with his all-ordering providence is wanting, is his mental vision untrue and his moral action unworthy and self-destructive.

From Christ's own lips we have a clear, definite statement of the greatest faith that he found on earth; so that 'he marvelled at it, and said, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel' (Matt. viii. 10); and what was it but this — that, just as the centurion's soldiers obeyed him promptly, coming or going, acting or waiting, according to his orders, so he thought that diseases would stay or depart at Christ's bidding. Him he regarded manifestly as the Master of all life's occasions, and of the elements and forces of nature. This conviction was accompanied, on the one hand, with a most humbling view of his own moral character, as expressed in the words: "I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof"; and with a full, practical persuasion, on the other, of Christ's abounding humanity and readiness to bless him. To the possession of such true, all-inspiring, and all-conquering faith, it is necessary that we renounce self-seeking in every form and degree, and with it, by implication, all narrow, sensual, and sensuous aims and wishes. Our faith must make God, in actual fact, the Alpha and Omega of every desire and effort, as the first stepping-stone to all its heights of power and privilege. "*Delight* thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

God's greatest glory to each individual moral being is that of an infinite, personal friend. The true and proper faith in him here described is that practical, active, delightful sense of his personal readiness and desire to gladden every human heart with his goodness, which is denoted at various times in the scriptures as "walking with God," being "the friend of God," "abiding with God"; and of which Enoch, Elijah, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and Daniel,

were various notable types, according to their differing circumstances and various mental constitutions, under the old covenant dispensation ; and Peter, Paul, and John, under the new. Pleasant would it be to sketch with some fulness of presentation some of the illustrious examples witnessed in more modern times of the power and beauty of habitually simple, hearty, childlike faith in God, in such as Madame Guyon, President Edwards, and Sarah Pierrepont, his wife, so remarkable for her perpetual joy in God ; of whose exalted style of spiritual experience it is a pity that some adequate pen has not found material enough to have made it known long ere this to the world. In the Christian type of religious experience, as appointed of God, no place is left for fear or discouragement or forebodings about anything. Duty is life's watchword — simple duty ! while Hope bears on the standard of conquest over all foes within and without — Hope ever radiant with the smile of God streaming down upon her face, as a sunbeam from above, and with eyes upraised, full herself of soaring confidence in her God. The standard that she bears has on it, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah." "In this conquer" are the magic words with which she announces its approach. That standard is victory. Angel wings are gathered like a cloud of doves about it. Victory in God and for God is the hero's wish and the martyr's consolation ; and shouts of joy for "the goodness of God unto the children of men," "hosannah in the highest!" are the notes of triumph that swell up perpetually from the hearts and the voices of those that rightly bear the banners of the Lord on earth or in heaven.

God often makes appeal to our faith in his providence, in respect alike to individual and national interests, on purpose to deepen in our hearts the conviction that he is not only the true supply of all our wants, but also that he is at heart infinitely ready to supply them — "a present help in every time of need."

Faith has thus great power with God, not only in respect to the forms and results of our outward activity and devel-

opment, or the inward culture of each and every grace and virtue; but especially also to the regulation and subduing of false or morbid tendencies of mind—a phase of personal and often carefully concealed consciousness quite common among those of a high nervous organization. There is no preventive of insanity, in connection with proper sanitary agencies and influences, like religion, especially in the one all-absorbing form of complete trustfulness in Christ. The thorough committal of one's self to him—as the reigning Head of nature, providence, and destiny, and of everything in heaven and on earth, over all and for all—and unwavering confidence in his unceasing watchfulness and love, will brace the soul to any endurance, and nerve it to any effort which may be necessary to a true life, in either one's interior experience, or in the external demonstrations that he makes of his desires and purposes.

2. Just and adequate views of God's providence promote habitual prayerfulness, or open, full, continual companionship with God. Prayer is the language of want and aspiration, of confession, affection, thanksgiving, and devotion, and in its higher forms expresses, in one full, mingled tide of holy, happy feeling, the desire to know more of God, to be more like him, and to do more for him. Right views of God are a perpetual incitement to prayerfulness. To those that are animated and swayed by them prayer has an object, a meaning, and a profit, as well as a pleasure, unknown to others. God seems continually near and dear to them, with his heart full of kindness and his hands full of precious gifts of love. The reactionary benefits of prayer they regard as valuable as can any others, who from false views deem these to be its only real profit; while, to their gladdened apprehension of him, it is one of God's highest characteristics that he actually and abundantly answers human prayer. The two styles of theological thinking and of personal religiousness determined by these two widely different theories of prayer are very separate one from the other.

The Bible analysis of the causes of moral barrenness of life may be seen, in a form as terse as it is simple, by arranging a few scattered passages of the living word together, in their mutual correlations. "Ye have not," it declares, "because ye ask not; ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." "If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven of the wind and tossed; let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." "According to your faith be it done unto you." Place side by side with this a similar scriptural analysis of the elements of earthly prosperity: "Trust in the Lord and do good, and verily thou shalt be fed"; "having food and raiment let us be therewith content;"; "godliness with contentment is great gain." So also it is declared of food and clothing: "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things; seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you." God is, therefore, not only theoretically, but practically, the source of every good; and earnest, believing prayer to him will certainly draw his ear and his heart towards the real wants of any of his earthly children.

In order that prayer should carry with it its true outward rewards or inward pleasures in any high and permanent degree, it must possess several specific elements in combination. They are such as these: minuteness of detail, where power in prayer exerts itself, as in character, art, scholarship, genius, administrative talent, and executive ability; comprehensiveness of interest, so as to harmonize not only in inward essence with the feelings and wishes of the munificent Hearer of prayer, but also in outward breadth with his plans and works in promotion of them; filial familiarity of feeling, so as to suggest and demand the free and full outpouring of the heart into his ear; earnestness of desire and aim, without which nothing great or worthy can be secured in any direc-

tion ; cheerful, inspiring confidence in God's personal affection, and so, in the profit of praying, since he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him ; and a spirit of untiring diligence and of labor in prayer. They whose prayers possess in them increasingly such true, effective elements of positive influence with God, will find prayerfulness to be the direct means, not only of cultivating and adorning their own characters, but also of securing perpetual good to others, for whom they shall thus supplicate God.

The very object of conditioning all the spiritual benefits of life, as well as many other specific benefactions from God, on the offering up of prayer, is, that the real source may be perpetually brought into view of every good and perfect gift ; so that when bestowed it shall be both received and used as a fresh link of love between the heart and God. He would fain hold us bound for our own sakes, and so for his, with ever new strength of affection to himself, and therefore uses all the material appliances that can in any way move and touch our hearts in order thereby to draw us upwards into the pure sphere of his ever-consciously manifested presence to the soul. Therefore is it that " he will be inquired of to do these things unto them."

The prayer of faith, while having no dictation in it, is yet full of sure expectation founded on a thorough and perchance all-mastering conviction of the truth of the divine declaration, that " every one who asketh receiveth," — if not exactly what he asks, yet its full equivalent, and even more at some point in his character or condition where there was greater need of divine succor. Paul prayed thrice that the thorn might be removed from his flesh, and had an answer better in his view than the one which he sought ; so that afterwards he " gloried in his infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him." All our baffled hopes of earthly bliss, and all our yearnings after good yet unattained, point us unvaryingly to God as the one all-sufficient end and crown of every noble thought and impulse, who never disappoints human

confidence, or denies expectations that he himself has awakened in the heart, or turns any one who seeks him empty away.

The prayer of faith is as greatly efficacious now as it ever was, except in its one extraordinary use, as a miraculous attest of a divine commission to speak for God to men. The invariableness of God's responsiveness of feeling to men in all times and places is strangely forgotten even by the good. Wondrous strength of courage and of consolation is derivable from this high fact, especially as magnified by the farther one, so seldom realized, that, as God is progressively unfolding himself in his greatness and goodness to the world in ever larger measures of manifestation, he is all the more ready to bless mankind now than ever before in every possible form of merciful approach to them. The prayer of faith not only uplifts the soul itself in the very exercise of so sublime an act, and exalts one's own consciousness in the felt presence of God within, according to his promise, but it is its predominant excellence that it is the determinate way in which to obtain the actual blessing itself desired.

Thus, restoration to health is to be believingly sought by prayer, as in all other needful ways; not indeed with any spirit of clamorous positiveness, or of unsubmitive assurance of feeling, but persistently, trustfully, hopefully, all for God's glory and the good of men. If the special benefit desired is not obtained, it will be because God can and does confer a better one. If it is bestowed, it comes perchance in a form just indirect enough and sufficiently "without observation," to demand and reward watchful, grateful recognition. He will direct us, it may be, to the use of the right means, or give inward efficacy to the means actually employed, while the very state of mind that earnest, believing prayer generates — peaceful, hopeful, exalted — is one of the highest results of his inworking grace, and actually contains in itself the greatest possible hygienic influence for good, both to make one well when sick, and to confirm good health if already enjoyed.

So, also, if any true, devoted friend of God on earth should, at any time, while exercising needful diligence and skill, become destitute of daily bread or necessary clothing, he could serenely rest, in the interval between effort and attainment, however trying in any case for a brief period to the flesh, in "the full assurance" that he who feeds the ravens would not forget him, and that he who gives its vesture to the lily would much more clothe him and his suffering household.

The intercessory prayer of faith for the sick has likewise power with God. It is one of the highest remedial agencies that can be employed in his universal providence by one man upon another. But since results very simple in their seeming often come from many sources in combination, and in greatly complicated ways, the deficiency of some needful element in the composition of forces requisite, or the undue action of some one element in the united whole, may prevent the accomplishment of the end desired, even though earnest, believing prayer be one of the agencies faithfully employed to obtain it.

It must never also be forgotten that death, with its preliminary processes of disease and distress, is the necessary means of access for each believer to his Father's house on high; and that, however sad we may be at the departure of a dear friend from earth, his arrival in the streets of the New Jerusalem above is hailed with shouts of welcome there. What special services, of sudden occurrence at times, the great Manager of all things may desire one and another of his trained host of loving ones in his church below to render in other worlds, who can dare conjecture?

The classes of objects in the pursuit of which his blessing may be sought with special confidence are such as these: the direct promotion of his kingdom on earth; the advancement of the higher interests and benefits of family life, since, as he himself instituted the family as the germinant form of all social existence and welfare, he has always made it his favorite medium for conferring benefits on mankind at large; the vigorous religious education of the young for him; the

conversion of particular individuals, especially under covenant relations; the enlargement of one's own sphere of usefulness in life, and the greater possession of the necessary means for its procurement. For these and similar objects already dear to his heart, we should pray perseveringly and with "the full assurance" of success, both from true views of his character, and also from specific promises of his co-operative aid in our efforts to procure them.

3. Right practical views of God's providence are greatly promotive of true self-culture and of rich religious experience. Those facts which men call experience and which they coin into golden proverbs, are the direct teachings of God's providence. And how positive is his mode of enforcing the great moral lessons of life, so transitory in itself, and yet made so grand by its connections with the life beyond. How uniform and inexorable are the decisions which he renders upon all questions of inexperience and carelessness, and even innocent ignorance, in our modes of contact, whether deliberate or hasty, with the elements of nature or the conditions of social progress or the demands of his ever dear and ever advancing kingdom of grace, including in itself all other interests in heaven and on earth.

The centralization of the legitimate tendencies of all facts, events, agencies, and influences, upon earth, in man, in his moral education, elevation, and enjoyment, is the most noticeable fact in the divine order of things. As our moral nature is the highest part of our constitution as beings, so the moral adaptation of all surrounding objects to it is the highest fact of the physical universe. The grand use of God's providence, as of creation and of the total universe, whether viewed as a whole or in respect to any single part of it, is twofold: to draw or to drive each finite spirit home to its God for service and society. This was his supreme design in making the framework of the heavens and the earth; and this is his present design in maintaining and managing all things. All our wants are, rightly interpreted, but wants of him, or of his gifts only as they are fitted to

unite the heart the more closely to him, and to fill it with the sense of his indwelling life and love. Defeats of purpose, plan, or hope, never occur in any Godward direction, but only in the pursuit of earthly objects, and are all designed as direct and powerful modes, in their proper influence, of leading their wearied victim directly to God himself for all good.

The immediate effects of his providential treatment vary in different individuals according to their own diversified habits of moral feeling and action. While of one general educational tendency in themselves towards all, they are yet with strange exactness of adaptation modified to the special necessities of each one of the race. All have a cross to bear, all find a crook in their lot, all discover that though "the heart of man deviseth his way, yet the Lord directeth his steps."

His special mode of managing his providence in reference to those who love him, brings with it special benefits to them. The covenant of grace in Christ that he has made with them overarches them perpetually with its rainbow brightness. These are its magnanimous terms: "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." The wicked stand, though so unconsciously now, yet with the certainty of a horrified sense of the bitter reality hereafter, "without," "in the outer darkness" of uncovenanted mercy, only to be overtaken ere long by a doom, the height and depth and length of whose darkness no finite imagination can measure.

The fact and degree of the personal benefits which he bestows on each of his spiritual children, are denoted in such simple, sweet, and satisfying declarations of scripture as these: "The Lord knoweth those that are his"; "He will not suffer them to be tempted above that which they are able to bear"; "There is no want to those that fear the Lord"; "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come"; "If any 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." The

indirect helps of his providence to the cultivation of a noble character, are altogether beyond the reach of our appreciation; while the ready responsiveness of the good man's heart to their influence, and his purposed improvement of them to his own highest welfare, will furnish results, for containing the aggregate of which eternity itself will not afford too wide scope. Since we were made on purpose to possess God, to reflect his image unto others, and to abound, like him, in acts of useful service unto all men as we have opportunity; and since his providences are carefully framed throughout to work in the direction of these ends, we may be sure, whenever we are moving earnestly of our own accord towards them, of obtaining his guidance and favor, in proportion as we ourselves are zealous in our own behalf. And yet the total sum of good realized in any one's life, from a hearty improvement of the higher benefits of God's providence, will be greatly incomplete here on earth, and both suggest and demand the better state hereafter as the needful complement of its many deficiencies.

Checks and counter-checks occur everywhere in each individual history to irregular growth in any direction, variant from a complete, harmonious type of character, and the blending of all its elements into one beautiful, symmetrical whole. So in nature, the various orders of vegetable and animal life are set in their places as they are, not only to fulfil each their own destiny, but also to react against all undue departures, on the part of any one of them, from their proper sphere of activity or increase.

Every human character has its noticeable points of individual defect and decay, as every fleshly organism has always its peculiar places of weakness, where dissolution most easily begins, or works with the greatest force. The older we grow the more instinctively, if we grow aright, do we account for differences of character among men, as of their personal development, by the influence of constitutional causes. As the physical skeleton of a nation's peculiar type of manifestation is to be found in the geological

structure of the soil, which it inhabits, so lies the mould of each distinct human personality, upon earth, in the aggregate of its separate external furnishings for its inward growth and outward activity. Endless variety has been ordained in the conditions and relations of human development — as in the framework of the outer world, so strangely adapted to man, both as he is and as his Maker would have him to be. Man, the genus, is not presented to view in his true ideal in any single specimen of the race, or in any one time, place, or form of social manifestation. The conceptional model of his powers and position as a being must be formed out of the aggregation of the capabilities, attainments, and excellences of any and all individuals of the race who have shown force, wit, or worth in any direction.

How much higher in beauty, even to an ordinary beholder, is that steadfast, serene, joyous style of personal character which has been acquired by a long life of effort to be good and to do good, with the diligent improvement of every trial to its highest use, and the habit at all times of prayerful trust in God, than any gladness of spirit or manner that comes from mere exuberance of physical health or vivacity of natural temperament.

4. Right views of God's providence will greatly promote habitual ardor of moral feeling and purpose.

Earnestness is an unfailing mark of all natures with high aspirations and of every human spirit that possesses much inward light from above. It indicates not only superior thoughtfulness, but more also than ordinary impressibility by the facts of nature and of life. One of such a mould has a vision of the wonders of the real universe, that other minds in their unreflecting and unobserving torpidity of feeling behold not. But the highest and most abiding earnestness of feeling is moral in its elements, — flowing ever, as from deep water-springs, from a just appreciation of the divine nature, sovereignty, and goodness; of the grandeur of man as an immortal being; of the glory of life under God and for him; and of the coming splendore

of that unending future whose inexhaustible riches of joy and wonder no human computation can fathom. He who feels within him the stir of a strong spiritual life, invigorated continually by fresh experiences of God's presence and grace, will find in the atmosphere of his own thoughts perpetual stimulation to high, sustained moral aims and efforts. With his sense of God as he is, all-glorious in himself, and as the Ruler of his own conscience and destiny, he will not need, like the victim of worldly ideas and habits, to feel the spur of some outward necessity in order to arouse himself to a course of vigorous endeavor. He will dash by any glittering chances of personal promotion or applause, towards the great moral ends of his being, as would a true soldier in the hour of battle, by any mere tinsel cast upon his pathway.

5. Just conceptions of God's providence promote thorough industriousness of life. Nothing can be more manifest than that God's providence is adjusted to the idea of every man's acting as well as thinking, and working as well as praying. "Faith without works is dead"; "it works by love," while at the same time "it purifies the heart." "The good ground" of a true heart "brings forth fruit." The fruit-bearing qualities of our lives are their highest, and, in fact, their only, recommendation to God. 'Herein is our heavenly Father glorified, that we bear much fruit.'

God's providence is evangelistic in its spirit, aims, and issues, as truly as the system of grace of which it is itself but the outward machinery. Under just views of it, deism, fatalism, universalism, and all moral indifferentism speedily wither up and die in the heart. How does he everywhere here show himself to be a God of law! And how is each law — whatever its place or strength may be in the web of intertwined agencies and influences by which all things are bound together — maintained in its appointed scope and functions, with the same unvarying truthfulness of feeling on his part, and with equal firmness of will! The greatest things often depend upon the smallest; and the most un-

observed conditions of vitality, efficiency, and productiveness often control the ultimate results of the largest plans and means of action.

The careful observer of the divine ordinances of human life will see in every direction that labor is the means of attainment; that the more valuable anything is in itself or its relations, the harder is it of procurement, on the one hand, and the more easy, on the other, to be lost or injured; that our characters and fortunes are put into our own keeping; and that, however different and definite may be the ways of obtaining the various treasures offered to our grasp, there is in each and all of them the same manifest arrangement — to demand the higher exercises of our intellects and hearts in full combination. Aspiration for any new form of real good, the labor needful for its acquisition, and the very functions of its use when obtained, are each designed by their demands, in separate or combined forms, of toil, skill, self-government, economy, forethought, faith, patience, perseverance, and self-denial, to exert a strong, disciplinary influence upon our characters. Even our worldly business, as such, however mechanical in its forms or urgent in its claims, is intended by God to be, like his own law itself, "our schoolmaster to lead us to Christ." The educational influences of nature and of human experience, as each a glorious system of divinely appointed facts for our benefit, are inappreciable by us, like the melodies of an untouched musical instrument, until we ourselves awake to adequate reflection upon them.

Since the scope of God's providence is continually expanding, in itself and in its range of applications, by the progress of the race, each man's life becomes potentially of more and more value, from one generation to another, by its larger relations and resources for action, but numerically of increasingly less value — as is manifested in the ever-diminishing narrowness and brevity of human fame. Not for praise, but for duty, not for ostentation, but for usefulness, is each man bidden of God and his own conscience to live.

Utility is everywhere alike the story and the moral of divine providence. "Moth and rust corrupt" soon whatever is unused, and there is no longer any blessing in it. All human experience is full, both without and within, of monitions against habits of hoarding, or of selfish appropriation, or of thoughtless indifference to the moral privileges and resources of our mortal life.

6. Right practical views of God's providence promote joyousness.

Men of worldly tastes and experiences speak with wanton carelessness, and even at times positiveness of feeling, of the religion of Christ as "the religion of sorrow." It is, indeed, in its requirements from first to last, the religion of self-renouncement; but what joy is there like that of renouncing all self-worship and self-dependence, for the entertainment of God, otherwise absent from the soul, as its chosen and permanent guest. It is true, also, that every one has so much remaining sinfulness that he never long ceases to need the purifying power of trials, and the reactionary benefits of resistance to their depressing and destroying energy, in order to be made "perfect (or complete) through suffering," like "the Captain of our salvation," for the reception of any special trusts of service at his hands. But the outward experiences of a Christian upon earth are not to be thought of as any part of the substance of his religious life as such. That inward life in the soul is in itself a succession of noble aims and attainments, and of holy ideas, feelings, affections, and graces — an ever-living, ever-spreading, efflorescent growth in the heart of divine desires, purposes, and efforts, continually full of fresh balm and bloom.

The sorrows of any spirit upon earth are most of them self-caused. So far as they are permitted by God to be brought upon us by the malice or folly of others, it is not because of any satisfaction in his heart with them, but only because, for universal reasons, he sees that it is not best to interfere in the case with the full outworking of the free-

agency of his creatures. So far as they come directly from his hand upon any one, it is but as a part of his own effective treatment of him for his highest moral education. In heaven there is unceasingly redundant joy. Often, indeed, here on earth, we find that 'when we would do good, evil is present with us.' From the action of this "law in our members" drops of bitterness may often be distilled into our cup of earthly happiness; but "the kingdom of God," here and in heaven, "is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." In any distance of heart from God, the infinite source of every treasure and pleasure, there well may be proportionate sadness, but not in the spirit of free and full approach to him who is full of beauty and bounty and gladness forever.

Most of the felt evils of life are, to those of right aims and efforts, but imaginary. The so common bondage of men to doubts, anxieties, and fears is, in reference to those that love God, self-imposed, however unconsciously to themselves. He has so framed the constitution of man and of nature that our lives, if rightly ordered by ourselves, shall move on to their very end through a constant round of divine delights. While there is a sufficient mingling of trial in every one's lot to produce in one of perverted ideas melancholy, or, in one of truer habits of thought, sobriety of mind; a heart that is ruled of its own choice by God will be ever predominantly conscious of its blest relationship to him.

Is there any grace so quickening in itself to every element of pleasure in the soul, and of such high developing power upon every other noble aspiration and impulse of the heart as gratitude to God? What a zest does it add to life! what moral poetry to its commonest experiences of good — to feel habitually that every blessing, of whatever kind, is a gift fresh from his heart and hand — to find in every earthly enjoyment, besides its own conscious sweetness, the added flavor of the association with it, that it is a token of the unceasing interest of our heavenly Father in our personal welfare.

So also in the realization of his constant watchfulness over us and near living presence at all times, what a serene, satisfying sense of protection will the soul enjoy! Habitual, elevated self-possession, great peacefulness of spirit, sweet contentment in one's earthly lot, calm hopefulness in it, the glad sense of our complete relationship in being, act, and destiny to God and his cause, and the inspiring expectation of unbounded good forever at his right hand on high — these are some of the legitimate results of the proper reception into the heart and life of the facts of God's providence.

Have, then, the processions of living beings — each made in God's image for a life like his own and with himself — come and gone in such long and startling succession just that they might jostle for a few short days furiously one against the other, in their mad strife for worldly gain? Or is not, rather, earth's history altogether incomplete as yet — foretoking in its very unfinished condition hitherto a future of the most grand proportions, and of the most glorious harvests of all good things? "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice!"

ARTICLE VI.

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

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No. IV.

INTEGRITY OF THE GOSPEL NARRATIVES.

THE genuineness of the Gospel narratives being admitted, the further question of their integrity, that is, of their uncorrupt preservation, at once arises. If it be granted that the histories of our Lord's life current under the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, are rightly ascribed to those men as their authors, how do we know that they have come down to us without corruption or mutilation?