

## ARTICLE IV.

## SCIENCE AND PRAYER.

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## IV.

I HAVE thus far attempted to show—

1. How God can interfere in nature whenever he chooses without working any confusion, abrogating any law, or destroying any force;
2. That he has thus actually interfered, and that repeatedly;
3. That we are, each one of us, of sufficient importance to warrant his interfering for us.

I now desire to consider whether we can reasonably believe that he will interfere because we ask him, doing for us what otherwise he would not have done.

In following out the different lines of inquiry suggested by this theme, we have found the whole earth instinct with the Divine Presence, that whichever way we turn we stand face to face with nature's God, witnessing not only finished works replete with his thought, but works still being carried on by organized and tireless living forces. These forces we have found wrapped in such unfathomable mystery, working right before our very eyes with such unabated vigor, such wondrous precision, such wisdom, such irresistibility of movement, that we have recognized divine thought and divine power in every bit of rock crystal, every pendent leaf, every tint of sky or painted petal, every liquid note of bird, or restless tongue of flame. And it has greatly enhanced our pleasure to

find that our own minds are so akin to the divine that we can trace with clear, interpretive insight the great trend of God's thoughts through the ages as they have become incarnated one by one; for when, from off that illumined face confronting us everywhere, there thus fades that strange far-away look and in its stead comes an answering glance of recognition and kindly greeting, that face apparently draws so near we can all but feel its warm touch upon our cheek, look down into the infinite depths of its love-lit eyes, and see the parting of its lips as they break the long-kept silence with words of benediction.

But it appearing that these forces are derivative and delegated, rather than direct acts of divine will, we have found that we must take other steps in our thinking before we can reach that assurance, for which every human heart hungers, of God's still being present on this earth and still actively interested in it; for otherwise, what grounds have we for believing that these forces were not fully commissioned ages ago, and that since then God has gone far into the stellar depths to people other planets and never once come back again or even given this little globe a passing thought? for otherwise, how do we know but that the earth is nothing more than a finished piece of mechanism, like the watches we carry, and, like them, wound up and kept running by the coiled energy of some hidden spiral spring? Happily we have discovered that matter and force are of such a nature, and so related, that abundant opportunity has been afforded, and with apparent design, for the effective intervention at any time of direct will-power. A study of our own experiences has suggested this; for, if we by the might of our own wills have wrought such multitudinous changes on the earth, we can readily conceive that the divine will can work by analogous methods, and be as much more effective as its knowledge transcends the human. It cannot, as we have found, be reasonably urged that this, God's, direct personal

interference would be a confession of flaw in his scheme of evolution, as provision for this may have been, and doubtless was, a part of that very scheme. He, as we have seen, left many of his works incomplete with the evident design that man's will should complete them; and if provision was thus made for the after use of the guiding force of the human will, why not for that of the divine? And we are confirmed in this faith when we reflect that, otherwise, God, instead of being an exhaustless fountain of outflowing, energizing thought, instead of being to us the very personification of living force, of tireless mental buoyancy and zest, becomes a picture of changeless, thoughtless, emotionless calm, of absolute mental stagnation; all the vast plans of his whole universe of worlds, having been inconceivable ages ago, not only determined upon to their minutest details, but intrusted for their unfolding to agencies fully commissioned and empowered to carry out those details to the very letter. Since that time, which lies in a past so remote that no finite imagination can conceive it, he must have been lying with folded hands and folded thought and folded feeling, virtually dead in the midst of the abounding life which he himself created. This conception of the divine existence is repellent to every earnest active soul, and there is nothing in the discoveries of science to compel such a belief. The perfecting of the intellectual and spiritual in man must, of course, be God's highest work here, and command his chief attention. But he has linked the soul indissolubly with matter and cosmic force in this world certainly, and also in the next, if the Bible disclosures be true; for after death our souls, so says the record, will still be clothed upon, though the garments be of an imperishable and glorified texture. So we have no warrant in affirming that God has withdrawn his personal oversight and interference from any, even the lowest of his kingdoms, so long as they are so inseparably intertwined, and exercise over each other an influence so vital and lasting.

The facts of the past as disclosed by science, we have found to confirm us in this faith; the progressive changes from a first formless chaos of dead atoms to whirling sun-clusters and solar systems of organized peopled worlds being but the stately steppings of a creating God, and testifying to a sleepless watch and tireless activity as the ages have one by one rolled by. On this revelation of God's mode of existence in the past we may safely predicate that of to-day and of all coming time. We can feel assured that his hands will never fold in weariness in caring for his own, that his eyes will never close in listless inattention to their fate, that he will never surrender to delegated forces the full conduct of the complex-affairs of his universe; but will ever be a commanding and directing power everywhere present to the uttermost bounds of space,—just as the vital forces within the boundaries of these bodies of ours sway the cosmic, only more perfectly; and as our spirits, so mysteriously housed within, order the organs to answer the behests of their all-governing wills.

But having progressed thus far in our attempted solution of this most perplexing problem, we find ourselves confronted by questions far more formidable than any we have yet met. They are questions which are sure to intrude whenever there is any thorough thinking on this theme. They have proved such fruitful sources of doubt in earnestly inquiring minds, that, instead of being, as they too often are, ignored or evaded by the leaders of Christian thought, they should be squarely met and fully answered. I remember stating them once at a prayer-meeting presided over by my pastor, who was also a college professor; and, although they were perfectly germane to the subject of the evening, and I asked for light and needed it, he simply remarked, "There is some intellectual difficulty in that," and immediately passed to other things, and neither in public nor private discourse did he in the slightest manner ever again allude to

them. This reverend teacher in his evasive indifference is, I fear, far from being an exceptional case, for it has never been my fortune to have either heard from the pulpit or seen in print any attempted reply.

Grant, says the doubting Thomas, that it is true and demonstrable, as claimed, that God can interfere, that he has interfered and is still interfering, and interfering every day and hour, in every individual life, watching that life with loving interest and with unremitting care, still what proof is there, in all this, that prayer has in a single instance effected any change in the plans which God had formed before the prayer was uttered? Has any prayer given God any new information as to the needs of any petitioner; or rather, has not God had from the first an infinitely fuller and more accurate knowledge of the entire life-necessities of every soul than the soul itself can ever possibly have, with its imperfect finite faculties and meagre experience? Is it not absurd to imagine that we can in any way instruct Jehovah? Do not our prayers appear to him who knows our real needs but utterances of wildest absurdities? But suppose they do sometimes actually voice our real wants, have not those wants already been known to God and definitely provided for by him? Has he not been busy for ages fitting up this world for us? Are not those instances of his direct interference which are insisted on as having actually occurred, and as still occurring, as much parts of this original plan as the formation of a crystal or the growth of a tree? Has he not thought out to the minutest detail just what to do and how to do it? Are the forces at work in the world, and their combinations, so complex that exigencies are constantly arising which escaped God's foreknowledge or for which he failed to provide? Does science or revelation afford us any warrant in thus limiting God's wisdom or questioning the perfection of his works? If God thus thought out deliberately and fully his vast plans before he uttered his first cre-

ative fiat, and had as his guide a perfect and all-comprehending foreknowledge, think you his will has since become so vacillating that he can be cajoled against his best judgment, or that more kindly feelings can be enkindled within him, by the blind, passionate pleadings of creatures of his own make, and whose lives are yet but in the bud?

The only reply I have ever heard given, leaves the difficulties just where it found them. It is this, that the prayers of God's people have been all foreknown to him, and their answers provided for, uncomputed ages before they were uttered; that they entered into God's thought when he formed his original plan, and were made to constitute an integral part of it. This reply is so plausible and has given such general satisfaction, that it may be regarded as the accepted creed of Christendom.

Suppose this were true, that God has both foreknown all prayers and made ample provision for each as each deserves, would not the difficulties just urged still remain? for if the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, as the Scriptures teach, and if it had influence with God, as Christians believe, what matters it, so far as these objections lie, whether that influence is exerted now or was exerted ages ago? For, according to the supposition, prayer has actually wrought a change in the divine purpose just the same, only at an earlier date; and it is just as truly an embodiment of the blind longings of a finite being addressed to an infinite God; and the fact of the prayer's availing—which must mean, if it means anything, that it actually effects a change in God's plan at the time its influence is felt—witnesses just as pointedly against the perfection of God's plan, since it existed before the change was wrought, and against the stability of his purpose, whether that change occurs now or took place before the chaotic fire-mist was rolled into suns. But, say you, how, then, can the objection be answered? Only in this one way,—by denying the doubter's major premise, that God's

foreknowledge is all comprehending. The denial of this, I believe, can be shown to be in perfect consonance both with sound philosophy and the revealed word when once that word is rightly understood. Let us then examine this denial, first, from a philosophical standpoint, from the standpoint of the science of metaphysics.

If God foreknows everything that will ever come to pass, all his own mental states must necessarily be included in that foreknowledge. His eternal past and eternal future must be to him an eternal now. This is axiomatic. A moment's reflection will convince us that otherwise there is not a single present intention or plan but what is exposed to the possibility of modification. If a single thought or emotion is ever going to spring up in God's mind unanticipated, coming in as a complete surprise, God himself must be as ignorant as we as to what part of his vast plans it will pertain, or what will be its relative importance, or what the radius or duration of its influence. Indeed, both radius and duration must be absolutely infinite; for, however minute the influence or modification, it must result in others, and those in others still—the circle widening thus without end; for the parts of God's plan are supposed to be intimately interlinked, complementary, so precisely fitted part to part that the effect of each is felt throughout the whole, like the intricate complications of a piece of mechanism. And if one thought or emotion may thus spring into being unanticipated, be absolutely original, why not ten or ten thousand? Indeed, what limit can be placed on their number or on their modifying power? And so, if we would logically defend a belief in the all-comprehensiveness of God's foreknowledge, we must affirm that not a single new idea can arise in his mind—not a single new emotion be felt, and that if he is thus limited now he must have been equally so at every moment in all the eternal past, and must be through all the years to come; for if there ever has been, or ever will be, a moment when a new thought

can thus come, then during all the time preceding that moment the foreknowledge was incomplete. Where does this lead us? What sort of an intellectual or emotional condition does this irrefragable logic compel us to assert God to be continually in? Unquestionably that of perfect stagnation. No thought processes can be carried on under such conditions—no succession of ideas, no change of mental state; but God must have been, and must still be, imprisoned in a hopelessly dead calm.

When then did he form his plans for creation? Under this supposition, there never could have been a time when he began to think about them, nor a period during which he adjusted their different parts, each to each, in that perfection of harmony which so astounds us; for that would involve thought-succession. We are not at liberty under this supposition to affirm even that the entire plan in all its details flashed instantly upon him,—for this would impeach the perfection of his foreknowledge up to the instant of such in-flooding of thought, but must content ourselves with asserting that it has existed in his mind from all eternity as one of its constituent elements. If God has had no thought-succession, he can have had no feeling; his emotional state having ever necessarily been that of unbroken placidity—of absolute apathy, his heart throbbless as stone. He could experience no change of feeling; for that would involve thought-succession. From all the sources of joy or sorrow of which we can conceive, he would be utterly debarred—from pleasurable or painful memories, from hopes and forebodings, from social sympathies, from emotions that accompany changes, contrasts, surprises, from the glow of activity, even from the delights and griefs of contemplation; for they all involve thought-movement. Therefore under this supposition God can have no emotional activity, for he would have no thought-activity for its back-ground. Thoughts must course, must come and go, or the heart lies dead.

Such are the absurdities in which we become hopelessly entangled the moment we attempt to defend the doctrine of God's perfect foreknowledge. And besides, on further reflection, we will discover that it is, after all, utterly impossible, from the very nature of the case, for God to foreknow all his own future. The very fact that he is a sovereign spirit precludes this. It is equally impossible, and for the same reason, for him to know what our future will be. He has made us equally with himself of sovereign will, and placed upon us all the responsibilities of that sovereignty. When he thus created us in his own image, he, by that very act, surrendered a part both of his power and of his foreknowledge. He has left it possible for us, despite all the influences he can bring to bear, to rebel against his throne and persist in that rebellion. He in thus constituting us the arbiters of our destinies, necessarily circumscribed his own power. There was no other course open to him. We must be free, must be sovereign, if we become morally accountable, and ever reach up out of a state of simple innocency to that of divine virtue. And God when he thus surrendered absolute control, also of necessity limited his foreknowledge, for our own self-study reveals that our perfect freedom of choice is inseparably linked with uncertainty as to what that choice will be. Character can be evolved only out of struggle. Virtues are the names of victories won over temptations; and where temptations environ a sovereign will, there must be risks, a certain degree of uncertainty. It cannot be otherwise. We cannot exercise this sovereignty or know that we have it, unless there are open to us two or more courses from which to choose, and our fidelity to principle or the depth of our self-sacrificing affection cannot be developed or brought to test except by genuine wage of battle. And how can it be certainly known whether this shall issue in defeat or be made glorious by decisive victory? From the

very nature of things complete foreknowledge is precluded, for we can go in the direction of either the weaker or the stronger motive. But, say you, perhaps we have the power thus to go, but in point of fact we never do, for the motive that controls us proves itself the stronger in that we invariably yield to it. This is too wide a conclusion for the premises. Our yielding does not prove it the stronger intrinsically, but simply relatively, and then only because we make it so through our choosing to direct and hold the current of our thoughts in that direction until the chosen object of contemplation acquires prominence and power. We cannot stop the flow of thought, but can change its direction. And even God himself cannot with unerring certainty predict what that change will be, for it is purely an act of sovereignty. If, in fact, we never go in the direction of the weaker motive, how do we know we can? Would not this unbroken regularity prove the presence of inexorable law? The testimony of our inner consciousness that we could do differently, would under such circumstances never come to proof. And yet only where strict regularity prevails, can the necessary data be obtained for perfect foreknowledge. Outside this circle of responsible sovereignty, under the reign of absolutism, of immutable order, within which the physical and vital forces and the pure animal instincts work their wonders, God can of course predict with unerring certainty, and to the minutest detail; for the plan is all his own, and from it there is not the slightest deviation, nor can there be. Courses here are predetermined and as exact as mathematical formula. God, who fixed the conditions, who founded the laws, must know the issue. But in the region of delegated sovereignty, of absolute freedom of choice, of moral accountability, uncertainty just as necessarily enters in and renders prediction impossible.

If what I have argued be true, we need no longer struggle with those hopeless tasks of harmonizing foreordination

with free will, and of explaining how a beneficent God could bring into being souls which he at that very time positively knew would be eternally lost.

The doctrine of God's perfect foreknowledge is not only unphilosophical, but also unscriptural. The Bible exhorts us to the deepest earnestness in prayer,—to downright importunity,—and encourages us to believe that the fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much. No petitioner can plead with any genuine unction unless he believes that he can actually effect some change in the purposes existing in the divine mind at the time his prayer is offered. If he were convinced that everything had been prearranged from all eternity; that his tears, and sighs, and passionate words of longing had been present in God's mind always; that they never had exerted, and never could exert, any influence, effect any change, as there could never be a time when they would first arrest God's attention,—how could he wrestle, agonize, in prayer? It would seem but empty show to him, that he was merely playing a part. Every word he uttered, would fall back dead. If he believes in God's foreknowledge, he must, while he prays, if he prays as the Bible commands, utterly forget his belief and fall into the temporary delusion that the matter is yet undetermined, that God's heart is tender, can be moved, that his purposes can be changed. He must forget his belief, must go ahead just as if foreknowledge were not true. Think you God would force his children to such straits, to such mental stultification? The thought is repellent. Read if you will the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy. Moses here rehearses the several rebellions of Israel, and his three separate pleadings before the Lord, of forty days and forty nights each, without either eating bread or drinking water. Each time he fell down before a very angry God who had fully purposed, and had definitely announced his purpose, to destroy the rebels, and each time, if Moses can be credited, he actually changed that purpose

right then and there and rescued his people. The God here depicted had none of that foreknowledge which theologians with such strange unanimity ascribe to him. But, say you, that and similar accounts scattered throughout the Bible are simply instances of anthropomorphism, of rhetorical accommodation, of describing in the language of human experiences and human limitations what really transcends the human; that it was not the intent to have these narrations interpreted as literal history, but as poetic approximations or dim shadowings of really ineffable truths. It seems to me that it would be a strange way to bring the truth within our comprehension, to state what is directly opposed to the truth, and to reiterate the downright falsehood, again and again, in a most misleading way, and in a matter of such vital moment that all possibility of religious life depends on it, and through which alone any lasting comfort comes to the hungry human soul. Could Moses have thought that what he was so importunately pleading for had actually been determined upon millions of ages before, and that the picture of his prostrate form, his streaming eyes, his starving body, his passion-swayed soul, had been lying in the divine mind from all eternity? He unquestionably believed directly the opposite, and the narration was designed to teach us that directly the opposite was true.

Think you that Christ during that long night of agony in Gethsemane, when he cried out over and over again, while great drops of blood stood on his brow, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," knew all the time that there was but one way in which the race could be rescued, that precisely this one had been predetermined to its minutest detail, and that all that was left for him was to carry it out to the bitter end? Were not those the agonized utterings of a faithful yet shrinking human soul,—for Christ was human as well as divine,—poured out before a supposed loving and sympathetic Father? And have we not a right to believe

that they not only deepened God's sympathy, but actually influenced him to again reconsider the whole subject, that happily he might discover some escape for his Son from the impending doom? When Christ prayed, he unquestionably meant the same as if he had directly said, "Father, do think it over again, and see if it be possible, and if it is, let the cup pass," for the petition is pointless unless this thought is embodied in it. Christ had not yet for an instant harbored the thought of relinquishing the enterprise or even imperiling it by any attempt at self-rescue. He did not even ask for sustaining grace. All he plead for was another more searching inquiry to see if some different means of rescue could not be devised. He simply desired to avoid needless humiliation and pain. In what a pitiable farce he must have consented to become an actor during the watches of that memorable night, if he positively knew all the time that there was no other way possible! And if he did not thus know, but God did,—and that too from all eternity, even to the precise mode and to its every detail,—and had unalterably determined upon its being carried out to the very letter, with what cold, relentless cruelty this Father must have listened, hour after hour, to that sorrow-stricken Son as he plead in heart-rending agony for him to see if there were not some other equally effective way to save the lost! How could he listen to that pleading, wailed out on the night air, for something he had not the faintest idea of granting? Why did he not encircle him in the arms of his everlasting love and at once explain the impossibility of change, if he certainly knew that no change was possible? What importunate pleading! No parallel can be found in all human history. Was it for naught? Was it a stupendous blunder born of ignorance? We cannot mistake it for some blind outcry of a sinking soul. Should we not seek for some sane, sensible purpose in the plea? We have here revealed not simply one of the disciplinary seasons in Christ's career, his

desperate battling with the tempter, for he had betrayed no weakness, no unwillingness to face, if need be, any fate however terrible. He showed from first to last a spirit of perfect submission, for note how carefully he coupled with his passionate prayer, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Nothing could be added to his consecration. His self-surrender stood complete. His soul was white as the light that beats on God's throne. But how natural, and necessary, and full of deepest significance, appears this whole scene in this, earth's, darkest tragedy, the moment that we conceive that Christ, instead of being crazed by his grief, was quickened by it to clearer spiritual insight; that in his cry, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," the real plea was that the whole subject-matter of modes of rescue should be re-opened and again most searchingly reviewed; that God fully answered that prayer by a long, deep study; and that, when the last faint ray of hope went out in night, he in accents tender as an infinite pity could make them, told Christ all; and then the Saviour, satisfied, rose from his knees, wiped away the blood-stains of his agony, and with a calm, majestic bearing—that never again left him, save in the last throes of dissolution—said to his disciples, "Rise up, let us go; lo! he that betrayeth me is at hand."

Had I time, and were it necessary, I might multiply indefinitely citations from Scripture of cases in which it is clearly taught that even to God's eye the future is not wholly uncurtained,—that he carries on processes of thought as we do, elaborates plans, modifies them and sometimes even abandons them altogether to meet the demands of unforeseen exigencies as they arise, that he interferes in behalf of his children and because they ask him, actually forming and executing entirely new, unpremeditated purposes in response to their asking.

Against this view, that we actually exert an influence over the divine mind, it has been urged, as I have already

remarked, that it implies imperfection in the divine adjustments, and vacillation in the divine will, that it is the very height of presumption in us to suppose that we can influence the great God of the universe to do differently from what he had in his wisdom deliberately planned. The usual reply, that God has from the first foreknown all prayers and carefully incorporated his answers into his original designs, is, as I have endeavored to point out, fatally lacking both in sound philosophy and in Scripture support. How, then, can the objection be met? In the first place, God has, as I have explained, left his works in such plastic state that he can whenever he chooses interfere by direct will-power without occasioning any disorder. If so, what can be urged against the belief that he left them thus with the express design of introducing from time to time such modifications as circumstances should require? Indeed, what other explanation can be given than this for the presence of this universal characteristic? This, instead of betraying a weakness, a flaw, in God's plans, reveals its strength and finish. So far as it was possible for him to perfectly foreknow, so far the conditions of change and activity have been unalterably fixed, as in the operation of chemic, vital, and instinct forces. But realizing that in delegating to his human offspring the responsible power of free choice he would necessarily let in the element of uncertainty, thus obscuring his prophetic vision, he with most profound wisdom contrived through this very plasticity in nature to be able to meet any emergency that might arise, to leave every avenue free, every particle of matter and every form of force promptly responsive to his call. His plans in such a case, instead of being ill advised and marred with faults, are simply unperfected and in constant process of completion. He is thus afforded ample opportunity to enjoy unceasing mental activity, and with sleepless eye and tireless hand to be ever caring for his own. To me this conception of God is by far the most exalted and stimulating.

Instead of an idle spectator walled out of his own universe, he becomes an intense participant of effective personal presence, a living, loving spirit, free and masterful, the embodiment of all the active virtues and throbbing sympathies that are the necessary heroic belongings of him who would win the affectionate reverence of human hearts.

God being able to forecast the general trend, the ordinary tendencies, of the lives of his children, has unquestionably prearranged his providences to meet their probable wants, has provided for them a bountiful environment full of illimitable possibilities of joy and growth. For the extraordinary and unforeseen he has made provision by leaving himself ample facilities for immediate interference. And then, too, by timely suggestions he may, and often does, make us willing and intelligent servitors of his will, inaugurating by a single whispered thought, in moments of crisis, movements of deep and lasting import in our own or others' destiny.

Thoroughly conversant, as he must be, with all the peculiar mental states of every individual as fast as they arise, his seed-thoughts fall opportunely into responsive soils and soon quicken into harvests. A word dropped into the mind of a young Luther starts a reformation that shakes to its very centre the papal throne of the world. As Carlyle says, "The clock strikes when there is a change from hour to hour, but there is no hammer in the horologue of time to peal through the universe when there is a change from era to era." God notes those pivotal periods and uses them.

Any human will obstinately standing in the way of the great ongoings of his providence, as it certainly can as long as it is free, he reserves the power of either temporarily or permanently placing under duress. Of course, while thus borne down by a superior personality, while deprived of its freedom of choice, it is relieved of responsibility, its acts lose their moral quality, and it becomes like any other

force in nature. It is, however, responsible for necessitating such summary procedure. This divine impressment, this infringement upon our freedom, may, for aught we know, be frequently resorted to in the course of individual or national history. We certainly are the arbiters of our destinies. But woe betide him who recklessly dashes against the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler. We are closely hedged in by carefully constructed systems of inexorable law. We can break those laws if we choose, but we do it at our peril. We can stand out persistently against all God's good influences; we may render futile his utmost efforts to rescue us from the thralldom of sin. The whole race may combine successfully to thwart his purposes of love. From the very nature of the case he was forced to incur that risk, for virtue can live only in an atmosphere of liberty. But we must remember God's unalterable determination from the beginning has been not to make everybody loyal and loving, but simply to furnish the possibilities for loyalty and love, and then do all in his power consistent with the conditions precedent to character-forming to develop within each soul the germs of divinity of his own hand's planting. He may be forced to summon a deluge, or an earthquake, or some wasting pestilence to do his terrible bidding; he may be forced to abandon what after trial prove ineffectual methods, and adopt new ones; he may be forced to recall the gift of liberty, or the very gift of existence here and hereafter from those who persistently repel all proffers and become hopelessly hardened; but his loving purpose still holds out, his laws still stand, the golden opportunities are still presented, each century witnesses some new conquests of love, some souls added to heaven's company, the great scheme is steadily going forward to its final glorious consummation.

Such a view of God—of his maturing and executing plans, of his intellectual and emotional life—as I have endeavored to present, is the only one, after all, actually con-

ceivable by finite minds. To pronounce him unconditioned, unchangeable, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, using these words in their ordinary and fullest acceptation, placing no restriction upon their meaning, is simply falling, unintentionally no doubt, into nothing less than word jugglery, affirming what to human minds must of necessity be absolutely unthinkable. The only rational course is to take for our basic thought that we have been created in God's image, and then to picture God as a spirit possessing in perfection attributes analogous to our own, although these are yet germinal and sin-distorted.

I am now ready to answer the question, How can we reasonably hope by our petitions to effect a change in the divine purposes, and why should we plead importunately, why kindle our souls into such intensity of fervor? The Scriptures in enjoining earnestness need not be understood as favoring attempts to coax and tease God, as we too frequently do our earthly parents, to act against his better judgment out of some weak, short-sighted sympathy. If that be our purpose, we may be certain of flat failure. Our prayers will never induce him to deal any more generously with us. He has always stood with outstretched arms, with overflowing sympathy, waiting impatiently to bless us. What untold wealth of deep inventive thought, what untold eons of slowly passing years, he has already lavished in his preparations for our coming, for our maintenance, for our unfolding, for our permanent weal! While our prayers will not make him any more kindly disposed, will not noticeably increase his sympathy *for* us, they will in most marked measure increase his sympathy *with* us, will profoundly change our attitude toward him and multiply our capacity for blessing ten thousand fold. Indeed, so radical is the change wrought, that what would have been poison before, becomes medicine now. We thus furnish God new facts upon which to act, facts of mental attitude, the unforeseen outputs of our sovereignty.

That attitude is one of Christ-like love, manifesting itself in five forms,—that of willing obedience, of self-sacrificing service, of sense of divine dependence, of restful confidence, and of intensest longing. Until that attitude is attained in all these its prime essentials, God, if he should interfere by stepping outside his general providence, in which the evil and the good are served alike, to confer especial favors, would be doing violence to his conceptions of fitness and of true beneficence, would work his children a most positive injury, placing a premium on qualities that stand over against these forms of love, thereby countenancing a spirit of rebellion, selfishness, self-sufficiency, distrust, and ignoble apathy. It is the fervent prayer of the righteous man that availeth much. He must be righteous and his righteousness must be on fire to fulfil the Scripture conditions. That availing power is something more than retroactive; it moves the arm that moves the world. As this is a moral state of the soul within the circle of its sovereignty, the product of its absolutely free choice, there cannot be, as I have shown, any sure prophecy of its coming. But when it comes, all barriers are burnt away. Reserve gives place to closest sympathetic intimacy. What more natural when the spirits of father and son thus meet and mingle, than that the son, care-cumbered it may be, or broken with grief, or baffled in purpose, though battling still, should pour out in most impassioned utterance his deep and noble longings? Love itself would so prompt; for love casteth out fear, is the very essence of liberty. Cautious reserve cannot live in its atmosphere of holy confidence. All curtains of concealment fall instantly at the magic touch of sympathy. He could not keep his longings back. His father's tender look and tone would break the seals of silence, would touch his lips with coals of fire. The thought of trying by coaxing to melt down his stern reluctance is utterly foreign to such a scene, repugnant to such a state, and was never contemplated

in the gospel. What more natural than that God's heart should be deeply stirred by the fervid outflow of such a passion of love and longing, and that he should by direct will-power supply the deficiencies of his general providence, or by timely suggestions reveal its resources, and place them in reach to meet the needs of such a soul in such an hour?

These views are not only thus in deep accord with the principles of sound philosophy and the revelations of modern science, but also with the profoundest intuitions of human hearts; for when once our sense of world-dependence and of self-sufficiency is rudely swept away by some disaster, and we come intently to long for what we find we cannot reach without God's help, how soon we brush aside all hindering creeds, and in dead earnest plead our case, and plead believing that the heart and arm of God will answer to our plea! But in this intensely materialistic and scientific age there have so insidiously settled about our thought the bewildering fogs of learned and subtile sophistries breathed out by those who would either relegate God altogether from his universe or make his relations quite inconsequential and remote, that only in the distressing stress of crises in our history do our long-neglected religious intuitions assume their rightful sovereignty, and restore us to our true relations with Him who in his great love never wearies in caring for his own. But may we not hope that the night is well-nigh spent, that the fogs are lifting, that a new day dawns—a day of deeper, clearer, truer thought, of more perfect knowledge, of more enlightened faith, and a faith whose kindly light will prove the sure harbinger of God's perfect day?

[*To be concluded.*]