

# Of the Providence of God.

by John Gill

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*The providence of God refers to His sustaining, upholding, and preserving all things, as well as His government of the world and the execution of His purposes.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 145:15

**Topics:** "Trust in God's Care", "Divine Providence"

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## Description

John Gill expounds on the providence of God, emphasizing that it is the divine governance and care over all creation. He explains that God's providence is distinct from foreknowledge and predestination, focusing instead on His active involvement in sustaining and directing the universe. Gill illustrates how God's providence is evident in the natural order, the care for all creatures, and the moral governance of humanity. He argues that both the blessings and judgments in the world are manifestations of God's providential care, reinforcing the belief that nothing occurs by chance. Ultimately, Gill encourages believers to trust in God's providence as a source of comfort and assurance in their lives.

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## Transcript

A Body of Doctrinal Divinity

Book 3--Chapter 4

OF THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

The next external work of God is "Providence"; by which all the creatures God has made are preserved, governed, guided, and directed. The word itself is never used of the divine Being syllabically, or in so many syllables in scripture; yet the thing itself, or what is meant by it, is fully declared and clearly expressed; as, that God upholds all things by his power; governs the world by his wisdom; looks down upon the earth, takes notice and care of all his creatures in it, and makes provision for them, and guides and directs them to answer the ends for which they were made; which is the sum and substance of Providence: nor need we abstain from the use of the word on that account, since there are many other words used to express Christian doctrines, not to be found in the Bible, though the things expressed by them are, as trinity, satisfaction, &c. nor because it is taken from the school of Plato, who is said<sup>[1]</sup> to be the first that made mention of the providence of God in so many words, as he often<sup>[2]</sup> does: nor because used by the Stoic philosophers, and other heathens, who have wrote and spoken well of divine providence.

It is once used in scripture, of the civil administration of a Roman governor, Felix, by Tertullus the orator, when he pleaded before him against the apostle Paul, whom he compliments on the "great quietness" the Jews enjoyed under his government, and "the very worthy deeds done unto their nation by his providence" (Acts 24:3), that is, by his wise and prudent administration of government, and the provident care he took of the peace and welfare of the Jewish nation; as he would be understood.

And if the word may be used of such an administration of government; or of that of a civil magistrate; then much more of the great Governor of the world, whose is the kingdom of the whole world, and he is the Governor among the nations; whose kingdom rules over all, and who does according to his will and pleasure in heaven and in earth; and does all things, well and wisely. Providence, of which we are now about to treat, must be considered as distinct from praevidence, praevision, prescience, foresight, foreknowledge, and predestination; which all respect some act in the divine mind in eternity; and are no other than the eternal purposes and decrees of God, who foresaw and foreknew all persons and things that would be; he determining within himself that they should be; for "known unto him were all his works from the beginning", or from eternity; even all that would be done in time, from the beginning to the end of the world; he knew they would be, because he decreed they should be; this may be called eternal providence, virtual providence, providence in purpose; but providence in time, which is what is now under consideration and may be called actual providence, is the execution of whatsoever God has foreknown and determined; "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11), the eternal will of God is the rule of his conduct in providence, according to which he proceeds in it; and his wisdom, which fixed his will, and therefore said to be the counsel of his will, presides, guides, and directs in the execution of it; which execution of it is called his working; wherefore providence is to be reckoned as his work.

The wise man says, "There is a time to every purpose under the heaven"; whatever is done under the heavens in time, there was a purpose for it in eternity; and for the execution of that purpose a time was fixed; and at that time it is brought about by the providence of God; who "makes everything beautiful in his time"; in the time and season in which he appointed it to be done (Eccl. 3:1,11). Purpose and providence exactly tally and answer to each other; the one is the fulfillment of the other; "Surely, as I have thought", saith the Lord, "so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isa. 14:24).

The providence of God is not only expressed in scripture, by his sustaining, upholding, and preserving all things; and by his government of the world, and the execution of his purposes; but by his looking down upon the earth, and the inhabitants of it; taking a prospect of them, and notice of their ways, and works, and actions, and dealing with them according to them; "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men", &c. (Ps. 14:2; 33:13,14). The providence of God may be argued from, and illustrated by the senses which he imparts to men, for their good, preservation, and safety; particularly those of hearing and seeing.

He has placed the eyes and the ears in the head of the human body, to look out after and listen to what may turn to the advantage or disadvantage of the members of the body; hence the Psalmist reasons, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" He must needs hear all that is said, and see all that is done in the world, and must know and take notice of all persons in it, their works, their words, and even their very thoughts; as it follows; "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity" (Ps. 94:9-11).

All which is observed, to convince such brutish and ignorant people, who act as if they disbelieved the providence of God (Ps. 94:3-8). The words "provide" and "providing", are sometimes used of men in

general, and of masters of families in particular, who are to "provide things honest in the sight of all men", both for themselves and for all under their care; and, "If any provide not for his own, he is worse than an infidel" (Rom. 12:17; 1 Tim. 5:8), and which provision, incumbent on such persons, may give us an idea of the providence of God; in that branch of it particularly, which concerns the provision which he, as the great Master of his family, throughout the whole universe, makes for it, even from the greatest to the least; "The eyes of all wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season; thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Ps. 145:15,16; 104:27,28), even the very ravens and their young, such mean and worthless creatures, are provided for by him; "Who provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry unto God?" (Job 38:41; Luke 12:24), and how much more does he not, and will he not provide for rational creatures?

It was an instance of great ingratitude and unbelief in the Israelites, that after many tokens of divine goodness to them, they questioned the power of God to take care of them; saying, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?--Can he give bread also? --Can he provide flesh for his people?" Yes, he could and did for six hundred thousand besides women and children; and he can and does provide food for all creatures, rational and irrational; and he can and does provide for men, what is necessary for them, when in the greatest extremity.

From God's providing a sacrifice in the room of Isaac, when just going to be slain on mount Moriah, it became a proverbial expression in after times, "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen"; or, "the Lord will appear"; or, "will provide", and grant supplies, and deliver out of difficulties (Gen. 22:8,14), and from the provision which God makes for all his creatures, as the great Master of the family, Providence, which with the heathens was reckoned as a deity, is represented like a good housewife, or mistress of a family, administering to the whole universe, and was pictured like a grave elderly matron,[3] and this is one of the titles of the goddess Minerva.[4] Once more: the providence of God is expressed by his "care" of his creatures; "Doth God take care of oxen?" (1 Cor. 9:9).

He does, and even of creatures inferior to them; and much more then of those who are superior to them; even of all rational creatures; and especially of them that believe; who therefore are encouraged to be "casting all their care upon him, for he careth for them" (1 Pet. 5:7). It is particularly said of the land of Canaan, that it was "a land which the Lord careth for"; from one end of the year to the other (Deut. 11:12), and it is true of the whole world in general, that God cares for it, and all creatures in it; not only from year to year, and from age to age, but from the beginning of the world to the end of it.

Now God's sustentation of the world, his government of it, the view and notice he takes of it, the provision he makes for all creatures in it, and his care of and concern for them; this is providence. And having considered the name and thing, and what is meant by it, I shall proceed, 1. To prove a divine providence, by which all things are upheld, governed, guided, and directed. And, 1a. This appears from the light of nature; for as by that it may be known that there is a God who has created all things; so by the same that there is a providence that superintends, orders, and disposes all things.

Hence the heathens held a providence; all nations, even the most barbarous;[5] all the sects of the philosophers owned it, but one, the Epicureans, and that from a foolish notion that it was unworthy of God, affected his happiness, and interrupted his peace and quiet. Pythagoras[6] asserted, there is a kindred between God and men; and that God exercises a providence over us. Plato[7] gives this reason for his being the soul of the universe, or why he thought that was a living creature, because it was under the providence of God; and it is affirmed by the Stoics,[8] that the world is inhabited by the mind and

providence of God; the mind dispensing and administering through every part of it, as the soul in us; and that God governs the world by his providence, and all things in it.

Seneca wrote a book on providence, in which he says,[9] providence presides over all, and God is in the midst of us. Menedemus, the philosopher, was an advocate for the doctrine of providence.[10] Chrysippus wrote on the same subject also.[11] They are the words of Cicero,[12] that by the providence of God, the world, and all the parts of it, were both constituted at the beginning, and administered by it at all times: and the apostle Paul, in a discourse of his before the philosophers at Athens, concerning God and his providence, produces a passage from Aratus, one of their own poets, in proof of the same; "We are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28), his creatures, his children, and his care; in whom we live, move, and have our being.

Even God's sustentation of irrational creatures, his preservation of them, and the provision he makes for them, prove a providence; wherefore Job (Job 12:7-10), sends his friends to them to learn this; "Ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee", &c. 1b. Divine providence may be concluded from the Being of God; the same arguments that prove the one prove the other; if there is a God, there is a providence; and if there is a providence, there is a God; these mutually prove each other; as he is a fool that says there is no God, he is equally a fool that says there is no providence: these are closely connected together, and cannot be the one without the other; wherefore, when the Psalmist had observed, that "the fool said in his heart, there is no God", he immediately observes the providence of God; "The Lord looked down from the heaven upon the children of men" (Ps. 14:1,2).

And such in all ages who have denied a providence, have been looked upon as atheists. Hence Cicero[13] observes of Epicurus, that though he made use of the word God in his philosophy, that he might not offend the Athenians; yet in reality removed him from it. And the same writer[14] thus reasons, If it is granted there is a God, it must be owned, that the administration of the world is by his counsel; and again, those who allow there is a God, must confess that he does something, and something famous and excellent; and nothing is more excellent than the administration of the world; and therefore it must be by his counsel.

And to me, says Lucilius,[15] he that does nothing (as such Epicurus makes God to do) seems entirely not to be, to have no being; so closely connected are God and his providence, according to the reasoning of this wise heathen: the oracle of Apollo, at Miletus, calls providence the firstborn of God:[16] and it is easy to observe, that the Lord puts the idolatrous heathens upon proving the truth of the deities they worshipped, by acts of providence; by declaring things past; foretelling things to come; and by doing good or evil; bestowing good things on their votaries, and avenging their enemies; all which he claims to himself and which could not be proved to belong to them; and therefore no deities; for a deity without foresight, and without forecast, inactive and impotent to do good or evil, to reward or chastise men, could be no deity; see (Isa. 41:22,23; 42:8,9; 43:9; 46:9,10). 1c.

The providence of God may be argued from the creation of the world; as the Being of God may be proved from thence, so the providence of God; for if the world was created by him, it must be upheld by him; for as it could not make itself, so neither could it sustain itself; the same power that was requisite to create it, is necessary to uphold it; and therefore it may be observed, that creation and conservation, which is one branch of providence, are closely joined together (Col. 1:16,17; Neh. 9:6; Heb.. 1:2,3).

God, the great builder of all things, does not act by them as an architect, that builds an house and has no further concern with it, but leaves it to stand or fall of itself; or that builds a ship, and has nothing more to

do with it; he takes the government of it, and steers and directs it; he that is the Creator of the world, is the Governor of it; the Creator is not one, and the governor another, but the same; and is as equal to the government of it, as to the creation of it; and creation gives him a right to govern; and without his support and government of it, it could not long subsist: besides, there must be some ends for which it is Created; which ends it cannot attain and answer of itself; but must be directed and influenced by the Creator of it.

Wherefore, 1d. The perfections of God, and the display of them, make a providence necessary, particularly his power, wisdom, and goodness: since God has created the world, had he not supported it, but left it to chance and fortune, it would have seemed as if he could not have supported it; then where had been the greatness of his power, and the glory of it, who is said to be the Almighty? and since he made it with some views, and to answer some ends, had it not been influenced, guided, and directed by him, to answer these ends; where had been the wisdom of him, who is called the all wise and the only wise God? and to make a world of creatures, and then neglect them, and take no care of them, where would have been his goodness?

Whereas, the whole earth is full of it; and he is good to all his creatures; and his tender mercies are over all his works; so that from these perfections of God, we may be assured of his providence. 1e. It may be concluded from the worship of God; which this is a powerful inducement to, and the ground of. The Being of God is the object of worship; and his providence is the basis of it; without this there would be no fear of God, no reverence for him, no adoration of him: the two main branches of worship are prayer and praise; but if God has no regard to his creatures, and they receive nothing from him, nor have an expectation of any from him, what have they to pray to him for? or what to praise him for?

Nor what have they to fear from him, if they have no connection with him, and are not accountable to him? Hence Cicero,[17] an heathen, could say, "There are some philosophers (meaning the Epicureans) who suppose that God takes no care at all of human affairs; but, says he, if this is true, what piety can there be? what sanctity? what religion?" Therefore they are the libertines of the age, who in any period, as the followers of Epicurus, deny the providence of God; and this they do, that they may have the reins loose on their own necks, and be under no restraint, but at liberty to indulge to the gratification of every sensual lust; such were those of that cast among the Jews, who said, "The Lord hath forsaken the earth; and the Lord seeth not"; and therefore we may do as we please; there is none to observe what we do, nor to call us to an account for it; "The Lord will not do good, nor will he do evil"; neither bestow favors on good men, nor correct and punish evil men (Ezek. 9:9; Zeph. 1:12).

And hence, because it has been observed, that good men are afflicted, and wicked men prosper, which some have improved into an argument against divine providence, which will be considered hereafter; this has been inferred from it, that it is in vain to serve God, and no profit to keep his ordinances (Mal. 3:14,15). 1f. The settled and constant order of things, from the beginning of the world to this time, clearly evince a divine Providence; the ordinances of the heavens, of the sun, moon, and stars,[18] have never departed from their stated and fixed order and appointment; nor the covenant of the day and of the night ever been broken (Jer. 31:35; 33:20), the sun goes forth every morning, like a giant to run his race; takes his circuit from one end of the heavens to the other, and with great exactness observes his rising and setting, and makes every day in the year; and who also performs his annual course with great precision, and who also finishes every returning year; and this course he has constantly ran almost six thousand years: can this be thought to be the effect of chance, and not of an all wise, all powerful, and all disposing Providence, which has so long supported it in its being, supplied it with light and heat, given and continued its motion unto this day? the constant revolution of night and day; and of the seasons of the year; of seedtime and

harvest; of cold and heat; and of summer and winter, are standing and perpetual proofs of a divine providence; since these take place every year in their order, throughout the whole world, according to the different climates of it.

Were there only now and then an instance of such an order of things, it might not deserve so much notice; but that it should be constant and continued, can never surely be thought to be the sports of chance and fortune; and especially when it is observed, that so much, and things of the greatest importance, depend upon such a constant revolution of them, with respect to the welfare of mankind. Every year, in the winter season, grass, herbs, and plants, wither and seem to die; trees are stripped of all their fruit and verdure, and look as if they were dead; when, in the returning spring, which never fails to come, there is a reproduction of all these, a sort of a new creation of them; "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit; they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30).

Can this be observed, as it may with amazement, and a Providence denied! To all which may be added, the constant succession of men in all ages; "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh" (Eccl. 1:4), so that the earth is continually replenished with inhabitants, notwithstanding so many are daily taken off by death, in various shapes. All which can never be without an all wise disposing Providence. 1g. Were there not a supporting and superintending providence concerned in the world, and the things of it, all would soon fall into confusion and destruction.

If God, that has hung the earth upon nothing, without any support than his own power, was to withdraw his hand and let go his hold, it would drop into its original chaos, into Tohu and Bohu;[19] the earth, and the inhabitants of it, would soon and easily be dissolved, did not the Lord bear up the pillars of it (Ps. 75:3), and where anarchy takes place, and no government is, there is confusion and every evil work. In families, in bodies of men gathered tumultuously together, and in towns, cities, kingdoms, and states, where is no head, no governor, none to preside, guide, and direct, dissipation and ruin quickly ensue; and so it would be with the world in general, if not governed and superintended by a divine providence.

The founding of kingdoms and states, and the setting up of political government in the world, are a proof of divine providence; and one way and means by which it is exercised, as will be seen hereafter; and even the erection of the great monarchies of the earth, Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, and the dissolution of them, show a divine providence: those monarchies could never have risen to the height they did, nor come to the destruction they have, but by that providence "that removeth kings and setteth up kings" at pleasure (Dan. 2:21). 1h.

The many blessings of goodness, the daily benefits and favors, which are continually bestowed by God on his creatures, manifestly declare his providence; all creatures partake of his goodness, he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust; he has not left himself without a witness of his providential goodness in any age to any people, Jews or Gentiles, in that he has done good unto them, given them rain and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness (Luke 6:35 Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17). 1i.

The judgments of God in the earth, at different periods of time, are a demonstration of the providence of God. Who can believe that the universal deluge, the sweeping away of a world of ungodly men by a flood, and saving eight persons only in an ark, were the effects of chance, and not of providence? and that the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, with the cities of the plain, by fire and brimstone from heaven, was by accident, as a common fire is sometimes said to be? the same may be observed of the plagues of Egypt,

the drowning of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, the captivities of the Israelites, the destruction of their neighbours, the Moabites, Edomites, &c. so that the name of one of them is not to be found in the world, as was foretold; when they, though scattered up and down in it, are yet preserved.

The earthquakes, famine, pestilence, fire and sword, which are frequently in the world, show a divine providence; for God is "known by the judgments which he executeth" (Ps. 9:16). 1j. The fears of punishment and hopes of reward in men, show the consciousness they have of the notice God takes of them and their actions, which is one branch of providence. Their fears, either of judgments coming upon them now, or of a future judgment, at which Felix trembled when he heard of it, plainly declare their sense of a divine Being, and of his knowledge of their conduct and behavior, and resentment of it; who they justly fear will punish them for it, here or hereafter; why else were some of the Roman Caesars, as Augustus, Tiberius, and Caligula, so terribly frightened at thunder and lightning; but because they were convinced there was a God in the heavens, from whence they came, who saw and knew all their wicked actions, and to whom they were accountable? and this is to be observed, more or less, in all mankind; whose consciences accuse or excuse, according to their actions; if evil, their minds are filled with dread, and a fearful expectation of wrath and vengeance: if good, they entertain hopes of receiving good things here, and better hereafter; which is a clear proof from men themselves, and they are obliged to own it, and say, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous; verily, he is a God that judgeth in the earth" (Ps. 58:11).

I proceed, 2. To observe some distinctions which have been used by some, and may be useful to explain and confirm the doctrine of providence. 2a. First, Providence may be considered as "immediate" and "mediate". 2a1. Immediate providence, is what is exercised by God of himself, without the use of any mean, instrument, or second cause: thus the world is upheld by himself, by his own power, without the intervention of any other; and every creature, as to its being and subsistence, is immediately dependent upon him; in whom all live, move, and have their being (Heb. 1:3; Acts 17:24).

God sometimes works without means, as when he made the earth fruitful before any rain, or dew, or mist, fell upon it, or before there was any man to till it (Gen. 2:5,6), and as he supported the body of Moses in the mount, and of Christ in the wilderness, without food, for the space of forty days and forty nights; and as he sometimes has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth; which is one branch of providence; and has given victory over enemies without fighting, as to the Israelites at the Red Sea; to the same, in the times of Joshua, before the walls of Jericho; and in the times of Gideon over the Midianites; and in the days of Jehosaphat over the Ammonites, and others.

Sometimes he works over and above means, and what means cannot reach unto, which exceeds the power of nature; of this kind are all miraculous operations; such as those wrought in Egypt; and by Christ and his apostles; as turning water into wine; and multiplying a little food for the supply of multitudes. Yea, God works sometimes contrary to the nature of things, of means, and second causes; as when he caused waters, which naturally flow or stand, to rise up and become heaps, and divide, and be as a wall, to the right and left, as the waters of the Red Sea and Jordan were to the Israelites, and through which they passed as on dry land; and as when he caused the sun, which naturally goes forth and forward as a giant to run his race, to stand still, as in the days of Joshua; and to go back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz, in the times of Hezekiah; and he suffered not fire to burn, which it naturally does, combustible things; even not so much as to singe the garments of Daniel's three companions, when cast into a furnace of fire; and to cause lions, naturally voracious, to shut their mouths and not touch Daniel, when cast into their den.

All which God sometimes does; that is, acts immediately, and without the use of means, and even above them, and contrary to them; to show that he is not tied to means and second causes; and that his people, those that trust in him, may not despair when things are at the worst, and there appears no way of deliverance; but to exercise faith in the God of providence, who is all wise and all powerful, and can and will appear for them, and be seen in the mount of difficulties; (see Dan. 3:16,17). 2a2.

Mediate providence is what is exercised in the use of means, or by them; and which God does, not from any defect of power in him; but, as Dr. Ames[20] observes, because of the abundance of his goodness, that he might communicate, as it were, some dignity of efficiency to the creatures; and in them make his own efficiency the more discernible: hence it may be observed, that he sometimes makes use of means to produce great and noble effects, which are unlikely, and for which they do not seem to have any aptitude; as when with a small army, an handful of men, comparatively speaking, he gives victory over a large one; for there is no restraint or hindrance to him; and it is nothing with him to save by many or by few; and whether with many, or with them that have no power (1 Sam. 14:6; 2 Chron. 14:11; 24:24; 1 Cor. 1:27,28).

And sometimes he makes proper means ineffectual to answer the end of them, and for which they seem to be well adapted; for what seems more for the safety of a king and his country than a well mounted cavalry, and a well disciplined and numerous army? and yet these are sometimes of no service, and are vain things for safety (Ps. 33:16,17). And what more fit to support the lives of men, and to refresh and nourish when hungry, than wholesome food? yet men may eat, and not have enough, or be nourished by it (Hosea 4:10).

Indeed, ordinarily God does work by means; he makes the earth fruitful by snow and rain descending upon it; whereby it gives seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; produces grass for cattle, and herb for the service of men; with other necessaries of life. There is a chain of second causes that depend upon the first, and are influenced by it, and act in subordination to one another; the Lord hears the heavens, and the heavens hear the earth, and the earth hears the corn, and the wine, and the oil, and they hear Jezreel (Hosea 2:21,22).

And usually God supplies and supports the bodies of men by means of food, the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water, by giving a blessing thereunto. And he exercises his providence, commonly by the use of means, to show men that they are to make use of means, and not slight them; no, not even when events are certain to them; as the cases of Hezekiah and Paul's mariners show (Isa. 38:21; Acts 27:31). Yet means, or second causes, are never to be depended on; but the first Cause is to be looked unto for success, and to him the glory is to be given (Ps. 115:1-3; 127:1,2). 2b.

Secondly, Providence may be considered both as ordinary and extraordinary. 2b1. Ordinary providence is what is exercised in the common course of means, and by the chain of second causes; and according to the original law of nature impressed on beings from the beginning. From this law, the ordinances of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, have not departed, except in extraordinary cases; and the revolutions of day and night, and of the seasons of the year, are constantly and regularly observed; and all things act and move by an inclination of nature settled in them; fire burns, and sparks fly upwards; heavy bodies descend, and light ones ascend; in animate and irrational creatures there is an instinct of nature suitable to their natures, by which they are guided and directed, and do not ordinarily swerve from it; and even in inanimate creatures, as the meteors of the air, snow, rain, hail, &c. there is an obediencial power and influence, by which they perform the will of their Creator, and answer the ends for which they were made (Ps. 148:8). 2b2.

Extraordinary providence is that in which God goes out of his common way; and which consists of miraculous operations, as before observed, such as exceed the power of nature; as when he ordered rocks to be smitten, and waters gushed, out to supply the Israelites, their flocks and their herds; and rained manna about their tents every morning in the week, excepting one, by which he supported them near forty years in a wilderness; and so the prophet Elijah, though the food he was fed with was ordinary and common, yet it was in an extraordinary manner that he was furnished with it; ravens brought him bread and flesh morning and evening, while he was by the brook Cherith; and he was supplied with food at Zarephath, in a widow's house, through the very extraordinary multiplication of an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and when in a wilderness, had a cake baked for him by an angel, and a cruse of water set at his head, of which he eat and drank; and in the strength of which he traveled forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 17:6,12-16; 19:5-8). 2c.

Thirdly, Providence may be considered as universal and singular; or, as general and particular. 2c1. Universal or general providence, is what is concerned with the whole world, and all things in it; and is expressed by upholding and preserving all things that are created; it is God's sustentation, preservation, and continuance of creatures in their being; this is acknowledged by some, who yet do not agree to-- 2c2. A singular or particular providence, as concerned with every individual, and especially with rational creatures and their actions.

But most certain it is, that God not only in his providence is concerned for the world in general, but for all individuals in it; every star in the heavens is known by him, taken notice of, and preserved; "He bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names--for that he is strong in power; not one faileth" (Isa. 40:26), the cattle on a thousand hills, and the thousands of cattle on those hills, are known and provided for by him; and so are all the fowls of the air, and of the mountains; and even a sparrow does not fall to the ground without his notice and will (Ps. 50:10,11; Matthew 10:29).

And he looks down upon all the inhabitants of the earth, and considers their ways, and works, and actions (Ps. 33:13-15). The sentiments of the Stoic philosophers come the nearest to those of divine revelation, concerning this matter; which, according to Cicero,[21] are, that not only mankind in general, but that singulars, or individuals, are cared and provided for by the immortal gods: and yet Seneca,[22] one of that sect, says, that the gods take a greater care of universals than of singulars; and elsewhere, that they take care of mankind in general, and sometimes are careful of singulars,[23] as if they were not always careful of them; and Cicero,[24] though he represents Balbus the Stoic, as saying that the gods take care of singulars; yet with this exception, that with respect to some externals, they take care of great things, but neglect small ones.

Sallustius,[25] the Cynic philosopher, is very expressive; he says, Providence and fate, as they are concerned about nations and cities, so about every man; and so Plato[26] strongly argues, that the providence of God is concerned about less as well as greater matters; and according to the Christian doctrine, as will be seen hereafter; not only men, but the most minute things, are under the notice of providence. 2d. Fourthly, Providence may be considered as both common and special.

Common providence is that which belongs to the whole world, and all the creatures in it, and to all mankind, and is exercised in the common and ordinary way; for God is "good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. 145:9). Special providence is what concerns the church of God in all ages. The Jewish church, under the former dispensation, was distinguished from all the people of the earth, and chosen to be a special and peculiar people, and had special favors bestowed upon them; and the

Christian church, under the gospel dispensation, was particularly cared for at the beginning of it, and remarkably increased and preserved under the persecution of the heathen emperors; and which has been, and will be, nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, in the wilderness, during the reign of antichrist, and then will become great and glorious.

Moreover God, as the God of providence, is the Saviour and Preserver of all men; but especially of "them that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). And the providence respecting God's elect will be particularly considered hereafter. 2e. Fifthly, Providence may be considered as real and moral: real, is what concerns things, and the essence of them, by which they are sustained and preserved. Moral providence, or what is commonly called God's moral government of the world, respects rational creatures, angels, and men, to whom God has given a law, as the rule of their actions, which consists of precepts and prohibitions, the sanctions of which are promises and threatenings; and it is explained and enforced by instructions, persuasions, admonitions, &c. and according to which reasonable law, a reasonable service is required of reasonable creatures.

God deals with them as their works and actions appear to be. Of this providence of God, respecting angels and men, especially in their first estates, and change of them, a particular notice will be taken of in some following chapters. I shall next observe, 3. The Author of providence, the efficient Cause of it, and the instruments made use of by him in the administration of it. God, that is in the heavens, and looks down upon the earth, does in it whatever he pleases; he sitteth King for ever, and his kingdom rules over all.

Elihu puts such a question as this, "Who hath disposed the whole world?" (Job 34:13), the answer to it must be, He that made it has a right to dispose it, and of all things in it; and he does dispose thereof according, to his pleasure; "All things are of him", in creation; and all things are "through him", in providence; and all things are to him, directed and ordered to his glory (Rom. 11:36), God, Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one efficient Cause and Author of providence.

God, the Father of Christ; "My Father worketh hitherto", not in creation; for the works of creation were finished in six days; and then God ceased from his work; but in providence, in which he worked from the beginning of the world to the time of Christ on earth; and continued to work; for he says not, my Father hath worked, but worketh, continues to work in a providential way; for the work of providence is his work; "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11), which is said of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus; who has blessed his people in Christ, chosen them in him, and predestinated them by him to the adoption of children; and who is spoken of all along in the context to the passage cited.

Our Lord addresses his Father as "the Lord of heaven and earth", the Maker and Possessor of both and Governor of them, when he is speaking of a sovereign act of his in providence; hiding some things from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes; and adds, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father", to subserve the ends of his mediatorial kingdom in a providential way (Matthew 11:25-27). Christ, the Son of God, is equally concerned with his divine Father in the work of providence; "My Father worketh hitherto", as before observed; "and I work", the same work jointly along with him; for "whatsoever things he" (the Father) "doth, those also doth the Son likewise" (John 5:17,19).

"By him all things consist"; are sustained, upheld, preserved, and supplied, and guided, to answer the ends for which they are created by him (Col. 1:16,17; Heb. 1:2,3). Nor is the Holy Spirit to be excluded from the work of providence, who had so great a concern in that of creation; the heavens were garnished by him; yea, the host of them were made by him; he moved upon the waters that covered the chaos, and

brought it into a beautiful form and order; and several of the works of providence are particularly ascribed to him; the renovation and reproduction of things every returning spring are ascribed to him; "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created; thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30).

The government of the world, and the ordering and disposing of all things in it, are attributed to him, without the counsel and direction of others; "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, &c. or, being his counselor, hath taught him?" &c. (Isa. 40:13,14). And he that is so much concerned in the regeneration, conversion, and sanctification of men, and has been in all ages of the world, with which the affairs of providence are so closely connected in numberless instances, can never be shut out of the administration of them.

Father, Son, and Spirit, are the efficient cause of providence; and to whom, and not to fate, fortune, and chance, are all things in it to be ascribed. The instruments God makes use of in the administration of providence are many; some of the principal of which are as follow: 3a. Angels, good and bad. Good angels are the ministers of God that do his pleasure; these stand continually before him, wait his orders, hearken to the voice of his commandments, and are ready to perform any service he shall enjoin them, or send them to do; "These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth", into the several parts of the world, when sent by him, to execute his will and pleasure; they are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation"; to guard and protect them, and do many good offices for them, as has been observed in a preceding chapter; see (Ps. 103:19,20; Zech. 6:5; Heb. 1:14).

Evil angels are also sometimes employed in the affairs of providence; either for the inflicting of punishment on wicked men, or for the correction and chastisement of the people of God. They were made use of in the plagues of Egypt; for the Psalmist says, God "cast" upon the "Egyptians the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, by sending evil angels among them" (Ps. 78:49). In the execution of what particular plagues they were concerned it is not easy to say; probably they were sent at the time of the plague of darkness, to terrify and frighten, and add to the horror of that dreadful scene.

An evil spirit offered himself to be a lying spirit, in the mouths of Ahab's prophets, which he had leave to be, and thereby brought about, in providence, the death of that prince, in a battle at Ramothgilead, as was foretold (1 Kings 22:21-34). Satan, the adversary of good men, obtained leave from the Lord, to destroy the substance, family, and health of Job; which was granted for the chastisement of him, and for the trial of his faith and patience. The same malicious spirit put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray his Lord, as was foretold; whereby the crucifixion of Christ, according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, was effected; and by that the redemption and salvation of men.

The coming of antichrist, was after the working, and through the efficacy of Satan, by divine permission, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; with which so many things in providence have been so closely connected for more than a thousand years past, and will be to the end of his reign. 3b. Kings, princes, and civil magistrates, good and bad, have been, and are, instruments in the hands of God, for the executing of his providences in the world; the powers that be, are ordained of God, and are ministers of his, to some for good, who do good and behave well; to others for evil, for vengeance, to execute wrath upon them (Rom. 13:1,4), and because they have their power and authority, their commission and capacity from God, and are his vicegerents, and act under him, and represent him, and are representatives of him; hence they are called gods (Ps. 82:6).

"By him good kings reign, and princes decree justice"; from him they have wisdom and capacity to make good laws, and power to put them in execution, for the good of men; such an one was David, raised up by God to fulfil his will; there have been few of this sort; but some there have been, and more there will be in the latter day, when kings shall be nursing fathers to Zion, and queens nursing mothers; the seven angels that shall have the vials of God's wrath to pour forth on the antichristian states to their destruction, are seven Christian kings, or protestant princes, who will have a commission from God to do that work.

Evil kings, however, such who have had no true knowledge of God, have been raised up, and made use of in providence, to do great things in it; either for the good of the church and people of God, as Cyrus king of Persia, whom the Lord girded, though he knew him not, and held his right hand to subdue nations, and particularly Babylon; that he might be in a capacity, and have an opportunity of letting go the captive Jews in it, and of delivering them from their bondage, and of giving them liberty to rebuild Jerusalem, and the temple in it, as was foretold of him two hundred years before he was born (Isa. 44:28; 45:1-13).

And sometimes wicked princes have been used as scourges of God's people, and for the correction of them; as Sennacherib king of Assyria; of whom it is said; "O Assyria, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation!" that is, the indignation of God, the execution of it, was put into his hands, as a rod and staff, to chastise the people of the Jews for their hypocrisy and other sins, which were provoking to God; "Howbeit he", the Assyrian monarch, "meaneth not so; neither doth his heart think so", that he is an instrument, in the hand of God, to correct his people; "but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off, nations not a few", to gratify his ambition, pride, and cruelty (Isa. 10:5-7).

So the ten kings, who have given their kingdoms to the antichristian beast, and become vassals to him, God put it into their hearts to do it, to fulfil his will in providence, which they knew nothing of (Rev. 17:17). And Psammon,[27] an Egyptian philosopher, made use of this as an argument of divine providence, showing that all men were governed by God, since in everything that ruled and governed, there was something divine. 3c. Ministers of the word, and masters of families, are, in their respective stations, instruments in the execution of the affairs of providence.

The work of ministers lies much in convincing men of sin, and in turning them from it, and directing them in the way of their duty, as well as in the way of salvation; and it has a very close connection with the providence of God, which is exercised therein and thereby. Masters of families, both by their instructions and examples, are very serviceable in providence, to those that are under them; and, indeed, every man, in whatsoever station he is, has a work to do, which, in providence, is ordered and disposed to answer some end or another. 3d.

Even irrational creatures are employed in providence to execute some parts of it; the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, being at the beck and command of the great Creator of them. The noisome beast is one of God's four judgments which God has sometimes inflicted on wicked men; this he threatened the Jews with in case of disobedience to him (Ezek. 14:21; Lev. 26:22), two she bears, by divine direction, came out of a wood, and tore in pieces two and forty children, for mocking a prophet of the Lord; and lions were sent among the idolatrous Samaritans, to punish them for their idolatry (2 Kings 2:24; 17:25), nay, not only creatures of such bulk and strength have been made use of in providence, but even the meanest and most minute, as flies, frogs, lice, and locusts, which were four of the plagues of Egypt; and the latter is called the Lord's army, and his great camp, which sometimes have a commission to destroy a whole country, and strip it of herbs and plants, and every green thing (Joel 2:11), the fowls of the air, the ravens, those voracious creatures, were employed in providence, to carry bread

and flesh, morning and evening, to the prophet Elijah; and the fishes of the sea also have been made use of; God prepared a fish to swallow up Jonah when he was cast into the sea, and he spake unto it, commanded and gave it orders to throw him upon the shore again; and a fish furnished Peter with a piece of money to pay the tribute for himself and his Master. 3e.

Inanimate creatures, the various meteors in the air, are under the direction of providence, and subservient to it. God has his treasures of snow and hail, which he reserves against the day of trouble, against the day of battle and war (Job 38:22,23), and which artillery of heaven he sometimes plays upon the inhabitants of the earth; hail was one of the plagues of Egypt by which, not only grass, herbs, plants, and trees were battered down, but both cattle and men destroyed; and in a battle with the Canaanites, in Joshua's time, more of them were killed by hail stones from heaven, than by the Israelites; and sometimes others of the meteors are made use of in a way of mercy, as those mentioned in a way of judgment; so snow and rain, by commission, descend on the earth to refresh it, and make it fruitful, whereby it brings forth what is beneficial to man and beast: in short, every meteor in the heavens is at the command of God, and does his will; "Fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling his word" (Ps. 148:8).

Now, whatever good or evil come to the children of men, by any and all of these instruments, are not to be attributed to them, but to the God of providence, who makes use of them to bring about his designs. All the good things of life, the wealth and riches men are possessed of, let them come by them in what way they may, by inheritance, by bequest, or by their own industry, yet all must be ascribed to God; "Riches and honour come of thee", says David (1Ch 29:12 he had amassed together a vast quantity of riches, great part of which, at least, he got by his victories over the Moabites, Syrians, &c. but who gave him the victory?

God; and therefore, as he ascribes his military honour and glory, so his riches to him; in like manner as Job, through the providence of God, became the greatest man in the East for worldly substance, as well as other things; so by the same providence he lost all; and though the Sabeans and Chaldeans were the instruments of it, he does not impute it to them, nor to Satan, who instigated them to it; but to the Lord: saying, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" (Job 1:21). 4.

The various parts and branches, or acts of providence, of which it consists, are next to be considered; and they are chiefly these two, conservation, or preservation of all things created, and the government of them; or the wise and orderly disposal of them, to answer the ends for which they are made and preserved. 4a. First, Conservation, or preservation of creatures, and the sustentation of them in their being; which is expressed by these several phrases, "Thou preservest them all"; that is, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and seas, and all therein (Neh. 9:6).

"Upholding all things by the word of his power"; that is, the worlds made by him (Heb. 1:2,3). By him all things consist, even all things created by him in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible (Col. 1:16,17). It may be proper to consider the necessity of God's sustaining and preserving the creatures made by him; and then show to what and to whom this preservation extends and reaches. 4a1. That the sustentation and preservation of the creatures in their being, is of God, and must be so, and which may be proved, 4a1a.

From the nature and perfections of God, particularly his independence. God is an independent Being; all creatures depend on him, but he on none; "Of him, through him, and to him are all things" (Rom. 11:36). If creatures could or do support and preserve themselves in their being, they would be independent, and

then there would be more independents than one, and so more gods than one; which cannot be admitted; there is but one potentate, God over all, on whom all depend. 4a1b.

From the nature of creatures, which is to be dependent on the Creator; he that gives them life and breath, gives them all things for the support and preservation thereof; yea, in himself they live and move and have their being; he not only grants them life and favour, but his visitation preserves their spirits; and this is true of all the creatures that have life and breath and motion; all depend upon God for the continuance of them; and even of rational creatures, "he holdeth our soul in life", in union with the body, in which it lives (Acts 17:25,28; Job 10:12; Ps. 66:9). 4a1c.

From the weakness of creatures to support and preserve themselves. If any creature could preserve itself, it might be thought that man could; but he cannot; he cannot preserve himself from disorders and diseases of body; if he could, he would not be attended with them: he cannot preserve himself from death; could he, none would ever die; but there is no man that hath power over the spirit, to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death, to keep it off from him; there is no discharge in that war (Eccl. 8:8), nor can any man preserve his brother, friend, or near relation, so as that they "should live for ever, and see no corruption"; for then none, for whom an affectionate regard is had, would ever die; nay, men cannot preserve their cattle, in which the chief substance of some men lies; could they, these would always be in good plight and case, and stand, and never fail; their sheep would continue to bring forth thousands, and their oxen would be always strong to labour (Ps. 49:7,9; 144:13,14). 4a1d.

The same power that was put forth in creation, is required and is necessary, for the preservation of the creatures made; eternal power was exerted, and is to be seen in the things that are made, and by the same almighty power all things are upheld (Rom. 1:20; Heb. 1:3), hence creation and preservation are so closely connected (Neh. 9:6), and, indeed, preservation is no other than a continued creation. 4a1e. Was God to withdraw his supporting hand and preserving power and influence, creatures would soon come to destruction and perish; the whole fabric of the world would at once fall to pieces; "The earth, and all the inhabitants of it, are dissolved", that is, they would be, were it not for what follows, "I bear up the pillars of it" (Ps. 75:3).

Creatures, while God supports and supplies them with his hand of providence, they live; but when he hides his face, or withdraws his hand, they are troubled, die, and return to their dust (Ps. 104:27-29). Job was sensible of this, that he was held in life by the hand of God; he therefore desires he would "let loose his hand", let go his hold of him, and then he knew he should drop and die, for which he was solicitous (Job 6:9). 4a1f. The whole world is a building, and God is the architect of it; "He that built all things is God"; but this building differs from any building of man.

A man may erect an edifice, and when he has done, leave it to itself, to stand or fall; and it does stand without him, and oftentimes subsists many years after the architect is dead; the reason of which is, that such an edifice is only the effect of art; the builder does not make the materials of it, the stone and the timber; he finds them made to his hand; he only figures them for his purpose, and puts them together; and this is all that is necessary for him to do. But God, the great architect, has not only put together the world, and all things in it, in the beautiful order he has; but he has made the very matter of which it consists, and for the support of that his almighty power that created it, is requisite and necessary. 4a1g.

Every creature is made for some end, and therefore it is necessary it should be preserved and continued until that end is answered; "The Lord hath made all things for himself"; for his own glory (Prov. 16:4),

wherefore it may be strongly concluded, that as God has made all things to answer some subordinate ends to one another, and ultimately for his own glory; he will, as it is necessary he should, preserve them, that such an end may be answered, as it is, in fact; "All thy works shall praise thee, O Lord!" (Ps. 145:10). 4a2.

To what and to whom this preservation extends and reaches. It includes all the creatures God has made; the phrases by which it is expressed, as before observed, show this; which declare that God preserves them "all"; that he upholds "all" things, and that by him "all" things consist; the world in general, and every individual in it; "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast" (Ps. 36:6), yea, every other creature. 4a2a. Some of the individuals of the creation are sustained and preserved, as they were from the beginning; the "prima materia", the first matter, of which all things were made, still continues; for matter is never annihilated, though it passes into different forms and figures.

The whole world, which was made of it, is so established, as that it cannot be moved (Ps. 93:1; 96:10), the form, figure, and fashion of it pass away, but the matter and substance of it remain. The ordinances of the heavens, and the heavens themselves, are as they were when first created; the sun is supported in its being, continued in its motion, and constantly supplied with light and heat, which it continually emits; for nothing is hid, as from the light, so neither from the heat of it; the stars, everyone of them, keep their place, their station, or course; because that God is "strong in power", who sustains and preserves them, "not one faileth" (Isa. 40:26), for what are called falling stars, are not stars, but meteors kindled by the air, which burn and blaze awhile, and then run and fall.

A new star, so called, because not seen before, sometimes appears, but no one is lost. The heavens God has established by his understanding and power, so that they remain as they were; and though it is said they "shall perish, wax old as a garment, and as a vesture be changed and folded" (Prov. 3:19; Ps. 102:25,26; Heb.. 1:11,12), yet as a garment folded up still remains, though in a different form; so the heavens will not perish, as to matter and substance, but be changed, as to form, quality, and use, in which respect they will be new and continue; and the same may be said of the earth; for God "has laid the foundations of it, that it should not be removed for ever" (Ps. 104:5), and though it underwent some change at the universal deluge, so that the apostle distinguishes the earth that then was, from that which now is, yet as to substance it is the same; and though at the general conflagration, the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up, and a new earth will rise up out of it; yet the same as to matter and substance, only different as to form, an earth without a sea; and as to quality, being purified and refined; and as to use, only to be inhabited by righteous persons (2 Pet. 3:5-7, 10-13; Rev. 21:1).

Angels and the souls of men, are preserved in being, as they were first created; angels die not, nor do the souls of men, when their bodies do, but survive them, and live in a separate state till the resurrection. 4a2b. Some of the individuals of creatures, which are subject to corruption and death, are yet preserved, as long as it is the pleasure of God; as the beasts of the field and the bodies of men; for "he preserveth man and beast" (Ps. 36:6), the brute creatures wait upon him, and he gives them food for their sustenance, by which they are supported; and then when he pleases he takes away their breath and they perish.

Man springs up like a flower, and flourishes for a while, and then is cut down; God sends him into the world to do his will, or to do some work by him, and when that is done, he changes his countenance, and sends him away (Ps. 104:28,29; Job 14:20), but though the individuals of various sorts of creatures die, yet they are preserved and continued in their species; thus, though herbs, and plants, and trees, wither

and seem to be dead, or are dead in the winter season; yet in the spring those that were withered revive; or, if dead, others spring up in their room, or are raised up by seed; so that there is a constant succession of vegetables.

Cattle, and fowls, and fishes, though consumed in great numbers for the use of man, or on other accounts; yet their species is propagated by them, so that there is the same sort of creatures of all kinds, as were at the first creation; and though thousands of men die every day, in one place or another, all put together, yet still a race of men is continued; "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth for ever", and is full of inhabitants (Eccl. 1:4). 4b.

Secondly, The other branch of providence is government, or the wise and orderly disposal of all creatures, to answer the ends for which they are made and preserved. God is the Governor of the whole universe; and he has a right to govern it, who is the Creator of it; the kingdom of nature is his, and so is the kingdom of providence; and he is the Governor among the nations; his government is very extensive, all creatures are subject to him; his kingdom rules over all, and it is an everlasting one; and his dominion endures throughout all generations (Ps. 22:28; Ps. 103:19; 145:13).

And as the government of the world is a branch of providence; so from the wise and orderly disposition of things in it, it may be strongly concluded there is a Providence; or that there is a God, who by his providence governs, guides, orders, and directs all thing in the world. For, as Cicero[28] observes, if a man comes into an house, or a school, or a court of judicature, and takes notice of the order, manner, and discipline of things observed therein, he must conclude within himself, there is some one who presides there, and who is obeyed; and much more in such motions, in such vicissitudes and orders, and of so many and such great things, in which there is never any failure, one must needs conclude, that such motions of nature are governed by an intelligent Being. 4b1.

Inanimate creatures are governed, and guided, and directed by the providence of God, to do those things for which they were created, and so answer the ends of their creation; there is a law of nature, as has been before observed, impressed upon such creatures, which they constantly obey; there is an inclination of nature in them to such and such actions, which they perpetually follow; so the sun naturally pursues his course, and takes both his daily and yearly circuit from one end of the heavens to the other, and exactly knows and observes his rising and setting; there is an obediencial power and influence, by which creatures without life and sense are actuated, and to which they attend with as much precision, as if they heard the order, and understood the will of their Creator; thus the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and fall upon the earth, by direction; that drinks in the rain that comes upon it, receives the seed cast into it, cherishes and fructifies it, and throws it up again; whereby it brings forth seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; and so in numerous other instances. 4b2.

Animate creatures, but irrational, are governed, guided, and directed in providence, by an instinct of nature, placed in them by their Creator, to such actions as are agreeable to their nature, and from which they scarce ever swerve; thus with what art and skill do birds build their nests? with what tenderness do they cherish and provide food for their young? that little creature the ant, though it has no "guide, overseer, or ruler", no visible and external one, yet "provides its meat in the summer, and gathers its food in harvest"; an example this of industry and diligence, care and foresight, to human creatures; this is one of the "four little things" on earth Solomon speaks of, which, though little, are exceeding wise, through an instinct in nature, put into them by the God of nature and providence.

The "ants", he says, "are a people not strong", far from it, very weak, "yet prepare their meat in the summer" against winter; "the conies are but a feeble folk", yet are so wise under the direction of providence, and by an instinct in nature, as to "make their houses in the rocks", to shelter them from danger and hurt; "the locusts have no king", to command and direct them, "yet they go forth all of them by bands", march in rank and order, like a well disciplined army; "the spider taketh hold with her hands", on the thread of her webs, she spins, and is in kings' "palaces", where, though her webs are often destroyed, she weaves them again (Prov. 6:7,8; 30:25-27).

Birds of passage, as the stork, the turtle, the crane, and the swallow, know the appointed times of their going and coming, and exactly observe them (Jer. 8:7). Multitudes of instances of this kind might be given. 4b3. Rational creatures, as angels and men, are governed in a moral way, by a law, which for substance is the same to both, according to their different nature and circumstances; particularly men have either the law and light of nature to guide them, or a written law to direct them; and according as they behave towards it, they are dealt with; to those that are good, and do good, it is well with them, now and hereafter; and for the present, God makes all things work together for their good; to the evil, and them that do evil, it goes ill with them, and they shall eat the fruit of their doings, now, or in the world to come.

And there is a concourse of providence which attends all men, all their actions, yea, even their words and thoughts (Prov. 16:1,9; 29:21), all which are overruled by providence, to answer some end or another; yea, even evil actions themselves, as in the case of Joseph's brethren selling him into Egypt; they, in so doing, thought evil against him, and did evil in it; but God meant it for good, and overruled it for that purpose, to save many people alive (Gen. 50:20), but of this more hereafter.

Moreover, men are governed as rational creatures, in a political way; kings and princes, as has been before observed, are instruments by whom God governs and administers this part of the affairs of providence; he sets up kings and judges at his pleasure, and enjoins men obedience to them; who are ministers of his, and through the power and authority they are entrusted with, are terrors to evildoers, and a praise to them that do well. I proce

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