

# LECTURE XXV.

## PROVIDENCE.

### SYLLABUS.

1. Define God's Providence. State the other theories of His practical relation to the universe. What concern has Providence in physical causes and laws? Conf. of Faith, ch. 5. Turretin, Loc. vi, Qu. 1, 2, 4. Dick, Lect. 41, 42. Calvin's Inst., bk. i, ch. 16 to 18. "Reign of Law," by Duke of Argyll. Southern Presbyterian Review, Jan., 1870, Art. i. Knapp, Chr. Theol., Art. viii. McCosh, Div. Gov., bk. ii, ch. 1.
2. Argue the doctrine of a special, from that of a general Providence. Turretin, Loc. vi, Qu. 3. Dick and Calvin as above.
3. Prove the doctrine of Providence; (a) from God's perfections; (b) from man's moral intuition; (c) from the observed course of nature and human history; (d) from the dependence of creatures. Turretin, Loc. vi, Qu. 1. Calvin and Dick as above. Knapp, Art. viii, § 68.
4. Present the Scriptural argument; (a) from prophecies; (b) from express testimonies. Answer objections. Same authorities, and Dick, Lect. 43.
5. Does God's Providence extend to all acts of rational free-agents? What is His concern in the gracious acts of saints? What, in the evil acts of sinners? Discuss the doctrine of an immediate *concursus* in the latter. Turretin, Loc. vi, Qu. 4-8. Calvin, Inst., bk. i, ch. 18. Witsius, *de Oec Fed*, bk. i, ch. 8, § 13-29. Dick, Lect. 42, 43. Hill's Div., bk. iv, ch. 9, § 3. Knapp, Art. viii, § 70-72, Hodge's Outlines, ch. 13. Hodge, *Syst. Theol.*, Vol. i, ch. 11, § 1, 3, 4.

**P**ROVIDENTIA, Greek, *πρόνοια*, is the execution in successive time, of God's eternal, unsuccessive purpose, or *πρόθεσις*.

We believe the Scriptures to teach, not only that God originated the whole universe, but that He bears a perpetual, active relation to it; and that these works of providence are "His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions." It may be said that there are, besides this, three other theories concerning God's relation to the Universe; that of the Epicurean, who, though admitting an intelligent deity, supposed it inconsistent with His blessedness and perfections, to have any likings or anger, care or concern in the multiform events of the worlds; that of the Rational Deists, Socinians, and many rationalists, that God's concern with the Universe is not universal, special and perpetual, but only general, viz: by first endowing it with general laws of action, to the operation of which each individual being is then wholly left, God only exercising a general oversight of the laws, and not of specific agents; and that of the Pantheists, who identify all seeming substances with God, by making them mere modes of His self-development; so that there is no providential relation, but an actual identity; and all the events and acts of the Universe are simply God acting.

The first theory is, as we shall see, practical atheism, and

General Providence is contradicted by a proper view of God's unreasonable without special attributes. The third has been already refuted, as time and ability allowed. Against the second, or Deistical, I object that the seeming analogy by which it is suggested is a false one. That analogy is doubtless of human rulers—e. g., a commander of an army, who regulates general rules and important events, without being himself cognizant of special details; and of machinists, who construct a machine and start its motion, so that it performs a multitude of special evolutions, not individually directed by the maker. The vital difference is, that the human ruler employs a multitude of intelligent subordinates, independent of him for being, whose intention specifically embraces the details; whereas God directs inanimate nature, according to deists, without such intervention. The Platonist conception of a providence administered over particulars by dæmons is more consistent with this analogy. And the machinist does but adjust some motive power which God's providence supplies (water on his wheel, the elasticity of a spring, &c.,) to move his machine in his absence; whereas God's providence itself must be the motive power of His universal machine. 2d. On this deistical scheme of providence, results must either be fortuitous to God, (and then He is no longer Sovereign nor Almighty, and we reach practical atheism,) or else their occurrence is determined by Him through the medium of causations possessed of a physical necessity, (and we are thus landed in stoical fate!) 3d. It is a mere illusion to talk of a certain direction of the general, which does not embrace the particulars; for a general class is nothing, when separated from the particulars which compose it, but an abstraction of the mind. Practically, the general is only produced by producing all the specials which compose it. If the agents or instruments by which a general superintendence is exercised, be contingent and fallible, the providence must be such also. God's providence is efficient and almighty: it must then be special, or all its instruments Gods. 4th. God's providence evolves all events by using second causes according to their natures. But all events are interconnected, nearly or remotely, as causes and effects. And the most minute events often bear the connection with the grandest; e. g., the burning of a city from a vagrant spark; the change of King Ahab's dynasty by an errant arrow. Hence, according to this mode of providence, which we see God usually employs, unless His care extended to every event specially, it could not effectuate any, certainly. To exercise a general providence without a special, is as though a man should form a chain without forming its links.

The definition of Providence, which we adopted from the Catechism, divides it into two works—sustentation and government.

According to the Augustinian scholastics, the Cartesians, and many of the stricter Calvinistic Reformers, this sustentation of creatures in being is effected by a perpetual, active efflux or concursus of divine power at every successive instant, identical with that act of will and power by which they were brought out of *nihil* into *esse*; and they conceive that on the cessation of this act of God, for one instant, towards any creature whatsoever, it would return incontinently to non-existence. So that it is no figure of speech with them to say, "Sustentation is a perpetual re-creation." Their arguments are, that God alone is self-existent; hence those things which have a dependent existence cannot have the ground of the continuance of their existence in themselves. That all creatures exist in successive time: but the instants of successive time have no substantive tie between them by which one produces the next; but they only follow each other, whence it results that successive existence is momentarily returning to *nihil*, and is only kept out of it by a perpetual re-creation. And 3d: They quote Scriptures, as Neh. ix : 6; Job. x : 12; Ps. civ : 27-30; Acts xvii : 28; Heb. i : 3; Col. i : 17; Isa. x : 15.

This speculation has always seemed to me without basis, and its demonstration, to say the least, impossible for the human understanding. But let me distinctly premise, that both the existence and essence, or the being and properties of every created thing, originated out of nothing, in the mere will and power of God; that they are absolutely subject, at every instant of their successive existence, to His sovereign power; that their action is all regulated by His special providence, and that He could reduce them to nothing as easily as He created them. Yet, when I am required to believe that their sustentation is a literal, continuous re-production by God's special act out of *nihil*, I cannot but remember that, after all, the human mind has no cognition of substance itself, except as the unknown *substratum* of properties, and no insight into the manner in which it subsists. Hence we are not qualified to judge, whether its subsistence is maintained in this way. The arguments seem to me invalid.

If man's reason has any necessary ontological judgment whatever, it is this: That substance involves reality, continuity of existence, and permanency. Such is, in short, substantially the description which the best mental science now gives of that thing, so essential to our perception. When we deny self-existence to creatures, we deny that the cause which originates their existence can be in them; but this is far from proving that God, in originating their existence, may not have conferred it as a permanent gift, continuing itself so long as He permits it. e. g., Motion is never assumed by matter of itself; but when impressed from without, it is never self-arrested. To say that

finite creatures exist in successive time, or have their existence measured by it, is wholly another thing from showing that this succession constitutes their existence. What is time, but an abstract idea of our minds, which we project upon the finite existence which we think of or observe? Let any man analyse his own conception, and he will find that the existence is conceived of as possessing a true continuity; it is the time by which his mind measures it, that lacks the continuity. Last. These general statements of Scripture only assert the practical and entire dependence of creatures; no doubt their authors would be very much surprised to hear them interpreted into these metaphysical subtilities.

You will observe that the class of ideas which leads to this doctrine of a perpetual efflux of divine power, Monads not dependent in same way as organisms. in recreation, are usually borrowed from organized, material bodies. Men forget that the existence of organisms may be, and probably is, dependent, in a very different sense, from that of simple existence, such as a material ultimate atom, or a pure spirit. For the existence of an organized body is nothing but the continuance of its organization, i. e., of the aggregation of its parts in certain modes. This, in turn, is the effect of natural causes; but these causes operate under the perpetual, active superintendence of God. So that it is literally true, the existence of a compounded organism, like the human body, is the result of God's perpetual, providential activity; and the mere cessation of this would be the end of the organism. But the same fact is not proved of simple, monadic substances.

But what are natural causes and laws? This question What is second cause? enters intimately into our views of providence, inasmuch as they are the means with which providence works. The much-abused phrase, law of nature, has been vaguely used in various senses. The Duke of Argyle says he finds the word "Law," used in five senses. 1. For an observed order of facts. 2. The unknown force implied therein. 3. The ascertained limit of a force. 4. Combinations of force for a 'final cause.' 5. The order of thought which the reason supplies for explanation of observed effects, as in Mechanics, the 'first law of motion.' The list might be larger, but properly it means that it is the observed regular mode or rule, according to which a given cause, or class of causes operates under given conditions. This definition of itself will show us the absurdity of offering a law of nature to account for the existence of anything. For nature is but an abstraction, and the law is but the regular mode of acting of a cause; so that instead of accounting for, it needs to be accounted for itself. The fact that a phenomenon is produced again and again regularly, does not account for its production! The true question which lies at the root of the

matter is, concerning the real power which is present in natural causes. We say that they are those things which, under certain conditions, have power to produce certain effects. What, then, is the power? It is answered that the power resides in some property of the thing we call cause, when that property is brought into certain relations with the properties of some other thing. But still the question recurs: Is the power, the activity, a true property of the thing which acts as cause, or is the power truly God's force, and the occurrence of the relation between the properties of cause and effect, merely the appointed occasion of its exertion? This is the question. Let me premise, before stating the answers given, that the question should be limited to the laws of material nature, and to physical causes. All sound philosophy now regards intelligent spirits as themselves proper fountains of causation, because possessed of a true spontaneity and self-determination, not indeed emancipated from God's sovereign control, yet real and intrinsically active, as permitted and regulated by Him.

But, as to physical causes, orthodox divines and philosophers give different answers. Say the one class, as Dick, matter is only passive. The coming of the properties of the cause into the suitable relation to the effect, is only the occasion; the true agency is but God's immediately. All physical power is God directly exerting Himself through passive matter; and the law of the cause is but the regular mode which He proposes to Himself for such exertions of His power. Hence, the true difference between natural power and miraculous, would only be, that the former is customary under certain conditions, the latter, under those conditions, unusual. When a man feels his weary limbs drawn towards the earth, by what men call gravity, it is in fact as really God drawing them, as when, against gravity, the body of Elijah or Christ was miraculously borne on high. And the reason they assign is: that matter is negative and inert; and can only be the recipient of power: and that it is incapable of that intelligence, recollection, and volition, implied in obedience to a regular law.

Others, as McCosh, Hodge, &c., would say, that to deny all properties of action to material things, is to reduce them to practical nonentity; leaving God the only agent and the only true existence, in the material universe. Their view is that God, in creating and organizing material bodies, endued them with certain properties. These properties He sustains in them by that perpetual support and superintendence He exerts. And these properties are specific powers of acting or being acted on, when brought into suitable relations with the properties of other bodies. Hence, while power is really in the physical cause, it originated in, and is sustained by, God's power. The question

Some admit no natural force but God.

Theory of McCosh Defective.

then arises: If this be so, if the power is intrinsically in the physical cause, wherein does God exert any special providence in each case of causation? Is not His providential control banished from the domain of these natural laws, and limited to His act of creation, which endued physical causes with their power? The answer which McCosh makes to this question is: that nothing is a cause by itself; nor does a mere capacity for producing a given effect make a thing a cause; unless it be placed in a given relation with a suitable property of some other thing. And here, says he, is God's special, present providence; in constituting those suitable relations for inter-action, by His superintendence. The obvious objection to this answer seems to have been overlooked; that these juxta-positions, or relations, are themselves always brought about by God (except where free agents are employed) by natural causes. Hence, the view of God's providence that would result, would be nothing more than the pre-established harmony of Leibnitz, from whom, indeed, his views seem derived. This would, indeed, give the highest conception of the wisdom, power, and sovereignty exercised in establishing the amazing plan; but it would leave God no actual providential functions to perform in time, except the doubtful one of the mere sustentation of simple being. For, you must note: since the continued aggregation of the parts of an organism results from the operation of natural laws between its elementary parts, His concern in the sustentation of compounded bodies would be no other than in the working of natural laws. The explanation is therefore obviously defective.

Let us see to what extent the defect can be supplied.

How amended? The problem which the Rationalist supposes to be involved is this: How God's effective providence can intervene consistently with the uniformity of natural laws. Now, the laws of nature are invariable, only in the sense defined above. When a given law is the expression of the mode in which a real, natural cause acts; then it is invariable in this sense, that granting the same conditions in every respect, the same power will produce the same effect. But it must be noted, that in nature, effects are never the sole results of a single power. Combination of natural powers is the condition of all effects. Our description of God's providence over nature must be, in a good sense, "anthropopathic." How then, does man's personal will use the powers of nature? He is not able, and does not aim, to change the invariability of either of the powers which he borrows. But, knowing the invariable law of one cause, he combines with this some other power, or powers, which are also used in strict accordance with their laws, so as to control the conditions under which they together act. Thus, he modifies the effects, without infringing at all the regularity of the natural laws. And this is rational con-

trivance for an end. Thus, even in man's hands, while the law of each power is invariable, by combination of a rational providence, the uses are widely flexible. Must not this be much more possible in God's hands? Thus, for instance, man constructs a clock, for the purpose of keeping time. He avails himself of one law, the gravitation of a mass of metal suspended, which is absolutely unchangeable. He combines with this, by a set of wheels, and an "escapement," the action of another law; the regular beat of a pendulum thirty-nine inches long. This is also invariable. But by this combination, the mechanic has made a clock, which he can cause to keep sidereal or solar time, to run faster or slower. It is not by interrupting the regularity of two forces, but by virtue of that regularity, that he is enabled to produce these varied effects. By a rational providence, these invariable forces are made to perform a new function.

Now, man's agency here is *supra material*, namely, personal, intelligent and voluntary. Is then, all God's working in special providence supernatural? The answer is, it is *supra physical* being personal; but not in the proper sense supernatural, any more than man's similar agency. For that which Personal Will effectuates through the regular laws of second causes, is properly natural. The supernatural is that which God effectuates by power above those causes.

It may be objected, that, as we observe the clock maker shaping and adjusting the parts of machinery, by which he combines two or more invariable powers for a varying function, so, we should have experimental knowledge of God's processes in His providence. We reply: Is the machinist's result any the less natural, because he chose to work only in secret? The answer contained in this question has its force greatly enhanced by remarking that the Agent of providence is an invisible Spirit. It is also certainly a part of His purpose that His hand shall be invisible, in His ordinary working. This His objects require. Hence, we are to reconcile our minds to this fact, that while the reality of a special providence, and its possibility, are rationally demonstrable, man is not to find its method explicable. Here faith must perform her humble office. But when the possibility of its execution by infinite power and wisdom are shown, all is done that is needed to silence rationalism.

The speculations of the Duke of Argyle have been mentioned above, with approbation. This imposes a necessity of dissenting from his opinion as to the miracle. Desiring, apparently, to conciliate the rationalistic cavil, that the "invariability of the laws of nature," renders a miracle absolutely impossible and incredible, he advances this definition; Let a miracle be called an

Is a miracle the result of an inner Law.

Is Providence, then, supernatural.

Objection.

effect which, while above and beside all laws of nature explored by man, will yet be found (in the light of heaven perhaps,) to be but an expression of some higher and more recondite law. From this view I wholly dissent. It is inconsistent with the prime end for which God has introduced miracles, to be attestations to man of God's messages. For, we have only to suppose human physical science carried to higher stages, and the events which were miraculous to a ruder age, would become natural. All miracles would cease to be *σημεῖα* just so soon as they were comprehended; but it is the glory of the true miracle, that the more fully it is comprehended, the more certainly it would be a *σημεῖον*. On this plan the effects of the electric telegraph, to us merely human, would have been veritable miracles to Peter and Paul, and would now be, to the Hottentot christians. This definition then, virtually destroys the christian miracles. We must hold fast to the old doctrine; that a miracle is a phenomenal effect above all the powers of nature; properly the result of supernatural power: i. e., of God's immediate power which He has not regularly put into any second causes, lower or higher. The advocates of the new definition may retort, that in denying miracles to be expressions of some higher, recondite law, I assign them a lawless character. Should we not, they ask, claim for them, as for all God's acts, a lucid method, a rational order? I reply: By all means, yes. Miracles are not anarchical infractions of nature's order. But they confound the law of the divine purpose, which is but the infinite thought regulating God's own will and acts, with some recondite natural law. Every miracle was wrought in strict conformity with God's decree. But this is in God: the natural law is impressed on the nature of second causes.

We see, then, that all general providence is special. And the special is as truly natural as the general.

The natural arose out of the supernatural, and in that sense, reposes upon it at all times. The Divine will is perpetually present, underlying all the natural. Else God is shut back to the beginning of the universe, and has no present action nor administration in His empire. Reason: Because, if you allow Him any occasional, or special present interventions, at decisive crises, or as to cardinal events, those interventions are found to be, as events, no less natural than all other events. They also come through natural law.

A providence is proved: (a.) From God's perfections. His infinite essence, immensity, omniscience, and omnipotence enable Him to sustain such functions to His universe, if He pleases.

And we believe it is His will to do so; first, because His wisdom would not have permitted Him to make a universe without an object; and when made, the same wisdom will undoubtedly employ due means to attain that end. Second. His good-

3. Providence proved,  
1st, from God's perfec-  
tions.

ness would not permit Him to desert the well being of the various orders of sentient beings He has created and endued with capacities for suffering. Third. His righteousness ensures that after having brought moral relations into existence between Himself and His moral creatures, by the very act of creating them, He cannot desert and neglect those relations.

(b.) Man's moral intuitions impel him to believe that God is just, good, true and holy; and that the Moral Intuitions. 3d, natural connection which generally prevails From Nature's Order. in the course of this life, between man's exercise of these virtues, and well-being, is intentional and retributive. If so, then God's providence is concerned in all that course of nature. So we argue from the instinct of prayer. (c.) The intelligent order which we see in the working of material nature splendidly displays a Providence. A multitude of elements and bodies are here seen connected by most multifarious influences, and yet the complex machine moves on, and never goes wrong. There is a guiding hand! The same fact is revealed by the steadiness of all the laws of reproduction in nature, especially in the vegetable and animal world, and in man's and animal's sensitive, and man's emotional and intellectual nature. Like does not fail to beget like. Why? It is strikingly seen in the ratio of the sexes among human births, and the diversity of human countenances. And the revelation of wise designs made at least occasionally in human history (e. g., in the formation of Washington's character, prevalence of the Greek language at the Christian era,) shows that it moves on under the constant superintendence of God.

Man's conscious dependence teaches him the same truth. He has no control over a single one of the laws of nature, such as enables him to educe anything necessary to his well-being from them, with any certainty. If there is no controlling mind to govern them for him, he is the child of a mechanical fate, or of capricious chance.

Scriptures prove a Providence. A preliminary doctrinal argument may be found in God's decree. If its existence is proved, then a providence is proved: for the one is complementary to the other, (a.) By its predictions, promises, and threats, many of which have been explicit and detailed, and long afterwards have been accurately accomplished. e. g., Ex. xii: 46, with Jno. xix: 36; Ps. xxii: 18, with Jno. xix: 24; 1 Kings xx: 13, with xx: 34, 35-38; Micah. v: 2, with Matt. ii: 5; Is. xiv: 23; Jer. i: 23 to end; Jer. xlix: 17, &c.; Ezek. xxvi: 4, 5. Without a control that was efficacious, over particular events, God could not thus positively speak. Ps. xci.

(b.) The duty and privilege of prayer, as exercised by inspired saints, and enjoined in precepts, implies a providence;

for else, God has no sure way to answer. No Providence is practical atheism.

(c.) A multitude of express Scriptures assert God's providence to be universal. e. g. Fs. ciii: 17-19; Dan. iv: 34, 35; Ps. xxii: 28, 29; Job xii: 10, and Chaps. xxxviii-xli; Col. i: 17; Heb. i: 3; Acts xvii: 28.

*Efficacious and Sovereign.*—Job xxiii: 13, Ps. xxxiii: 11; cxxxv: 6; 2d Sam. xvii: 14.

*The evolution of His eternal purpose.*—Ps. civ: 24; Is. xxviii: 29; Acts xv: 18; Eph. i: 11.

*Special and particular.*—Matt. x: xxix; 31; Luke xii: 6, 7; Nehemiah, ix: 6; Matt. vi: 26; Ps. xxxvi: 6; cxlv: 15, 16; Gen. xxii: 13, 14; Jonah iv: 6, 7, 8.

*Over the material world.*—Job, Chaps. xxxviii-xli; Ps. civ: 14; cxxxv: 5-7; cxlvii: 8-18; cxlviii: 7, 8; Acts xiv: 17; Matt. vi: 30; vi: 26.

*Over acts to us fortuitous*, i. e. those of which the natural causes are unassignable by us, either because undiscovered, as yet, or so subtle, or complex. Gen. xxiv: 12, 13, &c.; Exod. xxi: 12, 13; Deut. xix: 4; Ps. lxxv: 6, 7; Job v: 6; Prov. xvi: 33; xxi: 31.

Last: over the good and bad acts of free agents. Reason shows this; for otherwise God could not govern any of the physical events into which human volitions enter as modifying causes, either immediately or remotely. Prophecy, threats, promises, and the duty of prayer prove it, (see on Decrees,) and Scripture expressly asserts it. Prov. xvi: 9; xx: 24; xxi: 1; Jer. x: 23; Ps. xxxiii: 14, 15; Gen. xlvi: 8, &c.; Exod. xii: 36; Ps. xxv: 9-15; Phil. ii: 13; Acts ii: 23; 2 Sam. xvi: 10; xxiv: 1; lxxvi: 10; Rom. xi: 36; Acts iv: 28; Rom. ix: 18; 2 Sam. xii: 11; 1 Kings xxii: 23; Ps. cv: 25.

The objections against the Bible doctrines may all be reduced to these heads:

Objections.

1. Epicurean; that God would be fatigued from so many cares.

2. That it is derogatory to His dignity to be concerned with trivialities.

3. The disorders existing in material nature, and in the course of human affairs, would be inconsistent with His benevolence and righteousness.

4. The doctrine infringes the efficacy of second causes, and the free-agency of intelligent creatures.

5. Last: It makes God the author of sin.

For answers, see discussions above and below: and Dick. Lect. 43.

5. In proceeding to speak of the control of Providence over the acts of intelligent free agents, we must bear in mind the essential difference between them and physical bodies. A

body is not intrinsically a cause. Causation only takes place when a certain relation between given properties of two bodies, is established by God's providence. (See § 1.) But a soul is a fountain of spontaneity; it is capable of will, in itself, and is self-determined to will, by its own prevalent dispositions. Soul is a cause.

Now, the Bible attributes all the spiritually good acts of man to God. Rom. vii: 18; Phil. ii: 13; iv: 13; 2 Cor. xii: 9, 10; Eph. ii: 10; Gal. v: 22-25. God's concern in such acts may be explained as composed of three elements. (a.) He perpetually protects and preserves the human person with the capacities which He gave to it naturally. (b.) He graciously renews the dispositions by His immediate, almighty will, so as to incline them, and keep them inclined by the Holy Ghost, to the spiritually good. (c.) He providentially disposes the objects and truths before the soul thus renewed, so that they become the occasional causes of holy volitions freely put forth by the sanctified will. Thus God is, in an efficient sense, the intentional author of the holy acts, and of the holiness of the acts, of His saints.

But, the question of His concern in the evil acts of free agents (and the naturally indifferent,) is more difficult. The Dominican Scholastics, or Thomists, followed by some Calvinistic Reformers, felt themselves constrained, in order to uphold the efficiency and certainty of God's control over the evil acts of His creatures, to teach their doctrine of the physical *concursum* of God in all such acts, (as well as in all good acts, and physical causes). This is not merely God's sustentation of the being and capacities of creatures; not merely a moral influence by truths or motives providentially set before them; not merely an infusion of a general power of acting to which the creature gives the specific direction, by his choice alone, in each individual act; but in addition to all this, a direct, immediate physical energizing of the active power of the creature, disposing and predetermining it efficaciously to the specific act, and also enabling it thereto, and so passing over with the agency of the creature, into the action. Thus, it is an immediate, physical, predisposing, specific and concurrent influence to act. Their various arguments may be summed up in these three: that the Scripture, e. g., Gen. xlv: 7; Is. x: 15, &c.; Acts xvii: 28; Phil. ii: 13; Col. i: 13, demand the *concursum* of God to satisfy their full meaning: That as man's *esse* is dependent on the perpetual, recreative efflux of God's power, so his acting must perpetually depend on God's *concursum*, because the creature must act according to his being. Under this head, for instance, Witsius may be seen, following Aquinas, arguing thus: Nothing but a first cause can act without the aid and influence of a prior

cause. Hence, if the human will were able to produce any action of which God was not the efficient, the creature's will would hold the state of a First Cause. Again: All action proceeds from powers: but the creature's powers emanate from his essence. Hence if the essence is derived, the action must also be derived. They argue, in the third place, that without the *concursum* they describe, God's providence over human acts could not be efficient and sovereign, as the Scripture teaches, and as we must infer from the doctrine of the decree, and from the certain fulfilment of prophecy.

Turretin obviously implies, in his argument, that the rational creature's will, like a second cause in matter, is indeterminate to any specific effect. For he argues that a cause thus indeterminate or indifferent must receive its determination to a specific effect, from some cause out of, and above itself, which must be active, and determining to the specific effect. (Qu. 5, § 8, &c.)

Now, on this I remark, see here the great importance of the distinction I made (in last lecture, and on the difference of permissive and efficacious decrees) between material and rational second causes.

Again: Consider if Turretin does not here surrender a vital point of his own doctrine concerning the will. That point is, that the rational will is not *in equilibrio*; that volitions are not contingent phenomena, but regular effects. Effects of what? Sound metaphysics says, of subjective motive. The soul (not the faculty of choice itself,) is self-determining—i. e., spontaneous. But this according to a law, its subjective law.

Now, to this I reply farther, (a) The doctrine that God's sustentation is by a perpetual active efflux of creative power, we found to be unproved as to spirits, which unlike bodies, possess the properties of true being, absolute unity and simplicity. That doctrine is only true, in any sense, of organized bodies; which are not proper beings, but rather organized collections of a multitude of separate beings, or atoms. My consciousness tells me that I have a power of acting (according to the laws of my nature) dependent indeed, and controlled always by God, yet which is personally my own. It originates in the spring of my own spontaneity. As to the relation between personal power in us, and the power of the first cause, we know nothing; for neither He, nor consciousness, tells us anything.

(b) Surely the meaning of all such Scriptures as those referred to, is sufficiently satisfied, as well as the demands of God's attributes and government, by securing these two points. First, God is not the author of sin; Second, His control over all the acts of all His creatures is certain, sovereign and efficacious; and such as to have been determined from eternity. If a way

It is not revealed by consciousness.

Not required by God's Sovereignty.

can be shown, in which God thus controls these sinful acts, without this physical *concursum*, the force of the other arguments for it is all removed.\* May not this mode be found in this direction? Thus:

God's eternal purpose as to evil acts of free agents is more than barely permissive; His prescience of it is more than a *scientia media* of what is, to Him, contingent. It is a determinate purpose effectuated in providence by means efficient, and to Him, certain in their influence on free agents. What are those means? Volitions are caused. The efficient causes of volitions are the soul's own dispositions; the occasional causes are the objects providentially presented to those dispositions. Even we may, in many cases, so know dispositions as efficiently to procure, and certainly to predict, given volitions, through the presentation of objective causes thereof. An infinite understanding may so completely know all dispositions and all their complex workings, as to foretell and produce volitions thus in every case, as we are able to do in many cases. Add to this, omnipotent, providential power, which is able to surround any soul with circumstances so adapted to his known dispositions, as infallibly to prove the occasions of given desired volitions. And the presentation of the objective inducement to do wrong is also wrought, after the manner of God's permissive decree, by the free actions of other sinners permissively ordained. Thus: The offer of the Ishmaelitic merchants (Gen. xxxvii: 25,) to buy Joseph, was the sufficient inducement to his brethren's spite and cupidity. It was these subjective emotions in them, which constituted the efficient motive of the crime of selling their brother. God did not himself present that inducement by His own immediate act or influence; but He permissively ordained its presentation by the merchants. Here you have means enough to enable God to purpose and efficiently produce a given act of a free agent, without any other special *concursum*, in the act itself, than the providential power by which He sustains the being and capacities of that soul, whatever that power is. This, then, is my picture of the providential evolution of God's purpose as to sinful acts; so to arrange and group events and objects around free agents by His manifold wisdom and power, as to place each soul, at every step, in the presence of those circumstances, which, He knows, will be a sufficient objective inducement to it to do, of its own native, free activity, just the thing called for by God's plan. Thus the act is man's alone, though its occurrence is efficaciously secured by God. And the sin is man's only. God's concern in it is holy, first, because all His personal agency in arranging to

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\* If a soul is not spontaneous cause, it is not responsible. If its spontaneity is above providence, it is a God!

secure its occurrence was holy; and second, His ends or purposes are holy. God does not will the sin of the act, for the sake of its sinfulness; but only wills the result to which the act is a means, and that result is always worthy of His holiness. E. g.: A righteous king, besieged by wicked rebels, may arrange a sally, with a view to their righteous defeat, and the glorious deliverance of the good citizens, in which he knows the rebels will slay some of his soldiers. This slaying is sin; the good king determines efficaciously to permit it; not for the sake of the slaying, but for the sake of the righteous triumph of which it is part means. The death of these good soldiers is the sin of the rebels; the righteousness of the end in view, is the king's.

It may be said, that this scheme represents God, after all, as governing free agents by a sort of *scientia media*. I reply: Let us not be scared by unpopular names. It is a knowledge conditioned on His own almighty purpose, and His own infallible knowledge of the dispositions of creatures; and it is, in this sense, relative. But this is not a dangerous sense. For only lay down the true doctrine, that volitions are efficiently determined by dispositions, and there is, to God, no shadow of contingency remaining about such foreknowledge. (That was the ugly trait.) As I showed you, when explaining this *scientia media*, in the hands of him who holds the contingency of the will, it is illogical; in the hands of the Calvinist, it becomes consistent.

(c) This doctrine of physical *concurus* neglects the proper distinction between the power of causation in physical bodies and in free agents. It also commits a fatal error in making God's agency in bad acts, about as immediate and efficacious as in good acts; and indeed very much the same. It represents the soul, like a physical cause, as undetermined to action or non-action, till God's *præcursor* decides it to act. Of course, then, an unholy will might be equally decided by it to a holy or an unholy act! Thus hyper-Calvinism actually betrays its own cause to the opposite party, who teach the *equilibrium* of the will; and contradicts Scripture, which always claims more credit and agency for God (and an essentially different agency) in the good acts, than in the evil acts, of the creature.

(d) This doctrine leads us too near to the awful verge of Pantheism. See how readily it can be made to tend towards one of the very types of Idealistic Pantheism, lately prevalent in parts of Europe. If God's efficient *præcursor* is essential to all the creature's acts, then, of course, it is essential to his acts of perception. But now, if it is not the objective world, which is the efficient cause of perceptions in our minds, but God: why

Is God's intelligence herein *Scientia Media*?

Such *concurus* would be physical.

Its tendency Pantheistic.

should we predicate any objective world at all? The real evidence of its existence is lacking, and if this doctrine is true, the supposition of an objective world should be excluded by the "law of parcimony." And since the mind is not, according to this doctrine, the efficient of its own acts, why should we predicate its personality either? But, more simply stated, the road towards Pantheism is this: If there is such a universal *præcursor*, God is the only true agent in the universe. Turretin himself admits, that according to this scheme, God's *concur-sus* is the efficient cause of every act, and the creature's volition only the formal cause. How easy the step from this to making the creature's being a mere efflux of God's being? Do not these writers claim that the mode of the action must agree to that of the *esse*? Thus we have another illustration of the justice of the charge that Scholastic Realism prepared the way for modern Pantheism.

(e) Last. Like all Pantheism, it comes too near making

Makes God cause  
of sin. Evasion. God the author of sin; for it makes God an immediate, intentional efficient of acts which are sinful. The scholastics endeavour to evade this, by distinguishing between the physical entity of the act and its moral relation. God, say they, is an efficient of the entity, not of the moral evil which qualifies it. Thus: when a musician strikes an untuned harp, the sound is from him, the discord of the sound is from the disorder of the strings. When a partial paralytic essays to move his limbs, motion is from his volition; the halting or jerking is from the disease. The illustrations are false; for the musician's intention is to produce, not only sound, but harmonious sound,—the paralytic's, not only motion, but correct motion. God's intention embraces not only the physical entity of the act, but its moral quality. It is not only the act as an act, but the act as sinful, which He intends to permit. For how often are the holy ends He has in view connected with the sinfulness of the act? That the distinction is incorrect may be practically evinced thus: The same distinction would serve as well to justify the Jesuit doctrine of intention. Search and see. I see no way to escape the horrid consequence of making God the author of sin, except by making sinful acts immediately the acts of the sinner alone; and this is certainly the testimony of his own consciousness. He feels that he is wholly self-moved thereto; and hence his sense of guilt therefor.

The inadequacy of this evasion appears in that Turretin

The evasion false, because it gives no act moral quality *per se*. (Qu. 5, § 17,) admits himself to be constrained by it to hold the deplorable dogma, that no moral act has intrinsic moral quality *per se*. He even quibbles, that the hatred of God felt by a sinner is not evil by its intrinsic nature as a simple act of will; but only by its adjuncts. Ans. The act, apart from its adjuncts,

is either no act at all, or a different act intrinsically. There is false analysis here. Turretin (again) is misled by instances such as these admitted ones. All killing is not murder. All smiting is not malice. All taking is not theft, &c., &c. The sophism is, that these are outward acts: effectuated through bodily members. As to the mere physical phenomenon of volitions moving bodily members, we admitted, and argued that, abstracted from its psychological antecedents and adjuncts, it has no moral quality. Proof is easy. But, in strictness of speech, the physical execution of the volition in the act of striking, &c., is not the act of soul—only the outward result thereof. The act of soul is the intent of will. In this, the right or wrong moral relation is intrinsic. Now, would not Turretin say, that the *concursum* he teaches incites and directs the act of soul, and not that of the body merely? Certainly. Thus it appears that his distinction and evasion are inadequate.

Or thus: No Calvinist will deny that the morality of an act is determined by its intention. But intention is action of soul, as truly as volition. And if a physical *concursum* is necessary to all action, it is so to intention. Thus God's action would be determinative of the morality of the act. In a word, these Calvinists here betray, in their zeal for this *præcursum*, that doctrine of the essential originality of the moral distinction, which they had already established; (see Lec. xiv, § 4, and Loc. iii, Qu. 18th,) and which we shall find essential in defending against Socinians, the necessity of satisfaction for guilt.