

power. It is altogether too much the habit of ministers to content themselves with general traditional views of such things. The Inquisition has of late had its apologists, as even Nero and Pontius Pilate have had theirs. The "whitewashing" tendency has had somewhat free swing ever since Froude with his brush and pail strove to make of Henry VIII. simply a royal husband under a sad necessity of beheading his wives. Ministers ought to deal no random blows. They need to refer to history, and should know the history to which they must needs refer.

How many texts there are in Scripture the best possible unfolding of which must be secured by some study of what history shows the actual man to be. Take this word of Christ, "And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light lest his works should be reproved" (John iii. 19, 20, New Version). Christ's view of man is a sweeping generalization. To understand it, to feel its awful significance, to put it forth with anything like its fit exposition, the preacher needs to see how thoroughly it has been brought out in actual human experience through whole periods of history. He cannot show its depth or breadth of meaning by any illustrations his village history can give him. He cannot measure its bearing either by any study of individuals. He must know the dreadful verdict as history on the large scale has uttered it before he can himself feel its truth. So for many other texts. His best commentary on them would be not Meyer or Alford, but possibly Gibbon, or Hume, or Mommsen, or Sismondi.

History offers to the ministry a no less interesting field than that just considered in its disclosures of the Divine Providence in human events. Interpreting providence is a somewhat perilous business. Most of us have listened to sermons which undertook this serious business when we felt like replying in Cowper's lines,

"God is his own *interpreter*,
And *He* will make it plain."

A great many people find a *special* providence in every turn of life, and quite forget that in the very process they are taking away their favorite conception of its particularity. But those who have studied history deepest and longest are most ready to find a *unity* in history—that is, its shaping by a divine Mind to a great and good end, as in Tennyson's celebrated lines,

"The one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

St. Augustine affirms that the Being who has not left "even the entrails of the smallest and most insignificant animal or the feathers of a bird, or the little flower of a plant, or the leaf of a tree without harmony, and as it were a mutual peace among all its parts—that God can