

SYNOPSIS

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Along the line of intelligent life we get greater and greater autonomy, which at last calls for what we know as the highest form of purpose—that of the parent or teacher.

Pantheistic thought identifies the life of the universe with God; but life lends itself both to good and evil, to progress and retrogression. It appears saner to regard life as the not-God, which came from God, and is being trained by Him to form with Himself a new unity.

It is never life that is limited, but the power of the organism to utilise life for its own ends. The perfection of the organism would be its power to utilise life fully for its highest end.

When life at last in man becomes conscious of itself, and able consciously to respond to God, we get "spiritual life," which entails pre-eminently the power to utilise more and more of the universal life for the highest end.

The speculations of this chapter seem to harmonise with experience.

CHAPTER III

PROVIDENCE AND AUTONOMY 43

Can we detect in world evolution a purpose which tallies with the types of purpose we have found in man?

The order we perceive in inorganic nature tallies with such human purpose as we have called mechanical.

In the earliest stage of life physical strength and adaptation seem to be the aim.

Later on the aim seems to be a balance of physical force and intelligence; not the strongest body, nor the strongest intelligence, but the best combination of these persists. We therefore get defects in the physical nature and in intelligence handed down along the line of fullest life.

Later, when what we call God consciousness or spiritual life is added, nature again strives for a balance of the three qualities; again defects in each aspect are handed down along the line of fullest life.

The purpose suggested by the development of human life is health of body and brain, excellence of intelligence, excellence of will power, excellence of extra-regarding impulses which make for the perfection of corporate life. The prevailing desire of nature seems to be to rid itself of defects in all these.

The disease germ or parasite does not belong to the method, but militates against the purpose.

If this tendency to excellence of life indicates God's will, very much must happen in our universe which merely represents the will of the autonomous creature before it is won by the persuasive purpose of God.

If disease and defect were the will of God, God and the life-force would be at war.