

He is not only a Being of a higher nature than man's, but that He is also the Guardian of man's life, the Rewarder of virtue, the Punisher of crime. It is not a bad description of the Bible to say that it is a history of the Divine Providence either generally or in relation to a portion of the human family. Nay, it begins with Providence in its very account of the Creation.

That account displays the Creator as acting, not with the blind impulse which would become some fatal or necessary cause, but with the intelligence of a Being who acts freely in what He does, who acts as He does act, to use human words about Him, with reflection, with foresight, with a view to the endurance of His work, and to the happiness of His creatures. The world did not escape from Him without or against His will, but "He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast;" and as He was in Creation so has He been ever since, so is He at this moment, the Ruler and Sustainer of all life as well as its Author.

**TWO POPULAR OBJECTIONS.**

The popular objections to the reality of God's Providence are ultimately two. Men have held it impossible for a single mind to care for every created being, and every part of every created being. Cæcilius in a treatise on Minucius Felix shows us how a Pagan, at the beginning of the third century of our era, could feel and represent this. "The Christians," he says, "pretend that their God, inquisitive, restless, mysterious, imprudent, is to be found everywhere; that He knows all, that He sees all, even the most secret thoughts of men; that he is mixed up with everything, even with men when they are committing their crimes, just as though His powers of giving attention would enable Him to govern the world at large and yet to take a minute care of every particular thing. What a foolish illusion!" "Nature," he continues, "nature pursues her eternal course without being interfered with by any Divinity; the goods and the ills of life light impartially on the virtuous and the vicious; religious men are often worse off than are the ungodly, and if the world were governed by a wise Providence, the course of events would certainly be very different from what it is." We might almost suppose ourselves to be reading the pages of some modern magazine, instead of listening to the current talk of a third-century Pagan. But the objection is really atheistic without pretending to be such. An intelligence which could not thus grasp the details of the created world would not be infinite in its capacity—in other words it would not be God.

More common is the notion that attention to the minute details of a universe is inconsistent with the true dignity of God; and when this objection is advanced by uninstructed Christians, they sometimes endeavour to disguise from themselves their rejection of the truth that God rules all life by distinguishing between what they call His *general* and His *particular* Providence. They are willing to assign to Him a general superintendence of the laws which govern human life: they cannot think that He interferes to prescribe the every day circumstances that surround Him. Details are, they consider, too trifling for His notice. This is one of the devices of the human mind for relieving itself of the sense of God's encompassing presence and activity; but men hide their real motives even from themselves, when they thus assume that they are mainly concerned to uphold God's dignity. It is unworthy of Him, they say, to suppose that He can really trouble Himself with matters of such light importance, it is enough for Him to enact general laws, and then to leave all beyond to their silent operation, modified by the action of His reasonable creatures. Now, this conception of God's relation to the world, and to life is, in fact, anthropomorphic. It is suggested by the experience of human potentates whose exercise of their governing powers is controlled by the hard necessities of a finite understanding. A human

ruler can only give attention to the general principles of his administration, he must leave details to his subordinates. But this does not illustrate his exalted position so much as it shows the limited nature of his faculties. If he could, he would attend to details as well as to general principles, since he would thereby show the really comprehensive character of his intelligence. A mind which can grasp *details* as well as *principles* is greater than a mind which can only grasp principles. Among men it is rare to find the two forms of mental power combined in any high degree of perfection. The Infinite Mind of God is as much at home in the minutest details of His government as in the broadest laws which regulate its procedure; and to deny His particular Providence is to degrade Him to the level of a human governor who veils his lack of capacity beneath a false standard of dignity.

**PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE—THE ONLY REAL PROVIDENCE.**

On Providence, in the sense of a particular Providence—in other words, the only Providence which is real at all—two observations may here be made. First of all, it is especially prominent in the recorded teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ. He insists on the doctrine as part of His revelation, of the fatherly love of God, and He ends His illustrations of it in a quarter from which all fatalistic systems have most eagerly excluded it—the world of nature. "Consider," He says, "the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" Or, again: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you?" And these examples illustrate God's care in providing for the needs of human life. At other times our Lord insists on the protection which God extends to His servants in times of danger: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." And, if to human observers it is difficult to trace, in the provisions made in human life, that sharp distinction that might be looked for at the hands of God in the cases of the good and evil respectively, we are taught that this very indiscriminate care is a note of the hand of the universal Father. When insisting that His Disciples should love their enemies and do good to them that hate them, and pray for those who despitefully use them and persecute them, our Lord gives as a reason "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven;" and then He points to the share which all alike have—not through the operation of a blind fate or force, but by the express decision of a loving and holy Will, in the blessings of nature: "God maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

**THE WARRANTY OF PRAYER.**

And the second observance is that belief in a particular Providence is the necessary basis and warrant of prayer,—and by prayer I mean prayer in its most usual and natural sense, namely, the asking God for what we want. Prayer is no doubt sometimes, and rightly, used of every kind of Communion with God, for acts of faith, hope, trust, intercession, adoration, resignation, even praise; but its first and simplest meaning in all languages is a petition for what we want addressed to a Being Who is able to grant it. Now prayer, in this primary sense, is impossible except to a believer in Providence, in what people call "a parti-

cular Providence." A being who should only content himself with general laws and principles, and have no eye or care for details, for single human beings, for single circumstances, for single events, would not answer prayer; and, accordingly, in quarters where belief in God's particularising Providence has been lost, people have persuaded themselves that it is unspiritual to ask for particular gifts or blessings, and the true prayer cannot well be anything else than praise or resignation. Upon this it must be observed that, if such a theory holds good, the Apostles of Christ were unspiritual men.—*From the Family Churchman, London*

(To be Continued)

**NEWS FROM THE HOME FIELD.**

**DIOCESE OF MONTREAL.**

**MONTREAL.**—*The Late Canon Belcher.*—The funeral of the late Canon Belcher took place on Friday afternoon last, and was very largely attended. The remains were conveyed to Grace Church, where they were received by the Bishop of the Diocese, Dean Carmichael, Canon Henderson, the Rev. R Lindsay and others. The chief mourner was Mr. Belcher, son of the deceased. After the funeral service, the cortege was reformed, and proceeded to Mount Royal. Among those in attendance were the Rector of Montreal (Dr. Norton), the Revs. Canon Ellegood, Canon Mills, J. H. Dixon, J. A. Newnam, G. O. Troop, Lariviere, Evans, L. N. Tucker, Smith, G. Rogers, S. Massey and Messrs Charles Garth, L. H. Davidson, Q. C., J. S. Hall. The students of the Diocesan Theological College attended in a body. During the services several hymns were sung.

We extend to the family and friends of the deceased and to the parishioners our most heartfelt sympathy in the loss they have sustained. In the parish, where for eighteen years he has faithfully ministered, Canon Belcher will be deeply missed, but not forgotten. His words of comfort and faithful ministrations will remain in remembrance and bear fruit. The parish is an increasingly important one; we hope it may be filled by a capable and earnest priest.

**DIOCESE OF NOVA SCOTIA.**

**SHELBURNE.**—The Tea on behalf of "St. Peter's by the Sea, Sandy Point, was a pronounced success. A generous public handsomely patronized the tempting tables loaded with creature comforts. The sum of \$221 was cleared. We congratulate and thank all who assisted in making the above sale so successful. A handsome west window has lately been put in, and now an order has been sent to Spence & Sons, Montreal, for similar windows for porch and vestry "St. Peter's is a lovely sanctuary, with seats free and unappropriated, where hearty services are regularly enjoyed by its worshippers; and its ample Sunday School Library by an appreciative class.—*Yarmouth Times*

**CAPE BRETON.**

**LOBBRAINE.**—Another one of our young men, who is away from home the greater part of his time, has kindly remembered the building fund of the new church by sending us a present of \$10 towards lessening the debt upon it. We hope that the account of this, and a former present of \$20 sent us by another absentee and mentioned previously in your columns, may arouse others who are away from home to do likewise.

An Incumbent in Ontario writes:—"I consider your paper one of the best Church papers in Canada, and well worthy of every Churchman's loyal support."