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John Gill's

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 to be the first that made mention of the providence of God in so many words, as he often 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 mout 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, and this is one of the titles of the goddess Minerva.

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; 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 asserted, there is a kindred between God and men; and that God exercises a providence over us. Plato 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, 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, providence presides over all, and God is in the midst of us. Menedemus, the philosopher, was an advocate for the doctrine of providence. Chrysippus wrote on the same subject also. They are the words of Cicero, 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 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 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, 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: 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, 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, 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; 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 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, are, that not only mankind in general, but that singulars, or individuals, are cared and provided for by the immortal gods: and yet Seneca, 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, as if

they were not always careful of them; and Cicero, 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, 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 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, 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 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 proceed to consider,

5. The object of providence; which is the whole universe, all the creatures of it, and whatever is done in it.

5a. First, The whole inanimate creation, or creatures without life, whether in the heavens or in the earth, are subject to divine providence, and under the direction of it, and act according to ancient and original laws, which, the Author of them has imposed upon them, and from, which they do not swerve.

5a1. The luminaries of the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, these were made at first for various uses, for signs and seasons, and for days and years, and to give light to the earth by day and by night; and they are continued and employed by divine providence, for the said purposes and uses for which they were created. The sun is not only supported in its being, directed in its course, and continued to perform its office, as has been observed, but it daily sheds its benign influences upon the earth, to make it fruitful; hence we read of "precious fruits brought forth by the sun" (Deut. 33:14 and by the order of God in providence, all men partake of the benefits of it; for "he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good" (Matthew 5:45), it is at his command and beck, he can stop it at his pleasure, and hide it from men; "He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not"; or, is not seen for days together; he causes it to go down at noon, as it seems to do in an eclipse, "and darkens the earth in a clear day" (Job 9:7; Amos 8:9), the same may be said of the moon, that is supported, continued, and directed in providence to answer the ends of its creation; it was "appointed for seasons", to distinguish times, as it does; to give light by night, of which use it is, and to influence the earth and seas; hence we read of precious things brought forth by the moon; and that it is at the command of the God of providence, appears by its being stopped and stayed, when the sun was, in the days of Joshua; the stars are the hosts of heaven, God's militia, which he sometimes employs in providence, in favour of his people, and against their enemies; "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judges 5:20), they are of use, in

providence, to mariners on the mighty waters; the loss of which was sensibly felt by the apostle Paul, and those with him, when for many days neither sun nor stars appeared (Acts 27:20), and when such is the case, then it is that God "sealeth up the stars" (Job 9:7).

5a2. The meteors in the heavens are under the direction of providence; the clouds and winds, hail, rain, snow, and dew, thunder and lightning: the providence of God is greatly concerned in the ordering, directing, and managing of the clouds; "He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them" (Job 26:8), amazing it is, that such a body of waters should be wrapped up in so thin a garment as a cloud is, which is only thickened air; and that the cloud should not be rent and burst with the weight of the waters in it; and that these should not fall at once, in the vast quantity of which they are, which should they, would wash away the increase of the earth, and destroy men and cattle on it. But God, in his infinite wisdom and providence, causes them to fall in gentle showers, and in small drops, as if they passed through a sieve or colander, and so refresh and make the earth fruitful (Job 36:27-29). Elihu asks, "Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?" how from a small appearance, like that of a man's hand, on a sudden they spread themselves all over the heavens; as in the times of Ahab (1 Kings 18:44,45), and elsewhere he asks, "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?" (Job 37:16), how such vast bodies, holding such large quantities of water, are poised in the air, without turning aside, or falling at once; but move on evenly from place to place, and fall on those parts where in providence they are directed.

5a3. The winds are also at the dispose of providence: God has his treasures of them, and he brings them out from thence when he pleases, and holds them in his fists, restrains them, or lets them loose at his pleasure; he commands and raises the stormy wind, and bids it blow, and it obeys his orders, and fulfils his word; and he makes a weight for it, and causes it to subside (Ps. 135:7; 107:25,29; 148:8 Prov. 30:4; Job 28:25). And as all this is the work of providence, and which God only can do, so it is a clear proof of the Deity of our Lord; who, when he rebuked the winds and sea, and there was a calm, when before a violent tempest, the men in the ship with him said, "What manner of man is this, that the winds and the sea obey him?" (Matthew 8:26,27). Hail is at the command of God, and which he sometimes in providence makes use of to the hurt and destruction of wicked men, as the Egyptians and Canaanites, as before observed, and will be one of the plagues on the antichristian states (Rev. 16:21), and we frequently hear of damages by it. On the other hand, in a way of mercy, God sends dew, and rain, and snow upon the earth, to water it, and make it fruitful; and which are what none of the vanities of the Gentiles can give; rain is a wonderful blessing of providence, and falls by divine direction, sometimes on one part of the earth, and sometimes on another, as God pleases to dispose of it to the benefit of it (Amos 4:7,8). Thunder and lightning are of God; lightning is directed by him, and it runs from one end of the heavens to the other, and very many and wonderful are the effects of it; thunder is the voice of God; "Canst thou thunder with a voice like him?" (Job 40:9). "The voice of the

Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thundereth"; and strange effects are produced by it (Ps. 29:3-9). God sometimes causes this his voice to be heard, to awaken and terrify secure sinners and atheistical persons, and let them know there is a God in the heavens that takes notice of them, and to whom they are accountable; and sometimes God in his providence does execution upon them this way; thus with a great thunder the Lord discomfited the army of the Philistines, in the days of Samuel (1 Sam. 7:10).

5a4. The providence of God is not only concerned with things inanimate in the heavens, but also in the earth, the various metals and minerals there; such as gold, silver, brass, iron, &c. "There is a vein for silver, and a place for gold-----iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stones" (Job 28:1,2). God has made a provision of these metals for the use of men, and bestows them on them in providence; "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord" (Hag 2:8), and he gives them to whom he pleases, and as much of them as seems meet to him; and directs men how to employ them and improve them in trade and commerce, and in several arts and manufactories.

5a5. The sea, as well as all that are therein, is at his command; this unruly and unwieldy creature is managed by him at his pleasure, as easily as an infant by its nurse; he puts on its garment, wraps it in a swaddling band; he has broke up its decreed place for it, and has set bars, and doors, and bounds unto it, to stop and stay its proud waves from proceeding any further; he has placed that small creature the sand for a boundary of it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, as it were in scorn and contempt of this their boundary; yet notwithstanding their haughty airs, they cannot prevail and pass over (Job 38:8-11; Jer. 5:22; Ps. 65:7).

5b. Secondly, Animate creatures, or creatures with life; though they have only either a vegetative life, or a sensitive animal life, are under the care of divine providence; vegetables, herbs, plants, and trees, grass for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; and of great use, profit, and advantage, are they to both; when they are withered, or they do not spring up, not only the "beasts groan, the herds of cattle are perplexed, and the flocks of sheep are made desolate, because they have no pasture" (Joe 1:18), but men sensibly feel the loss of them; for God sometimes in providence turns "a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein" (Ps. 107:34). As every spire of grass proclaims a God, so it also declares a providence, and instructs men to trust therein; "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin"; but being raised by providence, they thrive, and are clothed with a beauty and glory, which Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed with: "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field", with such verdure and gaiety, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Matthew 6:28-30). Other creatures that live a sensitive, animal life, yet irrational, are cared for in providence; "He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens that cry" (Ps. 147:9). All the creatures look up unto him, wait upon him, and he gives them their meat in due season; the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air, God knows them

all, and provides for them, and takes care of them, and preserves them; not a sparrow falls to the ground without him, without his knowledge, will, and providence; and the doctrine of providence, and trust in it, are to be learned from these creatures; "Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26). The heathens acknowledge the providence of God, as regarding the most mean and minute. Plato says, that things small and great are not neglected by God, neither through ignorance nor sloth; and that such an imagination is false and wicked; so Chrysippus. Indeed, some are for exempting creatures mean and small, as well as trivial things, from the providence of God, being of the Stoic's mind, who said, "Dii magna curant, parva negligunt"; the gods take care of great things, but neglect small ones: but what is more mean and worthless than a sparrow? and yet under the care of the providence of God; and what smaller than some insects, as flies, &c. and yet as the wisdom and power of God are seen in creating them, they are no less displayed in the use he makes of them, in doing great things by them; as in the plagues of Egypt; and if they are not unworthy of his creation, they cannot be unworthy of his providence.

5c. Thirdly, Rational creatures, angels and men, are more especially the objects of divine providence. Angels good and bad. Good angels are not only upheld in their beings by God, but are directed by his providence, and ordered by his will, here and there; and he does according to his will among them, even in the armies of the heavens, which they are (Dan. 4:35). He orders them to do his pleasure in the several parts of the world, gives them a charge over his people, to keep and guard them in all their ways. Christ says, he could have asked twelve legions of them from his Father, and have had them (Ps. 91:11; Matthew 26:53). But of the officers and employment of good angels we have treated elsewhere. Evil angels are under the restraints and checks of providence; they are held in the chains of it, nor can they go any where, nor any further, nor do anything but what they have leave for; as the cases of Job, and of the man possessed of a legion, and of Peter, show (Job 1:11,12 2:5,6; Mark 5:10-13; Luke 22:31) but of the providence of God, respecting angels in their first estate, and at their fall, I shall treat more particularly hereafter; and proceed to consider the providence of God concerning men, men in general, and the people of God in particular.

5c1. First, Men in general. As all men have their life and breath, and all things, from God; they live, and move, and have their being in him; he looks down from heavens for them, and preserves them; "Thou preservest man and beast"; as all sorts of beasts, so the whole of mankind (Acts 17:25,28; Ps. 33:13,14; 36:6), the providence of God is concerned in production of every man into being, and attends him in every stage and step of life, even unto death.

5c1a. It is concerned in the production of them into being; it was the will of God, declared from the beginning, that there should be a propagation of the human species; God made man, male and female, for that purpose, joined them together in marriage, and enjoined them the first law of nature; "Increase and multiply"; and

blessed this ordinance and institution of his to the peopling of the old world; and when that was overrun with wickedness, and destroyed by him for it with a flood, he by his providence preserved eight persons in an ark; and renewed the original law, "increase and multiply"; and by them re-peopled the whole earth; and though ever since one generation of men has been going off by death, yet another generation comes and succeeds by birth; so it has been, is, and will be to the end of the world. To be a little more particular; the providence of God is concerned in the birth of every man, with respect to time when, place where, and persons of whom he is born; for as each of these are fixed in the purposes of God, the providence of God exactly executes those purposes (Eccl. 3:1,2; Acts 17:26; Gen. 33:5 48:9), the conception of man in the womb, the formation of every member of the body, in the curious and wonderful manner in which they are wrought, and the whole progress thereof, are under the direction of providence, and owing to it (Job 10:8,9; Ps. 94:9; 139:14-16), the production of the soul in, and the union of it to the embryo, when in a fit and proper state to receive it, whereby it is quickened, are performed by the same hand (Ps. 33:15; Zech. 12:1; Acts 17:25), and when all things are ripe for the birth, God, by his power and providence, takes it out of the womb, and brings it forth into the world; for to him is this act ascribed, rather than to the midwife. Job, in his distress, complains of it, and wishes it had not been; but the Psalmist blesses and adores the providence of God for it (Job 10:18; Ps. 22:8,9; 71:6), and how wonderful does the providence of God appear in the case of a newly born infant, that when it cannot help itself, nor tell its wants, care is taken that such things should be done for it in that instant which are necessary (Ezek. 16:4), and that as it has been marvelously fed and nourished, in the dark cell of nature, as soon as it is brought to the light, the mother's breasts are filled with milk, to which it has a natural desire; and her heart is filled with tenderness to it, to do all that is in her power for it, and rather suffer herself than that should want; this is all owing to divine providence (Ps. 22:8; Isa. 49:15).

5c1b. The providence of God attends men in every stage of life into which they come, and in every step in it, as in the first moment of their birth, so throughout their infancy; providing things necessary for them, and preserving them from many dangers the infant state is exposed unto: it appears in their education, the foundation of which is laid in childhood; some have a better education than others, by which their tender minds are opened and improved; and some have greater capacities to receive and take in the instructions given them; but all have either more or less to fit them for the stations in life which are designed for them; all that come into the world are enlightened with the light of nature and reason; there is a rational spirit in every man; and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding in natural things, and teaches him, and makes him wiser than the beasts of the earth, and the fowls of the heaven; whereby he is qualified, in a course of time, for such employments in life he is designed unto (Job 32:8; 35:11), and when fit for business, the providence of God is greatly seen in directing to such callings, occupations, and stations in life they are fittest for; and it is easily discerned in giving to each an inclination to such and such services, some to one, and some to another; some choose an employment on the sea, others on land; some take to

agriculture or husbandry, in one branch of it or another; some to mechanic trades and manufactories, of different sorts: in all which the providence of God greatly appears; for as it is in the natural body, "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? So it is in the body politic, if all chose and were concerned in one sort of business and employment, that would soon be overdone, and the rest neglected; the consequence of which would be distress and confusion. But God, in his providence, has ordered every man's calling for his own particular good, and the good of the public; therefore, "let every man abide in the same calling wherein he is called" (1 Cor. 7:20,24 ;12:17) the places of abode where every man is settled, to do the business of his calling, are under the direction of the providence of God, who has "determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of men's habitation". God not only at the first peopling of the world, divided to the nations their inheritance, and set the bounds of the people; particularly after the flood, disposed of the sons of Noah, and their posterity, some in one part of the world, and some in another; but he has appointed to every man the place of his settlement, and in his providence directs unto it (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26). The marriage state of life, into which most men enter, is too important an affair to escape the providence of God; there is more truth in that common saying, than many are aware of, that "marriages are made in heaven"; that is, they are appointed of God, and brought about in providence; and very often in a most remarkable manner; instances of this may be observed in the direction of Abraham's servant, sent to take a wife for Isaac; and in the case of Boaz and Ruth (Gen. 24:14,15,21,27; Ruth 4:13,14). When persons are born into the world, and set up in business in it, their success therein depends on the providence of God, which is different, to some greater, to others less; some rise early, and sit up late, and it is as much as they can do to live; others, through the blessing of God on their diligence and industry, become rich; which is not to be ascribed to chance and fortune, but to divine providence (Ps. 127:2; Prov. 10:4,22), for poverty and riches are both in the hand of God, and he disposes of them at his pleasure; "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all", both rich and poor; not the maker of them as men, though he is, which is an observation anyone could make, as well as the wise man; but the maker of them both as rich and poor; this is an observation worthy of the wisest of men; for "the Lord maketh poor and maketh rich". Agur was sensible of this, and therefore desires that God would give him neither poverty nor riches, for reasons he mentions; see (Prov. 22:2; 30:8; 1 Sam. 2:7). All afflictions, of whatsoever sort, are under the direction of providence; they do not spring out of the ground, or come by chance, but by the appointment of God; and are overruled, in providence, to answer some ends or other; be they personal or family, or crosses, losses, and disappointments in trade and business, they are all sent, and set and bounded by the providence of God; prosperity and adversity are set by him, the one against the other; so that men can find nothing after him (Job 5:6; 23:14; Eccl. 7:14). All diseases of bodies are the servants of God, are at his beck and command, and sent here and there to do his pleasure; he says to one, go, and it goes, and to another, come, and it comes; he sends them on, and calls them off, as he pleases; he chastens with sore pain, consumes their flesh, weakens their strength in the way, and brings near to the grave; "These things worketh God", in his

providence, "oftentimes with men" (Job 33:29). And as the providence of God attends men in their infancy, childhood, youth, and manhood, and in all circumstances relative to them, in the course of these, so in old age; he that has been the guide of their youth, and conducted them in every part of life, is the staff of old age, and will not then cast off, leave, nor forsake; he carries from the womb even to old age and hoary hairs (Ps. 71:9,18; Isa. 46:3,4). The term of life, as it is fixed by God, it is finished by providence, exactly in the manner, and at the time appointed; some die a violent, and others, for the most part, a natural death; some in the prime of life, others in old age; some suddenly, and in their full strength, while others drag on a tedious life, and consume and pine away gradually; but all come by the appointed means, and in the appointed manner, and at the appointed time, under the direction of providence (1 Sam. 26:10; Job 21:23-25; Eccl. 3:2). Nor can the term of life be protracted beyond the bounds of days, months, and years which God has fixed; nor be shortened, as not to be reached unto (Job 14:5). Nor are the fifteen years added to Hezekiah's days, an objection to this; since that addition was not to the days which God had appointed he should live, but to his own, which he thought were at an end; when he had the sentence that he should die, being stricken with a mortal disease, which none but God could cure him of: nor what is said of some, that they die before their time (Eccl. 7:17), since that does not respect God's time, but their own time; what, according to the course of nature, humanly speaking, they might have lived to; and which both they and their friends might expect they would; the passage respects such who by capital crimes fall under the notice and vengeance of the civil magistrate, and so come to what is usually styled an untimely end. And when some are said not to live out half their days; these live out all the days they are designed in providence to live; and yet live but half of those which, according to their own, and the expectation of their friends, and according to the common term of life, threescore years and ten, it might be supposed they would have lived; so that if a person dies under five and thirty years of age, he may be said to live not half the days of man, though he has lived all the days that were allotted to him in providence; see (Ps. 55:23; 90:10).

5c2. Secondly, There is a special providence, which is concerned with the people of God in particular; God is "the Saviour of all men", in a providential way, but "especially of those that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10), not only is the eye of love, grace, and mercy, on those that fear the Lord, but his eye of providence. The providence of God is signified by seven eyes, that run to and fro through the earth, to denote the perfection and extensiveness of it; and it takes this course, particularly that God may "show himself strong on the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him" (Ps. 33:18; Zech. 4:10; 2 Chron. 16:9). Many are the instances on divine record, of the special providence of God respecting the saints; as Abraham and Sarah, who being called from their native country to a strange land, through which they traveled with safety, though the Canaanite was in it; and were eminently preserved both in Egypt and Gerar; Abraham, when his life, as he supposed, was in danger, and Sarah, when her chastity was ready to be violated (Gen. 12:1,6,10; 12:12,13,20; 20:6,15,16). Isaac, in obedience to the divine command, Abraham took, and was about to sacrifice, all things being ready for that purpose, and his hand

stretched out to give the fatal blow; when he was restrained from it by a voice from heaven, and was directed to a ram caught in a thicket, to offer in his room; and this providence being at mount Moriah, occasioned a proverb in future ages, for the encouragement of faith in times of distress; "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen" (Gen. 22:2,10,11,14). Jacob is another instance of the special care of divine providence, in directing him to flee from the wrath of his brother, who intended to kill him; and in preserving him in his journey, and bringing him safe to Laban's family; in prospering him in it, and in securing him from his fury, when he departed from him; in guarding him with an host of angels when his brother Esau came out to meet him; all which, and other providences, were remarked by him; which occurred in the way in which he was led by his God, who fed him, and protected him all his days (Gen. 27:42,43; 29:1; 30:43; 31:29,42; 32:1,2; 35:3; 48:15). Joseph, whose party-colored coat was an emblem of the various providences of his life, is a remarkable instance of this kind; in being preserved from the designs of his brethren upon his life; in his being sold and carried into Egypt; in the disposal of him there, and the favour he had both in Potiphar's family, and in the prison into which he was cast by him; in interpreting the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants, which was the means of his being brought from thence into Pharaoh's presence and court; where he was advanced to the highest honour and office, next the king, and was of eminent use to the whole nation, and to his father's family (Gen. 37:3,18,21,26,27; 39:4,21,23; 41:14,41; 50:20). To observe no more, David was also remarkably the care of providence. Samuel was directed by the providence of God to anoint him king, when all his brethren, elder than he, were passed by; and by the same providence he was brought to Saul's court, and more than once was he eminently preserved from his fury; as when he threw a javelin at him, and sent messengers to beset his house, and take him; and when he pursued him in various places, and particularly when he lay with his army on one side of the mountain where David and his men were, and was just about to surround him, but was called off by a messenger that acquainted him the Philistines had invaded the land: with many other signal appearances of divine providence in his favour, both in his exile and in his wars (1 Sam. 16:13,18-23; 19:10,12; 23:26,27). But besides those instances, and many others, there is a special providence that attends all the people of God.

5c2a. Before conversion, even as soon as they are born; this is what the apostle seems to intend in (Gal. 1:15). With respect to himself; "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb"; which cannot be understood of the separation of him in election, which was done earlier than this, even in eternity; nor of his separation from others in the effectual calling, for that was not done so early; but of his being taken under the care of divine providence in a distinguished manner, as soon as he was taken out of his mother's womb; God's eye was upon him all along, from thence to the time of his conversion, waiting to be gracious to him; see (Acts 7:58; 8:1,3; 9:1-5). Though it is not the only, nor the principal thing, that may be intended in (2 Tim. 1:9), yet it seems to be part of the sense of it, and not to be excluded from it; "Who hath saved us, and called us"; since the people of God are often saved from many imminent dangers, to which their lives are exposed

before conversion; and so are saved before called, and saved to be called. Many of them are greatly preserved from the grosser sins of life before conversion, though this is not the case of all; and many are blessed with a religious education, which is a means of their preservation from scandalous sins; though this also every one has not; yet where it is, it is a providential favour.

5c2b. At conversion; as effectual calling itself is according to the purpose of God, as to time, place, and means; so the providence of God is concerned in the bringing of it about agreeable thereunto; there is a time fixed for it, called the time of life, and the time of love; because there is then the first appearance of both; this is sometimes in the earlier, and sometimes in the latter part of life, and is not restrained to any, but is always at the time appointed by God, and then it is providentially brought about; the time being come for the conversion of the woman of Samaria, and for the call of Zaccheus, Christ must needs go through Samaria and Jericho, when it does not appear that he had any reason to go through either, but on those accounts. The place where conversion shall be made is also fixed (Ps. 87:4-6; Acts 18:10), wherefore the providence of God is often remarkably concerned either in bringing the gospel to such places, as it was brought to Philippi, for the sake of the conversion of Lydia and her household, and of the jailer and his (Acts 16:6-12,14,15,33,34), or in bringing persons to the places where the gospel is, and casting them under the sound of it. Very remarkable and uncommon was the conversion of Onesimus, a fugitive servant, who ran away from his master, was taken up and cast into the same prison where the apostle Paul was, by whom he was begotten in his bonds, through the ministry of the gospel to him (Philemon 1:10). And as the gospel is the ordinary means of conversion, how providentially are some persons brought under it, and converted by it, led by curiosity to hear it, or with a malignant spirit to scoff at it, oppose and persecute it; and ministers, how providentially are they directed to insist on such a subject, to say such things, and drop such expressions, and which, perhaps, they thought not of before, which, accompanied with a divine power, issue in conversion. Thus Austin, losing his subject, and digressing from it, fell upon the error of the Manichees, which proved the conversion of a great man of that heresy; and at most, ministers draw the bow at a venture; it is divine providence, in a gracious manner, directs the arrow of the word to the sinner's heart, where, through the power of divine grace, it does execution.

5c2c. After conversion the providence of God appears, as well as before, in preserving his people from many evils and dangers; angels are ministering spirits to them, have the charge of them, encompass about them, and protect them (Ps. 91:11; 34:7), in providing for their temporal good, so that they shall want no good thing fitting and convenient for them; rather than they shall suffer want God will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys (Ps. 34:9,10; 89:11; Isa. 41:17,18). And in directing them in all their ways, to take such steps as will be most for their good and the glory of God (Ps. 37:23), and in delivering them out of their afflictions, and causing all things to work together for their good; and in being their God and guide even unto death (Rom. 8:28; Ps. 34:19; 48:14).

5d. Fourthly, The providence of God is concerned in all actions; in everything that is done in the world, from the beginning to the end of it. God is a "God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (1 Sam. 2:3), not only are they known, considered, and examined by him, but he has some way or other, or in some sense or another, a concern in them; all action is from motion, and all motion comes originally from the first Mover, who is God, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

5d1. First, All natural actions, which are common or peculiar to every creature, as flying to the fowls of the air, swimming to fishes, walking to men and beasts; all muscular motion is of God; and is continued by his providence; by which we can move from place to place, rise, walk, run, &c. eat and drink, and do every action, and the several businesses of life.

5d2. Secondly, All necessary actions; such as either arise from the necessity of nature, or are so by the ordination and appointment of God. Some are so by the necessity of nature; as waters naturally and necessarily descend and flow; and fire naturally and necessarily burns what is combustible, when put to it; and heavy things descend, and light things ascend; they necessarily move and act according to their nature, which is preserved in them by the providence of God; and that they are under the direction of providence is clear, because they are sometimes controlled by it: so the waters rose up and stood on an heap in the Red Sea, and the river of Jordan, and made dry land for the Israelites to pass through. The nature of fire was so restrained in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, that it did not so much as singe nor scent the clothes of the three companions of Daniel, cast into it. There are other things that are necessary by the appointment of God, or must be, because he has appointed them; and, indeed, everything is necessary in this sense, because he has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass; so for instance, the sufferings of Christ being by the determinate counsel of God, were necessary; hence those phrases, ought not Christ to suffer; the Son of man "must" suffer many things; so likewise offences must come, and heresies must be; they were necessary, by a necessity of immutability; that is, they must and do unchangeably come to pass in providence; but not by a necessity of coercion, or force, on those that are the authors of them, who do what they do most freely: as the crucifiers of Christ; men could not act more freely than they did; and as those by whom offences come, they give them freely, and are pleased when they are taken. Heretics form their corrupt schemes of doctrine with their whole hearts and will, and freely spread them; so that the divine determination, and providential bringing about of necessary actions, are consistent with the liberty of man's will. Hence,

5d3. Thirdly, All free and voluntary actions, which depend upon the free will of man, are under the direction of the providence of God. The thoughts, purposes, schemes, and determinations of the will of men, than which nothing is more free; yet these are under the influence of divine providence; "A man's heart deviseth his way"; forms schemes, which he purposes to execute; settles the method of the execution of them, according to his will; and chooses the way he proposes to walk in;

"But the Lord directeth his steps", and guides him in providence to take a quite different course; "The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, are from the Lord"; the thoughts of the heart, by which a man is prepared to speak his mind, are under a divine influence; as free as thought is, it is not exempt from the providence of God, which both directs and overrules it; and the answer the tongue is thereby prepared to give, is under the same influence and restraint; Balaam would willingly have given an answer to the wishes of Balak, in order to have gotten his money, but could not: when he had devised what to say, and was just ready to open his mouth to curse Israel, God put another word into his mouth; and instead of cursing, he blessed Israel. What more free and arbitrary than the heart, mind, and will of a sovereign despotic prince? yet "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will"; as resolute and determined as it may be, it is in the hand of God; and it is in his power to turn it as easily as canals of water may be cut by a gardener to water his garden; or as the river Euphrates was cut by Cyrus, and its course diverted, and its waters drained; so that he could march his army into the midst of Babylon, through which it ran. So the cabinet councils of princes, in which they consult, debate, and speak their minds freely, are all overruled by the providence of God, to answer his own purposes; (see Prov. 16:1,9; 21:1).

5d4. Fourthly, All contingent actions, or such as are called chance matters, these fall under the divine providence. What may seem more a contingency, or matter of chance, than the shooting of a bird flying, and its falling to the ground? When the bow is drawn, or the piece presented and leveled, how uncertain is it whether it hits the bird or not? And yet, "One sparrow shall not fall on the ground", that is, be shot and drop on the ground, "without your Father"; without his knowledge, will, and providence (Matthew 10:29), and what is more contingent than the killing of a man unawares, as it is described (Deut. 19:4,5)? and yet the providence of God is so far concerned in such an affair, that God is said to "deliver" such a man "into the hand" of his neighbour (Ex. 21:13). What we call accidental death is providential: what can be thought more a chance matter than the casting of a lot, how it will issue? and yet the issue, which is of God, is certain; "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Prov. 16:33). The first lot mentioned in scripture is that which was cast on the account of Achan, who had stolen a Babylonish garment, and a wedge of gold; to find out which, Joshua had recourse to a lot; this was cast first for the tribe the guilty person belonged to, and it fell on the tribe of Judah; then for the family of it, and it fell on the family of the Zarhites; and next for the household, and it fell upon the household of Zabdi; and then for the person, and it fell upon Achan: and in the whole process, how remarkable is the providence of God, which directed to the tribe, to the family, to the household, and to the guilty person; for that he was so, is certain from his own confession (Joshua 7:16-20). The next lot was that which was cast for the division of the land of Canaan to the tribes of Israel; and which fell exactly agreeable to the prophecies of Jacob and Moses: thus for instance, it is suggested in both of them, that the tribe of Zebulun should have its situation by the sea (Gen. 49:13; Deut. 33:19), and by lot this situation was assigned unto it (Joshua 19:11). The third lot we read of was that

cast by Saul, to find out the person that had sinned, on whose account no answer was returned by the Lord to an inquiry made; and Saul desired a perfect lot might be given between the people, and him and Jonathan; it was cast, and the people escaped; it was cast again, and it fell on Jonathan, who had tasted honey that day, contrary to the charge and oath of Saul (1 Sam. 14:40-43). Once more, Jonah fleeing from the presence of the Lord, took shipping at Joppa, for Tarshish, when a tempest arose and endangered the ship, and frightened the mariners; who supposed it was for some evil done by some among them, and therefore cast lots to find out the person, and the lot fell on Jonah. Now how careful and just was this disposition made in providence, that it might not fall upon any of the innocent mariners, but upon the guilty person; and for whom God in his providence had provided a fish to swallow him, when cast into the sea! (Jonah 1:7,17).

5d5. Fifthly, All actions and things done in the world and among men, whether good or evil, are under the direction of providence; or that is some way or other concerned in them.

5d5a. First, Good actions. Those are of God, the fountain of all goodness; there is no good thing in fallen man naturally, and therefore no good thing comes out of him, nor is any good thing done by him; and without the grace of God, he can do nothing of that kind; neither think a good thought, nor do a good action, an action that is spiritually good; in this God is concerned; this is one branch of his gracious dealings in providence with men: and he does not only uphold them in their beings, while they are doing good; for this he does to wicked men, while they are doing evil things; nor does he only give them a law, which shows them that which is good, what is to be done, and what to be avoided, and what is the perfect and acceptable will of God; to love God and their neighbour; to do nothing injurious to the glory of the one, and the good of the other: nor does he barely make use of moral persuasion by his ministers, to persuade with arguments taken from fear or love, from loss or profit, to avoid evil and do good (Deut. 30:19; 2 Cor. 5:11). But God works efficaciously in the hearts of his people, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure; he opens their hearts to attend to the word spoken to them; he bends their wills, and inclines their hearts to that which is good, and gives them power and grace to effect it; he circumcises their hearts to love him, the Lord their God; he creates them anew in Christ, that they may be capable of performing good works; for though without him they can do nothing, yet through him strengthening them, they can do all things; he puts his Spirit within them, to enable them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments and do them. But of this more, when we come to treat of the doctrine of efficacious Grace.

5d5b. Secondly, There are many evil things done in the world, in which the providence of God is concerned; and these are of two sorts, the evil of calamities, distress, and afflictions, and the evil of sin.

5d5b1. The evils of calamities, &c. and these are either more public or more private.

5d5b1a. More public; such are the calamities and distresses on nations and kingdoms, and bodies of men, and which are never without the providence of God; "I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things", in a providential way (Isa. 45:7). When peace obtains and continues in states and kingdoms, it is God that makes peace in their borders; this is a blessing of his providence; and the evil which is set in contrast with it, said to be of his creating, is war; and this, and all the calamities and distress that attend and follow it, are by the providence of God. In this sense are we to understand the prophet when he says, "Shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos 3:6), he means any public calamity, affliction, and distress; even cities themselves come to destruction, and their memorial perishes with them: where is now Thebes with its hundred gates, and Babylon, with its broad walls, and the famous Persepolis, and Jerusalem the joy of the whole earth? it cannot be thought that these cities came to destruction without the concern of providence therein: yea, where are the famous monarchies which made such a figure in the world, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman, of which the latter only has a name, and that is all? the fall of these, according to divine prediction, has been accomplished by divine providence. Under this head may be observed the judgments of God in the world, as the sword, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, &c. When the sword is drawn, it is God that gives it a charge, and appoints it against such a state and kingdom; and it cannot be sheathed again, and be at rest and quiet, until he gives a counterorder in providence (Jer. 47:6,7). Famine is one of God's arrows shot out of the bow of providence; wherever it is, it is of his calling for and sending. (Amos 4:6; Hag 1:11), and pestilence is another of his arrows, an arrow which flies by day and walks in darkness, and wastes at noonday by his order; concerning which he says, "I will send", or "I have sent" the pestilence among them (Jer. 29:17; Amos 4:10), and who has foretold there shall be earthquakes in divers places, as have been in our times as well as others, and cannot be thought to be without the providence of God (Matthew 24:7).

5d5b1b. There are other calamities and afflictions which are of a more private nature, and are either inflicted on wicked men by way of punishment for sin, nor can they justly complain of the providence of God as acting unrighteously by them, "Wherefore should a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" (Lam. 3:39), or they are inflicted on good men in love, and as fatherly corrections and chastisements; "for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son that he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6), and this now (the afflictions of good men) is made an objection, though not justly, against the providence of God: this was the grand objection of Epicurus and his followers to divine providence, the only persons among the heathens that objected to it: because they observed that wicked men for the most part prospered, and good men, or virtuous men, as they called them, were generally afflicted and distressed; and therefore they could not believe that God concerned himself with human affairs; and this has been a stumbling to good men, which they know not how well to reconcile to the justice of God, as it was to Asaph and Jeremiah (Ps. 73:2,3,12-14; Jer. 12:1,2). But it should be observed,

5d5b1b1. That wicked men, though they prosper and abound in riches, and are not seemingly in trouble as other men, yet they are not so happy as they may be thought to be; for as our Lord says, "A man's life", that is, the happiness of it, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Some have much, and have not a power to make use of it, either for their own comfort or the good of others; and where is the difference then between having and not having it? Others, on the contrary, are profuse and extravagant, and live very luxurious and debauched lives, and bring upon themselves painful or nauseous diseases, and distress of mind; so that they have neither ease of body nor peace of conscience, but racking pain and dreadful remorse; some, their abundance will not suffer them to sleep, either through fear of losing what they have by thieves, &c. or through care contriving schemes to increase it; and some, envy seizes them and gnaws upon them, and they cannot enjoy themselves because a neighbour exceeds them in grandeur and wealth.

5d5b1b2. It should be also observed that a good man, though afflicted, is not so unhappy as is imagined; he has more peace, satisfaction, and contentment in what he has, though mean and little, than the wicked rich man in all his abundance; see (Ps. 37:16; Prov. 15:16,17), besides, the good man, though poor in one sense, he is rich in a better; and is not only heir of a kingdom, but is possessed of one which cannot be moved, the kingdom of grace; he is possessed of the riches of grace, and is entitled to the riches of glory; and in the meanwhile has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, communion with God, and joy and peace unspeakable, which none can take away; and even his very afflictions work together for his good, temporal, spiritual, and eternal; and he has the presence of God, and a rich experience of his grace in them; so that he has reason to count it all joy when he falls into temptations, that is, into afflictions; for though they are not in themselves joyous, but grievous, yet they yield to them to whom they are sanctified the peaceable fruits of righteousness; so that the balance is now on the afflicted good man's side.

5d5b1b3. Hereafter, in a future state, this difficulty will be quite removed, and entirely vanish, when the wicked rich man, that was clothed in purple, and fared sumptuously every day, and had his good things here, will have his evil things; and Lazarus, the afflicted man, that was clothed with rags, and covered with ulcers, and had his evil things, will now have his good things; the one will be tormented, and the other comforted; the wicked will go into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal; and then justice will shine in its true luster and glory.

5d5b2. There are the evils of fault, or sinful actions, from which the providence of God is not to be excluded. This is the greatest difficulty to be met with in the article of providence, how it should have a concern with sinful actions, or with actions to which sin is annexed, as some choose to express themselves. There are two things to be set down for certain and eternal truths, whether we are capable of reconciling them to our own satisfaction and that of others, or not; the one is, that God is not and cannot be the author of sin; the other is, that the providence of God has a concern with and in all sinful actions in some sense or another: that God is not the

author of sin is most certain, there is nothing sinful in his nature; Plato says of good things there is no other cause, but of evil things we must seek for any other cause but God: he is without iniquity, is of unspotted purity and holiness; there is nothing but good in him, and therefore nothing sinful can come from him, nor be done by him; he takes no pleasure in sin, nor in those that do it, which the authors of sin do; he cannot look upon it with approbation and delight, it is abominable and hateful to him; for he has not only forbidden it by his law, but is the avenger of it; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, come from him on every soul that does evil; wherefore "let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God" (Jam. 1:13), and on the other hand, to exclude the providence of God from all concern in the sinful actions of men, is contrary to the independency of God, in whom all live and move and have their being, and of whom, through whom, and to whom all things are: creatures depend upon God, as in their being so in their operation, or they would be in action independent of him, and so there would be other independents besides him; moreover to exempt the providence of God from all concern in sinful actions, or in actions to which sin is annexed, would be to banish providence, in a good measure, out of the world; for, comparatively speaking, what is done in the world but what is sinful? for these are the all, or the chief things in the world; "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). Let the following things be observed for the settling of this point, and the removing of the above difficulty,

5d5b2a. That God supports men in their being, while they are sinning. This is certain; he upholds them in life, his visitation preserves their spirits; was he to withdraw his power and providence from them, they would cease to be, and become incapable of action; but this he does not; he could have struck Ananias and Sapphira dead, before they committed the sin they did, and so have prevented it; but he did not; but when they had committed it, then he did it.

5d5b2b. God, in innumerable instances, does not hinder the commission of sin, when he could do it, if he would: that he can do it is certain, because he has done it; he withheld Abimelech from sinning against him, as he told him (Gen. 20:6 and he that withheld Abimelech, could have withheld Adam, and any of his sons, from sinning, whom he has not. He restrained Laban from hurting Jacob, as Laban himself owned; and hindered Balsam from cursing Israel, which he would gladly have done. And so God could prevent the innumerable sins of men, which yet he does not. We, as creatures, are bound to hinder all the evil we can; but God is under no such obligation.

5d5b2c. God permits sin to be done, or suffers it to be, in his providence. This is the language of scripture; "Who in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways"; and these ways were sinful ones (Acts 14:16). And this permission is not a connivance at sin; nor a concession or grant of it; much less does it express any approbation of it; nor is it barely a leaving of men to the liberty of their wills, to do as they please; as Moses suffered the Jews to put away their wives when they pleased; as though he was careless and indifferent about it: nor is it a mere naked

permission, but a voluntary one, yea, an efficacious one; God's will is in it, and efficacy attends it. Hence,

5d5b2d. God is represented as active in things relative to it; he not only suffers men to walk in their sinful ways, but "he gives them up to their own hearts lusts; he gives them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; he sends them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie" (Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:28 2; Thess. 2:11). Joseph's brethren sold him into Egypt, but God sent him thither; he bid Shimei curse David; he gave the evil spirit a commission to go forth and do what he proposed, to be a lying spirit in the mouths of Ahab's prophets (Gen. 45:5 2; Sam. 16:10; 1 Kings 22:21,22).

5d5b2e. It will be proper to distinguish between an act, and the obliquity of it; every action, as an action, a natural one, is of God, the first Mover, in whom all move; the creature is dependent on God, as the Creator, in every action, as well as in his being; but the obliquity and irregularity of the action, as it swerves from the rule of God's law, is from man this is sometimes illustrated by divines, in such an instance as this; a man that rides on a lame horse, he by whipping and spurring is the cause and occasion of his motion of going forward; but he is not the cause of his going lamely; that arises from a disorder in the creature itself: also the sun in the firmament, when it exhales a nauseous scent from a dunghill, it is the cause of the exhalation; but it is not the cause of the ill scent of it, that arises from the dunghill; the heat and force of the sun may be the occasion of the ill scent being drawn forth, but not of that itself. So,

5d5b2f. God in his providence may put in the way of persons things that are good in themselves; which may give an opportunity, and be the occasion of drawing out the corruptions of men's hearts; thus God in his providence directed Joseph to dream, and to tell his dreams; which drew upon him the envy of his brethren; and God put it into the heart of Jacob to send him to visit them in the fields, where they were feeding their flocks, which gave them an opportunity to form and execute evil against him. David was brought by providence into afflicted circumstances, which obliged him to flee, and pass by the way where Shimei lived; and which gave him an opportunity of doing that with his mouth, which very probably he had done in his heart before; and now it was, as it were, saying, Go curse David; the object was presented, and a fit opportunity in providence offered. There is sometimes a concurrence of things in providence, which in themselves are not sinful, yet are the occasion of sin; as in the affair of David and Bathsheba. Various things met together, which gave an opportunity, and were the occasion of committing sin, which David fell into, not being restrained by the grace of God; and to be preserved from opportunities, the occasion of sinning, is owing to the kind providence of God. Of this an heathen was sensible, and therefore gave thanks to God, that when he had a disposition to sin, and should have committed it, had an occasion offered; yet *θεων ευποια*, by the good providence of God, no such occasion, from the concurrence of things, did offer for his commission of it. God gives to some men wealth and riches, and these are the occasions of much sin to them. He gives a law, which forbids men

to sin; but as the poet says, "Nitimur in vetitum"; or rather as the apostle says, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:8), the gospel also sent to men, is the occasion of stirring up the corruption of their nature, their pride, and passion, to an opposition to it, and it becomes the saviour of death unto death unto them (2 Cor. 2:16).

5d5b2g. The concern of providence about sinful actions, further appears in limiting and setting bounds; as to the waves of the sea, saying, "hitherto shalt thou come, and no further" (Job 38:11). Thus Joseph's brethren would have run greater lengths in sin, had they not been restrained by the overruling providence of God; their first scheme was to put him to death; this was disconcerted by Reuben, who proposed putting him into a pit, and let him starve there; from this also they were diverted by a motion of Judah's to take him from thence, and sell him to the Ishmaelites, who were coming that way. And though it is amazing to observe how much sin is committed in the world; yet considering the wretched depravity of human nature, the temptations of Satan, and the snares of the world, it is most amazing that no more is committed; which can only be ascribed to the restraining providence of God.

5d5b2h. God in the affairs of providence, is to be considered as the Rector and Governor of the world, and the Judge of the whole earth; and in this branch of it, respecting sin, which he overrules either for the punishment of those who commit it, or of others, or else for good; he sometimes punishes one sin with another. Plato says, a license to sin, is the greatest punishment of sin. So disobedient Israel, because they would not hearken to the voice of God, and would have nothing to do with him, therefore he gave them up to their own hearts lust: and the heathens, because they liked not to retain God in their knowledge, therefore he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to commit things sinful; and because the followers of antichrist believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness; therefore he sent them strong delusions to believe a lie; and when he is said to harden the hearts, and blind the minds of men, it is done in a judicial way, by giving them up to greater hardness and blindness, for their willful obstinacy, and affected ignorance (Ps. 81:11; Rom. 1:28; 2 Thess. 2:11,12; Rom. 9:18; 11:8,10). Thus God corrected David's sin with Bathsheba, by the incest of his son with his wives and concubines; and punished the hypocrisy and idolatry of Israel, through the pride, ambition, and cruelty of the Assyrian monarch, who was in his hand the rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation (2 Sam. 12:11; Isa. 10:6,7). Sometimes God overrules the sins of men for good; as the sin of Adam, for the glorifying of his perfections; the crucifixion of Christ for the salvation of men, and Joseph's being sold into Egypt, for the saving many persons alive (Gen. 50:20).

To conclude this article of providence; let it be observed,

1. That all the providences of God are executed in the wisest manner; though they may not sometimes appear clear to us, and are inscrutable by us, and the causes and

reasons of them not to be accounted for; yet even in such a view of them it should be said with the apostle, "O the depth of the riches", &c. (Rom. 11:33).

2. They are all done in the most holy and righteous manner; even such as are concerned about sin, are clear from any imputation of it; "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:17).

3. They are executed with power irresistible; they are immutably performed, according to the unchangeable will of God, who works all things in providence after the counsel of his will; he does what he pleases; his counsel always stands; and he does all his pleasure. Wherefore,

4. We should give to him the glory of all; observe with wonder and gratitude, the various steps of it respecting ourselves and others; and put our trust in him for things temporal and spiritual; and at all times cast our care upon him, who cares for us; seeing it is, and always will be, well with the righteous, in time and to all eternity.