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SCRIPTURE LANGUAGE.

It is one of the unlovely traits of humanity, that men censure in others, the want of that which they themselves possess not. Or condemn that in others which they themselves practise. A stronger illustration of this fact could not be given, than is exhibited in the outcry raised by Unitarians against the Christian Churches, for not using *Scripture language* in their creeds.—For not using *Scripture language* in their sermons. The specifications they point to, are, words, or expressions, such as *Trinity*, *Trine*, *vicarious*, *Godman*, &c. &c. The answer which is given to this puerile rant, is familiar perhaps, to every plain, common-sense Trinitarian: viz. "the word *trine*, is compounded of two latin words; the first meaning *three*, and the second meaning *one*;—and we express by the word, *trine*, or *three-one*, (in a short way) that which the scriptures express, by saying, "*These three are one*." The word *Godman*, is not in the New Testament applied to Jesus Christ: but when we see him called *God* in one verse, and *Man* in another, we abbreviate the expression of our belief, by uniting the two scripture expressions." "And so of *vicarious*, we mean to express briefly what the scripture means by "He bore our sins in his own body on the tree." And thus it is with every particular of this unfounded and futile charge. I do not know that the word *malevolent* is found in the scriptures; but, if it is not, who, in either speaking his belief or in writing it, would object to its use if he wished to express briefly, that disposition felt by satan, when he goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.—I do not know that the word *extatic*, is to be found on the sacred page; yet, it might be found an useful adjective to convey the christian meaning, either in writing or speaking:—and so of a thousand expressions, used by every one (either Trinitarian or Infidel,) who ever spoke much, or wrote much on the

wrote, were "Predestinated unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will."

Reader, can you say this; or are you frightened at a text: and are you afraid it should go forth without addition, alteration or qualification, as your sentiment. N.

A WHEEL WITHIN A WHEEL.

A SERMON,*

BY REV. THOMAS CLELAND, D. D.

Ezek. i. 16. And their appearance and their work was, as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.

This is one of the grandest visions ever seen by mortal man. It commences at verse, 4. and ends with the chapter. A brief analysis, or explication is necessary in order to a more familiar entrance on the subject before us.

In verse, 4. the prophet saw "a whirlwind." It "came out of the North," with "a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, &c." The "whirlwind," I consider, denoted the impetuous judgment of God in

*This Sermon has been obtained from Dr. Cleland, by the particular solicitation of one of the Editors. The story of its origin is somewhat novel and interesting; and is, itself, an illustration of the subject presented in the Sermon.

In the early part of the author's ministry, one of the good elders of his church, since gone to his rest, asked his minister if he could preach a Sermon for him, on that text? To which he replied, that he could not tell, until he examined the subject, which had not before been brought to his mind. The elder expressing an anxiety about it, received a conditional promise. Shortly after, the author was under the necessity of being employed in repairing a horse-mill on his premises, on which many around were dependant for bread. In this employment, he was engaged all alone during three days. His mind was at the same time very much occupied with the subject of the elder's text; and here was an auxiliary, somewhat of a practical illustration of the matter in hand. And therefore, while the wheels of the mill, in their various relations and connections, were displayed before his eyes, the wheels of Ezekiel's vision were continually running in his head. At length, something in the shape of a Sermon was produced. It was preached both to the amazement and gratification of the good old man.

Not long after, the author had occasion, by the order of the Presbytery, to visit a congregation where a great schism had taken place, by the defection of Matthew Houston, their Pastor. The Sermon was preached there. A young man was present, who had commenced a course of preparation for the Ministry. He was very ardent and zealous, and much attached to Houston—went off with the party, and put himself under the direction of Barton W. Stone, expecting shortly to come out a flaming New Light preacher. But these wheels rolled him out of the mazes of error, and the Lord be praised, rolled him back again into the Presbyterian Church.—He got completely cured of Arianism, and finished his theological studies with the author. The church will rejoice to know, and that is all, from this story, she need to know, that young man is now, the Pastor of the First Presbyterian church in Lexington. (Ky.)

the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah by the Babylonians. The "cloud," was emblematic of his dark dispensations and impending heavy judgments on the Jewish nation. The "fire," represented his justice and holiness in the awful vengeance about to be executed. Out of the midst of this glorious vision the prophet saw (v. 5.) "the likeness of four living creatures." In chap. x. and 20 verse, he tells us what they were. "I know that the living creatures were the Cherubims;" one of the names by which the angels are known in scripture. They are the bright attendants on the king of glory, and the ministers of his holy Providence. We have their number. They are *four*, to intimate their being employed in the four quarters of the globe, or sent forth toward "*the four winds of heaven.*" And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of *a man.*" They were intelligent, rational creatures; "and every one had *four faces*; and every one had *four wings.*" We have here, and onward, their qualifications represented, their various endowments and characters hieroglyphically described. "They four had the face of *a man.*" (v. 10.) Indicative of knowledge, forethought, prudence, compassion and philanthropy. "They had the face of *a lion.*"—Bold formidable, and fearless in executing the will of God.—"The face of *an ox.*" For strength, labor, unwearied diligence and perseverance in their work. "The face of *an eagle.*"—Denoting their activity, their piercing knowledge, and spiritual sagacity. Their "four wings" are necessary for activity, celerity, and expedition. "The hands of a man *underneath the wings,*" point out their skillfulness and dexterity, their admirable adaptation to their work.—Wings for motion, hands for action. "Their wings were joined one to another, because of their perfect unanimity." (v. 9.) "They went every one straight forward." They were intent upon the service of their Master, as well as harmonious, steady and constant in their obedience to all his commands. "They turned not when they went." Because they made no mistakes that needed rectifying—no errors that needed correction; and no diversions caused them to turn aside to follow any thing foreign from their employment. "Their wings were stretched upwards," expressive of their promptitude and readiness to execute their Makers orders. "Their feet were straight feet." They stood straight and firm, and steady; exhibiting great simplicity and uprightness; the sole of their feet being "like the sole of a calf's foot," which divides the hoof, and is therefore clean, was emblematical of their purity and holiness. "And they sparkled like the colour of burnished brass." A superior excellency and dignity appeared in their character and movements.

Being employed on the errands of the Almighty, every step the angels take therein is glorious.

The prophet having described these living creatures by their nature, their number, their qualifications, including their general appearance, their faces, their wings, their feet, their hands, and their motions, he goes on to tell us that "they went whither the spirit was to go;" (v. 12.) which implies that in all their motions and conduct they subjected themselves to the direction and government of the divine will. In their ministrations they were perfectly subservient in the providential government of the world—to the great concerns of religion, and the prosperity of the church. In this grand employment, "their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps;" denoting their ardent love to God—their fervent glowing zeal in his cause—their splendor and brightness—the terrible effects of their ministry on the enemies of God and his church. The "lamps, or light going up and down among the living creatures," intimate, that they receive all their light, wisdom and understanding from Him who is the fountain of Light, and by whose unerring wisdom they are guided in all their operations. And while inflicting his judgments on the objects of Divine vengeance, a bright fire is seen issuing forth as lightning upon them; in the execution of which these instruments were seen by the prophet, with inexpressible velocity, "running and returning as a flash of lightning."

The prophet next discovered "one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces." (v. 16.) The mysterious dispensations of God's Providence are compared to *wheels*, either of a chariot in which he rides as a conqueror to execute the purposes of his own will, or, rather, the wheels of a clock, or some complicated Machine, all contributing to its regular motion. The wheel being "upon the earth," intimated that the vision related to the affairs of this lower world. Its being "by the living creatures," who attended it to direct its motion, teaches us that the Angels, as the ministers of God's Providence, are employed in directing the motions of second causes in subserviency to the Divine purpose. And such a close connection and admirable harmony exist between the *living creatures* and the *wheels*, that they co-operated, moved, and rested together.—"When the living creatures went, the wheels went by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up. Whithersoever the spirit was to go, they went, thither was their spirit to go; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. When those went, these went; and

when *those* stood, *these* stood." &c. (v. 19—21.) Thus, the same will and counsel of God, that guides and governs the Angels and all their performances, does also, by them, order and dispose of all the motions of the creatures in this lower world, with all their issues and events.

It is moreover said, that this wheel had "*four faces*," looking four several ways; intimating that the Providence of God exerts itself in all parts of the world, East, West, North and South. Look where you will upon this wheel of Providence, it has a face toward you. The four wheels, as they now appeared to the prophet, "had one likeness," to show that there is a consistency, and even uniformity, in the dispensations of Providence. "Their work was like unto the colour of a beryl," like green sea-water, an emblem of the perpetual vicissitudes of human affairs. "They went on their *four sides*; and they returned not when they went." (v. 17.) The shape of the wheels and admirable aptitude for continual motion, "the appearance, and their work being as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel," either passing through at right angles, or perhaps a smaller wheel, connected with a larger one, and set in motion by it, very forcibly represent the constant revolution of human affairs, under the conduct of Providence, both with respect to persons and communities; being to-day at the top, but to-morrow at the bottom of the wheel, beyond all human expectation or prevention. Nothing could interrupt or retard the progress of these wheels, moving steadily on "their four sides," and in their proper places, without deviating or being diverted from their course by any impediments. They signify, too, by their not returning backward, that Providence does nothing in vain. The *rings*, or rims of the wheels "were so high that they were dreadful; and their rings were full of eyes round about them." (v. 18.) If the circumference of these wheels, when raised up and put in motion, was so vast and tremendous that the prophet was afraid to look upon them, how should we be astonished when contemplating the "vast compass of God's thought, and the vast reach of his design?" Who can attempt to describe the circle of Providence, without amazement, or without being constrained to cry out, "O! the height and depth of God's councils!" Though the dispensations of Providence may appear to us intricate, perplexed, and unaccountable, yet it is pleasing to reflect that the wheels *were full of eyes round about*: plainly denoting that the motions and events of Providence are all directed and determined, not by a fickle chance, or a blind fortune, but by a God of infinite wisdom and unerring skill. And though we be not able to account for the origin

and tendencies of events, yet all things are under the cognizance and disposal of an all-wise, all-seeing God, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. To follow the prophet in our analysis through this vision would be pleasing and interesting. But in doing so, we should transcend our intended limits; and therefore we proceed to the discussion of our subject, by attempting to illustrate and confirm the following

PROPOSITION.

The great plan of God's Providence, like a great "wheel upon the earth," is fixed and unalterable, under the direction of fixed laws, in the connexion of cause and effect; extending to the preserving and governing of all his creatures, and all their actions, and all events; yet in such a manner that he is not "the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established;" the whole having "*the appearance and the work as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*"

By *Providence*, is generally understood the wise and holy superintendence and care which God exercises over the created universe. It has been distinguished by mediate and immediate, ordinary and extraordinary, common and special, universal and particular Providence. *Mediate* Providence requires the use of means; *immediate* Providence is the reverse, being exercised by God himself without any instrument or second cause. *Ordinary* Providence is in the common course of means, and by the chain of second causes; *extraordinary* is opposite to this course, and is of a more miraculous character. *Common* Providence is exercised over creation at large; *special* relates to the Church particularly. *Universal* is the general upholding and preserving of all things; *particular* relates to individuals in every circumstance and conduct through life. To suppose, as some have maintained, that God extends his Providence no farther than to a general superintendence of the laws of nature, having no regard to the minute affairs and actions of individuals, would not only be contrary both to Scripture and reason, but would represent the divine government so loose and contingent, so fortuitous and uncertain, as to destroy all ground for reposing any trust under its protection, or deriving any comfort or encouragement from its operations.

Reason and Scripture both concur in establishing the doctrine of Providence. The former recognizes the admirable order and harmony that appears in the operation of the laws of nature—the accomplishment of future events, with the most exact minuteness,

according to predictions and astronomical calculations long beforehand—the revolutions of empires—the rise and fall of kingdoms—the regular returns of seed-time and harvest, day and night, summer and winter—the preservation of a church, in such a corrupt degenerate world as this, like a spark in the midst of “the rough ocean’s foam,” against the fury of hell and wicked men. In short, to deny that God governs the world by his superintending Providence, is to deny his very being; for the arguments that prove the one, do prove the other also. And to imagine that the *purposes* of God are, in respect of their object and plan, different from the *events* of his Providence, is to suppose that he acts without design, operates without plan, wills without effect, and is obliged to do as he *can*, when he cannot do as he *would*:—all which deserves a name not short of blasphemy.

But the testimony of scripture is express and pointed on this subject. God is represented there as conducting the falling sparrow to the ground—noticing *the very hairs* of the head which are *all numbered*—feeding the fowls of the air, which neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns—clothing the grass of the field to-day, and arraying the lily of the valley that grows without toiling or spinning, with an ornament not excelled by Solomon in all his glory. He is there exhibited as the giver of *life and breath and all things*; causing his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and sending his rain upon the just and upon the unjust,—yea, “he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.”

The great plan of God in the operations of his Providence is fixed and unalterable. “I know, that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever; nothing can be *put to it*, nor any thing be *taken from it*.” (Eccl. iii. 14.) “He is the Rock, *his work is perfect*; for all his ways are judgment: a God of Truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Deut. xxxii. 4.

The Providence of God extends to, and is conversant about all the Angels. Some of them he permitted to rebel, and fall irrecoverably, and hath reserved them in chains and darkness until the day of judgment. Others are established in holiness; their standing is confirmed because they are “the elect Angels.” (1 Tim. v. 21.)

It also extends to all the children of men, and to all the tribes of *animated nature*:—from the prince on his throne, to the beggar on the dung-hill—from the rich man in purple and fine linen, to the poor beggar at his gate full of sores—from the mite and the gnat, up to the elephant and the whale: and from the mite downwards to those invisible animalculæ, a hundred thousand of which would not

equal a grain of sand." "The eyes of the Lord are in every place—they run to and fro throughout the whole earth." And while "He telleth the number of the stars," he also numbereth the very hairs of the head. Truly, "great is our Lord, and of great power.—His understanding is infinite."

A sentiment has been propagated of late, taken from a learned Commentator, which seems to deny the complete knowledge of God; or, that he knows all things that exist in the universe. It maintains, "That God, although omniscient, is not obliged, in consequence of this, to know all that he can know." This sentiment charges the Governor of the world with criminality. Its import is this,—that God *could* know all things *if he would*; but that he has not chosen to know some things that he might know;—that he has imposed a voluntary ignorance on himself respecting the things he does not choose to know. Consequently, in proportion to the evil and the mischief that has entered into his dominions, because of this neglect, or voluntary ignorance, so must his criminality be estimated. The sentiment is unscriptural and dangerous—highly censurable, and verges toward Atheism and blasphemy. And it is to be regretted that it should receive countenance from any portion of a respectable denomination.

But we proceed to remark, that all the actions of men, good and bad, voluntary and contingent, are under the control and management of divine Providence.

1. *Good actions*:—not by coercion or compulsion, but by sweetly, powerfully, and efficaciously *inclining and determining* the will both to the *action* and the *right manner* of performing it. "It is God that worketh in you, both *to will* and *to do* of his good pleasure." "Thy people shall be *willing in the day of thy power*."

2. *Sinful actions*:—"and that not by a bare permission," which God did when, "in times past he *suffered* all nations to walk in their own way," and when "the times of this ignorance he *winked at*," but also in uniting with that permission, "a most wise and powerful bounding," limiting and directing them to good and holy ends, contrary to the nature of sin itself, and the design of the sinner. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee—the remainder of the wrath shalt thou restrain:"—"Because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears therefore, *I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest*." "I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them

down like the mire of the streets.—Howbeit, *he meaneth not so*, neither doth *his heart think so*: but it is *in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.*” “But as for you, *ye thought evil* against me; but *God meant it unto good.*” “A man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.”

3. *Voluntary* actions, are under the direction of divine Providence. “Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together—for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” Mark also, the conduct of Joseph’s brethren toward him;—these as well as the crucifiers of the Son of God, were perfectly free and voluntary in what they did.—They thought evil against those innocent victims of their hatred and cruelty; “but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” How forcibly is the sentiment expressed in the words of Solomon: “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord that shall stand.”

4. Those actions and events, denominated *casual* or *contingent*, are subject to the control and direction of divine Providence.—What can be more contingent than a lot; yet “the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof, is of the Lord.” Men may talk in the language of gamesters and infidels, and attribute providential events to accident, luck, chance, &c. But “what is *chance* to man, is the *appointment* of God.” What is reckoned to be casual or contingent with men, is not so with respect to God. For “known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.” Nothing can possibly be uncertain with him, “who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” His work is perfect—“*nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it.*” All things that come to pass, whether “necessarily, freely or contingently,” are so under the control and management of divine Providence, that they “fall out, according to the nature of second causes,” so that whatsoever is sinful, “proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who being most holy, and righteous, neither is nor can be the author, or approver of sin.” The subject will be further elucidated and confirmed by the following

EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

And here the case of Joseph is very remarkable. All history records not another case like this. And if ever the operations of divine Providence exhibited the appearance of *a wheel within a wheel*, it

is to be seen here. A desolating famine was about to waste the land. God, "to save much people alive," determined to lay up the stores of his provision in Egypt; and in due time to convey his covenanted people there on the great wheel of his Providence. But mark the intricate, complicated machinery, how it is set in motion. Joseph is the principal instrument. He must be sent on before to preserve life. In order to this, he must be a favorite son for his mother's sake,—must have a parti-coloured coat—must see, in prophetic dreams, the eleven sheaves of his brethren doing obeisance to his sheaf; and the sun, moon, and eleven stars doing reverence to him. On these accounts he is envied and hated by his brethren. At seventeen years of age, he is sent out into the wilderness, where his brethren were feeding their flocks, to enquire about their circumstances. At the sight of him their evil passions rise. They first resolve to kill him, then, at the instigation of Reuben, to throw him into a dry pit, there to perish. While taking a compass about to effectuate their wicked purpose, behold another little wheel is set in motion!—At that moment, God sends the Arabian merchants along that way, with their spices and gum from Mount Gilead, right on to the land of Egypt, where Joseph must go, to provide for his father and his family. To these merchants he is sold as a slave: they sell him again to Potiphar, the captain of the royal guards of the Egyptian king. By reason of the criminal passion, impudence, and false testimony of his mistress, he is unjustly and cruelly imprisoned, where he continued three years. There, under the Divine direction, he interprets the dreams of the king's butler and baker, by which he is at length brought before the king, to explain to him his remarkable dreams, respecting the seven fat kine devoured by the lean, and the seven good ears of corn, consumed by seven ears empty and withered. Now see how the wheel of Providence has rolled him to his station, after so many vicissitudes. How true it is, we repeat it again, in the language of inspiration, that though, "there are many devices in a man's heart, nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand." The whole affair is now clearly seen, and perfectly understood by Joseph, who, while he attributes evil intention in his brethren towards him, yet, by the light of Divine wisdom he says to them, "Now, therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life;—God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God."

Let us take another instance. Determining to relieve his peo-

ple from the bondage of Egypt, God raised up an instrument for that purpose, in the person of Moses.—But mark the peculiar circumstances under which it is accomplished: Before his birth, the King of Egypt had issued forth orders to put to death every male infant of the Hebrews. His parents hid him three months; and when this could no longer be done, his mother made an ark of bulrushes, and pitched it over, so that it might be water-proof. Therein she put her lovely babe, and laid it in the flags, by the river's brink. Now, "see that floating ark of bulrushes; it contains a weeping babe, abandoned to the perils of the Nile, in a state equivalent to the want of father and mother; but it carries the scourge of Pharaoh—the deliverer of Israel—the historian of the creation—the legislator miraculously commissioned—the prophet divinely inspired!" The wheel of Providence moved *Thermutis*, the daughter of Pharaoh that way; "she saw the ark among the flags, and sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and behold the babe wept." What a crisis is here! The secret retreat is discovered, and to all human appearance the whole of this tender stratagem to preserve this child is broken up. Yonder is little Miriam, his sister, who had been stationed from day to day, "afar off, to wit what would be done to him." Now her little swelling bosom forebodes the evil that is to befall the beloved object of her affection, and her charge. She approaches with all the tender agitation of infantile tenderness—she marked the countenance of the princess—saw the tender compassion of her bosom, and heard her say, "this is one of the Hebrews' children." Being emboldened by this circumstance, with an artful, but an innocent, and most willing officiousness, she approaches the princess and said, "shall I go and call thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother." O happy mother! joyful, welcome nurse! See how the wrath of man is restrained and made to praise God! Look at the rapid, but harmonious rotation of the wheels. We see Moses rising to a state both of safety and elevation. "Take this child away, and nurse it for me," said Pharaoh's daughter to the mother. And no mother need attempt to guess how sweet and pleasant was the task. "And the woman took the child and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son." The subsequent history is too well known to need any enlargement or comment.

The history of David affords another striking instance of the Providence of God. We see him a young stripling in the field "sitting

on a hillock, with the sheep at his feet, and his harp in his hand." But by a train of events as unexpected as they were remarkable, we see him led on by the Providence of God, until he was called to exchange the shepherd's crook for the royal sceptre—the hillock for the throne—and the cottage for the palace. "In revolutions less splendid and striking, but not less strange and unlikely, he has led others by a way that they knew not; he has made darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. Difficulties that seemed insuperable have been overcome; and without a design formed by their friends, or a hope entertained by themselves, they have passed from obscurity to honor—from limitation to enlargement—from dependence to the support of others—from inability, to be the instruments of good to thousands." "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the needy out of the dung-hill, that he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people." "It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

Our time and limits necessarily preclude the introduction of the cases of Job, Esther, Daniel, and many others, both ancient and modern, where the operations of divine Providence are remarkably exemplified, clearly illustrated, and fully established. The instances already adduced are sufficient for our present purpose;—we, therefore proceed to state and obviate some

OBJECTIONS.

1. If the great plan of God's Providence is fixed and unalterable, and the grand objects of that Providence necessarily and infallibly secured thereby, of what use is working, striving, preaching, praying, &c.

We answer:—That second causes and means, such as praying, preaching, &c. do as much belong to the plan, and are as really a part of it, as the little wheels belong to a grand machine; and are as really related to, and connected with it, as the smallest wheels are to the great wheel which puts the whole into operation. The objection not only fails to recognize the existence and the use of the *wheel within* a wheel, but really aims to strike it out, and thus, in effect, to destroy the order and beauty of this grand machinery altogether. Is it the design of God to save sinners? This he ordinarily accomplishes by means and instruments.—"By the foolishness of preaching he is pleased to save them that believe—" and his ministers "are workers together with God." There is a point where human and divine agency meet—where *duty* and *entire dependence* meet. That *it is so*, we know; but *how* it is so,

no one, we apprehend, is able to *explain*. The fact of Ezekiel's prophesying over the valley of dry bones, by the authority of God, with the effect that was produced, is entirely satisfactory to every modest and candid enquirer after divine truth. "God, in his *ordinary* Providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at his pleasure." Hos. i. 7. Rom. iv. 19—21. II Kings, vi. 6. Dan. iii. 27.

2. If Judas, (Luke, xxii. 22.) Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel (Acts, iv. 27—28.) did what the hand and counsel of God *determined before to be done*, how could they be considered as culpable? and how is God exonerated from the charge or implication of being the author and approver of sin, and yet righteous in their punishment?

We answer:—In the first place, that the objection has directly to encounter matter of fact, or revealed truth itself. In the case where Judas is concerned, it is stated as a fact by Christ himself, that "the Son of man goeth, as it was *determined*." (Ps. xli. 9.) But it is equally true, according to the same infallible teacher, that the entire blame, and consequent condemnation rested upon the head of the betrayer; for he immediately subjoins, "but, *wo unto that man* by whom he is betrayed!" It is true that the Saviour was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God"—that Herod, and Pontius Pilate in his unjust condemnation and crucifixion, did *what the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done*—and yet we are taught by the same divine inspiration, that it was done with malicious hearts and wicked hands. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *ye have taken, and by wicked hands* have crucified and slain." (Acts, ii. 23.) The objection ought therefore to be withdrawn; and, in truth, it ought never to have been started. But, if it will come out, it must fight the Bible itself.

We answer:—In the second place, these men being in a state of depravity and wickedness, needed no incitement or impulse from God to cause them to act as they did; but they acted freely, according to their own evil inclinations, untrammelled and uninfluenced by any decree or purpose of God, respecting the death of Christ. This could not be the *motive* of their acting as they did, nor the *rule* of their conduct. They were as wicked and voluntary in this matter as if there had been no purpose or determinate counsel about it. They meant it for evil, and no credit to them if God meant it for good, by educing good out of it, and thus making "Christ *crucified*," the greatest blessing this fallen world ever saw

or heard of—even “the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” unto them which are called, whether Jews or Greeks.

The following illustration may perhaps make this matter more plain and sensible to the feeble understanding. Suppose a man in some foreign dominion to be, on account of some misdemeanour, pronounced an out-law by his sovereign, so that any person may put him to death with impunity. Suppose he comes to your house, and you, prompted not by the king’s decree, or the man’s condition, but by your own wicked disposition, plunge a dagger into his heart, you are as much a murderer as if he were the most virtuous and upright man in the government. The decree of his sovereign did not *compel* you to do it; for of this you were totally ignorant. And if the fact should be made known on your trial, it could not be put in as a plea for your justification, nor make you one whit less a murderer than before. Just so the crucifiers of our Lord and Saviour—“who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world,” and was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God—” yet with wicked hands he was crucified and slain. In this horrible transaction they received no *direct* or *immediate* impulse from Deity; foreordination was not the *rule* nor the *impelling cause* of their conduct,

3. If these things be so, then is it not true that whatever is to be, will be—or whatever is, is right? and would not this make God the author of sin?

We reply:—that, *whatever is to be will be*, is such a plain *truism*—such a simple matter-of-fact thing, as to admit of no argument. Put a negative on it and it will throw every thing into confusion, and plunge us into the grossest absurdities. It will stand, inverted thus: *Whatever is to come to pass, may not come to pass*—whatever is *future* may *never* have an existence—all things that have existed, or do now exist, were once future *before* they did exist. Apply the rule to these things, and it will be found to be a good one, working both ways, backwards as well as forwards. To suppose the things that now exist never had any futurity, is a gross absurdity—a palpable contradiction.

But is the sentiment of Pope true, that “whatever is, is right?” It may or may not be true, according to its application. When applied to God, “who *worketh all things* after the counsel of his own will,” it is true. When it is referred to its ultimate tendency, which is the glory of God, “who doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy Providence, according to his

infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy." In this view of the sentiment it is also true. But with regard to men and devils, in their sinful volitions, and conduct, it is not true. For whatever causes the divine displeasure, deserves his righteous judgments, or is cause of final ruin to its author. This cannot be right in itself; it is most certainly wrong. True, God can limit, control, overrule, and educe good out of it to his own holy end; but the very notion of overruling, &c. presupposes the thing to be wrong in itself; otherwise, it would stand in no need of such controlling influence. In all these things, however, let it be, once for all, understood that, "sinfulness proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." We proceed, by way of improvement, to make a few

REMARKS.

1. The subject we have been contemplating teaches us humility and adoration. How great and incomprehensible is the majesty of Jehovah, and his infinite perfections in all the discoveries which he has made of himself! After all these emblematic or hieroglyphical representations of himself and of his works, such is the obscurity and intricacy in which they are involved,—such the depths in every subject relative to the existence, perfections, purposes and dispensations of the infinite and eternal God, that "clouds and darkness are round about him," while "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." No painter is capable of delineating them—no ostuary ought to attempt a similitude of them; still there is instruction enough suggested, and discoveries so far understood as to impress the mind of every humble and attentive believer with solemn awe, and to inspire his mind with true wisdom and filial confidence.

2. This subject points out the aberrations and inconsistency of two sorts of theologians, who are almost as opposite and far asunder as the North and the South. The one, who carries the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty to such an extent as to destroy the free agency and accountability of the creature. The other, who magnifies, on the other extreme, the free agency of the creature, second causes, means, &c. so as to set aside divine Sovereignty. The one attempts to move all things by the great wheel alone, without the agency of

the lesser ones;—the other would have all the intermediate wheels in operation without the prime agency of the main great wheel. But let them both remember that the whole grand machinery, in all its intricate, incomprehensible movements, exhibits, in perfect harmony, the wonderful appearance of “*a wheel in the middle of a wheel.*” God, is a Sovereign agent—Man, is a dependent free agent. Both these positions are true. The divine permission of sin—its existence only from the creature as its author—and the righteous punishment of it, &c. are all likewise true, however incapable we may be of comprehending or explaining the wonderful and mysterious management of the Supreme ruler, and righteous disposer of all things, *after the counsel of his own will.*

3. The Providential dispensations of God are sometimes dark and mysterious; as in the case of Job, Joseph, Lazarus, Flavel, Bunyan, and many who suffered martyrdom—also in the seemingly unequal distribution of the good things of this life. But all these things work together for good to them that love the Lord—who, as will be fully and satisfactorily seen at last, “hath done all things well.” Let us learn daily, the soul-cheering lesson, “the Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice.” “The Lord guides the wheels of Providence, as well as those of nature. Amidst all the apparent intricacies and unnumbered vicissitudes, the whole is directed by an unerring hand; and whether at the top or at the bottom of the wheel, our place is assigned by him, and for our good, if we be indeed his people. Nor need we despond in the lowest scenes of adversity; for the wheels keep turning round, and will raise us up again in due time from our depression: whilst they, who presume upon prosperity, know not how soon they may be cast down.

“Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his sovereign will.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain:
God is his own interpreter,
And he will make it plain.”

ST. ATHANASIUS

MAN is disposed to indolence. On this account it is well he lives in a restless world. For while every thing is quiet around him, his energies sleep. The moral elements must be in commotion; trials