

ficial nature of social distinctions. And who can doubt their utility? What would a wall be without a foundation, or a foundation without a wall? Tops and bottoms go together, and must go together. The middle classes could not exist without the upper and the lower, nor the upper and the lower without the middle. The foundation *supports* all, the coping *protects* all, and the middle *unites* all. Every trade like every tree, and every person like every plant, has his relations and dependants; and thus through the media of diversity and unity, every department gets occupied, every wheel in the machine turns round, and the stuff of which man is made gets all worked up. The inhabitants of different nations employ their skill and capital, exchange their commodities, and by the traffic they carry on, the four quarters of the globe may sometimes be seen in the provision of a tradesman's table, or the furniture of a peasant's dwelling.

Between natural and artificial distinctions, we must, however, put a difference. The distinctions of nature are useful and necessary; those of ignorance, pride, and oppression, baneful and revolutionary. Wealth always creates distinctions; but if these distinctions interfere with the natural order of things, they produce dissatisfaction and disorder, and not unfrequently get buried in their own ruin.

Let no member of a social economy dream of independence; for men are *there* made for one another. They live for one another, labour for one another, and are socialized by a bond which only death can dissolve. Even the king is served by the field, and the higher a man rises the more dependent he becomes. The larger the house, the more ground it occupies; and the higher the building, the more it takes to support it. The wants of the rich are many, and not easily supplied; the necessities of the poor are but few, and these few they can procure for themselves. A nobleman employs a thousand hands—and twice as many feet; a poor man is content with a pair of each—and each pair *his own*.

Nor must the dispositions of grace be inferred from

the dispensations of providence. The sure mercies of David are appropriated to the heirs of salvation; but the blessings of nature are bestowed indiscriminately. The sun shines on the evil and the good; and the rain falls upon the just and the unthankful. In the distribution of temporal gifts, and in the vicissitudes of life, it may be said, "all things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and the wicked;" "so that no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him."¹ Who, by looking over the fences and the fields, can distinguish those that belong to the righteous and the wicked! The character of the *culture* may be inferred; the religion of the parties is another thing. "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly."²

Two previous chapters have been devoted to an examination of spiritual and ecclesiastical distinctions, concerning which it may now be remarked, that these, as well as all other distinctions, whether in the order of creation or of providence, are highly advantageous. For such are the relations and dependences under the economy of the gospel, that all have some hold of one another, and are mutually conducive to each other's interest. For these reasons, believers are all to love one another, and by love to *serve* one another; for all have certain gifts, and these gifts enable them to profit one another, either in things temporal or in things spiritual. All have certain adaptations to certain uses; these adaptations are real distinctions, and these distinctions are calculated to promote social advantages among christians, and to display the glory of God.

For example, the church is called "God's *husbandry*,"³ or tillage; and there are several ways of considering it.

First, as to the *soils*; which consist of the dispositions and capabilities of believers. Their natural dispositions were the original soils, which, having been converted by

Eccles. ix. 2.

² Job xii. 6.³ 1 Cor. iii. 9.

the grace of God, are sowed with the seed of righteousness. Now, some of these soils are composed mainly of clay, others of sand, others of silt, others of peat, others of marl, and others of something else. Some are naturally light, others naturally heavy, while others are variously mixed. Each soil has its distinguishing properties, and consequently its distinguishing fruits—fruits which it can bring to greater perfection than what other soils can. The soils, too, may benefit one another: the heavy may mix with the light, the moist with the dry, the soft with the rough, and the poor with the rich. So may christians. Hence, Christ sent out his seventy disciples in pairs, that they might benefit each other; and contrasts often form the most important connexions. Peter, James, and John, were remarkably different from one another, but we often find them together on important occasions, and no doubt their individual distinctions formed beneficial connections. Luther and Malancthon were finished contrasts; but their distinguishing characteristics aided the reformation, and added lustre to the truth. Clay mixed with peat, or marl with sand, improves the tilth; and religious dispositions of strongest contrast are greatly benefited by social intercourse.

Most soils retain something of their original characters; and most christians do the same. But then these very differences are beneficial. For as each soil will bring something to perfection which other soils will not, there arises a general benefit from the distinctions; and as each christian possesses a congeniality to some particular end, each believer brings forth some particular fruit in greater perfection than what others can, thereby creating a clear gain upon the whole. All believers bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, but not to the same extent, nor to the same maturity. All the seeds of righteousness will grow, but they will not all grow alike, even in the same person. A christian may abound in the graces of the Holy Spirit, and in every good word and work; but he will not abound in them all *alike*. Yet these distinctions, which mark every gradation, and which therefore are

every where to be seen, are exceedingly useful. They serve to enhance the beauty and perfection of the *whole*.

Examine a bed of flowers, and what differences the lovely spot presents. The dahlia differs from the rose, the rose from the pink, the pink from the lily, the lily from the tulip, the tulip from the lichen, and all these from the rest. Yet all have their respective graces. Some grow up with peculiar elegance, others open with singular beauty; some climb, others creep, others squat. Some perfume the air with delightful odours, others please the eye by inimitable beauties. Here variety is pleasure—difference delight. All have their respective virtues, all combine their individual distinctions, and all contribute to the general effect. Such is a flower-bed, and such is a christian church.

Extend these remarks to a garden, a nursery, or a farm, and similar peculiarities, similar varieties, and similar harmonies will appear. Diversity, order, connexion and utility, are obvious. Men and things are to be studied and appraised, not individually, but collectively. One flower does not make a parterre, one object a landscape, one field a farm, or one christian a church.

Observe next the *culture*; and what a variety of modes, and implements, and talents, are employed. What a number of implements are on a farm, all differing in their construction, uses, and ends. Some are adapted to one purpose, and some to another; while their specific adaptations argue their respective applications. All are distinguished, and all the distinctions have a useful design. Servants may quarrel about the implements, and ignorant people question their utility, but the master employs them *all*, and all are useful, some in one place, some in another, and all more at certain times than at others. Such are talents in the church of Christ. Every talent has its adaptation, its use, and its time of service. There is a diversity of gifts, and every gift has its place and its period of usefulness. One description of talent cannot accomplish every thing. Who ever cultivated a farm with one implement? The plough is a necessary imple-

ment ; but what would the plough be without the roll, the harrow, or the scarifier ? It would *be* a plough, but of what *use* would the plough be ?

Observe likewise the *workmen*. One ploughs up the fallow ground, another harrows it, a third rolls it, a fourth cleans it, a fifth drills it, and a sixth drives away the fowls of the air. One can make straight his furrows, but knows nothing of sowing or drilling ; another can use the harrows, but has not skill enough to guide the plough. And herein is that saying fulfilled :—One man soweth and another reapeth. No one can do every thing, yet all may do something. The man who said he could not dig, spoke the language of pride and indolence. What was the *reason* he could not dig ? Was he not able-bodied ? Would nobody employ him ? Could he not procure a spade ? Or did he not know how to use one ? Nothing of the sort. His could not was a would not ; and his would not arose from an aversion to labour. He preferred a quill to a spade ; and a few dashes of the pen were much easier than digging. The son who told his father he was going to work, and yet went not, staid not away through physical infirmity, but through moral depravity. He went not to work because he did not like work,—because he was indulgent to inherent idleness,—because—like many of the present day—he preferred the do-nothing to the do-what-you-can principle. The man with only one talent, though he professed great caution, care, and fidelity, was notwithstanding a “wicked and slothful servant,”³ and was so pronounced by him who understood the secrets of his heart, and who determined the character of his actions by the state of his dispositions. The willingness of saintship, which is neither more nor less than the voluntary principle, is of essential importance, and is governed by the rule of proportion. So that if a man *willingly* labours according to his strength, or gives in proportion to his means, his services and his offerings are graciously accepted of God. He

³ Matt. xxv. 26.

consecrates all he has got, brings all he has consecrated, and offers freely all he has brought, exclaiming as he presents the sacrifice, "Of thine own have I given to thee."

According to this plan, all distinctions are beneficial. Diversity leads to unity; distinctions to combination. All christians are employed, all approved, and all accepted. All find employment who seek it, for here there is no surplusage of labour; there is only this condition annexed, that he who works must do that kind of work allotted for him; which perhaps may not quite please him, but which the master has laid out for him, and which he is well able to perform. All may work who wish to work, for there is always work to do, and such work as all are *able* to do. Some work in one field, and some in another; some in one costume, and some in another. Different fences divide the labourers, different dialects distinguish them, and different talents belong to them; but all are on the estate, all the sons of one parent, all employed by one master; and if they are all serving him in singleness of heart, who shall say which is the most and which is the least *useful*? Will not every man have his *penny*? and will not *dispositions* rather than *deservings*, be the rule of divine beneficence? Who can doubt it?

The same doctrines are contained in the metaphor of an edifice; for the church is represented as a "house," a "habitation," a "temple," and a "building;" and whether we consider the materials, the site, the construction, the labourers, or the architect, we shall perceive the benign tendencies of individual differences. From the foundation to the summit, and from every point of view, distinctions, connexions, uniformity and order, are observable. The materials are dissimilar in size, texture, shape, place, and adaptation; but by a wise arrangement, and a skilful application of all parts, there rises an entire whole, breathing nothing but beauty, exhibiting nothing but loveliness, and calling forth nothing but admiration.

Look at the *workmen*: one man makes the bricks, another makes the mortar, while a third uses them both. Observe too the number and necessity of *trades*. One is a bricklayer, another a stone-mason, another a smith, another a carpenter, &c., each following his own trade, yet all employed by one master, operating in subjection to one plan, and subserving the views of the great architect. Multiplicity, diversity, unity and effort, are essential requisites. All cannot be tradesmen nor artizans; but all may find employment, and all may be useful. If a man has not a talent for one thing, he has for another; and there is room and employment for all grades, shades, and varieties of natural and spiritual talent. Practice makes perfect; and he who has a willing mind seldom lacks a ready medium. If all the labourers render a hearty service,—if they work early and late, soberly and peacefully, honestly and righteously, every man shall receive a reward according to his work, and shall be commended and promoted. But suppose one goes to sleep, another gets intoxicated, a third is always quarrelling, a fourth is absent, a fifth slanders his master—suppose all this, and then suppose the master to come in an hour when they are not aware! What would he *say*? What would he *do*?

Let us now glance at the ministers of Jesus Christ. And who are they? They are neither lords nor proprietors, gentlemen nor idlers; but the joint united labourers of God. From him they derive their endowments, commissions, appointments; and to him they owe all their success. He calls them, qualifies them, sends them, and sanctions them. They are *co-workers* with him; not in the sense of a partnership, or of a joint effort, but in the sense of joint-labourers under his patronage, and in connexion with his almighty energy. For though a farmer may be said to work with God when he tills his field and sows his corn, seeing he does that without which a harvest could not be produced; and though ministers are engaged in doing that which is indispensable to an end, the sphere of their operations and of di-

vine operations are obviously distinct. It is not a complex agency, or two agencies operating in the same sphere, and participated in by both the agents; but two agencies acting distinctly, though harmoniously and connectively. Human and divine agency are each brought out to view, but each has its own province and its own laws. God does one thing, and man another; but God and man are not in partnership with Omnipotence, although their agencies frequently relate to the same end, and contribute to the same result. The sphere of God's operation in the growth of a plant, is totally distinct from that of the man who planted and watered it; and the same may be said of a christian church, or of an individual believer. The man who plants a tree has no agency in causing the juices to circulate, the buds to expand, or the fruits to ripen; neither has the christian pastor any agency in circulating spiritual influences in the soul, unfolding the graces of the Holy Spirit, or in maturing the fruits of righteousness. This is the work of God; "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."⁴

It is not for us to explain the *modus operandi* of divine agency, neither shall we examine any metaphysical theory relating to it; it may suffice to know, that in as far as spiritual results are concerned, divine efficiency is always implied. Ministers are fellow-labourers under God, united in their aims, their interests, and their efforts; and subserving the designs of his grace. They have their respective spheres of operation, but they can bring out no spiritual result, otherwise than *He* who employs them is pleased by his own energy to promote the object they have in view. To this divine energy their success must always be ascribed; and to its absence their failures must be attributed. The apostles concentrated their energies in tilling the soil, in building the church, and in giving the gospel to the world; but while respectful mention was made of them, they never

⁴ Phil. ii. 13.

permitted themselves to be put in God's stead, nor would they allow their exertions, however valuable, to obscure the doctrine of divine agency in the conversion of sinners. They recognized the *presence* of human agency; but always in a *subordinate*, and never in a *leading* sense. The exertion of human power, within its own jurisdiction, as prescribed by divine wisdom, and as likely to contribute to a certain end, they unwaveringly and fervently maintained; but the desired result they rested upon divine efficiency, acting within its own province, in harmony with the designs of God, and in concurrence with their own humble efforts. They were workers *for* God, seeing he employed, protected, and remunerated them; and in so far as they entered into his designs, acted upon his plans, identified themselves with his interests, and were succeeded by the exertion of his power, they might truly, and even significantly, be said to be labourers together with *God*. And this was the doctrine they taught. In this light they viewed the long debated subject; and in this light we do well to view it too. Acting upon this wise view of the case, we shall be kept diligent, hopeful, and dependent. We shall see the existence of *two* agencies, each distinct from the other, yet each contributing to the same result. One agency *derived*, the other *underived*; one *subjective*, the other *supreme*; one *human*, the other *divine*.

Viewed in relation to talents, usefulness, and real worth, ministers—and others who are not ministers—are just what God makes them, and no more. They differ from one another in their manners, habits, talents, modes of address, and many other things. John the Baptist was stern and severe; Jesus of Nazareth was affable and indulgent. Peter was passionate, and Paul was placid; Jude was vehement, and John was gentle; but they were all the servants of Jesus Christ. The apostles all differed in their natural dispositions, their gifts, their graces, and their appointments; but the church needed them all, and they were all useful. It is the same with ministers *now*. One is a sub-soil plough, another a clod

crusher, another a fine harrow, another gathers up twitch and clears off the rubbish. One uses the spade, another the mattock, another the axe, and another something else. Some thrash and others dress; some plant and others water; some lay the foundation and others build thereon. One man is set for the defence of the gospel, another labours in the application of it. Some excel as expositors of the law, others in handling the promises of grace. Milk is much used by some, strong meat by others. Let us not speak disparagingly of any of the Lord's servants. Each excels in his own way, each is useful in his own sphere, each is accepted of God according to what he hath, and "every man shall receive his reward according to his own work."

But let no one infer from these remarks that ministers are the *only* labourers; for *all* believers are the servants of Christ, and all have their own specific services to render. Paul made honourable mention of certain women who laboured with him in the gospel. John spoke of fellow-helpers to the truth, and instanced the hospitality of Gaius in relation to the brethren, and to strangers who went forth on errands of kindness, taking nothing of the Gentiles. All cannot be preachers, but all may succour and assist those who are. All may not be able to pray in public, but all must pray in private. Only a few can translate the scriptures, but most people can read them, and those who cannot read them may circulate them. Every christian cannot be a missionary, but every christian may do something towards sending missionaries, and those who are not contributors may be collectors. A man may not be gifted for edifying a congregation, and yet be well qualified for teaching in a Sabbath-school, and even superintending one. Call nothing common or unclean. Where language fails example may instruct; and where worldly means are not, consistency and affection may edify. All cannot be captains and generals, but all may serve under them; and those who, like some of David's men, cannot give chase to the common foe, like them they may abide by the

stuff. The *baggage* needs guarding, and they *can* take care of it.

The parts of a house are all different, but they are all necessary, and therefore all useful. The roof cannot say to the window, the window to the wall, or the wall to the foundation, I have no need of thee. The materials are all prepared, the parts are all conjoined,—some more near and some more remote, some more prominent and some more retired. And what saith the scripture? “We are all one in Christ Jesus.”⁵ “Ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”⁶ “He shall build the temple of the Lord;”⁷ and in doing this he assigns to believers their proper places, gives them one heart and one way, and by faith and love which are in Christ Jesus, they are more firmly attached than what they could be by any natural ties. He makes them one, even as he and his Father are one;⁸ so that the union is for ever; and being spiritually united to one another, “all the building fitly joined together groweth into an holy temple in the Lord.”

It is by a combination of parts, that every organic whole is completed; and it is by a union of many parts, that the church of Christ is formed. “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” The church is one body, united in one bond, animated by one spirit, and governed by one supreme authority. “For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one spirit”—to participate the dispositions of God.⁹

Conspicuous members resemble the senses, and the principal parts of the body. They have their respective offices, stations, and appointments; and God has wisely distributed them among the churches,—some here and

⁵ Gal. iii. 28.

⁶ Eph. ii. 22.

⁷ Zach. vi. 13.

⁸ John xvii. 21.

⁹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

some there, so that no locality contains them all; but they are all in those parts of the entire body to which they are most adapted, and in which they are most useful. Nor ought they to envy one another's stations, or to conclude they are nothing, because they are not everything, and that they cannot belong to the church because they do not fill a principal office, or occupy a noticeable post. "If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it not of the body? and if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members, every one of them, in the body as it hath pleased him;" and the good pleasure of his will is illustrative of his wisdom and beneficence. Our animal faculties could not have been more advantageously placed, or more perfectly adjusted to one another, than they are; neither could the organization of the church, nor the distribution of spiritual talents, have been either more nicely or more beneficially disposed. One part of the body cannot occupy the station of another, or perform its office, or be independent of it. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you." The stream of usefulness—like every other stream—runs downwards; and the greater is here blessed of the less. "The elder serves the younger;" the master learns something of the servant, and the minister receives instruction from those he is appointed to teach. "Those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those members which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour." We not only clothe but ornament them; so that "our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness." Some of the members are weak and hidden, but their usefulness is not to be questioned on these accounts. The intestines are concealed and feeble, but what would the body be without them? The brain

is borne about by the head—like the bowels by the body—without any concurring effort; but what would the head be without it? If the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, the weak are useful to the strong; and if the body is indebted to the senses, what would the senses be without it? And, as if to encourage the weaker, and to humble the stronger, God has often conferred distinctions of honour or of usefulness, upon persons of humble standing and apparent insignificance. Priscilla and Aquilla had not the eloquence of Apollos, but they were able to teach him the way of the Lord more perfectly, and became his preceptors. Naaman the Assyrian, was indebted to a little girl for his recovery; and Elijah the Tisbite, to a poor widow for his support. The Samaritans received the gospel by a female missionary of no reputation; and lepers first proclaimed the breaking up of the Assyrian siege. The Gentile centurion, and the Syro-Phœnecian woman, honoured Christ by their faith, which exceeded all that he had found in Israel. Women ministered to him of their substance, and it was Mary Magdalen who washed his feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head. While the brother of low degree rejoices that he is exalted, let the brother of high degree rejoice that he is made low.

Let not the poor and humble despond. The man who knows how to be abased, is equal in honour to him who knows how to abound. To be poor and yet refuse to steal, and to take not the name of God in vain, implies as much grace as the rich possess when we see them humble, thankful, and liberal. What said the Saviour of Mary? “She hath done what she *could*.”¹⁰ What said God of David? “It was well for thee it was in thine heart;”¹¹ and what said Paul to the Corinthians? “If there be first a willing mind it is accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.”¹² Many put into the treasury, and the rich gave largely;

¹⁰ Mark xiv. 8.¹¹ 1 Kings viii. 18.¹² 2 Cor. viii. 12.

but the poor widow who gave only two mites, gave more than they all. The man who occupied with five talents, received the same commendation as the man who had occupied with ten; and the man with only one talent was not condemned because he had *only* one, but because he had not *used* that one. The *fig-tree* was not cursed because it was not laden, but because it was *barren*,—not because it did not bear every sort of fruit, nor because it did not bear an abundance of one sort, but because it bore no fruit at all—at least none that could be gathered. The humblest believer may be a blessing from the Lord; for grace is diffusive, and every christian has a *locality*. God blessed Potiphar on Joseph's account; and Laban said he had "learned by experience," that God had blessed him for Jacob's sake. Believers are a dew from the Lord, and the dew is useful. They have power with God and prevail. They keep off invading judgments, fill up alarming gaps, and draw down important blessings.

There is enough to hide pride from the eyes of persons possessed of superior abilities, and occupying stations of wealth, honour, and advantage; but those who have not their opportunities nor powers of action, may nevertheless be doing service in other ways.

" ——— Thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean, without rest,—
They also serve, who only stand and wait."

And *they* may have his approving smiles, and know that he has loved them; and where God smiles we should not frown, where he blesses we ought not to curse, where he accepts we must not reject. Grace and peace are multiplied to *all* who love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity and in truth; and there are first who shall be last, and last who shall be first. Besides which there are the laws of accountability, of proportion, and of compensation; so that where much is given much

is required, and where little is given there little is required. To him that hath used rightly what he has received, shall be given; and from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath. This is no curious speculation—no fanciful conceit. It is bible truth, opening up to our view scenes of wonder, producing salutary impressions, giving out important lessons, supplying powerful excitements, and inducing “the man with his eyes open,” to exclaim, “I rejoice and tremble!”

From these distinctions and gradations, we observe the laws of unity, sympathy, social amity, and dependence. “For I say, through the grace given to me, to every man who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”¹³ Our comely parts have no need of clothing or ornament; “but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism (mutiny) in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

We also observe the folly of wishing to be *what* we are not, and *where* we are not. Let every man *abide* in his own calling; and let him abide in that calling *with* God, who ordained it for him, can uphold him in it, and make him honourable and useful while following it. If a man is neither useful nor respected, the fault is not in his station, but in his disposition. The actor calls down the plaudits of the audience, not by the *part* he acts, but by the *manner* of his acting it; and it is not the station we fill, but the manner in which we fill it,—it is not the *thing* performed, but the performance itself which entitles to commendation, or subjects us to censure. The groom

¹³ Rom. xii. 3—5.

who cleans his master's horse, and holds his master's stirrup, may have as much grace as the master whom he serves, perform his part as well, and be equally entitled to respect. We may serve God in every calling, exemplify religion in every station, and go to heaven from every locality. Our great aim should be, to "go on to perfection."

According to this plan, we see spiritual life in all its degrees and modifications. We observe it in all its lights and shades, combined with every degree of intellect, working with every variety of disposition, and manifesting its distinguishing excellencies in connexion with all the attributes of human nature. We discover it in its rudest and feeblest forms, like the zoophite or the stone-flower, from which point it gradually ascends, marking in its advancement every degree of perception. By its combination with intellect in all its forms, moral sentiment in all its variations, human dispositions in all their characters, providential appointments in all their diversity, and divine influences in all their proportions, we see the life of God brought out in all its beauty, fullness, and variety; and that in much the same way as we recognize vegetable and animal life in their multiplied forms, in their respective latitudes, and in their individual relations; or as we see different seeds all growing, but not all flourishing alike, one kind of soil bringing to perfection one, another kind of soil another, and so on through all the variety. Thus Enoch was renowned for his intimacy with God, Abraham for his faith, Joseph for his purity, Jacob for his resolution, Moses for his meekness, Job for his patience, Elijah for his prayers, Daniel for his fidelity, Peter for his zeal, Apollos for his eloquence, Paul for his assiduity, Jude for his vehemence, and John for his affection. One is an eye, another an ear, another a mouth, another a hand, and another a foot. It takes all the members to make a body, and all the church to make a saint. A farmer cultivates various seeds, but some of them grow more freely than others, and perhaps there is one species which grows more

freely than all the rest. It takes all the world to produce every thing; and all the church to do the same. Some people grow a little of every thing, but they seldom get anything very excellent.

In harmony with this arrangement, we are taught to expect the same general law of gradation and order, in the kingdoms of matter, mind, and spirituality; and accordingly we perceive in these kingdoms a graduated scale of order, in which the classes rise one above another by an easy and regular ascent. In the progress of organic life towards perfection, we observe in the lowest place life without feeling, or with nothing but feeling; then comes sight, then hearing, then taste, and then smelling. Then again if we examine what are called the perfect species, we find the gradations so numerous, that although the senses are retained under the same denomination, they seem to be almost of another nature. The same remark will apply to what is called *instinct*; for there, as well as in every other department of nature, we are called to witness a gradual rising, step by step, each successive class unfolding an additional power, till the link is caught by the human species; and the series carried upwards through the ascending divisions of intellect, morality, and religion. And so extremely small are these degrees, that they seem to have been determined by the law of infinitesimal proportions. So minute are the transitions, so subtle the deviations, so imperceptible the lines of difference, that no void is observable, no gap perceptible. Not a cranny or a crevice, appears in all the edifice; not a link is missing in the chain, not a vacancy is seen on the platform. Matter is the basis of animal life in all its variety and multiplicity, and there is no more of one than is necessary for the other; redemption is the basis of spiritual life in all its variety and multiplicity, and there is no more of the one than is necessary to the other. In nature the provision is equal to the demand, so that nothing perishes through an inadequate supply; at the same time the demand is equal to the supply, so that the fragments are

gathered up and nothing is wasted. In grace it is the same—he that believeth shall never perish; yet no man can come to Christ except the Father who sent him puts forth an agency to draw him.¹⁴ This point, however, the wisdom of God has secured, so that all whom the Father hath given to the Son shall come to him, and all that come to him shall be in no wise cast out.¹⁵ It is thus the provision is all realized; and as grace vitalizes, spiritualizes, and utilizes every thing it takes hold of, there arises an evangelical economy, supported by every variety of instrumental agency, combining the endowments, distinctions, and interests of a redeemed family, all united to Christ, the chosen head of sovereign influence, and exhibiting a series of gradations which connects the world that now is with the world that is to come, and the ages of time with the ages of eternity.

Were we to pursue this subject further we should descant upon the probable continuance of these gradations from the human to the other species of intelligences, displaying the same diversity, and carrying the chain upwards to a point above which, only God himself is seen. For as below mankind we see lengthened concatenations, descending to a point which fades from the eye, and thence downwards in the microscopical world, the analogy would suggest that there exist similar sequences above man to those which we know are beneath him, and that, consequently, the highest species of this world are the lowest of another.

But as it might perhaps savour somewhat of presumption to intrude into those things which we have not seen, and as but little advantage could result from a speculation of this description, we will, though somewhat reluctantly, quit the subject, bowing in humble adoration at the footstool of Omnipotence, and placing our reason at the feet of him who once said, “What is that to thee? follow thou me”—“what ye know not now, ye shall know hereafter.” Happy will it be for us, if we are

¹⁴ John vi. 44.

¹⁵ John vi. 37—40.

bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord our God. Only let my name be written in heaven, and I will rejoice in hope of the glory of God, however displayed. Let me have "a lot among all them that are sanctified," and I can lift up my head with joy, knowing that my redemption draweth nigh. Let me feel the blood of sprinkling, put on the garments of free salvation, and be found in *Him*. Let me walk before the Lord with a perfect heart, have my fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, and thus "be brought to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Let me be presented "faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy;" and let me, in another world, take my station among the "sons of God" by adopting grace, and my happiness will be consummated by the blissful presence of my beloved Lord, through whose humanity I shall for ever behold and endlessly adore, the redeeming persons in the eternal Godhead.

CHAPTER VI.

SOVEREIGN GOODNESS THE SOURCE OF PROVIDENTIAL DISTINCTIONS.

WE are now arrived at a point beyond which we cannot proceed, without attempting to illustrate the doctrine contained in the two following questions, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" We say *illustrate* the doctrine; for as the testimony of God is the highest evidence we can have, we will not enfeeble that evidence by imitating some ancient writers—to say nothing of some modern preachers—who propose first to prove the *truth* of the text, and then, secondly, to prove something else. We will assume the *text* to be true, and having made this assumption, we shall not treat the author of inspiration like a suspected witness in court, whose testimony is of no value until corroborated by evidence from other witnesses; with full reliance upon the veracity of the speaker, we shall attempt to bring out the doctrine involved, and to examine and apply it.

Now the doctrine implied, obviously amounts to this: That man is to be viewed in connexion with divine agency; and that all beneficial distinctions are referable to the sovereign goodness of God.

That this is the spirit and meaning of the passage, can admit of no reasonable doubt. For nothing can be clearer than this fact, that man is subject to the agency

of God, both in providence and in grace. This is undoubtedly the plain, common-sense view of the passage.

And to this view of the matter, as well as to this description of doctrine, agree the experience and testimony of nearly all mankind. The exceptions to this general concurrence, are but few and frivolous.

We may therefore, settle it in our minds, as a thing most certain, and as a doctrine clear beyond reasonable disputation, that the agency of God is in some way or other connected with the present condition of man, and acts upon him.

At the same time, we are as ignorant of the philosophy of this doctrine as we are certain of the truth of it. We have the fact, but not the form,—the combination, but not the prescription. That God acts upon the minds of men is evident; but whether he acts mediately or immediately, or whether sometimes in one way and sometimes in another, it is impossible to decide with that amount of clearness, which would exclude scepticism and shut out debate.

Yet far from us be the preposterous notion of one substance only in the universe, and that one substance infinitely extended, *God*; who is at once cause and effect, agent and patient; and whose productions are so many modifications of himself.

Equally remote—or nearly so—from the truth, and shamefully repugnant to the scriptures, is the *anima mundi* theory, which assumes the whole material universe to be a body of which God is the 'soul. This ancient conceit, though evidently heathenish, has nevertheless had its christian advocates, and in various forms has laid the foundations of metaphysics and of systematic theology, the goodly stones of which have been thrown down, and the foundations of each successive fabric razed to their utmost depth.

Philosophers and ecclesiastics, as well modern as ancient, have associated with this doctrine the theory of *absorption*. The souls of mankind, it is pretended, are so many fragments, sparks, or portions of the Deity, which at the dissolution of the body return to their

source, and become united to the soul of the world. Death, therefore, resembles the breaking of a phial full of water in the ocean, the water instantly mixing with the mass and becoming lost in it; or the dissolution of a plant, when its vital principle, becoming disengaged from the organic structure, mingles with its kindred elements—whether gases or whether something else; or to the breaking of dark lanterns, the inward radiancy of which is lost in the blaze of day.

“The Vedanta school,” says Sir William Jones, “represent Elysian happiness as a total absorption, though not such as to destroy consciousness, in the Divine Essence.” Something very like this forms the core of the Kantian system, and constitutes the distinguishing mark of not a few continental spiritualists. It creeps into the evangelical productions of Krummacher and others; and tinctures where it does not taint, the finest writings of some of the finest minds in the world. Nor can it be doubted that religious fervour, combined with the transcendental eccentricities of a lively imagination, though exhibiting philosophical and theological error, must always supply luscious aliment to a class of minds, mostly sincere, and especially qualified for rejoicing in intellectual discursiveness; but who, by a sort of pleasant aptitude, mistake so far the labyrinths of reason for the mysteries of the gospel as to revel in the luxuries of mental heterogeneity, and to feel themselves warmed and glorified by the gorgeous creations of an elevated fancy.

Besides this, there is what may be called a “voluntary humility,” which, though a work of supererogation, is notwithstanding held by many persons as essential to true religion, though sometimes it is nothing more than a substitute for it. This questionable virtue clothes itself in apparent deep prostration of soul, and under pretence of exalting the attributes of God, contrives to annihilate all the attributes of mind. Perhaps nothing is more natural to devotional and contemplative minds, than to dwell long and earnestly upon the mutability of sublunary things, and their incapacity for spiritual purposes, —to expatiate upon the loveliness, perfection, and suf-

iciency of God, till they imperceptibly slide from comparative to absolute language, and through a desire to magnify God, destroy the works of his hand. The desire is laudable—the medium of its expression is not so.

For, if man has nothing but what he receives from God, and is no more than what God makes him, there surely can exist no necessity for either plundering or unmaking him, in order that “the Lord may be glorified.” It may suffice to know, that man is indebted to God for all his distinctions and honours; and that where much is given, much is required.

Man, for example, is an accountable being; an accountable being is a voluntary being; a voluntary being is an agent acting under authority, but with a power surpassing the freedom of spontaneity, which supposes merely the absence of all impediments to action not contained in the nature of the agent himself. If this is *all*, of what service are commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, &c. in the word of God? of what use are they any where? Are we to assume with Descartes, that God is the author of all the actions which depend upon the free will of man? Must we affirm with Bonnet, that the gospel is an exposition of the scheme of necessity, and the simile of the potter its summary? Shall we believe with Leibnitz, that man is a double machine, one machine being material, and the other spiritual, each united to each, but each independent of the other—each uninfluenced by the other—each wound up, like a clock, for life—and each, by a nice adjustment, keeping time and working with the other, as exactly as if they were not two machines, but one? Or shall we affirm, as some have done, and as others now do, that every act is performed by the immediate agency of God?—That a man can no more move the limbs of his own body than he can move the limbs of another?—That the desire to move, is merely an *occasion* on which Deity himself sets our limbs in motion?—That the presence of light is not the cause of vision, but an occasion on which God affects our minds by it?—That, in fact, it is not man who acts at all, let the

action be what it may, but God who acts by him ; and that matter is a mere remembrance of the Deity, whose mechanic agency produces all our perceptions and actions, to whom they are all referable, and to whom they must all be ascribed? Is *this* to be our creed? God forbid.

As well might we affirm men to be so many barrel organs, or so many musical boxes, the mind being a spiritual cylinder, stuck with a set of ideas nicely adjusted to a set of sensations, and put in motion by a divine agent. As well might we believe with Plautus, that men are only tennis-balls, formed for the Maker of all things to play with, and which, when worn out, or struck away, new ones are called for. Or, what seems more ingenious still, why not imagine, with Cowley, the earth to be a large chess-board, human individuals so many chess-men, all moved by an invisible hand, but none of them having power to move themselves, any more than logs of wood or lumps of clay? "True," we might argue, "men *seem* to act freely ; but so would chess-men on the board, provided angels were to play at that game, and you saw the men move but saw not the angels moving them." And, finally, to complete the absurdity, we might advance one step further, take the bull by the horns, and assume once for all, that men, angels, and even God himself, are all moved—like so many knights and pawns—by the invisible hand of necessity!

He who materializes the Deity, or, what is the same thing, denies the existence of an all-presiding, all-pervading intelligence, possessed of moral attributes, and in his own nature, infinite and eternal, is an atheist, *i. e.*, a person without God. It is by his personality, spirituality, omniscience, power and freedom of action, that the true God stands distinguished from Nature, Destiny, Fate, Chance, Necessity, Anima Mundi, and all the fictitious deities invented by Stoics, Epicureans, Pantheists, and those of "modern men," of whom Hobbs, Hume and Priestly, may be justly regarded as the corepheus.

As little can we approve of the half-way-house system of neology—the new doctrine which sprung up under Wolf, became the staple commodity of German theology,

and imported into this country by protestant tractarians, who, like the disciples of Schelling, have thrown themselves into the bosom of the catholic church, having loved this present evil system, not because it is more *true*, but because it is more *poetical*. But whether this scheme appears under the guise of *naturalism*—a technicality invented in the sixteenth century; or under the refined form of *rationalism*—a word of modern coinage, it is at variance with that *supernaturalism* which is the religion of the bible, and which is the only religion that brings glory to God, or safety to man. The famous theory of *accommodation*, invented by Semler, has been a formidable weapon against christianity; for by reducing its mysteries to the standard of human reason, and thereby placing its foundations on mental sufficiency instead of divine efficacy, it has plucked up religion by the roots, induced a most awful apostacy, and contributed materially to the growth of deism. Beneath the protecting nightshade of intellectual competency, philosophic mysticism, pantheism, and even atheism, have flourished. The inspiration of the prophets and the apostles, have been put upon a level with heathen poets, or the “divine Plato;” many parts of Holy writ have been repudiated, miracles explained so as to be no miracles at all, sovereign grace ridiculed, the work of the Spirit sneered at, divine providence held up as a fiction, and the best sermons in Germany have been described as those which taught the rich how to cultivate their vines, and the poor how to choose their potatoes. We utter no slander when we say, that a revelation without certainty, an atonement without price, sanctification without the Spirit, salvation without grace, a world without providence and a church without God, are parts of the glorious gospel of our new-light intellectualists.

The existence of certain fixed laws, both in nature and providence, we cheerfully concede; the presence of second, as well as of first causes we are ready to admit; but we cannot allow the *use* that has been made of them. That there are wheels within wheels, and wheels without wheels as well, we see no reason to deny; but notwith-