

sence! The same effect, in a greater or less degree, will attend the belief that God must be not only virtually, but substantially, present every where, and be constantly exercising his power to keep in operation the vast machine of the universe. It cannot but deeply impress the heart, and exert a most salutary influence upon the affections, to realize that every event around us is brought about by the immediate agency of the supreme Being.

But notwithstanding the salutary influence of this view of Providence upon our moral feelings, and though philosophy pronounces it decidedly the most reasonable, still it meets with strong opposition. I need not stop to notice the objections, that it makes God the author of evil as well as good, and that it represents man as a mere machine in the hands of the Deity, and therefore takes away human responsibility. I say I need not stop to answer such objections, because they lie equally strong against any system which makes God the original author of the universe. But a more plausible objection is, that it makes all events miraculous. This objection is based on the supposition that every event which takes place through the direct and immediate agency of God is a miracle. But is this the true meaning of a miracle? Is the term ever applied to any but extraordinary events? It may or it may not imply a contravention of the laws of nature. But it does always imply something which the laws of nature cannot produce, and which, of course, they cannot explain. It is always the result of some new force coming in to the aid of the laws of nature, or in the place of them, or even sometimes, perhaps, in opposition to them; as when the "sun stood still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon." Hence an event may take place through the direct and immediate agency of God, and yet not be a miracle. If it be neither above, nor independent of, nor in opposition to the laws of nature, then it forms a part of the ordinary providence of God; it is a part of the usual, the fixed and uniform course of nature, and can be explained by known and unalterable laws. The nature of the event is not affected at all by the question whether it is produced by the direct efficiency of God, or by a power inherent in those laws. We, who believe that the direct efficiency of God is necessary to the operation, and even to the existence, of the laws of nature, are just as firm believers in the constancy of those laws as