No. 24 -
The Providence of God.
Thanksgiving Sermon, 1...
1. Chronicles, XXIX. 11.- "Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and there art exalted as head above all others."

God is the Sovereign of the universe. The energy of the Supreme Mind is spread over creation. The whole material world is ruled by Him who first gave it its existence and its form. What force is it, which controls the parts of matter, which causes its constituent particles to adhere to each other with never-ending fidelity? You may call it the law of attraction; but you have only substituted another name for the force of the Connipotent; that power, which guides in harmony the motions of systems of worlds, of systems, the parts of the material of the sun, which gathers in the dust beneath your feet, and rolls every wave of the ocean, every grain of sand on the sea shore. The elements are the subjects of the Almighty; is by His appointment, the winds come forth in dissolving anger, or wave as kindly in the gentle breeze, bestowing health and delight. Look to the vegetable crea-
good friends; He governs, directs, supplies, preserves them all. - But in the vine of Eden's dominion we rise still higher; we come to the mental & moral world, to the various orders of men, in whom God has dignified with the capacity of knowledge & understanding, & a sense of right & wrong, with powers of improvement, with freedom from sin & guilt, without measure. - Remember, is the story of the Almighty's government, the empire over intellect is the sublime empire exercised by God. Such are the high, mighty, splendid exhibitions of the dominion of Conscience - yet how coldly do we notice them: how little do we heed the unceasing invitation of the providence of government of God. Could we suppose a reason in full maturity of sense of understanding, that has not seen the light of day or the face of nature, suddenly presented with an ample prospect of the sublime canopy of heaven, the blazing sun, the illumined atmosphere, the richly diversified scenery of earth, bow would the appearance astonish him & stand in his mind as swelling ideas of grandeur & beauty? Exacts his boundless veneration of the beauty & dominion of God.
If we are not affected in the same manner as the
same view, it is because the causes of passions
of the world have settled round the heart of the
same familiarly has quelled our surprise, blunted
the sense of admiration. Man's advancement from
fancy be slow degrees to the view of creation,
when we know them best, the novelty becomes
the heart. We have grown up amidst the won-
derful of God's power, & because we have seen them
every day, we pass them heedlessly by. Hence it
is, that most minds are more disposed to rely
on revelation by the strange & monstrous appear-
ces of creation, than by the constant view of
the sublime order & beauty of the whole frame of
nature. The constant view of the earth with its
firm aspect & immovable train, will
naturally excite more feeling, & perhaps more devo-
tion, than the sun in his habitual wanderings,
daily ascend, enlightening & warming creation.

Still, however, whether we regard it as not, the
government of God is going on in all its majesty
& glory: his dominion extends from world to world
from one class of beings to another, till it has
stretched over the universe of worlds, & through
the whole mighty range of Being.

On this day of Thanksgiving, let us


 seem naturally called to think with gratitude
destined, in the providence & sovereignty of God,
how much we owe our religion for the continuing
when it opens on this subject. There is scarcely a

topic, a common, about which we are inclined to
be satisfied with less depth or reality. But if we could find in the character of

nothing, a high & rich source of hope & trust, of joy
& gratitude, we must ever consistent, have ever &
elevated conceptions of the government of the

spirits, with a reference to which the government of God
seems to be administered.

1. The government of God operates by general
laws. By this I mean, that certain consequences
flow from certain causes, so that we may always
calculate upon them, when the circumstances are
the same, without the fear of disappoint-
ment. In the exercise of authority among men,
the established laws are rules, on which our judg-
ment of the conduct of the ruler, towards the
subject in any given case, is founded. Thus
the natural & moral government of the Almighty
proceeds on a course so uniform & orderly, that
where the circumstances, character, & situation are
the same, we may always expect the same effects of the same events. It is in truth the regularity which constitutes what we call the laws of nature, an expression which is nothing else than another name for the constant in which the Almighty exerted his power of wisdom.

"Nature is but a name for effect.
When rain is fall ing, the farmer understands, from the past to the future, what has been to what will be. Without this steadiness of uniformity, the few pages of recorded experience present would be but a blank; old age would have been almost an insignificance, as when we consider the breadth of life, 3 when the heart covers the head, and grey hairs, we might still be but infants in knowledge. All that we know of causes and effects is learned by observation in the course of the government of God proceeds so that the government be variable or precise, if there are no uniform laws of nature's operation, the foundation of our knowledge would be swept away, and our highest reach would be the uncertainty of conjecture. If the ebullitions of the sea did not regularly succeed each other, if the seas of your harvest in autumn were of a different nature from that of the seed, or you committed the earth in the spring; if to day we read the oppressive heat of summer; if tomorrow the desolate winds of winter; if the seed does not give satisfaction, and pleasure, should immediately end, the same circumstances be converted into poison; if to day the sun should rise giving light and heat, to-morrow should huddle face and head in darkness; if for a while nature were the interest of men and approved by our own feast, so honorably in the eyes of others, then again vice should be elected in these honours, and be endowed with the high praise of conforming moral satisfaction; if we felt complacency; if at one time aversions and repulsion made men good, useful, if another, licentious principles of examples produced the same happy effects; if there were such irregularities in the administration of the material world, how would help be full of darkness in the heart; how would doubt and mistrust set the soul in a fever? how would there be new faculties little else but
the power of giving us pain. - To introduce such
discourse would be to ray the death knell to
whatever of happiness or wisdom we can now attain
of nature were not interlaced in means, every sign
of government rests would be destroyed.
And it is by the operation of the same general
laws, by which the necessity of the most high is
exacted, by which the necessity of the most high is
exacted, that we are exposed to so much regularity and stability, that
we are account for much of the world, for we are so
told that the world is full. The same con
stitution of nature which gives us the capacity of
enjoyment, occasionally exposes us to suffering
while it makes us sensible to pleasure, it must
sometimes necessarily inflict pain. It is not
one hand which administers the portion of joy,
and another which gives us the bitterness of grief:
universal laws must from their nature sometimes
involve us in consequences with try our feelings
painfully: yet if they were not general laws
which would be the happiness and they were
spread around us? - The same fire, with manners
which your domestic circle, may become the
dreadful minister of distress, often at times for
your control, sweeping a wide track of ruin,
leaving nothing but the line of ages to fill
when your dwelling has been. The lightning,
while it is making the air full of revelations, may
be too the waft of terrible messengers of death.
The falling stone may perhaps, set of the world
was the ornament of delight of society: but the
impeccably downs by the same forces of gravity
which regulate the rolling of worlds? The notes
and presences the waters of the ocean base itself.
out into the might become a barbet fruit,
to spread pollution and disease, may likewise wash
your vessel on the strand as wash away your
territory. The same wind, which carries me to the
desired haven, may drive another on rocks
as quicksands. The same force of example by
whence are sometimes early instilled into the
love of justice and bound by the strength of reverence
to its laws, may in other instances provide
vice of pollution through the youth and heart,
the same weight of authority, or may give
confidence of even censure to truth, will perhaps
frequently bend all its arrows to the cause
of errors. - Do we complain that we are exposed
to these evils? - Let us remember that they
flow from the same source  with hours as our
blessings: - that this must necessarily
be the case, unless we would have the laws
of God's government arbitrary, capricious, sense
tain. The principle on which the sovereign authority of Jehovah is exercised remains the same; but its effects must be different, according to the difference of circumstances & the different objects on which it operates. Would you have the laws of infinite wisdom suspended in your favor? Remember that this suspension, while it accomodates your interest, may inflict pain & suffering on thousands whose claims to happiness are not less urgent than yours. The stability of nature & the well-being of mankind depend ultimately on general laws. There, however, it should be observed, that when we say, that the government of the Deity is exercised by general laws, we do not mean, that there can in no case be exceptions to those laws. The history of man tells us, that such exceptions may be, for they have sometimes been, admitted; but it only for such useful purposes, & when a larger measure of good would be produced by the deviation from the usual tenor of adoration. Miracles are among the means by which God uses to accomplish his mighty & marvelous designs. The hand, as guides, may arrest the course of nature; could not the voice, at whose bidding the sun goes forth in his might -- "rejoicing to view his race," say to him, "Thou sun, stand still upon Gibeon?"

And why, we may ask, in the language of Paul to the Roman governor, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" (Acts xiv. 22.) Nay, not that he raise, but first breathe into man the breath of life, restore that breath to the body, & it hath ceased to animate? Is it not appealed to miracles, as the commanding evidence of authority from heaven? Come with the commission of the Almighty to enlighten & bless mankind with the revelation of bright & glorious truths, & what could impress on that commission more deeply the seal of divinity, than that the course of those laws should be interpreted in its favor, or none, but He who established them, could interpret them? But unpersonal truths, & divinities are always designed for great & adequate purposes. Why divided the sea, & formed the wall of waters, it was to afford a path to safety to that chosen people who were to preserve & transmit to other ages the knowledge of Deity, & of true religion. There may be deviations from the course of nature; but they only mark more brightly & gloriously the flower & wisdom of the God of nature.

2. It occurs as an obvious circumstance in the government of the Almighty, that it is wisely adapted to the various natures & conditions of the subjects with whom He deals.
it is exercised. Creation is diversified by all the thousand varieties which are constituted by the forms of matter, the energies of mind; and the mighty govern these different natures, and He has formed, by different principles, leaving to each the peculiarities of its condition and character. The domain of God over the animate and material world appears in the fixed and regular laws by which its operations are guided; in the preservation of its being and form; in the configuration of its minute particles; in the unceasing work of the material relations and connections; in the regular succession of these changes, I love revolving according to all these alternations which may appear to us variable and irregular. Now in all this, the agency of God seems to be, so to speak, more immediate, than in this empire over the world of intelligence. Man in the material world there is nothing left to the exercise of reason, for there is no relation there; nothing to the power of judgment, for all is blind, mute, and dead. In impress of divine power seems to be immediately recognized in every the least motion of matter, whether in its ordinary course or its accidental deviations. The planets roll through the heavens, move not through the smallest space without the hand of God to support it.
of misery to the brute creation. If beings endowed with animal faculties were obliged to creep on the earth, to ring the air, or to swim the ocean, would not this situation be rendered intolerably miserable by the very circumstance—that they had minds not felt; can the exist all the finer uses of capacities of reason & intelligence? The keen sense of suffering & degradation would war in them every moment of existence. We see then, that God governs the micro-organisms of the animal world by laws best adapted to their condition—the overpowering laws of instinct, combined with mental & moral forces—could the government of the Deity exercised over them with the same wise adaptation to the peculiarities of their character & condition. In proportion as they have a large capacity of action of a moral range of power, than the brute creation—the greater is the task set before them & the more is left to their own agency & exertion. God it is true, governs the world & mind equally with the world of matter, but He does it by the instrumentalities of the mental actions of man; by the intercession of angels, & by the agency of principles. He has established in the human breast. The Sovereign of the universe does not control actions in such a way, as to take them all met & elements of law with-out moral responsibility. We are placed here in a state of trial & we have faculties, which can find their inspiration or their proper office of exertion only in this state of trial. The mind of man is not determined by the same mechanical & unchanging laws as those which guide the motions of change of matter. Without freedom of choice, without the possibility of doing wrong, as well as the power of doing right, man could have no character to his one only. Character is formed by the action of those influences wh are thrown up by various objects of events as they come around us in life. We see then, that man, in the order of creation, is governed by laws exactly adapted to his nature & condition, as a free agent, & as destined to higher scenes of action & enjoyment than earth can afford. Here, then, we have another principle of the divine government; our administration is it is, by the same law which uniformly proceeds with a reference to the peculiarities in the condition character of its various subjects, yet always well connected & consistent; it is a bright chain of justice & benevolence, wh in its various winding stretches through creation, & yet is always grasped by the same hand, & that is the hand of
An important feature of the divine government in this world is the tendency to produce the best good, trust, happiness, if it be possible, to produce happiness in proportion to virtue. In each of the species, we shall see, that the object of the arrangement is to sustain the precious light of heaven, & bring the seeds of plants, & boys in their places, as the sure Being who has preserved unchanged the resources of enjoyment for the animal creation on the powers of nature, and man's free will, in the regularity of the seasons; the influence of the sun upon all the springs of nature is not neglected. The energies of existence are multiplied by strength.

Man is distinguished by the larger share of moral contributions of divine providence. For his support, earth, air, & sea, the charmed of luminaries of heaven yield a more ample tribute, in more various ways. To his dominion, the brute creation is subjected, & men themselves are made for each other. & are designed, & prompted, to seek not their own preservation only, but a more public interest, a wider range of service. Indeed, I need not point out how the numerous provisions for man's enjoyment in the world around him. - I will only observe, that if they sometimes have sources of misery, it is generally an accidental result, it is not that for which were designed by him who constituted them.

If you come now to a moral point of view, we shall find that the tendency of God's government is to produce happiness in proportion to virtue. I do not say that this conception uniformly takes place. It is frequently broken or disturbed by the untoward events of life, or may be thrust to the mouth in indignation the appearance of great and powerful men, the triumphs of high-born vice & daring wickedness. Felicity is not always allowed to grace the hand of justice in the path of life. But the argument rests not on a few particular instances; if it is surely unreasonable to insist particularly on exceptions, perhaps this at experiments, when the general state of the case is few diagnose. The great & proper question is, whether the condition of good men in this world, in general, & on the whole, is not happier than that of the bad? Whether they do not enjoy more satisfaction, more ease of contentment, are not better pleased with themselves, with their character, condition? If we were to consult on the means of happiness, or to direct a friend, how best to enjoy life, is not that with greatest security, with the least troubles, with the largest share of satisfactions, in what course would you mark out for him. What you point him to the ways of villainy, delinquency, or to the straight road of religion, the path of honesty & virtue? Parents, we know, expound all...
the resources of affection can produce in seeking the welfare of happiness of their children. - And do they endeavor to accomplish that end? - Do they instruct them in the ways of grace & train them up in habits of inquiry? - Or is it their anxious wish to mould their hearts to virtue & religion as the source of well being & moral peace in this world? - These questions surely admit but one answer: & if so, it must be allowed, as the result of experience, that the paths & legitimate tendency of virtue is to produce happiness. & that it actually does so in most cases. It is true we see enough of triumphant guilt & successful iniquity to make us look with gladness to a brighter world, where the relative duties of justice will be more accurately distributed, & even in this state of being, the connection between virtue & happiness is sufficiently manifest & intimate, to convince us that it is a principle established & signed in the government of the universe for man to pursue & to do well.

I have thus adverted to some of the principles on which the government of God over the world seems to proceed. - Let me not be understood to say that these principles will account for every appearance of providence that may be exhibited: for the accommodations are far from being complete. - Besides in the government of Providence & Omniscience, events must some
day, on this day of Thanksgiving & prayer, a remembrance will most fully remind us that we are & have been the subjects of this providence. - The power of habit in rendering us cold & careless in what is most striking & affecting is wonderful indeed. - We have every reason on the goodness of God, yet it is because we are constant in love upon that which passers by us of the hand of you support us. - The mercy of our Lord God is like the air which we breathe, it surrounds us, but we do not see it. - We are not called to mourn the ravages of meeting disease, its serpentine and drowning in its dreadful march, working all the off the human power of human skill. - Our rights & privileges as men, yea circulation have been continued to us uninterrupted. Instead of the din of arms, the rushing of the war horse, we hear around us the sounds
of peaceful industry & spirited enterprise. Look for a moment at the different nations of the old world, there is scarcely one of them where you could not turn away with pity from the misery & miserable state of your eye: then look at these U.S. & see how far from there to Georgia are scattered, in preference the blessings of liberty, of peace, of plenty, & of good government: & after this review, will you not say that God has marked out his happy dwellings, as the peculiar residence of his. Here the soul of man, no less than his body, are free: here presence cannot touch its joys, or bring any kind its chains. We are yet a young nation! The men of our country is but just ascending the horizon, but it will soon in its resistless course, till it shall reach the splendors of monady: & Heaven grant that while the mild habits it may descend to will be of such are our blessings & privileges, that great is our obligation of gratitude to Him, who hath been the God of our fathers & our God.

To Fast day.

While in this day of fasting & prayer, we are called upon to reflect on the providence of God, it becomes us seriously & honestly to ask ourselves, whether we have not much to reflect of, ye must to be forgiven. We are now looking forward to the approaching season, uncertain what may be in reserve for us, but anxiously desiring that God would grant us health in our habitations, peace in our borders, that he would bless the labors of our hands, that under the smile of His providence, the earth may afford us richly its bountiful fruits, & that the year may be crowned with his favor. And while we look up to our Father, for these & other blessings, it becomes us to remember how unworthy are some of his favors, & to strive that we may for the future be more fit subjects for his mercy. Seeking as we cherish our lives, we cherish that we will ever draw upon us
the judgments of heaven on one from the other. While in this day we profess to humble ourselves before the Most High, let us remember the wise in all his precepts to the people of old; consider it as spoken to ourselves, 'ye have transgressed, yea, ye have been transgressors; therefore will I destroy you, saith the Lord. And the temple of the Lord was 200 timesOccur, not to bring us to face the final, important, as ours, come clothed in mystery, to understand the lessons of renovation & redemption. The path of the Almighty's dominion is high & frequent, far beyond our ken; but let the tribute of gratitude rise at the reflection. He who is infinite, by wise & infinite, we can never do ought but what is best. In nothing the means of promoted; we are like the traveller who sees the prospect of some river gliding along through its winding channel & observes how it beautifully enriches the fertile valley; his view is limited to a certain extent. The course of life, as it comes, as it shall, it goes; hills intervene, or forests, or the many, in Scythian passages, and this progressive view, smooth his curiosity. Thus the means of goodness of God's providence continually flow through universal nature in many lesser channels: but they are perceptible to us perhaps only in some particular part, or in those compass of those inordinate, endless currents to which we see them in their rise of progress, where they immediately affect the senses & feelings of man. Yet shall we know that the march is ever the march of woes, of misery & of amendment. Hence it becomes incumbent on this public occasion to remember with admiration & gratitude the mighty & merciful providence of God with regard to our country.
Perhaps the history of our people tells of more than profuse
rousing the heart to render thanks that of U.S.
Let the tribute of gratitude rise to that Father conducted our forefathers over the wild waves of the
ocean, preserved them when all the rude inclemency of winterwas abroad on the desolate coast, no
thing but the yell of the savage disturbed the
silence of the wilderness. They were in truth very
able men. They were sages, heroes; but their own
and their decision have not been themes of the world's
exploits, because they were not displayed in the
various prowess of the senate, or in the terri
ous exploits of the battle field, but in the for
mation of sound, permanent institutions, in the
spirit of high and noble enterprise, of active creation,
patience, and suffering. Let us look back with fondness of presence on the first
days of our country; in the character of the first
settlers, we remember, it is a trifling task with
they have left to us, to transmute from un
in the blessings with the seen amidst all
the varieties of trial, of suffering, of pain.
1. Lo. 11. 26. - See as often as ye can do.