

28. But while we thus argue that by an operation behind the scenes, Prayer may be responded to without infringement on the visible sequences of nature, we will not affirm what the specific operation actually is. We may clearly see that there are several ways by which this can be brought about; and yet we may not be able to pronounce upon the one way. One might conceive it to be done by the ministry of angels. Another may imagine that the effect of prayer on some hidden term of that progression which has led to the wished for result may itself be, as much as any other, one of the regular sequences of nature; and, certainly, prior to experience, is not more mysterious or unlikely than the effect which a particle of matter has on the most distant matter of our Universe. Another may contend for the direct intervention of a fiat from the court of Heaven's Sovereignty—whose first influence is on some occult antecedent in the upper places of the train, and whose subsequent influences descend in regular order, perhaps through many visible steps to the final accomplishment. And lastly, the taste of some may incline them to a pre-established harmony, as if the same God who foresaw every prayer, included every answer to these prayers in His primary adjustment of the great Mundane System.* We do not affirm

* The author of the *Natural History of Enthusiasm*, in his chapter on the enthusiastic abuses of the doctrine of a particular providence, advances an hypothesis distinct from all these, and which certainly has peculiar recommendations of its own. His conception is that the history of nature and of society is made up of innumerable progressions, in lines which perpetually cross each other; and which at their point of intersection receive a new