

point of duration when the plan was first conceived, would imply new knowledge in one confessedly omniscient; and that destroys the idea of omniscience.

Similar reasoning from the nature of the divine attributes leads us to the conclusion that God always acts according to law. That he does this in the ordinary operations of nature, all admit. But even when he introduces a miracle, perhaps by a counteraction of ordinary laws, he may still act by some rule; so that, were precisely the same circumstances to occur again, the same miracle would be repeated. Beforehand, we could not say whether God would conduct the affairs of the universe by one unvarying system of natural laws, or occasionally interfere with the regular sequence of cause and effect by miracle. But though the latter course should be adopted, as we have reason to think it is, even the special interference must be according to law; so that, in fact, there is a law of miracles as well as of common events. Again, if God sometimes alters one or more of the links out of sight, in a chain of second causes, in order to meet a providential exigency, or if he modifies for the same purpose some of the oblique influences by which events are affected, all this must be done by rule; that is, by law. Indeed, to suppose him ever to act without law, is to represent him as less wise than men, who, if judicious, are always governed by settled principles, which produce the same conduct in the same circumstances.

From this reasoning we may safely infer two things: first that the laws regulating miracles and special providences are as fixed and certain as those of ordinary events; and secondly, that those laws must have formed a part of the plan of creation originally existing in the divine mind. And hence, thirdly, we must admit that every case of miracle and special providence must have entered into that plan.

When he formed it, he foresaw every possible event that would result from its operation to the end of the world. He saw distinctly the condition of every individual of the human family, from the beginning to the close of life; all his dangers and trials, his sufferings and his sins; and he knew just when and where every prayer would be offered up. Nor can it be any more doubtful that, with infinite wisdom to guide him, and infinite power to execute his will, God could so have arranged and constituted the laws of nature, as to meet exactly every