

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.

Chapter 5.-Of Providence.

I. God the great Creator of all things doth uphold,¹ direct, dispose, and governe all creatures, actions, and things,² from the greatest even to the least,³ by his most wise and holy Providence;⁴ according to his infallible fore-knowledge,⁵ and the free, and immutable counsell of his own Will,⁶ to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodnesse, and mercy.⁷

Question 1.—Doth God uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, their Actions, and all things, from the greatest, even to the least?

Answer.—Yes. Heb. 1:3; Dan. 4:34, 35; Ps. 135:6; Acts 17:25, 26, 28; Job 38, 39, 40, 41, chapters. They are confuted who deny this truth for the following reasons: 1.) Because, it is God, that worketh all in all, 1 Cor. 12:5, 6. 2.) Because, he worketh all things, according to the counsel of his own will, Eph 1:11. 3.) Because, of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, Rom. 11:36.

Question 2.—Is the providence of God rightly called “fate?”

Answer.—There is a sense in which some of the fathers frequently used the word “fate” which connotes the series and order of causes depending on divine providence by which it produces its own effects. But, although we grant it may be used in a sound sense, if it is evident concerning the thing itself and nothing else is understood by the use of the word than explained above. Still we think it safer with Calvin and others to abstain from the word. Because, 1.) It is contaminated by heathenism, superstition and impiety and belongs to the number of those whose profane novelties Paul commands us to flee, 1 Cor. 10:14. 2.) It is too much exposed to the calumnies of opponents, who with the name charge us with receiving also the doctrine and so endeavor to fasten its odium upon the truth of God. Nor can there be the same reasons against the word “providence” (also used by the heathen to confirm their own figments) because this is handed down to us in the Scripture itself. This was the opinion of Augustine: “If anyone calls the very power and will of God fate, let him hold the opinion, but let him correct the language.”

Question 3.—Do small things as well as great come under the providence of our God?

Answer.—Yes. Dan. 4:34; Ps. 107:40; Prov. 16:33. The Scripture establishes this both as to the general and particular. In general, in those passages which claim the care and government of all things for God, Neh. 9:6; Acts 17:25, 28; Heb. 1:3; Ps. 145:15, 16. In particular, in those passages which subject to the providence of God all the species of things and especially those which come into controversy, the smaller things no less than the greatest are said to depend upon it. What is more insignificant than the hairs of our

¹ Heb. 1:3.

² Dan. 4:34, 35; Ps. 135:6; Acts 17:25, 26, 28; Job 38, 39, 40, 41, chapters.

³ Matt. 10:29, 30, 31.

⁴ Prov. 15:3; Ps. 104:24; Ps. 145:17.

⁵ Acts 15:18; Ps. 94:8-11.

⁶ Eph. 1:11; Ps. 33:10, 11.

⁷ Isa. 63:14; Eph. 3:10; Rom. 9:17; Gen. 45:7; Ps. 145:7.

head? Yet, all are said to be numbered by God, Luke 12:7. What more unimportant than a sparrow? Yet not one falls to the ground apart from God's will, Matt. 10:29, who feeds all the fowls of the air by his providence, Matt. 6:26, and gives food to the young ravens, Ps. 147:9. What of less importance than the flowers of the fields? Yet God clothes them and makes them grow, Matt. 6:28, 30. What lower than frogs, lice, locusts, worms and other insects? Yet God raises them up to execute his judgments, Ex. 8:16, 17; 10:12; nay, they are called "his strong army, executing his word," Joel 2:11. Moreover, if the smallest, how much more the greatest?

Question 4.—Does providence also concern the government of things?

Answer.—Yes. 1 Kings 22:34. Scripture everywhere ascribes to God (as the first cause) the actions of causes. Thus, God "sent" Joseph into Egypt, Gen. 45:7. He has the king's heart in his hand, Prov. 21:1. He uses the wicked as an axe, an instrument of accomplishing his work, Isa. 10:15, 26; 13:5. The following passages also apply here, Acts 17:28; Phil. 2:13; 1 Cor. 12:6. They demonstrate that his providence extends to all of the actions, even of the intelligent creatures.

Question 5.—What ought to be the response of the intelligent creation to this providence?

Answer.—The revelation that there is purpose and that God stands behind and directs this purpose, Isa. 63:14; ought to lead all of the intelligent creation to recognize the wisdom of the Almighty is so doing, Eph. 3:10. The active directing of providence should also lead men to confess both the justice and the goodness of God, Rom. 9:17; Gen. 45:7. In observing the providences of God, the church is thereby taught to praise God for the glory of all of these things together with his mercy toward them that fear his name, Ps. 145:7.