

The Doctrine of Providence- Part I

Written by Calvin Fox

Friday, 17 August 2012 13:58 - Last Updated Sunday, 19 August 2012 16:02

Westminster Confession, Chapter V - Providence [Defined]

I. God the great Creator of all things does uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, according to His infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will, to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

II. Although, in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, ...all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, He orders them to fall out,[play out] according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

III. God, in His ordinary providence, makes use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure.

IV. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence

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that it extends itself
even

to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men

; and that not by a bare permission, but such as has joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise

ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends

; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceeds only from the creature, and not from

God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin

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V. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God does oftentimes leave, for a season, His own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and, to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

VI. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous Judge, for former sins, does blind and harden, from them He not only withholds His grace whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraws the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and, withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God uses for the softening of others.

Attached to the WCF, there are dozens of Scripture verses used as proof texts for all these points. I have grouped them by topic, but many overlap. I also omitted some that didn't seem at all relevant to me and have added others that are, taken from Reformed writers.

Proof texts for WCF are taken from the KJV which makes a difference in some cases (compared to ESV or NRSV, etc.).

Actually, I find that the compilers of the WCF really stretch their point many times in all Chapters with the proof texts chosen.

I often do not find in the latter what WCF writers intend the reader to find or what they say they found, especially when I reference another Translation and exegete the text.)