

God the creator and sustainer

Introduction

Recap...

A question from last week: WCF 3.3 “predestined to everlasting life... foreordained to everlasting death.”

Chapters 4-5 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

Chapter 4 – Creation

4.1. It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create—or make out of nothing—the world and everything in it, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

4.2. After God had made everything else, he created mankind. He made them male and female, with rational and immortal souls, endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, after his own image. They had the law of God written in their hearts and had power to fulfill it. They were, however, under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. In addition to this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As long as they obeyed this command, they were happy in their communion with God and had dominion over the creatures.

Chapter 5 - Providence

5.1. God—the great Creator of all things—upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least. He exercises this most wise and holy providence according to his infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchangeable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.

5.2. Although—in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first Cause—all things come to pass unchangeably and infallibly; yet, by the same providence, he orders them to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

5.3. In his ordinary providence, God makes use of means, yet he is free to work without, above, and against them as he pleases.

Creation...

- ... work of the Triune God - Gen. 1:1, Heb. 1:2
- .. preaches God’s glory - Ps. 19:1
- ... out of nothing - Heb. 11:3
- ... visible and invisible – Col 1:16
- ... in 6 days, all very good

The creation of people

- ... created
- ... male and female – Gen. 1:27
- ... reason and immortality – Gen. 2:7,
- ... God’s image
- ... God’s law in our hearts
- ... God’s law about the tree

Providence

- ... definition – Eph. 1:11
- ... it’s extent: “all”
- ... to His glory
- ... and our good: trust Him!

Sovereign... yet uses 2nd causes

- ... First cause: not just architect, but supervisor!
E.g. Acts 2:23
- ... Some events/actions cause others:
Necessarily: like planets moving in orbits
Freely: voluntary – humans do what we want
Contingently: if this, then that – things might have turned out different
- ... ordinary (normal) and less ordinary (miraculous) providence

5.4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God manifest themselves so completely in his providence that it extends even to the first fall and all other sins of angels and men—not by a bare permission, but by a permission which has joined with it a most wise and powerful limiting, and otherwise ordering and governing of them in a varied administration, for his own holy purposes. However, the sinfulness comes from the creatures alone and not from God, who, because he is most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

5.5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God often leaves his own children, for a time, to manifold temptations and to the corruption of their own hearts. He does this to chastise them for their past sins, to humble them by making them aware of the hidden strength of the corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, and then to raise them to a closer, more constant dependence upon himself for their support, to make them more watchful against all future occasions for sinning, and to fulfill various other just and holy purposes.

5.6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, blinds and hardens because of their past sins, God withholds his grace, by which their minds might have been enlightened and their hearts affected. He also sometimes takes away the gifts which they had, and exposes them to such things as their corrupt nature makes into occasions for sinning. Moreover, he gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, by which they harden themselves even under the same means which God uses to soften others.

5.7. As, in general, the providence of God reaches to all creatures, so, in a very special way, it cares for his church and disposes all things for its good.

The fall, and the sins of angels and men

e.g. 1 Chron 21:1, 2 Sam. 24:1

e.g. Acts 4:27-28

“not by a bare permission”: He governs and limits sin

He is holy and righteous – James 1:13

A pastoral concern: why does He leave Christian people in sin or suffering?

What he does... and why

e.g. Paul's thorn – 2 Cor. 12:7-9,

Asaph – Ps. 73

Peter – Mark 14:66-72

The lost: common grace... but also

He “blinds and hardens” – Rom. 1:18ff, 11:7-8

“takes away” – e.g. Matt. 13:12, 25:29

“gives them over”

God's providence... and the CHURCH: great comfort!

Ephesians 1:19-23, 3:10

Romans 8:28

Personal response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?