

Cloverdale FPC Adult Sunday School W.C.F. To Codify - Unify - Testify
Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Of Providence. [text in brackets added]

[GOD'S OWN GLORY IN PROVIDENCE]

1. God, the great Creator of all things, doth uphold,^a direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things,^b from the greatest even to the least,^c by his most wise and holy providence^d, according to his infallible foreknowledge,^e and the free and immutable counsel of his own will,^f to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness, and mercy.^g

a. Heb 1:3

b. Psa 135:6; Dan 4:34-35; Acts 17:25-26, 28; Job 38-41

c. Mat 10:29-31

d. Psa 104:24; 145:17; Prov 15:3

e. Psa 94:8-11; Acts 15:18

f. Psa 33:10-11; Eph 1:11

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

[GOD FOLLOWS THE LAWS OF NATURE]

2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly,^a yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.^b

a. Acts 2:23

b. Gen 8:22; Exod 21:13 with Deut 19:5; 1 Kings 22:28, 34; Isa 10:6-7; Jer 31:35.

[GOD USES MEANS AND MIRACLES]

3. God, in his ordinary providence, maketh use of means,^a yet is free to work without,^b above,^c and against them,^d at his pleasure.

a. Isa 55:10-11; Hosea 2:21-22; Acts 27:31, 44

b. Job 34:10; Hosea 1:7; Mat 4:4

c. Rom 4:19-21

d. 2 Kings 6:6; Dan 3:27

The providence of God is either ordinary or miraculous. In his ordinary providence God works by means, and according to the general laws established by his own wisdom: we are, therefore, bound to use the means which he has appointed, and if we neglect these, we cannot expect to obtain the end. But though God generally acts according to established laws, yet he may suspend or modify these laws at pleasure. And when, by his immediate agency, an effect is produced above or beside the ordinary course of nature, this we denominate a miracle. The possibility of miracles will be denied by none but Atheists. To maintain that the laws of nature are so absolutely fixed, that they can in no case be deviated from, would be to exclude God from the government of the world, - to represent the universe as a vast machine, whose movements are regulated by certain laws which even the great Architect cannot control. [That is the heresy of Deism.]

Robert Shaw

[SIN PROCEEDETH FROM THE CREATURE NOT FROM GOD]

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in his providence that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men,^a and that not by a bare permission,^b but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding [*set the boundaries of - as in the seas*],^c and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends;^d yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth 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.^e

- a. **2 Sam 16:10; 24:1 with 1 Chron 21:1; 1 Kings 22:22-23; 1 Chron 10:4, 13-14; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Rom 11:32-34**
- b. **Acts 14:16**
- c. **2 Kings 19:28; Psalms 76:10**
- d. **Gen 50:20; Isa 10:6-7, 12**
- e. **Psalms 50:21; James 1:13-14, 17; 1 John 2:16**

“To solve the difficulty connected with this point, [God approving of sin] theologians distinguish between an action and its quality. The action, abstractly considered, is from God, for no action can be performed without the concurrence of Providence; but the sinfulness of the action proceeds entirely from the creature. As to the manner in which the providence of God is concerned about the sinful actions of creatures, it is usually stated, that God permits them, that he limits them, and that he overrules them for the accomplishment of his own holy ends. But the full elucidation of this abstruse subject, so as to remove every difficulty, surpasses the human faculties. We are certain that God is concerned in all the actions of his creatures; we are equally certain that God cannot be the author of sin; and here we ought to rest.” Robert Shaw

[CHASTISEMENT THROUGH TEMPTATIONS]

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth 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 be humbled;^a and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support unto himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.^b

- a. **2 Sam 24:1; 2 Chron 32:25-26, 31**
- b. **Psalms 73 throughout; Psalms 77:1-10, 12; Mark 14:66-72 with John 21:15-17; 2 Cor 12:7-9**

[HOW GOD HARDENS MEN]

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as a righteous judge, for former sins, doth blind and harden,^a from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings and wrought upon in their hearts,^b but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had,^c and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin;^d and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan;^e whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softening of others.^f

- a. **Rom 1:24, 26, 28; 11:7-8**
- b. **Deut 29:4**
- c. **Mat 13:12; 25:29**
- d. **Deut 2:30; 2 Kings 8:12-13**
- e. **Psalms 81:11-12; 2 Thes 2:10-12**
- f. **Exod 7:3 with 8:15; 8:32; Isa 6:9-10 with Acts 28:26-27; Isa 8:14; 2 Cor 2:15-16; 1 Pet 2:7-8**

[GOD’S SPECIAL CARE OF HIS CHURCH]

7. As the providence of God doth, in general, reach to all creatures, so, after a most special manner, it taketh care of his Church, and disposeth all things to the good thereof.^a

- a. **Isa 43:3-5, 14; Amos 9:8-9; Rom 8:28; 1 Tim 4:10**

“The providence of God may be considered as **general** and as **special**. His general providence is exercised **about all his creatures**; his special providence is exercised, in a particular manner, **about His Church** and people. “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him” (2Chr. 16:9). Go has the interests of his won people ever in view; he knows what is most conducive to their happiness; and he will make all things, whether prosperous or adverse, to co-operate in promoting their good (Rom. 8:28). In all past ages, God has watched over his Church with peculiar and unremitting care; he has sometimes permitted her to be reduced to a very low condition, but he has also wrought surprising deliverances in her behalf. The very means which her enemies intended for her destruction and ruin have, by an overruling providence, been rendered subservient to her edification and enlargement (Acts 8:4.) The preservation of the Church, in spite of the craft and malice of hell, and of all the pernicious errors and bloody persecutions which have threatened her ruin, is no less wonderful than the spectacle which Moses beheld, - a bush burning but not consumed. And let us still confide and rejoice in the promise of Christ, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church.” Robert Shaw