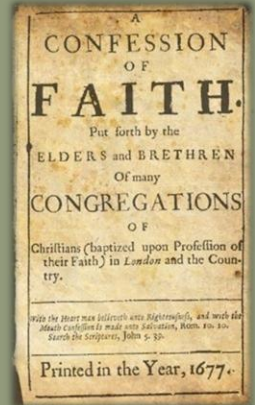


SECOND LONDON BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH



CHAPTER 5 OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE



1

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God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

2LCF; 5.1

2

Divine Providence

- *Sovereignty* is God's right and power to do whatever He pleases
- *Providence* is the way in which God brings about whatever He pleases
- "...upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least by his most wise and holy providence to the end which they were created..."

3

Does God Control Every Detail?

- Many today do not believe God is provident over every minute detail in the universe
- Why do you think that doctrine bothers them?

4

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But, on the other end of the spectrum, you have people that believe that God is the ultimate micromanager. And folks on this end of the spectrum (like John Calvin) believe that in order for God to be sovereign--in order for God to be the highest authority and have dominion over all creation--that God must will and cause every single thing that happens. And, if something were to happen that was not part of God's will or plan, then it would show that God is not truly sovereign. So the basic idea here is that God cannot be sovereign unless God directly controls everything.

So the folks on this end of the spectrum see God more like a computer programmer. They believe God has written the code for everything that has ever happened or will ever happen and there is no way that anything could hack the system and cause anything to happen that God hadn't planned.

<https://mhbcloouisville.com/blog/the-bible-doesnt-say-that-everything-happens-for-a-reason/>

5

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And, although I will admit that there are passages in the Bible that seem to back up this point of view, there are at least a couple of major problems with it. First, if God is completely responsible for everything that happens then we are not responsible for anything that we do...

Okay, so we've spent most of this sermon talking about where the idea behind the saying, "Everything happens for a reason" comes from. And it comes from the belief that in order for God to be sovereign that God has to be in direct control over everything that happens. But we've also talked about why this idea isn't true. And it's not true because if God is responsible for everything then we are responsible for nothing, and we would have no choice in the matter.

<https://mhbcloouisville.com/blog/the-bible-doesnt-say-that-everything-happens-for-a-reason/>

6

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Matthew 6:25–34 (ESV)

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

7



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8

Where is our Hope?

- Romans 8:28 (ESV) – And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
- What other force moves the universe but God?
- Do we not take every breath by the grace of God?

9



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[The carnal mind] imagines that all things are sufficiently sustained by the energy divinely infused into them at first. But faith must penetrate deeper. After learning there is a Creator, it must forthwith infer that he is also a Governor and Preserver, and that, not by producing a kind of general motion in the machine of the globe as well as in each of its parts, but by a special providence sustaining, cherishing, superintending, all the things which he has made, to the very minutest, even to a sparrow.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 114.

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God is deemed omnipotent, not because he can act though he may cease or be idle, or because by a general instinct he continues the order of nature previously appointed; but because, governing heaven and earth by his providence, he so overrules all things that nothing happens without his counsel.

John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, p. 114.



PRIMARY AND SECONDARY CAUSATION

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Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without his providence; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

2LCF; 5.2

13

King Ahab and the False Prophets

- 1 Kings 22
- Ahab – King of Israel
- Jehoshaphat – King of Judah
- Ahab asks Jehoshaphat to go to war with him against Ramoth-gilead (Syria)
- They summoned 400 prophets and asked, “‘Shall I go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?’ And they said, ‘Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hands of the king.’”

14

King Ahab and the False Prophets

- Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with their answer and wanted another prophet
- Ahab told him about Micaiah, but hated Micaiah because he never prophesied good for Ahab
- Micaiah's prophecies that Ahab would die

15

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1 Kings 22:19–23 (ESV)

¹⁹ And Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside him on his right hand and on his left; ²⁰ and the LORD said, ‘Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ And one said one thing, and another said another. ²¹ Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ ²² And the LORD said to him, ‘By what means?’ And he said, ‘I will go out, and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And he said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do so.’ ²³ Now therefore behold, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; the LORD has declared disaster for you.”

16

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1 Kings 22:29–36 (ESV)

²⁹ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

³⁰ And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.” And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. ³¹ Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, “Fight with neither small nor great, but only with the king of Israel.”

³² And when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, “It is surely the king of Israel.” So they turned to fight against him. And Jehoshaphat cried out.

³³ And when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him. ³⁴ But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded.” ³⁵ And the battle continued that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Syrians, until at evening he died. And the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. ³⁶ And about sunset a cry went through the army, “Every man to his city, and every man to his country!”

17

Causation

- *Primary Causes* – God is the first and primary cause so that “all things come to pass immutably and infallibly”
 - “God hath decreed in himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass” - 2LCF 3.1
- *Secondary Causes* – The things within creation that bring about events
- Primary causation is not a time-related thing, but is a logical order

18

Example of Primary and Secondary

- When you sit down for supper, who has given you that meal?
 - God, of course
- But who prepared the meal, delivered the food to the store, raised the crop/animals, and so on?
 - Humans
- Who then gave you the food?
 - Both.
 - God is the primary giver of the food who has ordained that you receive the meal and supplied all the means necessary to make it happen
 - However, God has accomplished this task through His Creation

19

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

4. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions both of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness of their acts proceedeth only from the creatures, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin.

2LCF; 5.3-5.4

20

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5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions 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 other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good.

2LCF 5.5

21

GOD THE FATHER - CARE AND PRESENCE

I Asked the Lord That I Might Grow 63

1. I asked the Lord that I might grow In faith and
 2. 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray, And He, I
 3. I hoped that in some fa-vored hour At once He'd
 4. In - stead of this He made me feel The hid-den
 5. Yea more with His own hand He seemed In - tent to
 6. "Lord, why is this," I, trem-bling, cried: "Will Thou pur-
 7. "These in-ward in- als I em - ploy From self and

love and ev - 'ry grace, Might more of His face,
 trust has an-swered prayer, But it has been
 an - e - vils of my heart And by His love's
 ag - gra - vate my woe, Crossed all the fair
 see thy worm to death!" "Tis in this way,
 pride to set you free, And break thy schemes

sal - va - tion know And seek more earn - est - ly His face,
 in such a way As al - most drove me to de - quire,
 con - strain-ing pow'r Sub - due my sins and give me rest,
 gry pow'rs of hell As - sault my soul in ev - 'ry part,
 de - signs I schemed, Hum-bled my heart, and laid me low,
 the Lord re - plied, "I an - swer prayer for grace and faith,"
 of earth - ly joy That thou may'st find your all in Me."

Words: John Newton
 Music: Traditional Scottish song

22

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6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth 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, under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

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

2LCF 5.6-5.7