

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

WHAT MAN OUGHT TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD

QUESTIONS # 18 & 11.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #18. *What are God's works of providence?*

A. God's works of providence are his most holy,¹ wise,² and powerful preserving³ and governing⁴ all his creatures; ordering them, and all their actions,⁵ to his own glory.⁶

(Shorter Catechism)

Q #11. *What are God's works of providence?*

A. God's works of providence are, his most holy,⁷ wise,⁸ and powerful preserving,⁹ and governing all his creatures, and all their actions.¹⁰

Question 1—*Is there a providence of God?*

Answer—That there is a providence with God, whereby he does most ably uphold all things he has created according to his will, is held forth in Scripture, Dan. 4:25, 34, 35. This providence teaches that the creation does not exist in a state of independence from the Creator, Luke 20:38. Nor does the course of the creation continue, as Deists and others have asserted, as if the Creator of all things took no interest in its direction, Eph. 1:11. This providence is held forth in several examples throughout Scripture: 1.) On Mount Moriah, when upon occasion of the miraculous preservation of Isaac, a ram was *provided* to be sacrificed in his room, the Lord revealed himself as Jehovah Jireh (*i.e.*, the LORD will see, or provide), Gen. 22:14. 2.) Jacob's ladder, on which God appears managing all things, Gen. 28:12-15. 3.) Ezekiel's wheels, in which there was a wheel in the midst of a wheel, denoting the agency of first cause, and the superintending and directing providence of God, Ezek. 1:15-21.

Question 2—*What is the object of the providence of God?*

Answer—This providence of God extends to all the creatures, and all their actions, whereby he upholds everything by his word of power, Heb. 1:3. There is nothing that exists in the creation which falls outside of this pervasive preserving and governing power of God, Ps. 103:19. All things that were created by him are now subject to his providence, Neh. 9:6.

This providence reaches to the devils, as infernal spirits, so as to order them, Matt. 8:31. Providence oversees the natural things, whether clouds, snow, wind, &c., Ps.

¹ Ps. 145:17.

² Ps. 104:24; Isa. 28:29.

³ Heb. 1:3.

⁴ Ps. 103:19.

⁵ Matt. 10:29-31; Gen. 45:7.

⁶ Rom. 11:36; Isa. 63:14.

⁷ Ps. 145:17.

⁸ Ps. 104:24; Isa. 28:29.

⁹ Heb. 1:3.

¹⁰ Ps. 103:19; Matt. 10:29-31.

104:10-30; Ps. 147:8-18. It extends to the most casual and contingent of events, Prov. 16:33. Thus, even in the case of manslaughter, there is no accidental disposition from God, Ex. 21:13. There is nothing so small, or unimportant, but God's providence superintends all which pertains to its existence, Matt. 10:29-31.

In a special manner, God's providence is conversant about man, forming him in the womb, Job 10:10, 11; bringing him forth out of his mother's bowels, and holding him up hereafter, Ps. 71:6. So, too, the heart of man is in the Lord's hand, and all his thoughts and inclinations are under his control, Prov. 21:1. The most free acts of the creature's will are governed by this superintending providence, Phil. 2:13. Thus, all their good actions can only be accomplished by this providence, John 15:5. So also, their evil actions are subject to this same providence, Acts 4:27, 28. Whereby, in the case of the latter, God's providence is said to accomplish, not that evil intended by the will of the creature, but that purpose of his own good pleasure, even to the benefit and welfare of his people, Gen. 45:7.

Question 3—Wherein does it appear that the acts of providence consist in preserving and governing?

Answer—First, God's preserving of all his creatures is an act of providence whereby they are upheld in their being and power of acting, Heb. 1:3. This God accomplishes sometimes by means, or mediately, and sometimes without means, or immediately, Hos. 2:21, 22. Thus, by his providence he provides all things necessary for the preservation of all things, Ps. 145:15, 16. This act of providence is so necessary, that nothing could subsist one moment without it, Col. 1:17. For there is no necessary connection between the being of the creatures this moment and their being the next, Ps. 75:3. Thus, they must be upheld by God as an object must be held up by the hand lest it fall to earth again, yet this God does by his mere word, Eccl. 8:4.

Second, God does not only preserve, but governs and manages them, which is the second act of providence, whereby he disposes of all things, persons, and actions, according to his own will, Prov. 16:1, 9. This act is also necessary, for as the creature cannot be or exist without God, so neither can it act without him, Acts 17:28.

Question 4—What are the properties of this divine providence?

*Answer—*This providence of God, being the expression of his own will and good pleasure, has several properties: 1.) This providence is most holy, Ps. 145:17. Although this providence reaches to and is conversant in sinful actions, yet it is pure, as the sun shining upon the dunghill contracts no impurity, Ps. 76:10. God is neither the physical nor the moral cause of the evil of any action, Jas. 1:13; yet, he makes the evils of his creatures to serve his ends, Hab. 2:12, 13. 2.) This providence is most wise, Isa. 28:29. Infinite wisdom always proposes the most excellent ends in all its operations, and uses the best methods for accomplishing its ends, Ps. 104:24. 3.) This providence is most powerful, 2 Kings 19:28. Who can resist his will which is almighty, Rom. 9:19, 20?

Question 5—What is the end of this divine providence?

*Answer—*Just as the end of the creation is to serve for the glory of God, Rev. 4:11; so, too, the end of this providential preserving and governing is to order all things to redound to his glory, Rom. 11:36. Again, the glory that is sought is not that essential glory, which neither increases nor diminishes, Ps. 16:2; Mal. 3:6; but that declarative glory whereby God's glory is made to appear in the well-being of another, Isa. 63:14.