

Of God's Providence

Henry Bullinger (1504-1575)

THE FOURTH DECADE.
THE FOURTH SERMON.

THAT GOD IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS, AND
GOVERNETH ALL THINGS BY HIS PROVIDENCE:
WHERE MENTION IS ALSO MADE OF THE
GOODWILL OF GOD TO USWARD, AND
OF PREDESTINATION.

DEARLY beloved, it remaineth now for me in this day's sermon, for a conclusion to that which I have hitherto spoken concerning God, briefly to add somewhat of that creation or work of God, whereby he, being the maker of all things, hath to mankind's commodity wholesomely created all things, both visible and invisible, and doth now as always most wisely govern and order the same. For by so doing we shall obtain no small knowledge of God; and many things shall be more openly laid forth unto us, which we in our last treatise did but touch and away. In the searching out, considering, and setting forth of the creation of the whole and the parts thereof, all the diligence of all wise men, both within and without the Church, hath been set on work, doth labour, and shall be troubled so long as this world endureth. For what is he, though he were the wisest, the cunningest, and diligentest writer of the natural history, that leaveth not many things untouched for the posterity to labour in, and beat their brains about? Or what is he at this day, which, although he use the aid and industry of most learned writers, is not compelled to wonder at more and greater things than either they ever did, or he ever shall, attain unto you? The most wise Lord will always have witty men, that are enriched with heavenly gifts, to be always occupied and evermore exercised in the searching out and setting forth the secrets of nature and of the creation. But we do simply by faith conceive, that the worlds were made of nothing, and of no heap of matter, of God through the Word of God; and that it doth consist by the power of the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God. For so did king David, and Paul the teacher of the Gentiles, both believe and teach. But although the order of the whole, and the manner of the creation, cannot be knit up or declared in few words, yet will I do my endeavour to utter somewhat, by which the sum of things may partly appear to the diligent considerer.

And here I choose rather to use another man's words than mine own; especially because I suppose this matter cannot be more lively expressed than Tertullian, in his book *De Trinitate*, setteth it forth as followeth: "God hath hung up heaven in a lofty height; he hath made the earth massive with a low and pressed down weight; he hath poured out the

seas with a loose and thin liquor; and hath planted all these, being decked and full with their proper and fit instruments. For in the firmament of heaven he hath stirred up the dawning risings of the sun; he hath filled the circle of the glittering moon for the comfort of the night with monthly increasings of the world; and he lighteneth the beams of the stars with sundry gleams of the twinkling light" (the night, he meaneth); "and he would that all these should by appointed courses go about the compass of the world, to make to mankind days, months, years, signs, times, and commodities. In the earth also he hath lift up high hills aloft, depressed down the valleys below, laid the fields out evenly, and profitably ordained flocks of beasts for sundry services and uses of men. He hath made the massive oaks of the woods for the behoof of man; he hath brought forth fruits to feed them withal; he hath unlocked the mouths of springs, and poured them into running rivers. After all which necessary commodities, because he would also procure somewhat for the delight of the eyes, he clad them all with sundry colours of goodly flowers, to the pleasure and delight of those that beheld them. In the sea also, although for the greatness and profit thereof it were very wonderful, he framed many sorts of living creatures; some of a mean, and some of a monstrous bigness; which do by the variety of the workmanship give special notes of the workman's wit. And yet not being therewithal content, lest peradventure the rage and course of the waters should with the damage of the earth's inhabitants break out and occupy another element, he closed up the water's limits within the shores; that thereby, when the raging waves and foaming water did rise up from the depth and channel, it might turn into itself again, and not pass beyond the bounds appointed, keeping still the prescribed course; to the end also that man might be so much the more ready to keep God's laws, when he perceived that even the very elements did observe and keep them. Last of all he setteth man to be lord over the world; whom he made to the likeness and image of God: to whom he gave reason, wit, and wisdom, that he might imitate God; whose body, although it were made of earth, was yet notwithstanding inspired with the substance of the heavenly breath and Spirit of God: to whom when he had put all things in subjection, he would have him alone to be free without subjection. And lest that liberty, being let loose at random, might come into peril again, he gave a commandment; by the means of which commandment it could not be said that evil was out of hand or by and by present in the fruit, but should then be in it, when once he perceived in the will of man the contempt of that commandment. For both he ought to be free, lest the image of God should seem to be bound undecently; and also a law was to be given, lest at any time the unbridled liberty should break out to the contempt of him that gave the liberty: that he might consequently receive either due rewards of obedience, or merits of punishment for disobedience, having that given him to whether part he was willing by the motion of the mind for to incline; whereby the envy of mortality doth return to him who, when by obedience he might have escaped it, did yet run headlong into it, while he made too much haste to become a God,"

&c. The same addeth: "In the parts above the firmament which are not now to be beheld of our mortal eyes, that first there were ordained angels; then there were ordained spiritual virtues; then there were placed thrones and powers, and many other unmeasurable spaces of the heavens; and that many works of holy things were there created," &c. Thus far Tertullian.

Now the sum of all this is: God did by his power create of nothing heaven, earth, and the sea; which he did immediately adorn and enrich with all kinds of good things. And into this world, which taketh the name of furniture that is in it, as in a most sumptuous palace well furnished with all sort of excellent necessaries, it pleased him to bring man, to whom he did put all things in subjection: as David doth with wondering and marveling set it forth, where he saith: "O Lord, our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world! For thy glory is lift up above the heavens. Out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mayest destroy the enemy and the avenger. For I will consider the heavens, even the works of thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. What is man, that thou art so mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou hast care over him? Thou madest him somewhat lower than the angels (or, than God); thou crownest him with glory and honour, thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet; sheep and oxen, and the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea, which walk through the paths of the sea. O Lord, our governor, how excellent is thy name in all the world!" Psalm 8. The same again in another place doth say: "The heavens are thine, O God, and the earth is thine; thou hast laid the foundation of the round world, and all that therein is." [Psalm 89] "The day is thine, and the night is thine; thou hast ordained the light and the sun: thou layedst all the borders of the earth; thou hast made both summer and winter." [Psalm 74.16,17.] Now who is so very a sot as that he doth not by these proofs easily gather, how great our God is; how great the power of God is; how good, rich, and liberal to man, who never deserved any such thing at his hand, our God is, which hath created so great riches, so exquisite delights, and such furniture as cannot be sufficiently praised, for man alone, and hath made them all subject, and will have them all to obey man as their lord and master?

But here by the way, in the creation of the world, we have to consider the preservation and government of the whole by the same God. For neither doth the world stand and endure by any power of its own; neither do those things move and stir of their own accord, or (as we say) at all adventures, which are stirred or moved howsoever. For the Lord in the gospel saith: "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." [John 5] And Paul saith: "God by his Son hath made the worlds, and doth rule and uphold them with the word of his power." [Heb. 1.] And again: "By God we live, and move, and have our being." [Acts 17.] And again: "God left not himself without witness, in that he shewed his benefits from heaven, giving us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." [Acts 14.] And Theodoret, *De Providentia*, saith: "It is a most absurd thing to say, that God hath created all things, but that he hath no care of the things which he hath made; and that

his creature, as a boat destitute of a steersman, is with contrary winds tossed to and fro, and knocked and cracked upon shelves and rocks." Therefore in this place we have to say somewhat of God's providence and government: which all the wicked, together with the epicures, do at this day deny, saying in their hearts: "Is it likely, that he that dwelleth in heaven should regard the things on earth? And doth the Almighty observe and mark the very smallest of our words and works? He hath given to all creatures a certain inclination and nature, which he hath made their own; and so leaveth them now in the hand of their own counsel, that they of their own nature may move, increase, perish, and do even what they lust. Tush, God neither knoweth, nor doth greatly trouble himself about these toys." Thus do the wicked reason very wickedly: but the scripture doth expressly in many places pronounce and prove, that God by his providence doth care for and regard the state of mortal men and of all the things that he hath made for the use of mortal men. And therefore here it is profitable and necessary to cite some testimonies out of the holy scriptures for the proof of this argument.

David in his Psalms saith: "The Lord shalt reign for ever, and his kingdom is a kingdom of all ages, and his dominion from generation to generation." [Psalm 114.] Lo, the kingdom of God (saith he) is a kingdom of all ages, and his dominion throughout all generations. Therefore God hath not only created the world and all things that are in the world; but doth also govern and preserve them at this day, and shall govern and preserve them even till the end. For the same kingly prophet, celebrating the providence of God about man and his estate, doth say: "Thou, O Lord, knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou spiest out all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but thou, O Lord, dost know it altogether. Thou hast fashioned me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me;" [Psalm 139.] and so forth, as followeth in the hundred and thirty-ninth psalm, which psalm doth wholly make to this purpose. With this doctrine of David doth the testimony of Salomon agree, where he saith: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; like as the rivers of water, he may turn it whithersoever he will. Every man's way seemeth right in his own eyes; but the Lord driveth, or ruleth, the heart." [Prov. 21.] And in the gospel the Lord said: "Are not two little sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not light on the ground without your Father. Yea, even all the hairs of your head are numbered." [Matt. 10.]

There are besides these other evident testimonies also of the providence of God. Daniel, the wisest man of all the east, and the most excellent prophet of God, doth say: "Wisdom and strength are the Lord's: it is he that changeth the times and seasons: he taketh away kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and understanding to those that understand: he revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth the thing that lieth in darkness; for the light dwelleth in him." [Dan. 2.] Moreover, Ethan the Ezrachite saith: "Thou, Lord, rulest the raging of the sea; thou stillest the waves thereof, when they arise. Thou hast an almighty arm; thou strengthenest thy hand, and settest up thy right hand. In justice and equity is thy royal throne stablished; goodness and faith do go before thy face." [Psalm 89.] And David saith: "Of the fruit of thy works, O God,

shall the earth be filled. And he bringeth forth grass for cattle, and herb for the use of man; and bread to strengthen the heart of man, and wine to make him merry." [Psalm 104.] And immediately after in the same psalm: "All things do wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. When thou givest it, they gather it; and when thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. If thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; and if thou takest away their breath, they die, and are turned into their dust." Again: "The Lord upholdeth all such as fall, and lifteth up all those that be down. The Lord looseth men from their fetters: the Lord giveth sight unto the blind. The Lord keepeth the stranger; he defendeth the fatherless and widow; and the way of the wicked he turneth upside down." [Psalms 145 & 146] "Great is our Lord, and great is his power; and of his wisdom there is none end. He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names. He covereth the heavens with clouds, and prepareth rain for the earth. He giveth fodder unto the cattle, and meat to the young ravens that call upon him. He giveth snow as wool, and scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who shall abide before the face of his cold? He shall send out his word, and melt them; he shall blow with his wind, and the waters shall flow." [Psalm 147] And again: "I know that the Lord is great; and that he is above all gods. What pleased him, that hath he done in heaven and earth, and in the sea, and in all deep places. He lifteth up the clouds from the ends of the world, and turneth lightning unto rain, and bringeth the winds out of their treasures." [Psalm 135.] There are many testimonies like to these to be seen in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of the book of Job; and rifully in the Psalms, and books of the holy prophets: but these that hitherto I have recited are sufficient enough, testifying abundantly that God by his providence doth govern this world and all things that are therein, and especially man himself the possessor of the world, for whom all things were made.

We do here attribute nothing to destiny, either stoical or astrological; neither have we anything to do with that ethnical fortune, either good or ill. We do utterly detest philosophical disputations in this case, which are contrary to the truth of the prophets' writings and doctrine of the apostles. We content ourselves in the only word of God; and do therefore simply believe and teach, that God by his providence doth govern all things, and that too according to his own good will, just judgment, and comely order, by means most just and equal: which means whosoever despiseth, and maketh his boast only on the bare name of God's providence, it cannot be that he should rightly understand the effect of God's providence. They make this objection: "Because all things in the world are done by God's providence, therefore we need not to put in our oar: we may snort idly and take our ease: it is sufficient for us to expect the working or impelling of God; for if he need our aid, he will, whether we will or no, even impel us to the work which he will have to be wrought by us." But the saints in the scripture are laid before us and shewed to have thought, spoken, and judged more sincerely of God's providence. The angel doth in express words say to Lot: "Haste thee to Zoar, and save thyself there: for I can do nothing until thou art come thither." [Gen. 19.] Lo, here by God's providence Lot with his are saved; the citizens of Sodom are destroyed, and of all the cities thereabout: and yet even in the very work of his preservation Lot's labour is required, and he

bidden to do his good-will to save himself. Yea, "I cannot," saith the Lord, "do anything till thou art come into Zoar." The king and prophet David doth plainly say, "I have hoped in thee, O Lord; I have said, Thou art my God: my days are in thy hand." [Psalm 31.] And yet even he, which did wholly betake himself to the providence of God, did earnestly consider with himself, how with his diligence and industry he might deceive and escape from the layings in wait of Saul his father-in-law. Neither doth he despise the aid and shifts of his wife Michol [1 Sam. 19.]: he doth not reply to her again and say, "All things are done by the providence of God; therefore there needs no wiles to be wrought. The Almighty is able to take me out of the hands of our father's soldiers, or otherwise to save me by some miraculous means: let us content ourselves, and suffer God to work his will in us." He did not argue thus; but did understand that, as God's providence doth proceed in a certain order by middle means, so that it is his part to apply himself to means in the fear of God, and by all assays to do his best for his own defence. Paul doth hear the Lord flatly saying: "As thou hast borne witness of me at Hierusalem, so must thou bear record of me at Rome." [Acts 23.] And although he did nothing doubt of the truth of God's promises, and was not ignorant of the power of God's providence; yet notwithstanding he did privily send his sister's son, which told him that the Jews had conspired to kill him, unto the tribune, to desire of him that Paul might not be brought forth at the Jews' request. Neither did he shew himself uncourteous or unthankful to the soldiers that carried him to Antipatridis, nor to the horsemen that went with him to Cæsarea. Again, as he sailed in the Adriatic sea, when he was in peril of dangerous shipwreck, and that all his company were stricken with fear, he said: "Sirs, I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul: thou must be brought before Cæsar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me." [Acts 27.] But a while after, when the mariners went about to leave the ship, the same Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers: "Unless these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved."

Therefore means do belong to the providence of God, by which he worketh; and therefore are they not to be neglected. Truly, it is by God's government or providence, that we have all these impressions* of what sort soever, either fiery, or airy, or watery. For by the power of God, and not by chance, nor by any power of their own, doth the air make the earth fruitful, the waters flow and ebb again, and the earth doth bring forth her increase. And although the saints think verily, that none of all this is done for any sake of theirs, because the Saviour himself in the gospel saith, "The Father sendeth rain upon the just and unjust;" [Matt. 5.] yet for all that they do never forget the words of the prophet, where he saith, "If ye will be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye be obstinate and rebellious, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." [Isa. 1.] For the great prophet Moses, long before Isaiah, had said: "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy

* Meteors, impressions or appearances which some times for their rareness and strangeness make men to marvel.

God, to observe and do all his commandments, all these blessings shall come upon thee. Thou shalt be blessed in the city, and blessed in the field. Blessed shall the fruit of thy body be, and blessed shall the fruit of thy ground be. The Lord shall open heaven unto thee, and give rain to thy land in due season. But if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do his commandments, then all these curses shall come upon thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed in the field. The heaven above thy head shall be brass; and the Lord shall smite thee with many plagues," &c. [Deut. 28.] And histories bear record, that all these things happened to the people of God even as they are here foretold; and that too, not without the providence of the Lord their God. All good successes and prosperity are the good blessings of God; and on the other side, all calamities and adversities are the curses of God. Therefore hereupon the saints do gather, that men's affairs and state are wholly governed by God's providence, so yet that they must not therefore sit (as we say) with their hands in their bosoms idly, and neglect good means; but rather watchfully and diligently walk by the grace of God in the ways and means, or precepts and ordinances, of the Lord. For the providence of God doth not disturb the order of things; it doth not abrogate the offices of life, nor labour and industry; it doth not take [away] a just dispensation [*order*] and obedience: but by these things it worketh the health of those men which do through the help of God religiously apply themselves to the decrees, purpose, or working of the Lord; to whom they do rightly ascribe what good soever doth chance or betide them; imputing to man's corruption, to our own unskillfulness, and to our sins, what evil soever doth happen unto us. Therefore the saints acknowledge, that although wars, plagues, and divers other calamities do by God's providence afflict mortal men, yet notwithstanding that the causes thereof do arise of nothing else than the sins of man. For God is good, which wisheth us rather well than evil: yea, oftentimes he of his goodness turneth our evil purposes unto good ends; as is to be seen by the history of Joseph in the book of Genesis.

Truly, upon the earnest consideration of God's providence all the godly sort do gather, that their good God wisheth all well unto man. For he hath a great care over us, not in great things only, but also in the smallest. He knoweth the number of the days of our life. In his sight are all our members, as well within as without. For the Lord in the gospel saith, that "all the hairs of our head are numbered." He by his providence defendeth us from all manner diseases and imminent perils. He feedeth, refresheth, and preserveth us: for as he made all creatures for man's health and behoof, so doth he preserve and apply them to man's good and commodity.

The doctrine of the foreknowledge and predestination of God, which hath a certain likeness with his providence, doth no less comfort the godly worshippers of God. They call foreknowledge that knowledge in God, whereby he knoweth all things before they come to pass, and seeth even present all things that are, have been, and shall be. For to the knowledge of God all things are present; nothing is past, nothing is to come. And the predestination of God is the eternal decree of God, whereby he hath ordained either to save or destroy men; a most certain end of life and

death being appointed unto them. Whereupon also it is elsewhere called a fore-appointment. Touching these points some have diversely disputed; and many verily, curiously and contentiously enough; and in such sort surely, that not only the salvation of souls, but the glory of God also, with the simple sort is endangered. The religious searchers or interpreters of the scriptures confess, that here nothing is to be permitted to man's wit; but that we must simply and wholly hang upon whatsoever the scripture hath pronounced. And therefore these words of Paul are continually before their eyes and in their minds: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable (or incomprehensible) are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who was his counsellor? or who hath given unto him first, and he shall be recompensed?" [Rom. 11.] They never forget the admonition of the most wise man, Jesus Syrach, saying: "Seek not out the things that are too hard for thee; neither search after things which are too mighty for thee: but what God hath commanded thee, think thou always thereupon, and be not too curious in many of his works; for it is not needful for thee to see with thine eyes the things that be secret." [Ecclus. 3.] In the mean time truly, they do not contemn neither yet neglect those things which it hath pleased God by the open scriptures to reveal to his servants touching this matter.

Of God's foreknowledge there are many testimonies, especially in the prophecy of Isaiah, chap. 41. and in the chapters following; whereby also the Lord doth declare that he is the true God. Furthermore, God by his eternal and unchangeable counsel hath fore-appointed who are to be saved, and who are to be condemned. Now the end or the decree of life and death is short and manifest to all the godly. The end of predestination, or fore-appointment, is Christ, the Son of God the Father. For God hath ordained and decreed to save all, how many soever have communion and fellowship with Christ, his only-begotten Son; and to destroy or condemn all, how many soever have no part in the communion or fellowship of Christ, his only Son. Now the faithful verily have fellowship with Christ, and the unfaithful are strangers from Christ. For Paul in his Epistle to the Ephesians saith: "God hath chosen us in Christ, before the foundations of the world were laid, that we should be holy and without blame before him through love: who hath predestinate us into his sons through Jesus Christ into himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; that the glory of his grace may be praised, wherewith he is pleased with us in his beloved." Lo, God hath chosen us; and he hath chosen us before the foundations of the world were laid; yea, he hath chosen us, that we should be without blame, that is, to be heirs of eternal life: howbeit, in Christ, by and through Christ hath he chosen us. And yet again more plainer: he hath "predestinate us," saith he, "to adopt us into his sons," but by Christ; and that too hath he done freely, to the intent that to his divine grace glory might be given. Therefore whosoever are in Christ are chosen and elected: for John the apostle saith: "Whoso hath the Son hath life; whoso hath not the Son of God, hath not life." [1 John 5.] With the doctrine of the apostles agreeth that also of the gospel. For in the gospel the Lord saith: "This is the will of him that sent me, the Father; that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth in him, should have everlasting life: and I will raise him up in the last day." [John

6.] Lo, this is the will or eternal decree of God, saith he, that in the Son by faith we should be saved. Again, on the contrary part, touching those that are predestinate to death, the Lord saith: "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness more than light." [John 3.] Therefore, if thou ask me whether thou art elected to life, or predestinate to death; that is, whether thou art of the number of them that are to be damned, or that are to be saved; I answer simply out of the scripture, both of the evangelists and the apostles: If thou hast communion or fellowship with Christ, thou art predestinate to life, and thou art of the number of the elect and chosen: but if thou be a stranger from Christ, howsoever otherwise thou seem to flourish in virtues, thou art predestinate to death, and foreknowledged, as they say, to damnation. Higher and deeper I will not creep into the seat of God's counsel. And here I rehearse again the former testimonies of scripture: "God hath predestinate us, to adopt us into his sons through Jesus Christ. This is the will of God, that whoso believeth in the Son should live; and whoso believeth not should die." Faith therefore is a most assured sign that thou art elected; and whiles thou art called to the communion of Christ, and art taught faith, the most loving God declareth towards thee his election and good-will.

The simpler sort, verily, are greatly tempted and exceedingly troubled with the question of election. For the devil goeth about to throw into their minds the hate of God, as though he envied us our salvation, and had appointed and ordained us to death. That he may the more easily persuade this unto us, he laboureth tooth and nail wickedly to enfeeble and overthrow our faith; as though our salvation were doubtful, which leaneth and is stayed upon the uncertain election of God. Against these fiery weapons the servants of God do arm their hearts with cogitations and comforts of this sort fetched out of the scripture:

God's predestination is not stayed or stirred with any worthiness or unworthiness of ours; but of the mere grace and mercy of God the Father, it respecteth Christ alone. And because our salvation doth stay only upon him, it cannot but be most certain. For they are wrong, that think those that are to be saved to life are predestinate of God for the merit's sake, or good works, which God did foresee in them. For notably saith the apostle Paul: "He hath chosen us in Christ into himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, that the glory of his grace might be praised." [Eph. 1.4-6.] And again: "It is not in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth, but in God that sheweth mercy." [Rom. 9.16.] Again: "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given unto us through Christ Jesus before the world was, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ." [2 Tim. 1.9,10.] Freely therefore, of his mere mercy, not for our deserts, but for Christ's sake, and not but in Christ, hath he chosen us, and for Christ's sake doth embrace us, because he is our Father and a lover of men. Of whom also speaketh the prophet David: "The Lord is full of compassion and mercy, slow to anger, and of great kindness. And as a father hath

compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him: for he knoweth whereof we be made, and remembereth that we are but dust." [Psalm 103.] Moreover, in the prophet Isaiah we read: "Can a woman forget her child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Though she should forget, yet will I not forget thee." [Isa. 49.] Truly, in Christ, the only-begotten Son of God exhibited unto us, God the Father hath declared what great store he setteth by us. Thereupon doth the apostle gather: "Who spared not his Son, but gave him for us all, how can it be that he should not also with him give us all things?" [Rom. 8.] What thing therefore should we not reckon upon and promise ourselves from so beneficial a Father? For thou canst not complain that he will not give unto thee his Son, or that he is not thine, who, as the apostle saith, was given for us all. Moreover, the Lord himself, crying out in the gospel, saith: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." And again to his disciples: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that shall believe, and be baptized, shall be saved." Whereupon also Paul saith: "God our Saviour will that all men shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." [1 Tim. 2.] In old times long ago it was said to Abraham: "In thy Seed shall all the tribes (or nations) of the earth be blessed." [Gen. 22.] And Joel saith: "And it shall be, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." [Joel 2.] The which Peter also hath repeated in the Acts, chapter 2; and Paul to the Romans, chapter 10. Isaiah also saith: "We have all gone astray like sheep; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all." And therefore durst Paul say: "As by the offence of one the fault came on all men to condemnation; even so also by the justification of one the benefit abounded towards all men, to the justification of life." [Rom. 5.] Therefore the Lord is read in the gospel to have received sinners and publicans with outstretched arms and embracings, adding moreover these words: "I came to seek that which was lost. Neither came I to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." [Matt. 9; Luke 19.] All which sayings do hitherto belong, that, being more narrowly weighed, they might confirm and establish us of God's good-will towards us, who in Christ hath chosen us to salvation: which salvation, truly, cannot but be most certain, and by all means undoubted; especially for that the Lord himself in the gospel saith: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand," &c. [John 10.]

I know what here again doth sting and grieve the minds of many. "The chosen sheep," say they, "of Christ, do know Christ's voice; and, being endued with a steadfast faith, stick in Christ inseparably, since they have felt that drawing, whereof the Lord speaketh in the gospel: 'No man cometh to me, unless my Father draw him:' as for me, as I feel no such manner of drawing, so do I not with a full and perfect faith stick in the Son of God." First of all, verily, true faith is required of the elect: for the elect are called; and being called, they receive their calling by faith, and frame themselves like him that called them. "He that believeth not is already condemned." Whereupon also Paul saith: "God is the Saviour of all men, specially of the faithful." [1 Tim. 4.] Furthermore, unless we be drawn of the heavenly Father, we cannot believe. And we must be very careful, lest

we, conceiving vain opinions of that divine drawing, neglect the drawing itself. God verily drew Paul violently, but he doth not draw all unto him by the hair. [Acts 9.] There are also other ways of drawing, by which God draweth man unto him; but he doth not draw him like a stock or a block. The apostle Paul saith: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." [Rom. 10.] God therefore doth then draw thee, when he preacheth unto thee the gospel by his servants; when he toucheth thy heart; when he stirreth thee to prayer, whereby thou mayest call and cry for his grace and assistance, his enlightening and drawing. When thou feelest these things in thy mind, I would not wish thee to look for another drawing: despise not thou grace offered, but use it whiles time present serveth, and pray for the increase of grace. For to greater and perfecter things thou aspirest godlily afterwards; in the mean space, there is no cause why thou shouldst despise the lesser. In the gospel after Matthew they receive larger riches, who, having received but a few talents, occupied the same faithfully: but he that despised the talent wherewith he was put in credit, and cloaked his slothfulness with I wot not what care, is greatly accused; yea, he is spoiled of the money which was once given him, and is thrown into everlasting torments, being bound with bonds of condemnation. [Matt. 25.] For the Lord pronounceth generally: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath." He hath, who acknowledgeth, magnifieth, and reverenceth the grace of God: to his heap of graces more is added, so that it is made more abundant. He hath not, which doth not acknowledge the gifts of God, and imagineth other, I cannot tell of what kind; in the mean time he doth not put in use the grace received, and which is present. And these are wont to use excuses, that that drawing came not to them as yet; and that it is a matter very dangerous to use occupying, or to make merchandise, of the gifts of God. But Paul, judging far otherwise, saith: "So we as workers together beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." [2 Cor. 6.] And to Timothy: "I put thee in remembrance, that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee." [2 Tim. 1.] Not that without God we are able to do any thing of ourselves, but that the Lord requireth our endeavour, which notwithstanding is not without his assistance and grace. For truly saith the selfsame apostle: "God worketh in us both to will and to do even of his good pleasure." [Phil. 2.] Again: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves: but all our sufficiency is of God." [2 Cor. 3.]

Furthermore, I wish not any man to despair, if by and by he feel and try not in his mind a most ripe and perfect faith. The gospel saith: "Of her own accord doth the earth bring forth fruit; first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards full corn in the ear." [Mark 4.] For so likewise hath faith her increasings; and therefore did the very apostles of the Lord pray: "Lord, increase our faith." Furthermore, in Mark truly a woeful man crieth unto our Saviour: "If thou canst do anything, Lord, have compassion upon us, and help us." [Mark 9.22. &c.] But he heard the Lord straightways saying unto him: "If thou canst believe it, all things are possible to him that believeth." And this silly soul cried out: "I believe, Lord; help mine unbelief." Lo, this woeful wretch believed, feeling in his mind faith given him of God, which notwithstanding he perceived to be so weak, that he stood in need

of God's help and aid. He prayeth therefore, "help mine unbelief," that is, my faith, which, if it be compared with an absolute and perfect faith, may seem but unbelief. But hear, I beseech you, what this faith, how little soever it was, wrought and brought to pass; what an humble mind and hanging upon the only mercy of God was able to do. For straightways he healed the child of the woeful father; and, being restored unto health, and as it were raised up from the dead, giveth him again to his faithful father. If any therefore doth feel faith in his mind, let him not despair, although he know that it is weak enough, God wot, and feeble: let him cast himself wholly upon God's mercy; let him presume very little, or nothing at all, of his own merits and strength; let him pray incessantly for the increase of faith. In which purpose verily the words of our Saviour, very full of comfort, out of the gospel, may confirm and strengthen any man most wholesomely: "Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For whosoever asketh, receiveth: and whosoever seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Is there any man among you, who, if his son ask him bread, will give him a stone? or, if he ask fish, will give him a serpent? If you therefore, which are evil, can give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things, even the Holy Ghost itself, if you shall ask of him?" [Matt. 7; Luke 11.] These and such like sayings, set forth unto us in the holy gospel for our consolation, ought more to move and establish our minds of the good, yea, the right good-will of God towards us than the eggings of the devil, wherewith he goeth about not only to overwhelm the hope of our election, but to make us suspect and doubt of God, as though he had his creature in hatred, whom he had rather have destroyed than saved. But he is well enough known to the saints by his subtilties and trains; for so he deceived our first parents. [Gen. 3.] Let us keep it deeply printed in our breasts, that God hath chosen us in Christ, and for Christ his sake predestinate us to life; and that therefore he giveth and increaseth faith to Christ-ward in them that ask it; and that it is he that puts it in our hearts. For all things that tend to our salvation come from the grace of God; nothing is ours but reproach and shame.

These things, brethren, thus far have I laid before you concerning the marvelous and wonderful work of the creation wrought by the eternal, true, and living God, without any trouble (doubtless) or pains-taking. "For he spake the word, and they were made. He commanded, and they were created." A little we have added touching the most wise and excellent governing of all things by God's divine providence, which is always just and most righteous: likewise of God's good-will towards us; of predestination; and certain other points unto these belonging. All these things truly have we rehearsed, to beautify the glory and knowledge of God our creator; to whom both the perpetual and universal course of nature, as well of things invisible as also visible, beareth witness; whom the angels worship, the stars wonder at, the seas bless, the earth reverenceth, and all infernal things behold; whom the mind of every man feeleth, albeit it doth not express him; at whose beck all things are moved, the springs cast forth their streams, rivers decrease, the waves arise aloft, all things bring forth their increase, the winds are forced to blow, showers to fall, seas to rage, all things in all places to deliver abroad their fruitfulness; who planted a peculiar garden of

felicity for our first parents, gave them a commandment, and pronounced sentence against their sin; delivered righteous Noah from the dangers of the deluge; translated Enoch into the fellowship of his friendship; did choose Abraham to himself; defended Isaac; increased Jacob; appointed Moses the captain over his people; set free from the yoke of bondage the groaning children of Israel; wrote a law; brought the offspring of the fathers into the land of promise; instructed his prophets with his Spirit, and by all these promised his only-begotten Son again; and at the same instant that he had promised to give him hath sent him; through whom also he would be acquainted and come in knowledge with us; and hath poured forth upon us all his heavenly graces. And because of himself he is liberal and bountiful, lest this whole world, being turned away from the rivers of his grace, should wax dry, he would have apostles to be sent by his Son as teachers throughout the whole world, that the state of mankind might acknowledge their Maker; and, if they followed him, might have instead of a God one whom in their petitions and prayers they might call Father; whose providence hath not only extended itself, and is now extended, not only severally unto men, but also unto very towns and cities, the ends of which he foretold by the voices of his prophets, yea, throughout the whole world; whose ends, plagues, decays, and punishments for their unbelief he hath described. And lest any should think, that this infatigable providence of God extended not to everything, though never so small, the Lord saith: "Of two sparrows, the one of them falleth not to the ground without the will of the Father;" and, "the hairs of your head are all numbered:" whose care also and providence suffered not the garments of the Israelites to wax old, nor their simple shoes on their feet to be worn and torn. And not without good reason: for if this God comprehendeth that which containeth all things, and all things and the whole doth consist of parts and particulars; then shall his care reach consequently even to every part and particular, whose providence hath reached already to the very whole, whatsoever it is. To this God be all glory.

Taken from the Parker Society edition (1849-1852); reprinted by Reformation Heritage Books in 2004.



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