

Let's Read *The Institutes of the Christian Religion, Class 4*

Book 1: Of the Knowledge of God the Creator
Chapters 14-18



Westminster Confession of Faith

Chapter 1 – Of the Holy Scripture

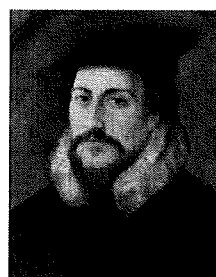
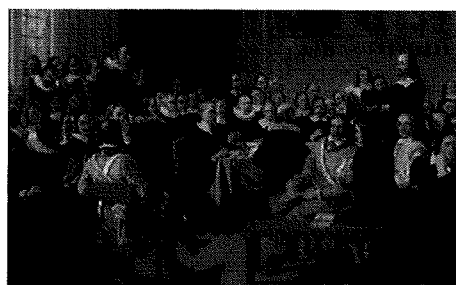
Chapter 2 – Of God and of the Holy Trinity

Chapter 3 – Of God's Eternal Decree

Chapter 4 – Of Creation

Chapter 5 – Of Providence

Book 3 – Soteriology



Creation and Providence

- Creation of the world
 - God gives us the revelation of creation
 - To establish the distinction between the Creator and the creation.
 - as the first evidence for faith in the true God.
 - Calvin defines the work of creation
 - Calling all things into being by the power of his Word *ex nihilo*.
 - As the work of the tri-une God.
 - It is not provided to answer all our scientific questions.
 - It is given to strengthen our appreciation for God and our faith in his sovereign will.
 - God “accommodates” here – the record is true but simple.

Moses relates that the work of creation was accomplished not in one moment, but in six days. By this statement we are drawn away from fiction to the one God who thus divided his work into six days, that we may have no reluctance to devote our whole lives to the contemplation of it. For though our eyes, in what direction soever they turn, are forced to behold the works of God, we see how fleeting our attention is, and holy quickly pious thoughts, if any arise, vanish away.

Here, too, objection is taken to these progressive steps as inconsistent with the power of God, until human reason is subdued to the obedience of faith, and learns to welcome the calm quiescence to which the sanctification of the seventh day invited us.

In the very order of events, we ought diligently to ponder on the paternal goodness of God toward the human race, in not creating Adam until he had liberally enriched the earth with all good things. Had he placed him on an earth barren and unfurnished; had he given life before light, he might have seemed to pay little regard to his interest. But now that he has arranged the motions of the sun and stars for man's use, has replenished the air, earth, and water, with living creatures, and produced all kinds of fruit in abundance for the supply of food, by performing the office of a provident and industrious head of a family, he has shown his wondrous goodness toward us.

These subjects, which I only briefly touch, if more attentively pondered, will make it manifest that Moses was a sure witness and herald of the one only Creator. I do not repeat what I have already explained—viz. that mention is here made not of the bare essence of God, but that his eternal Wisdom and Spirit are also set before us, in order that we may not dream of any other God than Him who desires to be recognised in that express image. (1.14.2)

Creation and Providence

- Creation of the world
- Creation of the angels/demons
- Creation of man
 - Man is to understand that he is both created by God and fallen.
 - Both of these is meant to yield humility & worship within us.
 - Man's sin prevents our blaming God and excusing ourselves.
 - Man is made of 2 parts:
 - Soul – the greater part – immortal
 - Body – the lesser part – immortality here is a special gift of God

Creation and Providence

- Creation of man
 - Man is made of 2 parts:
 - Soul – the greater part – individually created *ex nihilo*, immortal (gifted)
 - Body – the lesser part – although the glory of God reflects in the outer man
 - The *Imago Dei*
 - Understanding – the leader/governor of the soul
 - Will – the follower of the understanding
 - Inevitability of the Fall
 - Postpones discussion of predetermination
 - God chose to do this for his own glory.

Creation and Providence

- Providence of God

- Definition: more than foreknowledge, it is government.

First, then, let the reader remember that the providence we mean is not one by which the Deity, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but one by which he, as it were, holds the helms and overrules all events. (1.16.4)

- More than permission (Augustine), it is direction (“willing permission”).
- It is particular, direct, personal, intimate.
- It is all inclusive, excluding nothing.

“God’s providence is his watchful, effective, active, ceaseless, total, detailed, personal, loving, wise, and holy governing of this world.” (Calhoun)

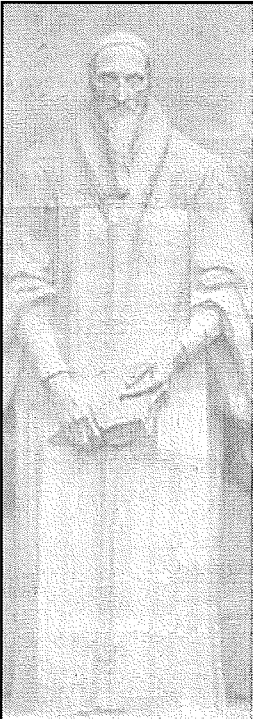
Creation and Providence

- Providence of God

- Application – How does this take place?
 - Through an intermediary
 - Without a intermediary
 - Contrary to every intermediary
- Accomplishment/Goal
 - Nothing happens outside of God’s exercise of providence.
 - It reveals his concern for all humanity, but particularly for his church.
 - Most lies hidden in God’s purposes.
 - We are to cherish moderation, hold to a gratitude of mind and heart, instill a true hope in God’s sovereign design/will and reverently worship him.
 - We are also to feel an incredible freedom regarding the future.

Creation and Providence

- Providence of God
 - What about sin and evil?
 - God is not the author of sin.
 - Man is responsible for sin.
 - God uses evil as “one uses a crooked stick to draw a straight line.” (Luther)
 - But how this happens is a mystery.
 - Ill.: God forbids murder but the death of Christ is his will.
 - Ill.: God is both omnipotent and good.
 - We must remember our finite mental capacity and worship God who dwells in inapproachable light.



New Covenant Presbyterian Church

*Preaching God's Sovereign Grace
to a World of Need*

128 St. Mary's Church Rd. Abingdon,
MD 21009

410-569-0289

www.ncpres.org

www.ephesians515.com

