

Griffin's History

CHAPTER III.

DOCTRINE

“OF GOD'S DECREE.”

"1. 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; yet so as thereby is God neither the author of sin, nor hath fellowship with any therein, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established, in which appears his wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing his decree.

2. Although God knoweth whatsoever may, or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated, or foreordained to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, to the praise of His glorious grace—others being left to act in their sin to their just condemnation, to the praise of His glorious justice.

4. These angels and men thus predestinated, and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

5. Those of mankind that are predestinated to life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal, immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any other thing in the creature as a condition or cause moving him thereto.

As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so he hath by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by His spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation; neither are any other

redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

6. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in His word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election; so shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation, to all that sincerely obey the Gospel."

"OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE."

"1. God, the 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 which they were created, according to 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.

2. 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 that 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.

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.

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 dependance for their support upon Himself, and to make them more watchful against all future accessions 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.

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a 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 in their hearts, but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruptions make occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, and temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass, that they harden themselves, even 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 all things to the good thereof."

"OF EFFECTUAL CALLING."

"1. Those whom God hath predestinated unto life, He is pleased in His appointed and accepted time effectually to call by His word and spirit, out of that state of sin and death, in which they are by nature, to grace of salvation by Jesus Christ; enlightening their minds, spiritually, and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and by His almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

2. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, nor from any power or agency in the creature, cworking with His special grace, the creature being wholly passive therein, being dead in sins and trespasses, until being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it, and that by no less power than that which raised up Christ from the dead.

3. Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how, he pleaseth; so also are all other

elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

4. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operation of the Spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the Father, they neither will, nor can, truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men that receive not the Christian religion, be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess."

"OF GOOD WORKS."

"1. Good works are only such as God hath commanded in His holy word, and not such as without the warrant thereof, are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intentions.

2. These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith, and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life.

3. Their ability to do good works, is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the spirit of Christ; and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is necessary an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure; yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

4. They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to supererogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much which in duty they are bound to do.

5. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them and the glory to come, and the infinite distance that is between us and God, whom by them we can never profit, nor satisfy, for the debt of our former sins; but when we have done all

we can, we have but done our duty, and are unprofitable servants; and because as they are good, they proceed from His spirit, and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled, and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

6. Yet, notwithstanding the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted, not as though they were in this life wholly unblamable and unprovable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

7. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use, both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end—the glory of God—they are sinful and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from God; and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

"OF THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS."

1. "Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved, seeing the gifts and callings of God are without repentance, (whence he still begets and nourisheth in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the spirit of immortality,) and though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, yet they shall never be able to take them off that foundation and rock which, by faith, they are fastened upon; notwithstanding, through unbelief and the temptations of Satan, the sensible sight of the light and love of God, may, for a time, be clouded, and obscured from them, yet it is still the same, and they shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto salvation, where they shall enjoy their purchased possession, they being engraven upon the palm of his hands, and their names having been written in the Book of Life from all eternity.

2. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God, the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of His spirit, and the seed

of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

3. And though they may, through the temptations of Satan, and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves, yet they shall renew their repentance, and be preserved, through faith in Christ Jesus, to the end."

The foregoing is deemed amply sufficient to portray the distinguishing features in the articles of faith, of the Particular Baptists of that day. Nevertheless, as the new idea of a general atonement and special application, was introduced, in the succeeding century, by Mr. Andrew Fuller, the attention of the reader is called to one section of chapter 8, on the mediation of Christ, viz: "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which He, through the eternal spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, procured reconciliation, and purchased an everlasting inheritance in the Kingdom of Heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him."