

## BRYAN STATION BAPTIST CHURCH

# THE PIONEER BAPTIST

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*“Preaching the same truth since before Kentucky was a state”*

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## DIVINE PROVIDENCE

By: Dr. C. D. Cole

Psalm 97:1: *“The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.”*

Is anybody running this world? Do things happen by chance or by a fixed law of nature or by a cold impersonal fate, or is there a personal intelligence at the helm of the universe: If the world is run by a person who is the person? Is it Satan, or is it run by a group of dictators and human kings? Christian people who study and think believe the universe is ruled by God, who is their heavenly Father. They speak of providence which means that the Lord reigns. The world has a Creator and Controller and Director.

If He who created the world is not running it, why isn't He? It must either be because He has lost interest in it, or has lost control over it. The thinking men will have to admit that God is running the universe, or else that He has lost interest in it or has lost control over it.

Providence has been defined as God's attention concentrated everywhere. Man is finite and has such limitations that he can only concentrate his attention on one thing and in one place, but God is infinite in space and power so that He can concentrate on everything and in every place. His care and control over His creation is microscopic as well as telescopic.

Men manufacture articles and lose control over them. A man may be killed

in the airplane he makes. He may be poisoned by a medicine he compounds. A mother may be disgraced by the daughter or son she rears. But God is in no danger from His creation. He cannot be disgraced by His creatures, but all who oppose Him will one day find themselves in disgrace and danger.

Providence is mysterious. Everything seems to be in disorder and confusion. As we look at the world we see conflict and there seems to be no plan or order; disorder is everywhere to be seen. Nobody seems to be in control.

There seems to be no order in the movement of bees to and from the hive, but examine the honey and you will see plan and arrangement and order. And just as bees gather their stores of sweets against a time of need, but are colonized by man's superior intelligence for his own purposes, so men plan and yet are overruled by Infinite Wisdom; by God, for His own glory.

Providence is a comforting thought. I'd rather have God, my Heavenly Father, rule this world than anybody else. I am glad that everything is under His control. Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for*

*good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”* This would not be precious if He is not in control.

*“The world is wide in time and tide, and God is guide;*

*Then do not hurry.*

*The man is blest who does his best and leaves the rest;*

*Then do not worry.”*

Providence is minute. It covers

little things as well as great things. I read the story that Gabriel, who waits to do God's bidding, was sent to earth to do two things. One was to prevent King Solomon from the sin of forgetting the hour of prayer in exultation over his fine horses; the other was

to help a little ant on the slope of Ararat, which had grown weary in getting his food and was about to perish in the rain.

God is interested in the hairs of our head and in the little sparrow. A preacher once said to his congregation that some of them did not even think their heads were numbered.

We have no trouble in seeing that God is in control of the good; we see His reign in the church where the members are interested in His service and live for His glory. We can see God's reign in the Christian home

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where everything is ordered and carried on for His honour. But the hard thing for us to see is that he reigns everywhere; that He is in control of the wicked as well as the good. This is the aspect of His rule I want us to ponder.

God's control extends to wicked men and their sinful acts. God's control with respect to men's evil acts is described in the Bible as of four sorts:

(1) It is preventative. God by His providence, prevents sin which would otherwise be committed. Genesis 20:3, 6: *"But God came to Abimelech...And God said unto him in a dream, Yea, I know that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me: therefore suffered I thee not to touch her."* The wicked do not do all they would do if God did not prevent. All the iniquity that is in the human heart does not come out. God restrains men from sinning.

(2) It is permissive. God permits sinful men to cherish and manifest the evil dispositions of their hearts. II Chronicles 32:31: *"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart."* Psalm 81:12, 13: *"So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!"* Acts 14:16: *"Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways."* Romans 1:24-32: *"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that*

*recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."* The woman that had been slandered rebelled when told that God had permitted it for her good; she maintained that Satan had inspired her accuser; she needed to learn that God had permitted the work of Satan. Job 1:8-12: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."* Job 2:3-6: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse*

*thee to thy face. And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."*

(3) It is directive. God directs the evil acts of sinful men to accomplish His own purpose. The evil in the human heart will certainly come out if God does not prevent it; so when it does come out He directs its flow in one direction rather than another, so that its flow will not overthrow His purpose. Genesis 50:19, 20: *"And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God? But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive."* Psalm 76:10: *"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain."* Acts 4:27, 28: *"For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together. For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."*

(4) It is determinative. God determines the bounds reached by the evil passions of His creatures, and the measure of their effects. Job 1:12: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD."* Job 2:6: *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."* Psalm 124:2: *"If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us."* I Corinthians 10:13: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."*

# A Proclamation

By: Abraham Lincoln

Whereas, the Senate of the United States, devoutly recognizing the Supreme Authority and just Government of Almighty God, in all the affairs of men and of nations, has, by a resolution, requested the President to designate and set apart a day for National prayer and humiliation.

And whereas it is the duty of nations as well as of men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions, in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord.

And, insomuch as we know that, by His law, nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, the the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People? We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of Heaven. We have been preserved, these many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us!

It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

Now, therefore, in compliance with the request, and fully concurring in the views of the Senate, I do, by this my proclamation, designate and set apart Thursday, the 30th. day of April, 1863, as a day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer. And I do hereby request all the People to abstain, on that day, from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord, and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the Nation will be heard on high, and answered with blessings, no less than the pardon of our national sins, and the restoration of our now divided and suffering Country, to its former happy condition of unity and peace.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this thirtieth day of March, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States the eighty seventh.

By the President: Abraham Lincoln

William H. Seward, Secretary of State.

—Senator James Harlan of Iowa, whose daughter later married President Lincoln's son Robert, introduced this Resolution in the Senate on March 2, 1863. The Resolution asked President Lincoln to proclaim a national day of prayer and fasting. The Resolution was adopted on March 3, and signed by Lincoln on March 30, before the fast day was observed.