

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

The Attributes of God

Banska Bystrica, 28th May 2017

<p>יהוה בשמים הכין כסאו ומלכותו בכל משלה</p>	<p>Ps 103:19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all</p>
<p>אל־יִתְהַלֵּל חָכֵם בְּחִכְמֹתָיו וְאֶל־יִתְהַלֵּל הַגִּבּוֹר בְּגִבּוֹרֹתָיו אֶל־יִתְהַלֵּל עָשִׂיר בְּעֲשָׂרוֹ ... הַשֶּׁכֶל וְיָדַע אוֹתִי כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה עֹשֶׂה חֶסֶד מִשְׁפָּט וְצַדִּיקָה בָּאָרֶץ כִּי־בְאֵלֶּה חִפְצָתִי</p>	<p>Jer 9:23-24 Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches,²⁴ but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."</p>
<p>עִם־חֲסִיד תִּתְחַסֵּד עִם־גֵּבֶר תִּמְיוֹם תִּתְמַם עִם־גֵּבֶר תִּתְבָּרַר וְעִם־עֲקֹשׁ תִּתְפַּתֵּל</p>	<p>Ps 18:25-26 With the merciful you show yourself merciful; with the blameless man you show yourself blameless;²⁶ with the purified you show yourself pure; and with the crooked you make yourself seem tortuous (nezrozumitel'ný)</p>

OUTLINE

0. INTRODUCTION

- 0.1. "PROVIDENCE" – DEFINITION
- 0.2. PROVIDENCE – AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD?
- 0.3. PROVIDENCE AND THE LAWS NATURE
- 0.4. SOME EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

1. PROVIDENCE – THE GOD OF ACTION

- 1.1. TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE
- 1.2. THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD
- 1.3. THE PARADIGMATIC CASE OF JOB

2. PROVIDENCE – THE GOD TO BE TRUSTED

- 2.1. TRUST BEYOND UNDERSTANDING!
- 2.2. KNOW (BIBLICAL) HISTORY!
- 2.3. WAIT!

3. TO REMEMBER

0. INTRODUCTION

- [BARTHOLOMEW] "Chance and necessity account for everything (MONOD)."
- **Ps 92:5** How great are your works, O LORD! Your thoughts are very deep!
(מִה־גִּדְלוֹ מַעֲשֵׂיֶיךָ יְהוָה מְאֹד עֲמֻקּוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ)

0.1. "PROVIDENCE" – DEFINITION

- vid-eo → to see, εἶδον → saw
- [Oxford] L. prōvidēntia foresight, precaution, providence, from prōvidēre to provide
- [Schaff-Herzog] In the wider sense of the term providence denotes the exercise of God's **(1) wisdom, (2) omnipotence, and (3) goodness**; while in the narrower sense it signifies the guidance of the world toward the end appointed by God.

[CAPPE, N. 1818] When we assert the divine providence, we deny on the one hand, that any thing comes to pass by chance or accident; i. e. without the knowledge, or beside the purpose of God; we deny on the other hand, that any thing takes place, through I know not what fatality, whether it be contrary to the divine will, and uncontrollable by his power; or whether, being agreeable to his pleasure, it be the effect of a necessity that proceeds not from his determination. We deny that the world is abandoned without order, rule, or end; we affirm, that whatever be at any time its order, it is precisely what God wills it should be; and that whatever be its end, the divine pleasure will therein be perfectly accomplished;...

- [D'ARCY 1935] "So sensitive are we now that to write a paper on Providence must mean, in fact, a paper on the problem of evil."

0.2. PROVIDENCE – AN ATTRIBUTE OF GOD?

- [Oxford Dictionary] attribute – A quality or character ascribed to any person or thing, one which is in common estimation or usage assigned to him; hence, sometimes, an epithet or appellation in which the quality is ascribed.

[LACOSTE] The word providence designates the way in which God rules the world according to his **purposes**. In the broad sense, providence concerns all of creation; more narrowly, humanity; and still more specifically, the direction of history. **Anthropocentrism** has been an essential characteristic of the concept of providence from the beginning, but the idea of a general design of providence in and through history dates from the 18th century.

- HAUCK: *Realenzyklopädie* (1908)

Vorsehung, auch Fürsorge, Fürsorge, Vorforge, πρόνοια, ἐπιμέλεια, διοίκησης, διακυβέρνησις, providentia, gubernatio, cura Dei, bezeichnet im allgemeinen das Walten der Allmacht, Weisheit und Güte Gottes, im engeren Sinne die Hinlenkung der Welt zu dem ihr von Gott bestimmten Ziel. — Die in der christlichen Kirche geltende Lehre von der göttlichen Vorsehung entstammt aus dem Zusammenwirken zweier Faktoren, des in den Urkunden der alt- und neutestamentlichen Religion bezeugten Glaubens und der philosophischen Spekulation des griechisch-römischen Altertums. Es gilt demnach zunächst den Vorsehungsgedanken der antik klassischen Systeme summarisch zu zeichnen, hierauf den Vorsehungsglauben der israelitisch-jüdischen und der christlichen Religion in seiner Eigenart zu schildern, endlich den dogmenhistorischen Prozeß der Lehre in seinen wichtigsten Wendepunkten zu schildern. Eine Übersicht der kritischen und systematischen Ergebnisse wird den Ertrag der biblisch-theologischen und dogmengeschichtlichen Entwicklung feststellen und zusammenfassen.

0.3. PROVIDENCE AND THE LAWS NATURE

- belief in evolution → fatalism
- [CARSON A. 1852] ...and the depravity of the human heart make a veil of the physical laws by which God usually conducts his government, which hides God in his own works.
- ...does *chance* lie within the purposes of God?
- ...did God create some beings *for destruction*?
- ...does God take risks? (*Open Theism*)
- ...are there *stages* in God's knowledge?

[CHAMBERS] ...when Providence or suffering contradicts any form of credal belief, the holder of the creed becomes **vindictive** in trying to justify what is threatened, and no longer discerns the truth. (*Baffled to Fight Better*)

- Theo-evolution? → (1) evolution has no purpose/goal, (2) evolution necessarily uses violence and death, (3) the Bible describes creation in separated stages (days) and separated species (kinds)
- *Stoicism* and the idea of providence... [LACOSTE] "...the concept of *pronoia* occurs explicitly in the Stoics, particularly from time of Chrysippus (third century B.C.) and Xeno (third and second centuries B.C.)"

[SENECA] ...God has the mind of a father, he cherishes for them a manly love, and he says, "Let them be harassed by toil, by suffering, by losses, in order that they may gather true strength." Bodies grow fat through sloth are weak, and not only labour, but even movement and their very weight cause them to break down. Unimpaired prosperity cannot withstand a single blow; but he who has struggled constantly

with his ills becomes hardened through suffering, and yields to no misfortune; nay, even if he falls, he still fights upon his knees.

0.4. SOME EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE

0.4.1. PERSONAL

- **1Pt 5:7** casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (πάσαν τὴν μέριμναν ὑμῶν ἐπιρίψαντες ἐπ' αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτῷ μέλει περὶ ὑμῶν.)
- **Phil 4:19** And my God will supply every need of yours according to his **riches in glory in Christ Jesus** (ὁ δὲ θεός μου πληρώσει πάσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)
- **Gn 22:14** So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide" (יְהוָה יִרְאָה); as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." (בְּהַר יְהוָה יִרְאָה)
- Gn 16:14 Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi (בְּאֵר לְהַי רֹאִי); it lies between Kadesh and Bered.

0.4.2. PEOPLE OF GOD / THE CHURCH

- **Gn 50:20** As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today
- **Mt 28:20** And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος)
- **Rom 5:1-4** Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,

0.4.3. THE WORLD

- **Jer 27:1-8** In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the LORD. ² Thus the LORD said to me: "Make yourself straps and yoke-bars, and put them on your neck. ³ Send word to the king of Edom, the king of Moab, the king of the sons of Ammon, the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. ⁴ Give them this charge for their masters: "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: This is what you shall say to your masters: ⁵ "It is I who by my great power and my outstretched arm **have made the earth**, with the men and animals that are on the earth, and I give it to whomever it seems right to me. ⁶ Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and I have given him also the beasts of the field to serve him. ⁷ All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson, **until the time of his own land comes** (עַד בְּאֵת אֶרְצוֹ). Then many nations and great kings shall make him their slave. ⁸ But if any nation or kingdom will not serve this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, I will punish that nation with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence, declares the LORD, until I have consumed it by his hand.

1. PROVIDENCE – THE GOD OF ACTION

- [CARSON, A.] Divine Providence disposes the event according to sovereign pleasure.
- → the book of Esther...

1.1. TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMANENCE

- the transcendence of God → worship (**Rom 11:34-36** For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" ³⁵ "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" ³⁶ For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen)
- the immanence of God → trust (**Eph 1:11** according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will)

1.2. THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD

- **Col 1:13-18** ...the kingdom of **his beloved Son**,¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him.¹⁷ And he is before all things, and **in him all things hold together** (καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν).¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.
- **John 5:26-27** For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.²⁷ And he has given him **authority to execute judgment**, because he is the Son of Man.

[BRUCE, A.B. 1889] As the Mediator between the Father and the world, it belongs to the essence of the Son to live not only in the Father, but also in the world. As 'the heart of God the Father,' He is at the same time the eternal heart of the world, through which the divine life flows into the creation. As **the Logos of the Father, He is at the same time the eternal world-Logos**, through whom the divine light rays forth into the creation. He is ground and source of all reason in the creation, whether in man or in angel, in Greek or in Jew. He is the principle of law and promise in the Old Testament, the eternal light which shines in the darkness of heathendom; all holy germs of truth to be found in the heathen world have been sown in the souls of men by Him. **He is the eternal principle of providence**, amid the confusion of the world's life; all forces of nature, all ideas and angels, being ministering instruments of His all-ordering, all-guiding will.

1.3. THE PARADIGMATIC CASE OF JOB

- **Job 1:9** Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does **Job** fear **God** for no reason? (וַיַּעַן הַשָּׂטָן אֶת־יְהוָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַחֲנָם יָרָא אֵיבֹב אֱלֹהִים)

2. PROVIDENCE – THE GOD TO BE TRUSTED

- **Rom 8:28** And we know that for those who love God **all things work together for good**, for those who are called according to his purpose.

2.1. TRUST BEYOND UNDERSTANDING!

- **Heb 11:8** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, **not knowing where** he was going.
- **Eph 3:20-21** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly **than all that we ask or think**, according to the power at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

2.2. KNOW (BIBLICAL) HISTORY!

- **Ps 77:12** I will **ponder** all your work, and **meditate** on your mighty deeds. (וְהִנֵּיתִי בְכָל־פְּעֻלָּתְךָ וּבַעֲלִילוֹתֶיךָ אֲשִׁיחָה)
- **1Cor 10:6** Now these things took place **as examples for us**, that we might not desire evil as they did.
- **Rom 15:4** For whatever was written in former days was **written for our instruction**, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have **hope**.

2.3. WAIT!

- **Ps 62:5** For God alone, O my soul, **wait** in silence, for my hope is from him (וְהָיָה לַאֱלֹהִים דּוֹמֵי נַפְשִׁי כִּי־מִמֶּנּוּ תִקְוָה) [v.6])
- **Heb 10:36** For you have **need of endurance**, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised
- **1Pt 5:10** And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and **establish** you

3. TO REMEMBER

- Providence of God must be understood in the light of the Scripture – neither fully explained, nor completely ignored.
- Understanding our personal providences has to be guided by the one goal of Providence – the glory of God.
- Proper response of faith to Providence is waiting on God and active abandonment to his arms.