The Doctrine of Creation and Providence

Creation

Definition: “God created the entire universe out of nothing; it was originally very good; and He created it to glorify Himself.”


Ps. 33:6,9; 90:2; Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16; Acts 17:24; Heb. 11:3; Rev. 4:11

Creation is *distinct* from God yet is always *dependent* on Him (Acts 17:25,28). God is both *transcendent* and *immanent*. This means *materialism* (no God), *pantheism* (all is God), *dualism* (God and matter are eternal), and *deism* (God is not involved in the world now) are all unbiblical views of creation.


“*When all the facts are rightly understood, there will be ‘no final conflict’ between Scripture and natural science.*”


“‘The position of theistic evolutionism as expressed by some of its proponents is not a consistently Christian position. It is not a truly biblical position, for it is based in part on principles that are imported into Christianity.’”

—Geologist Davis A. Young, quoted in Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 279.

“That a living organism emerged by chance from a pre-biotic soup is about as likely as that ‘a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein.’ Chance assembly is just a naturalistic way of saying ‘miracle.’”


Providence

Definition: “God is continually involved with all created things in such a way that he (1) keeps them existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them; (2) cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do; and (3) directs them to fulfill his purposes.”


Categories of God’s Providence:

1. **Preservation** – “*God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them.*”


   Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28; Neh. 9:6; 2 Peter 3:7

2. **Concurrence** – “*God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do.*”


   Eph. 1:11 – “*God works all things according to the counsel of His own will.*”

   a. **He controls inanimate creation.**

      Ps. 148:7-8; 135:6-7; 104:4, 14; Job 37:6-13; 38-40; Matt 5:45.

   b. **He controls animals.**

      Ps. 104:26-28; Job 38:39-41; Matt 6:26; 10:29

   c. **He controls seemingly “random” or “chance” events.**

      Prov. 16:33; 1 Kings 22:34, 37-38

   d. **He controls the affairs of nations.**


   e. **He controls all aspects of our lives.**

      Ps. 139:16; Job 14:5; Gal. 1:15; Jer. 1:5; 10:23; Pro. 21:1; 20:24; 16:1, 9; Ezra 1:1; 6:22; Phil. 2:13
“Our words, our steps, our movements, our hearts, and our abilities are all from the Lord. But we must guard against misunderstanding… God’s providential direction as an unseen, behind-the-scenes, ‘primary cause,’ should not lead us to deny the reality of our choices and actions. Again and again Scripture affirms that we really do cause events to happen. We are significant and we are responsible. We do have choices, and these are real choices that bring about real results…. God causes all things that happen, but he does so in such a way that he somehow upholds our ability to make willing, responsible choices, choices that have real and eternal results, and for which we are held accountable. Exactly how God combines his providential control with our willing and significant choices, Scripture does not explain—simply because we cannot explain how both can be true, we should accept both in an attempt to be faithful to the teaching of all of Scripture.”

— Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 321.

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(5.1) "God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, disposes and governs all creatures and things, from the greatest to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for which they were created - God governs according to His infallible foreknowledge and the free and unchanging counsel of His own will; for the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, boundless goodness, and mercy. (5.2) Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, Who is the First Cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that nothing happens to anyone by chance, or outside His providence, yet by His providence He orders events to occur according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently. (5.3) God, in His ordinary providence makes use of means, yet He is free to work outside, above, and against them at His pleasure."

f. He also controls (causes) evil. (…really?)

Joseph – Gen. 50:20; The Exodus – Ex. 4:21; 7:3; 9:12; 10:20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8; 9:16; 14:17; Ps. 105:25; Rom. 9:17-18; The Canaanites – Josh. 11:20; Samson – Judges 14:4; Sons of Eli – 1 Sam 2:25; King Saul – 1 Sam 16:14; King David – 2 Sam 11-12; 16:5-8, 11; 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; King Solomon – Evil kings raised up against him – 1 Kings 11:14, 23; Job – Satan = secondary cause, God = primary cause - Job 1:11, 21; Lying prophets – 1 Kings 22:23; Evil kings – Isa. 10:5; Jer. 25:9, 12; Ez. 14:9 (and God holds them responsible); Calamity – Amos 3:6; Evil itself (though usually translated “calamity”) – Isa. 45:7 (“created” is same word used in Genesis 1:1), Lam. 3:38; Isa. 63:17; Jonah – Jon. 1:15 and 2:3 (God accomplished His plan through the willing choices of real human beings who were accountable for their actions. God caused them to make a willing choice.); The Crucifixion of Jesus – the most evil act ever committed – Acts 2:23; 4:27; Future delusion sent by God – 2 Thess. 2:9-12; 1 Peter 2:8

— Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 322-27.

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(5.4) “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence that His determinate counsel extends even to the first fall, and all other sinful actions of both angels and men. This is not merely by a bare permission, but by a form of permission in which He included the most wise and powerful limitations, and other means of restricting and controlling sin. These various limitations have been designed by God to bring about his most holy purposes. Yet, in all these affairs, the sinfulness of both angels and men comes only from them and not from God, Who is altogether holy and righteous, and can never be the author or approver of sin.”

ANALYSIS OF GOD AND EVIL

- God uses all things to fulfill His purposes – even evil – for our good and His glory.
  Rom. 8:28; Gen. 50:20; Pro. 16:4; Ps. 76:10; Rom. 9:14-24.

- God NEVER does evil, and is never to be blamed for evil.
  Acts 2:23; 4:27; Luke 22:22 – “For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed.”

Alternatives:
1. God DOES evil.
   Problem: This is not the God of the Bible.

2. God DOES NOT CAUSE evil.
   Problem: Then evil has an independent existence apart from God and He could not have “created all things.”
3. God “ALLOWED” evil to enter the universe. Sounds appealing but doesn’t solve the problem. In fact, it still implies that evil exists independently of God.

Theology of Beaver: “He is not safe, but He is good.” We cannot fully understand God!

- Deut 29:29 – “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”
- God HAS revealed that He rules and causes all things.
- God has NOT revealed HOW! Thus Romans 9:19-21.

3. Government – “God has a purpose in all that he does in the world and he providentially governs or directs all things in order that they accomplish his purposes.” — Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology, 331-32.

Ps. 103:19; Dan. 4:35; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 15:27; Eph. 1:11; Phil 2:10-11; and all passages which refer to God as “king,” ruler,” etc.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Has thinking about the doctrine of providence increased your trust in God? How has it changed the way you think about the future? Are there difficulties or hardships in your life at this time? Give an example of a specific difficulty that you are now facing and explain how the doctrine of providence will help you in the way you think about it.

2. Do you sometimes think of luck or chance as causing events that happen in your life? If you ever feel that way, does it increase or decrease your anxiety about the future? Now think for a moment about some events that you might have attributed to luck in the past. Instead, begin to think about those events as under the control of your wise and loving heavenly Father. How does that make you feel differently about them and about the future generally?

3. Do you ever fall into a pattern of little “superstitious” actions or rituals that you think will bring good luck or prevent bad luck (such as not walking under a ladder, being afraid when a black cat walks across your path, not stepping on cracks on a sidewalk, carrying a certain item “just for good luck,” etc.)? Do you think those actions tend to increase or decrease your trust in God during the day and your obedience to him?

4. Explain how a proper understanding of the doctrine of providence should lead a Christian to a more active prayer life.

5. What has been the overall effect of this lesson on how you think and feel about God and the events of your life?
CREATION
Psalm 33:6 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.
Psalm 33:9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.
Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
John 1:3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
Colossians 1:16 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.
Acts 17:24-25 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.
Hebrews 11:3 By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.
Revelation 4:11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

PROVIDENCE
Preservation
Hebrews 1:3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.
Colossians 1:17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
Acts 17:28 for "In him we live and move and have our being";
Nehemiah 9:6 "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.
2 Peter 3:7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Concurrence
Ephesians 1:11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

He controls inanimate creation.
Psalm 148:7-8 Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and mist, stormy wind fulfilling his word!
Psalm 135:6-7 Whatever the LORD pleases, he does, in heaven and on earth, in the seas and all deeps. He it is who makes the clouds rise at the end of the earth, who makes lightnings for the rain and brings forth the wind from his storehouses.
Psalm 104:4 He makes his messengers winds, his ministers a flaming fire.
Psalm 104:14 You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth
Job 37:6-13 For to the snow he says, 'Fall on the earth,' likewise to the downpour, his mighty downpour. He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom he made may know it. Then the beasts go into their lairs, and remain in their dens. From its chamber comes the whirlwind, and cold from the scattering winds. By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen fast. He loads the thick cloud with moisture; the clouds scatter his lightning. They turn around and around by his guidance, to accomplish all that he commands them on the face of the habitable world. Whether for correction or for his land or for love, he causes it to happen.
Matthew 5:45 For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
He controls animals.
Psalms 104:26-28  
26 There go the ships, and Leviathan, which you formed to play in it.  
27 These all look to you, to give them their food in due season.  
28 When you give it to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

Job 38:39-41  
39 “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions,  
40 when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in their thicket?  
41 Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God for help, and wander about for lack of food?

Matthew 6:26  
26 Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Matthew 10:29  
29 Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father.

He controls seemingly “random” or “chance” events.

Proverbs 16:33  
33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.

1 Kings 22:34  
34 But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate. Therefore he said to the driver of his chariot, ”Turn around and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded.”

1 Kings 22:37-38  
37 So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria.  
38 And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes washed themselves in it, according to the word of the LORD that he had spoken.

He controls the affairs of nations.

Job 12:23  
23 He makes nations great, and he destroys them; he enlarges nations, and leads them away.

Psalm 22:28  
28 For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.

Acts 17:26  
26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,

Daniel 4:34-35  
34 At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation;  
35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

He controls all aspects of our lives.

Psalm 139:16  
16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Job 14:5  
5 Since his days are determined, and the number of his months is with you, and you have appointed his limits that he cannot pass,

Galatians 1:15  
15 But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace,

Jeremiah 1:5  
5 “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

Jeremiah 10:23  
23 I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps.

Proverbs 21:1  
1 The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.

Proverbs 20:24  
24 A man’s steps are from the LORD; how then can man understand his way?

Proverbs 16:1  
1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

Proverbs 16:9  
9 The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

Ezra 1:1-3  
1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing:  
2 “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.  
3 Whoever is among you of all his people, may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel- he is the God who is in Jerusalem.
Ezra 6:22  
And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had made them joyful and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria to them, so that he aided them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Philippians 2:13  
for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

He also controls (causes) evil. (...really?)

Genesis 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.

Exodus 4:21  
And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that he will not let the people go.

Exodus 9:12  
But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

Psalm 105:23-27  
Then Israel came to Egypt; Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.  And the LORD made his people very fruitful and made them stronger than their foes.  He turned their hearts to hate his people, to deal craftily with his servants.  He sent Moses, his servant, and Aaron, whom he had chosen.  They performed his signs among them and miracles in the land of Ham.

Romans 9:17-18  
For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."  So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.

Joshua 11:20  
For it was the LORD's doing to harden their hearts that they should come against Israel in battle, in order that they should be devoted to destruction and should receive no mercy but be destroyed, just as the LORD commanded Moses.

Judges 14:4  
His father and mother did not know that it was from the LORD, for he was seeking an opportunity against the Philistines. At that time the Philistines ruled over Israel.

1 Samuel 2:25  
But they would not listen to the voice of their father, for it was the will of the LORD to put them to death.

1 Samuel 16:14  
Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him.

2 Samuel 12:11-12  
Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.  For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.'"

2 Samuel 24:1  
Again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he incited David against them, saying, "Go, number Israel and Judah."

1 Chronicles 21:1  
Then Satan stood against Israel and incited David to number Israel.

Amos 3:6  
Is a trumpet blown in a city, and the people are not afraid? Does disaster come to a city, unless the LORD has done it?

Isaiah 45:7  
I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things.

Isaiah 63:17  
O LORD, why do you make us wander from your ways and harden our heart, so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage.

Acts 2:23  
this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Acts 4:27-28  
for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,  to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.

God uses all things to fulfill His purposes—even evil—for our good and His glory.

Romans 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.

Genesis 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.

Proverbs 16:4  
The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.

Psalm 76:10  
Surely the wrath of man shall praise you; the remnant of wrath you will put on like a belt.
Romans 9:14-24  

14 What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means!  
15 For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."  
16 So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.  
17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth."  
18 So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills.  
19 You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?"  
20 But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, "Why have you made me like this?"  
21 Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honored use and another for dishonorable use?  
22 What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction,  
23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-  
24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles?

Government
Psalm 103:19  

19 The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom rules over all.

Daniel 4:35  

35 all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?"

Romans 11:36  

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

1 Corinthians 15:27  

27 For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him.

Ephesians 1:11  

11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

Philippians 2:10-11  

10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.