

**The 1689 Confession of Faith, Chapter 5 – “Of Divine Providence”, Session # 5 –
“Divine Concourse in Action”, Presented in the Adult Sunday School Class, and
presented by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 10th, 2019.**

Paragraph 3 – “God, in his ordinary providence g) maketh use of means, yet is free h) to work without, i) above, and k) against them at his pleasure.”

g) Acts 27: 31,44; Isa 55: 10-11; h) Hos 1: 7; i) Romans 4: 19-21; k) Daniel 3: 27)

Paragraph 4 – “The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, that his determinate counsel l) 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 m) boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and governeth, in a manifold dispensation to his most holy n) 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 o) approver of sin.

l) Romans 11: 32-34; 2nd Samuel 24: 1; 1st Chronicles 21: 1; m) 2nd Kings 19: 28; Psalm 76: 10;

n) Genesis 50: 20; Isa 10:6-7, 12; o) Psalm 50: 21; 1st John 2: 16

We have been thinking about the subject of the Providence of God in relation to the Divine Concursus or Concourse. Concurrence is the Divine energy being operative in all that comes to pass. – Louis Berkhof I have given you three major points in relation to Divine Providence –

1. God not only is the First Cause in being the Creator and Preserver of All Things, He is the 1st Cause in the Governing of All Things.

2. God’s Providence is also seen in His ruling and directing second causes in such a way that they may accomplish the ends determined by Himself.

3. God by His Providence Governs by a particular and immediate Concourse.

I have demonstrated this truth Biblically to you by using two Scriptures so far; that of Acts chapter 17, verses 22-31, and Genesis 45: 1-7. In Paul’s preaching to the Athenians he was showing them that it was God who had determined the preappointed boundaries of men’s dwelling places by His providence, and that He was not very far from each of them, in that they lived and moved and had their being. God’s divine energy was in every man upholding them and all things by the word of His power, as it says in Hebrews 1: 3. In this sense all human beings, Paul said to them, are the offspring of God, and each of them ought to use all the strength that He gives to them to glorify Him with their life. God has commanded all men everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through the Man whom He has appointed, even our Lord Jesus Christ. That is good preaching; to tell people that it is God who has given them their life and all their strength and their being able to do anything is from God. He has not given them their life and strength so that they might sin against Him, but rather to think of what He would require of them. By the strength which He supplies them with, they ought to repent and seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him. (verse 27)

We also looked at Genesis 45: 1-7 at the way that God ordered by His providence all the events of Joseph’s being sold as a slave by his envious and hateful brothers, to the Midianite traders who took him down to Egypt and there eventually, after a number of trials and testings, was given the opportunity to interpret the dream of Pharaoh king of Egypt correctly about the coming 7 years of plenty and 7 years of famine, and Pharaoh raised him up to be 2nd in command in all of Egypt. The brothers had meant it for

evil, but God meant it for good. God's divine energy upheld the brothers during the time of their sinful acts, even though God did not approve of them one whit. But His providence worked according to His eternal purposes in His decrees to take those acts and overrule them for good; not permitting Joseph to be killed or to be imprisoned for any longer time that He ordained. (He did permit the chief butler to forget Joseph for two years longer than he should have, so that He could teach Joseph patience and that His time is the best time for all of our deliverance from various situations of difficulty that we encounter as Christians.

So we have begun to understand how God not only upholds all things by the word of His power, but He also governs all the actions of men, both the righteous and the wicked, so that all of His righteous purposes will be fulfilled in relation to all men and nations. Now that we have seen these things, I want us to look now at the characteristics of Divine Concursus so that we might see how God can be absolutely sovereign and altogether righteous in everything that He does, and in His judgments concerning all that men are doing and have done. We shall see how a right understanding of the Divine Concursus also establishes men to be free agents who are, and who will be, held accountable for all of their actions.

The Characteristics of Divine Concursus.

1. In every Instance the impulse to action and movement proceeds from God.

Louis Berkhof in his Systematic Theology under the subject of Providence says this – “There must be an influence of divine energy before the creature can work.” “This influence does not terminate on the activity of the creature, but on the creature itself.” “God causes everything in nature to work and to move in the direction of a pre-determined end.” “So God also enables and prompts His rational creatures, as second causes, to function, and that not merely by endowing them with energy in a general way, but by energizing them to certain specific acts.”

1st Kings 13: 1-6 – “And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense.” “Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, ‘O altar, altar!’” “Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you.’” “And he gave a sign the same day, saying, ‘This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out.’” “So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, ‘Arrest him!’” “Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to himself.” “The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.” “Then the king answered and said to the man of God, ‘Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.’” “So the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king’s hand was restored to him, and became as before.”

Jeroboam was a very wicked man. He ruled by fear of the people when it came to public worship. In verses 25-30 we are told that He thought that if the people of the 10 tribes over which he ruled were allowed to go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord at Jerusalem that the people’s hearts would be turned back to king Rehoboam who still ruled over 2 tribes of Israel. And thus he would lose his kingdom. He therefore asked advice from his unbelieving counselors and made two golden calves and said to the people that it was too much for them to go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord. Instead he has them worship these golden calves in Bethel and Dan. He also made shrines on the high places and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi.

Now, you can see here the Divine Concursus in action. Jeroboam is standing by the altar in Bethel and he is burning incense to a false god. God through the prophet gives a word to Jeroboam saying that He would raise up a king in the future named Josiah and he would be born to the house of David, and on this altar he would sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on that altar, and men’s bones shall be burned on that same altar, and the sign which would be given to Jeroboam was that the altar was

going to be split apart, and the ashes poured out. Well, Jeroboam did not like this interference to all that he was doing and so when he heard the saying of the man of God, he said – “Arrest him!” God, who was upholding Jeroboam’s physical arm by giving him the strength to raise, decided to withdraw that strength and to wither his arm immediately. He could not pull it back to himself; it froze in that position. And the altar was split apart. God was showing Jeroboam that he was the one who had upheld him in his physical frame while he sinned against Him, but that He did was not the author of that sin, nor did He in any way approve of it. He had the power to judge Jeroboam immediately and He did so as a perpetual example to all men of what His Divine Concursus is all about. He upholds men, keeps them in life, and gives them the strength to sin according to their own free will and choice, but He is not involved in their sin in its intent or its execution, in any way. In fact, He is saying that He will judge all sin and judge the person who sins and does not repent. Jeroboam repented only in an outward sense by asking the prophet to pray for him that his hand might be restored. He should have repented in his heart and mind of his wickedness, and entreated the Lord Himself to forgive him of his sins and give him a new heart. Of course, this could only happen if the Lord would have decided to show him mercy leading to His giving him the gift of eternal life. But this He had not determined to do. The Divine Concursus always works in complete line with the Divine Decrees of God concerning any person or any nation.

John Trapp says on 1st Kings 13: 4 – “A fearful stroke, had he well considered it: but his heart was as hard as his hand withered.” “Jeroboam had as great a miracle wrought before him herein, as St. Paul had at his conversion; but without the Spirit’s concurrence neither miracle, nor ministry, nor misery, nor mercy, can in the least measure mollify the heart of an obdurate and obstinate sinner.” “Valens, the Arian emperor, would have signed a sentence of banishment against Basil, but could not, by reason of a sudden trembling of his right hand, so that he could not write one letter of his own name, but for anger tore the paper in pieces, and let Basil alone.” “There is a story of one of our late innovators, who, turning with the times, and beginning to bow toward altars, never went upright more: and of another, who, hearing perjury condemned by a godly preacher, and how it never escaped being unpunished, said in a bravery, ‘I have often forsworn myself, and yet my right hand is no shorter than my left.’” “These words he had scarce uttered, when such an inflammation arose in that hand, that he was forced to go to the surgeon, and cut it off, lest it should have infected the whole body; and so it became shorter than the other.” “The Jews tell us, that when Jeroboam’s hand was dried up, the false prophets told him that this happened by chance, and so kept him from thinking of God who had smitten him.” “Let the saints learn to put their confidence in God: for if he (*whosoever denies*) deny concurrence and influence, the arm of all adverse power shrinks up presently.”