

Creation and Providence



Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Creation ex-nihilo

Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing," referring to God's creation of the universe without the use of any previously existing materials.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Day-age theory

An "old earth" theory of creation that views the days of Genesis 1 as extremely long "ages" of time.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Deism

The view that God created the universe but is not now directly involved in the creation.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Dualism

The idea that both God and the material universe have eternally existed side by side as two ultimate forces in the universe. It implies that there is an eternal conflict between God and the evil aspects of the material universe.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Gap theory

The idea that between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is a gap of millions of years during which God judged an earlier creation, making it "without form and void" and necessitating a second creation depicted in Genesis 1:3-2:3.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Macro-evolution theory

The "general theory of evolution," or the view that all organisms emerged from nonliving substance.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Micro-evolution theory

The view that small developments occur within one species without creating new species.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Pantheism

The idea that the whole universe is God or part of God.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Progressive creationism

An "old earth" theory which holds that God created new types of plant and animal creatures at several different points of time in the earth's history, and between those points, plant and animal life developed more diversity on its own.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Theistic Evolution

The theory that God used the process of evolution to bring about all of the life forms on earth.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Arminian

A theological tradition that seeks to preserve the free choices of human beings and denies God's providential control over the details of all events.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Calvinist

A theological tradition named after the sixteenth-century French reformer John Calvin (1509–64) that emphasizes the sovereignty of God in all things, man's inability to do spiritual good before God, and the glory of God as the highest end of all that occurs.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Decrees of God

The eternal plans of God whereby, before the creation of the world, he determined to bring about everything that happens.

Creation and Providence



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Providence

The doctrine that 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.



Definitions

Taken from Grudem's Systematic Theology

Reformed

Another term for the theological tradition known as Calvinism.

Creation and Providence

Creation

Definition

Creation is the calling into existence of that which did not exist before, while providence continues or causes to continue what has already been called into existence. In the former there can be no cooperation of the creature with the Creator, but in the latter there is a concurrence of the first Cause with second causes. In Scripture the two are always kept distinct. Berkhof

Creation in the strict sense of the word may be defined as *that free act of God whereby He, according to His sovereign will and for His own glory, in the beginning brought forth the whole visible and invisible universe, without the use of pre-existent material, and thus gave it an existence, distinct from His own and yet always dependent on Him.* Berkhof

Creation and Providence

Definition

It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good.

After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female ... after His own image. (Westminster Confession of Faith, IV/i-ii)
Reymond

EX NIHILO

Under the head of creation, we have to do only with the primary and strict signification of the term, as denoting origination from nothing: *de nihilo* or *ex nihilo*. The poverty and inadequateness of human language is very apparent in respect to this idea. Words are more or less pictorial in their roots and elements. But the creation of entity from nonentity utterly forbids any picturing or imaging. For this reason, more or less of qualification or explanation must be employed, in all languages, in connection with the words that are used to denote this purely abstract and inexplicable conception. Shedd

Creation and Providence

EX NIHILO

Gen. 1:1 records the beginning of the work of creation, and it certainly does not represent God as bringing the world forth out of pre-existent material. It was creation out of nothing, creation in the strict sense of the word, and therefore the only part of the work recorded in Gen. 1 to which Calvin would apply the term. But even in the remaining part of the chapter God is represented as calling forth all things by the word of His power, by a simple divine fiat. The same truth is taught in such passages as Ps. 33:6, 9 and 148:5. The strongest passage is Heb. 11:3... Creation is here represented as a fact which we apprehend only by faith. By faith we understand (perceive, not comprehend) that the world was framed or fashioned by the word of God, that is, the word of God's power, the divine fiat, so that the things which are seen, the visible things of this world, were not made out of things which do appear, which are visible, and which are at least occasionally seen. Berkhof

EX NIHILO

Genesis 1:1

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalms 33:6

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host.

Psalms 33:9

⁹ For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

Psalms 148:5

⁵ Let them praise the name of the LORD, For He commanded and they were created.

Hebrews 11:3

³ By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

Creation and Providence

J.I. Packer

The act of creation is mystery to us; there is more in it than we can understand. We cannot create by fiat, and we do not know how God could. To say that he created “out of nothing” is to confess the mystery, not explain it. In particular, we cannot conceive how dependent existence can be distinct existence, nor how angels and human beings in their dependent existence can be not robots but creatures capable of free decisions for which they are morally accountable to their Maker. Yet Scripture everywhere teaches us that this is the way it is.

J.I. Packer

As the world order is not self-created, so it is not self-sustaining, as God is. The stability of the universe depends on constant divine upholding; this is a specific ministry of the divine Son (Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3), and without it every creature of every kind, ourselves included, would cease to be. As Paul told the Athenians, “he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.... In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:25, 28).

Acts 17:25

²⁵ nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

Acts 17:28

²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’

Creation and Providence

J.I. Packer

The possibility of creative intrusions (e.g., miracles of creative power; creating new persons through human procreative activity; reorienting human hearts and redirecting human desires and energies in regeneration) is as old as the cosmos itself. How far God in his upholding activity actually continues to create new things that cannot be explained in terms of anything that went before, it is beyond our power to know; but certainly his world remains open to his creative power at every point.

Six Literal Days

A Countryside Bible Church Distinctive

Creation

We believe Genesis is a straightforward, literal presentation of the historical events it describes. We teach, therefore, that God created everything in six literal days. We reject every form of theistic evolution.

Creation and Providence



Six Literal Days

The word “day” (יָמָה, *yôm*)

The word “day” (יָמָה, *yôm*), in the singular, dual and plural, occurs some 2,225 times in the Old Testament with the overwhelming preponderance of these occurrences designating the ordinary daily cycle. Normally, the preponderate meaning of a term should be maintained unless contextual considerations force one to another view. Raymond



Six Literal Days

The recurring phrase, “and the evening and the morning [taken together] constituted day one, etc.” (1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), suggests as much. The qualifying words, “evening and morning,” attached here to each of these recurring statements occur together outside of Genesis in 30 verses (e.g., Exod. 18:13; 27:21). In each instance these words are employed to describe an ordinary day.

Creation and Providence

Six Literal Days

Genesis 1:5

⁵ God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was **evening and there was morning, one day.**

Genesis 1:8

⁸ God called the expanse heaven. And there was **evening and there was morning, a second day.**

Genesis 1:13

¹³ There was **evening and there was morning, a third day.**

Genesis 1:19

¹⁹ There was **evening and there was morning, a fourth day.**

Genesis 1:23

²³ There was **evening and there was morning, a fifth day.**

Six Literal Days

Genesis 1:31

³¹ God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was **evening and there was morning, the sixth day.**

Exodus 18:13

¹³ It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the **morning until the evening.**

Exodus 27:21

²¹ "In the tent of meeting, outside the veil which is before the testimony, Aaron and his sons shall keep it in order from **evening to morning** before the LORD; it shall be a perpetual statute throughout their generations for the sons of Israel.

Creation and Providence

Six Literal Days

yôm in conjunction with a cardinal or an ordinal number

In the 476 other cases in the Old Testament where $\text{D}\dot{\text{I}}'$, *yôm*, stands in conjunction with a cardinal or an ordinal number, e.g., Exodus 12:15; 24:16; Leviticus 12:3, it never means anything other than a normal, literal day.
Reymond

Six Literal Days

Exodus 12:15

¹⁵ 'Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the **first** day you shall remove leaven from your houses; for whoever eats anything leavened from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.

Exodus 24:16

¹⁶ The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for **six** days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.

Leviticus 12:3

³ 'On the **eighth** day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

Creation and Providence

Six Literal Days

Day and Night

With the creation of the sun “to rule the day” and the moon “to rule the night” occurring on the fourth day (Gen. 1:16–18), days four through six would almost certainly have been ordinary days. This would suggest that the seventh would also have been an ordinary day. All this would suggest in turn, if we may assume that the earth was turning on its axis at that time, that days one through three would have been ordinary days as well. Raymond

Genesis 1:16–18

¹⁶ God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also.

¹⁷ God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

¹⁸ and to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness; and God saw that it was good.

Six Literal Days

The Sabbath

If we follow the ... principle of hermeneutics enunciated in the Westminster Confession of Faith to the effect that “the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly” (1/ix), then the “ordinary day” view has most to commend it since Moses grounds the commandment regarding seventh-day Sabbath observance in the fact of the divine Exemplar’s activity: “In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exod. 20:11; see also 31:15–17). Raymond

Creation and Providence

Six Literal Days

The Sabbath

Exodus 20:11

¹¹“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 31:15–17

¹⁵‘For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.

¹⁶‘So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’

¹⁷“It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.”

Six Literal Days

Conclusion

Finally, had Moses intended to express the idea of seven “ages” in Genesis 1 he could have employed the term olām , *olām*, which means “age” or “period of indeterminate duration.” Reymond

Creation and Providence

The Creation of Time

Space and time are dimensions of the created order; God is not “in” either; nor is he bound by either as we are. Packer

The Bible begins with the very simple statement, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” Gen. 1:1. As addressed to all classes of people, it employs the ordinary language of daily life, and not the technical language of philosophy. The Hebrew term *bereshith* (lit. “in beginning”) is itself indefinite, and naturally gives rise to the question, In the beginning of what? It would seem best to take the expression in the absolute sense as an indication of the beginning of all temporal things and even of time itself.... Technically speaking, it is not correct to assume that time was already in existence when God created the world, and that He at some point in that existing time, called “the beginning” brought forth the universe. Time is only one of the forms of all created existence, and therefore could not exist before creation. For that reason Augustine thought it would be more correct to say that the world was created *cum tempore* (with time) than to assert that it was created *in tempore* (in time). The great significance of the opening statement of the Bible lies in its teaching that the world had a beginning. Berkhof

The Creation of Time

Psalm 90:2

² Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Psalm 102:25

²⁵ “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

Matthew 19:4

⁴ And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,

Creation and Providence

The Creation of Time

John 1:1

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2

² He was in the beginning with God.

Hebrews 1:10

¹⁰ And, "YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;

The Creation of Time – Questions!

Prior to the beginning mentioned in Gen. 1:1, we must postulate a beginningless eternity, during which God only existed. How must we fill up these blank ages in the eternal life of God? What did God do before the creation of the world? It is so far from possible to think of Him as a... God who is not active, that He is usually conceived of as ...pure action. He is represented in Scripture as always working, John 5:17. Can we then say that He passed from a state of inactivity to one of action? Moreover, how is the transition from a non-creative to a creative state to be reconciled with His immutability? And if He had the eternal purpose to create, why did He not carry it out at once? Why did He allow a whole eternity to elapse before His plan was put into execution? Moreover, why did He select that particular moment for His creative work? Berkhof

Creation and Providence

Creation and the Trinity

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). He did it by fiat, without any preexisting material; his resolve that things should exist (“Let there be ...”) called them into being and formed them in order with an existence that depended on his will yet was distinct from his own. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were involved together ... Packer

Creation and the Trinity

Scripture teaches us that the triune God is the author of creation, Gen. 1:1; Isa. 40:12; 44:24; 45:12, and this distinguishes Him from the idols, Ps. 96:5; Isa. 37:16; Jer. 10:11, 12. Though the Father is in the foreground in the work of creation, 1 Cor. 8:6, it is also clearly recognized as a work of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. ... The second and third persons are not dependent powers or mere intermediaries, but independent authors together with the Father. The work was not divided among the three persons, but the whole work, though from different aspects, is ascribed to each one of the persons. Berkhof

Creation and Providence

Creation and the Father

Genesis 1:1

¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Isaiah 40:12

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

Isaiah 45:12

¹² "It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands And I ordained all their host.

Creation and the Son

1 Corinthians 8:6

⁶ yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.

John 1:1-3

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was in the beginning with God.

³ **All things came into being through Him**, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Creation and Providence

Creation and the Son

Colossians 1:15–17

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

¹⁶ For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

¹⁷ He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:2

² in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, **through whom also He made the world.**

Creation and the Holy Spirit

Genesis 1:2

² The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

Job 33:4

⁴ “The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life.

Psalms 104:30

³⁰ You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground.

Isaiah 40:12–13

¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, And marked off the heavens by the span, And calculated the dust of the earth by the measure, And weighed the mountains in a balance And the hills in a pair of scales?

¹³ Who has directed the Spirit of the LORD, Or as His counselor has informed Him?

Creation and Providence

Creation is Distinct from God

This means that the world is not God nor any part of God, but something absolutely distinct from God; and that it differs from God, not merely in degree, but in its essential properties. The doctrine of creation implies that, while God is self-existent and self-sufficient, infinite and eternal, the world is dependent, finite, and temporal. The one can never change into the other. Berkhof

Creation is Distinct from God

Acts 17:24

²⁴ “The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

Psalm 102:27

²⁷ “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.

Psalm 90:2

² Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

Psalm 102:25–27

²⁵ “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

²⁶ “Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

²⁷ “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.

Creation and Providence

Creation is Distinct from God

Psalm 103:15–17

¹⁵ As for man, his days are like grass; As a flower of the field, so he flourishes.

¹⁶ When the wind has passed over it, it is no more, And its place acknowledges it no longer.

¹⁷ But the lovingkindness of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him, And His righteousness to children's children,

Creation is Dependent on God

While God gave the world an existence distinct from His own, He did not withdraw from the world after its creation, but remained in the most intimate connection with it. The universe is not like a clock which was wound up by God and is now allowed to run off without any further divine intervention...

God is not only the transcendent God, infinitely exalted above all His creatures; He is also the immanent God, who is present in every part of His creation, and whose Spirit is operative in all the world... God is Spirit, and just because He is Spirit He is everywhere present as a *whole*. He is said to fill heaven and earth, Ps. 139:7–10; Jer. 23:24, to constitute the sphere in which we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:28, to renew the face of the earth by His Spirit, Ps. 104:30, to dwell in those that are of a broken heart, Ps. 51:11; Isa. 57:15, and in the Church as His temple, I Cor. 3:16; 6:19; Eph. 2:22. Berkhof

Creation and Providence

The Purpose of Creation

The Glory of God

Psalm 19:1

¹ The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Romans 11:36

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

Creation

Knowing that God created the world around us, and ourselves as part of it, is basic to true religion. God is to be praised as Creator, by reason of the marvelous order, variety, and beauty of his works. Psalms such as Psalm 104 model this praise. God is to be trusted as the sovereign LORD, with an eternal plan covering all events and destinies without exception, and with power to redeem, re-create and renew; such trust becomes rational when we remember that it is the almighty Creator that we are trusting. Realizing our moment-by-moment dependence on God the Creator for our very existence makes it appropriate to live lives of devotion, commitment, gratitude, and loyalty toward him, and scandalous not to. Godliness starts here, with God the sovereign Creator as the first focus of our thoughts. Packer

Creation and Providence



Providence



Providence

“Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident it has suited all things better to your eternal good than you could do had you been left to your own option.” John Flavel, *The Mystery of Providence*

Creation and Providence



Providence

Defined

Providence may be defined as *that continued exercise of the divine energy whereby the Creator preserves all His creatures, is operative in all that comes to pass in the world, and directs all things to their appointed end.* Berkhof

The providence of God means the continuing action of God in preserving his creation and guiding it toward his intended purposes. Erickson

God the great Creator of all things doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures, actions, and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, 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, goodness, and mercy. Reymond



Providence and the Believer

Providence is in certain ways central to the conduct of the Christian life. It means that we are able to live in the assurance that God is present and active in our lives. We are in his care and can therefore face the future confidently, knowing that things are not happening merely by chance. We can pray, knowing that God hears and acts upon our prayers. We can face danger, knowing that he is not unaware and uninvolved. Erickson

Creation and Providence



Providence

A Right Perspective Provides Protection

With its doctrine of providence the Church took position against both, the Epicurean notion that the world is governed by chance, and the Stoic view that it is ruled by fate. From the very start theologians took the position that God preserves and governs the world. Berkhof

Augustine led the way in the development of this doctrine. Over against the doctrines of fate and chance, he stressed the fact that all things are preserved and governed by the sovereign, wise, and beneficent will of God. He made no reservations in connection with the providence of God, but maintained the control of God over the good and the evil that is in the world alike. Berkhof



General and Special Providence

Theologians generally distinguish between general and special providence, the former denoting God's control of the universe as a whole, and the latter, His care for each part of it in relation to the whole. Berkhof

John 17:2: "For you [the Father] granted him [the Christ] authority over all people [general providence] that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him [special providence]."

Creation and Providence

Providence Includes:

Preservation

Concurrence

Government

But while we distinguish three elements in providence, we should remember that these three are never separated in the work of God. While preservation has reference to the *being*, concurrence to the *activity*, and government to the *guidance* of all things, this should never be understood in an exclusive sense. In preservation there is also an element of government, in government an element of concursus, and in concursus an element of preservation. Berkhof

Preservation Defined

God keeps all created things existing and maintaining the properties with which he created them. Grudem

Preservation is God's maintaining his creation in existence. It involves God's protection of his creation against harm and destruction, and his provision for the needs of the elements or members of the creation. Erickson

Preservation may be defined as *that continuous work of God by which He maintains the things which He created, together with the properties and powers with which He endowed them.* Berkhof

Creation and Providence

Preservation

Thoughts from Jerry Wragg:

He sustains every detail of life

He has thought of everything

He doesn't lack the power to bring about good through it

He cannot ever be unwise with my life

Scripture and Preservation

Hebrews 1:3

3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Colossians 1:17

17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Acts 17:28

28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

Nehemiah 9:6

6 "You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, The heaven of heavens with all their host, The earth and all that is on it, The seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them And the heavenly host bows down before You.

Creation and Providence

Scripture and Preservation

2 Peter 3:7

7 But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Job 34:14–15

14 "If He should determine to do so, If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath,

15 All flesh would perish together, And man would return to dust.

Psalm 104:29

29 You hide Your face, they are dismayed; You take away their spirit, they expire And return to their dust.

Concurrence Defined

God cooperates with created things in every action, directing their distinctive properties to cause them to act as they do. Grudem

Concurrence may be defined as *the co-operation of the divine power with all subordinate powers, according to the pre-established laws of their operation, causing them to act and to act precisely as they do.* Berkhof

Divine-human concurrence. You are making free moral choices while God is perfectly accomplishing exactly what He intends. Wragg

Creation and Providence

Concurrence Implies Two Things

That the powers of nature do not work by themselves, that is, simply by their own inherent power, but that God is immediately operative in every act of the creature. This must be maintained in opposition to the deistic position. Berkhof

That second causes are real, and not to be regarded simply as the operative power of God. It is only on condition that second causes are real, that we can properly speak of a concurrence or co-operation of the First Cause with secondary causes. This should be stressed over against the pantheistic idea that God is the only agent working in the world. Berkhof

Scriptural Proof for Concurrence

Genesis 45:5

⁵ “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Exodus 4:11–12

¹¹ The LORD said to him, “Who has made man’s mouth? Or who makes him mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the LORD?

¹² “Now then go, and I, even I, will be with your mouth, and teach you what you are to say.”

Joshua 11:6

⁶ Then the LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid because of them, for tomorrow at this time I will deliver all of them slain before Israel; you shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire.”

Creation and Providence

Scriptural Proof for Concurrence

Proverbs 21:1

¹ The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes.

Ezra 6:22

²² And they observed the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Deuteronomy 8:18

¹⁸ "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Scriptural Proof for Concurrence

Isaiah 10:5

⁵ Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,

Ephesians 1:11

I I also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

Creation and Providence



Concurrence

Errors to Avoid (By Berkhof)

That it consists merely in a general communication of power, without determining the specific action in any way.

That it is of such a nature that man does part of the work and God a part.

That the work of God and that of the creature in concurrence are co-ordinate.



Government Defined

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. Grudem

Government means that God is actively engaged in achieving his purposes in his creation and that sin cannot thwart those purposes. Erickson

The divine government may be defined as *that continued activity of God whereby He rules all things teleologically so as to secure the accomplishment of the divine purpose.* Berkhof

Creation and Providence

God's Government Affirms Two Things:

The absolute sovereign lordship of God over creation

We are all dependent – not autonomous

God's Governing

A Scriptural Defense (taken from Cairns Dictionary of Theological Terms)

Creation and Providence



God's Governing

The Universe at Large

Psalm 103:19
19 The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.

Daniel 4:35
35 "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'

Ephesians 1:11
11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,



God's Governing

The Physical World

Psalm 135:6
6 Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Job 37:10
10 "From the breath of God ice is made, And the expanse of the waters is frozen.

Psalm 104:14
14 He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, And vegetation for the labor of man, So that he may bring forth food from the earth,

Creation and Providence



God's Governing

The Brute Creation

Psalm 104:21
21 The young lions roar after their prey And seek their food from God.

Matthew 6:26
26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

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



God's Governing

The Affairs of Nations

Job 12:23
23 "He makes the nations great, then destroys them; He enlarges the nations, then leads them away.

Psalm 22:28
28 For the kingdom is the LORD'S 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 their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

Creation and Providence

God's Governing

Man's Birth and Lot in Life

1 Samuel 16:1

1 Now the LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have selected a king for Myself among his sons."

Psalms 139:16

16 Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; And in Your book were all written The days that were ordained for me, When as yet there was not one of them.

Galatians 1:15-16

15 But when God, who had set me apart even from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased

16 to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

God's Governing

Success and Failure

Psalms 75:6-7

6 For not from the east, nor from the west, Nor from the desert comes exaltation;

7 But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another.

Luke 1:52

52 "He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.

Creation and Providence



God's Governing

Things Seemingly Accidental or Insignificant

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

Matthew 10:30
30 "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.



God's Governing

The Protection of the Righteous

Psalm 4:8
8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.

Psalm 5:12
12 For it is You who blesses the righteous man, O LORD, You surround him with favor as with a shield.

Romans 8:28
28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

Creation and Providence



God's Governing

Supplying the Wants of God's People

Genesis 22:8

8 Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

Deuteronomy 8:3

3 "He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.

Philippians 4:19

19 And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.



God's Governing

Giving Answers to Prayer

2 Chronicles 33:13

13 When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God.

Matthew 7:7

7 "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Luke 18:7-8

7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

Creation and Providence



God's Governing

The Exposure and Punishment of the Wicked

Psalm 7:12-13

12 If a man does not repent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent His bow and made it ready.

13 He has also prepared for Himself deadly weapons; He makes His arrows fiery shafts.

Psalm 11:6

6 Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup.



The Problem of Evil

The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men; and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so, as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin. Reymond

Creation and Providence

The Problem of Evil

Pelagians, Semi-Pelagians, and Arminians raise a serious objection to this doctrine of providence. They maintain that a *previous* concurrence, which is not merely general *but predetermines man to specific actions*, makes God the responsible author of sin. Reformed theologians are well aware of the difficulty that presents itself here, but do not feel free to circumvent it by denying God's absolute control over the free actions of His moral creatures, since this is clearly taught in Scripture. Berkhof

The Problem of Evil

A Scriptural Defense

James 1:13–14

¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.

¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.

1 John 2:16

¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

Creation and Providence



The Problem of Evil

A Scriptural Defense

We can begin by looking at several passages that affirm that God did, indeed, cause evil events to come about and evil deeds to be done. But we must remember that in all these passages it is very clear that Scripture nowhere shows God as *directly doing anything evil* but rather as bringing about evil deeds through the willing actions of moral creatures. Moreover, *Scripture never blames God for evil or shows God as taking pleasure in evil* and Scripture never excuses human beings for the wrong they do. Grudem



The Problem of Evil

A Scriptural Defense

Genesis 45:5

⁵ “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

Genesis 50:19–20

¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place?

²⁰ “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.

Creation and Providence



The Problem of Evil

A Scriptural Defense

Exodus 9:16–17 (Pharaoh)

¹⁶“But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth.

¹⁷“Still you exalt yourself against My people by not letting them go.

Romans 9:17–18

¹⁷ For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE I RAISED YOU UP, TO DEMONSTRATE MY POWER IN YOU, AND THAT MY NAME MIGHT BE PROCLAIMED THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE EARTH.”

¹⁸ So then He has mercy on whom He desires, and He hardens whom He desires.



The Problem of Evil

A Scriptural Defense

Psalm 105:25

²⁵ He turned their heart to hate His people, To deal craftily with His servants.

Joshua 11:20

²⁰ For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, to meet Israel in battle in order that he might utterly destroy them, that they might receive no mercy, but that he might destroy them, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Judges 3:12

¹² Now the sons of Israel again did evil in the sight of the LORD. So the LORD strengthened Eglon the king of Moab against Israel, because they had done evil in the sight of the LORD.

Creation and Providence

The Problem of Evil

But if the sinful actions of humans are not caused by God, what do we mean when we say that they are within his governing activity? There are several ways in which God can and does relate to sin: he can (Erickson)

Prevent it

Permit it

Direct it

Limit it

The Problem of Evil

God Can Prevent Sin

Genesis 20:6

⁶Then God said to him in the dream, "Yes, I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this, and I also kept you from sinning against Me; therefore I did not let you touch her."

Psalm 19:13

¹³Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; Let them not rule over me; Then I will be blameless, And I shall be acquitted of great transgression.

Creation and Providence



The Problem of Evil

God Does Not Always Prevent Sin

Acts 14:16

¹⁶“In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

Romans 1:24

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Psalms 81:12–13

¹²“So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.

¹³“Oh that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways!



The Problem of Evil

God Can Also Direct Sin

Genesis 37:21–22

²¹ But Reuben heard this and rescued him out of their hands and said, “Let us not take his life.”

²² Reuben further said to them, “Shed no blood. Throw him into this pit that is in the wilderness, but do not lay hands on him”—that he might rescue him out of their hands, to restore him to his father.

Genesis 45:8

⁸“Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

Creation and Providence



The Problem of Evil

God Can Also Direct Sin

Acts 2:36

³⁶“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Romans 11:25

²⁵ For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise in your own estimation—that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;



The Problem of Evil

God Can Limit Sin

Job 1:12

¹² Then the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him.” So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.

Job 2:6

⁶ So the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life.”

1 Corinthians 10:13

¹³ No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.

Creation and Providence

Conclusions Concerning God's Governing Authority (Erickson)

God's governing authority is universal. Rom 8:28; Isa 44-45

God's providence does not extend merely to His own people

God is good in His government

God is personally concerned about those who are His

Our activity and God's activity are not mutually exclusive

God is sovereign in His government

Conclusion

We must go as far as Scripture takes us and no further. There will be tensions where we must stop and simply worship. Jerry Wragg (paraphrase)

Romans 9:18-21

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 honorable use and another for dishonorable use?