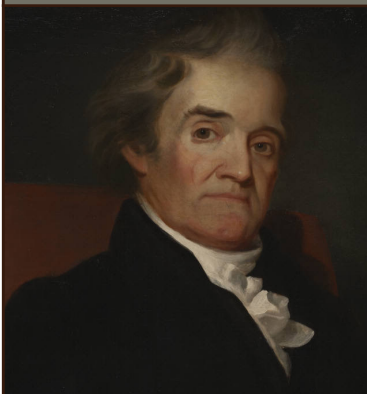


Founder Benjamin Franklin

“All of us who were engaged in the struggle [for our independence] observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor. I have lived a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that God governs in the affairs of men.”



Educator Noah Webster

“He that acknowledges a creation and denies a Providence involves himself in a contradiction; for the same power which caused a thing to exist is necessary to continue its existence. To say that such is done by Providence is to say it is done by God Himself.”

God *Governs* in the Affairs of Men and *Nations*

Before one can begin to observe the people and events of American history (or any history for that matter), he must first decide the lens through which to view them. This decision will ultimately determine which causes are to be recognized and where credit is to be given.

A skewed lens produces a skewed view of history, of man, and of life itself.

So then, the question is how many lenses, or interpretations of history, are there?

While the world will propose that there are many options, there are two – that which is biblical and that which is not – the Providential interpretation and the pagan one. Simply put, one's view of the world is secondary to his view of God.

Since one's view of God determines one's view of everything else, a study of history first relies upon a study of God.¹

A study of history cannot begin until one resolves whether God is or is not. If one concludes that He is, then he must understand the nature of God's character and government, in order to interpret history properly. History either reveals that God is over all and works through all things or that even He falls short, that there are matters that even He cannot control, but that view of God is not a Biblical one.²

As Creator, God is the source of all power in heaven and on earth. He is the Sovereign of the universe. It is, therefore, His privilege and prerogative to rule as He decrees and ordains. Not one thing, in either space or time, is ever outside of His judicial realm and rule. Nothing escapes His government. This is the God that the Bible describes.³

However, in order to explain the origin of things, pagans must pronounce that the rule of random chance is the causative source. Man himself is left alone to give meaning to life. Consequently, man is in control of his own destiny, and the world in which he lives is of his own making. Yet, this line of thinking is illogical, and any honest secularist will (and must) admit it. The universe, mankind, history, morality, these things all have a point of origin. God was not only present at that point of origin, He is the point of origin, the Superintendent of the universe. The pages of Scripture declare that the universe exists and operates by God's wisdom and not man's.⁴

By God's act of creation, all things are rightly His, to rule in accordance with His good pleasure and to dispose in accordance to His will. God's established, supreme authority over the universe leads to the idea that He has an overriding hand in the affairs of creation.⁵

Our forefathers referred to that overriding hand as *Providence*, the hidden hand of history. Providence (Latin *pro-vidéo*) literally means “to see beforehand.” It implies that God can see the future. Since He is all-knowing, the fact that He can see the future is a given. He wouldn't be much of a God, if He didn't possess foresight. But providence entails much more than foresight. It's not just that God can see what's going to happen, but that He can also bring it about the way He wants it to happen. That's different. Noah Webster defined this aspect as “active foresight.” God can arrange events the way He desires, “after the counsel of His own

God *Governs* in the Affairs of Men and *Nations*

THE HIDDEN HAND

by Arthur T. Pierson

Back of all that foes have plotted,
Back of all that saints have planned,
Back of schemes by men or demons,
Moves a higher, hidden Hand.

Warp and woof are heaven's making,
All the pattern good and wise;
Tho' on earth's side oft' perplexing,
Clear and right to heavenly eyes.

All earth's agents act with freedom,
Choosing whether love or hate,
Faith in God or bold defiance;
None are shackled slaves of fate.

Yet the Hand that guides is hidden,
Moving secret and unseen,
Firmly guiding life's great drama,
Every act and shifting scene.

Even human wrath, unknowing,
Serves that all-controlling will.
Man proposes; God disposes.
All things His design fulfill.

To that goal of all the ages,
All of history's windings tend;
And, despite all foes or factions,
God proves victor in the end.

Mysteries which hurt and baffle,
Past our power to understand,
In the end are turned to blessing
By that sovereign hidden Hand.

SEE FOR YOURSELF

Passages for Further Study

God is Sovereign

1 Chronicles 29:11, 12; Psalm 9:19;
96:9-11; 115:3; Daniel 4:35;
Ephesians 1:11

God Governs the Nations

Job 12:23; Psalm 22:28; 33:6-22;
47:8; 66:7; 67:4; 72:11; 82:8;
86:9; 113:4; 135:6; Proverbs 21:1;
Isaiah 40:15-17; Daniel 2:20, 21

God Has a Plan

Genesis 50:18-20; Isaiah 46:9-11;
Jeremiah 29:11; Acts 17:24-27;
Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:9, 10

God's Standards Exalt Nations

Psalm 33:12; 144:15; Proverbs 14:34;
Jeremiah 18:6-10; John 8:32; 14:6

will” (*Eph. 1:11*). He does not sit powerless to control time, space, or His creatures. He provides in advance to ensure that His will and good pleasure are fulfilled.

History, then, is not haphazard or accidental, but God has a plan that He has ordained, either by determining or permitting events to occur.⁶ Furthermore, it must be recognized that God’s power, which extends infinitely out into time and space, also extends infinitely in as well, into the most hidden and minutest details.

In other words, God is not a detached monarch, distant and removed from His subjects. Nor is He the Creator who left His creation to the mechanics of nature and reason (as deists believe). He is a personal God, conscious of and overruling in every detail. He is intimately involved in history, for it is His story, not man’s. Yet, no person or thing is excluded or unnecessary to the plot of this divine story. Every person has an importance in the overall outcome and conclusion.⁷

In 1876, Reverend S.W. Foljambe offered this same conclusion in a sermon entitled, “The Hand of God in American History.”

“History,” he said, “is not a string of striking episodes, with no other connection but that of time. The events of history are not accidents. There are no accidents in the lives of men and nations. We may go back to the underlying cause of every event and discover in each God’s intervening wisdom. We see men planning and working with only their own immediate and material interests in view, and yet a power behind them is noiselessly and effectually, though possibly unobserved, overruling their action, to the furtherance of higher, more widely extended, and more permanent purposes.”

Benjamin Franklin spoke a similar message to the distinguished men of the Grand Convention in 1787, as they were debating how to frame the new Constitution for our nation. Once, when the debates grew heated, he challenged the men by saying, “How is that we have not once thought of applying to the Father of Lights to illumine our understanding? In the beginning of the contest with Britain, we had daily prayer in this room, and our prayers were heard and answered... I have lived a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth – that *God governs in the affairs of men*. If a sparrow cannot fall without His notice, is it probable that a [nation] can rise without His aid?”

George Washington, who presided over that Convention, said, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to an independent nation has been distinguished by some token of providential agency.”

The study of history, while enriching us with an inestimable knowledge of past generations, is also leading us to a better acquaintance with God. Clearly we have been taught that all are called to fulfill some wise purpose. You who think that chance has brought forth all that exists and that chance decides the fate of nations and individuals, read history with careful attention, and you will soon acknowledge your error and testify to this truth – that an intelligent, all-wise, and benevolent Being is the Creator and Ruler of the world. The work of divine Providence is imprinted on every page of its history and in the life of every actor in its drama.⁸ Let us be careful to recognize and credit the hidden hand of history.

¹⁻⁷ Katherine Dang, *Ancient History*

⁸ G.G. Hebbe, *Universal History*, 1948