

otherwise tends to coldness and academics.

Providential Arrangements

The third major division of historical materials is that of providential arrangements. Secular historians tend to minimize these while theocentric historians maximize them. Some aspects are always debatable but with as little prejudice as possible it seems that often the deciding influence in an historical interaction is something beyond the control (or purview) of the participant. It would be very difficult to determine which, if any, of these was a direct act on the part of God in interrupting the moving course of events and which may have been a simple occurrence normal in the passage of time. Fortunately we do not have to do this; we may treat all the unexpected and unpredicted as providential arrangements: an unplanned event (in the minds of the participants) often conditions the outcome in an evident manner.

(1) Natural Occurrences in Unplanned Sequence

In this category we keep things that are noumenal as far as their classification is concerned, but occur in unplanned sequences for the advantaging (or vice versa) of a cause. Among these would be the sudden storm, the unexpected fog, the torrential and out-of-season rain, the untimely winter freeze or thaw, etc. It is correct to say that none of these may be planned and can only be predicted in the most general sense of things. But the occurrences that interest us are those when the events occur at unplanned-unexpected times. Men have, however, counted on some of these things when it could have been reasonably expected that they might occur when they did not materialise in spite of the normal expectation, as in the realm of providential arrangements. The effect of the weather in the English channel in 1588 was of no small consequence in the contest with the Spanish Armada.⁹

(2) Coincidental Circumstances

The evening before Arius, the celebrated heretic, was to be readmitted to the fellowship of the church on the basis of an imperial dictum, he died. He was an old man at the time. Was his death a sudden vindication of the Nicene doctrine or was it only another evidence that it is appointed unto man once to die? Regardless of how one might take it the whole incident is an illustration of a coincidental circumstance that is beyond our arrangement. History is full of these, types of events. A storm hits the ship on which Wesley and the godly Moravians are sailing for the American continent. Their spiritual behavior is a moment of meaning and power for Wesley. Would the storm have happened anyway or was it a storm sent by God for a specific purpose? That these are somewhat subjective in appraisal is perhaps no surprise. But the unpredictable nature of this sort