



Writings of W. Burney Overton

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The People and the Provider

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W. Burney Overton

I am a citizen of the kingdom. In this kingdom the king is very powerful, and, I'm glad to say, also loving and kind, and attentive to the needs of the citizens.

How did I get to be a citizen? I don't rightly know. Somehow, it doesn't make much difference. I sense and I know that, in some way, it was the doing of the king – the Provider. He brought me into the kingdom and declared me to be a citizen. It was entirely his doing and none of mine.

Then he provided me with everything, but not as a handout. It was soon evident to me that I had to participate in some way in having it. I had to decide what that participation would be.

There were days and nights. There were good times and not so good. There was work time, and recreation time, and rest time. There was warmth and cold. There was shelter for protection, and clothing to wear, and food to eat and choices of things to do. They were all available to me. The Provider had seen to it that I had everything at my disposal that, together with my effort, would enable me to have a wonderful life in the kingdom.

Therefore, I soon recognized that the wonderful life of the kingdom wasn't ready-made. It was more that the raw materials – the resources – were available to me to make use of them in such a way that I would experience the wonderful life of the kingdom. It was my part as a citizen to do exactly that.

To that end, the Provider also provided me with the ability to use the raw materials, and to turn them into a form that I could use to experience the wonderful life in the kingdom. I could observe. I could think. I could reason. I could size up the situation. I could figure out what to do with it. I could make my decisions and act on them. The result could be having shelter and clothes and food and all the rest. It was obvious to me, also, that I could neglect the use of my abilities, or misuse them, and end up not experiencing the wonderful life of the kingdom.

Furthermore, I was surrounded by many people, also citizens, also recipients of what the king had provided. So I had companions – loved ones – people with whom to share. They had been provided with the same abilities as I – the same opportunities – and basically, the same task if they were to experience the wonderful life of the kingdom.

The Provider had, indeed, seen to it that I had everything that would enable me to make my life as a citizen really complete and whole. He had done the same for all the citizens.

The Provider had even arranged it so that I must decide about my use of all with which I was provided. There were the issues of what to use, and how to use it, and when, and where, and to what end. "I must decide" is the correct phrase. One way or another, I must decide. There was no other option.

I must confess that, sometimes, I wished that the Provider would just make the decisions, too, along with all the rest that he had provided. That way I wouldn't have to deal with the feelings of uncertainty – the dilemmas over choices – and the anxiety about whether or not I was making right or wrong decisions. That way, there would be no struggles – no difficulties – just the enjoyment of that wonderful life of the kingdom.

But the Provider, in his wisdom, knew that it would not benefit me to make the decisions for me, nor to provide me with all the answers. Deciding, and all that went with deciding, was up to me. The answers – the outcomes – hinged upon my decisions, and my actions based on my decisions. That part was entirely up to me. It was my particular role as a citizen of the kingdom.

I admit that I do not always see that it is wise for choices to be left in my hands. I have lots of choices. When I put my mind to it, I can usually see what the outcome of one choice or another is likely to be. I can't always tell. Some situations seem too complex, and the possibilities for outcome too varied. Under those circumstances, I often wish someone else – even the Provider – would make the appropriate decisions so that the outcome would be desirable.

For instance, there is the matter of deciding how I want to see my place in the kingdom, what I want my relationship to the Provider to be, and how I view all with which he has provided me.

One way to decide is that all this that the Provider had provided isn't really mine. I'm just the caretaker – the user. It always belongs to the Provider, and he can take it from me at any time. Keeping it and using it hinges upon my doing so in such a way as to please him. Therefore, what I need to do is to figure out how to please him. If I do, I can use all that I have as if it were really mine. I won't have to worry about it being taken away. Surely that would be pleasing to the Provider.

But how can I ever know for sure? I have no indication that the Provider ever answers that kind of question – not in advance, anyway.

Maybe the thing to do is accept that I can't know in advance if my decision and actions are pleasing to the Provider. I can't even know for sure if I am just a caretaker in the kingdom. I decide. I do what I do. And see what happens. If nothing bad happens, it ought to be safe to assume that the Provider is pleased, and that he won't take what I have away from me.

Another way to decide is that all has been provided me is really all mine to do with as I choose. It is given to me and it cannot be taken back. This way, there are no contingencies. I don't have to please anyone.

I don't know if deciding that it is all mine, and that it can't be taken from me, is any better – or worse – than the first choice. I don't have any certainty about being able

to keep it. I don't know the extent of the power of the Provider. Nor do I know what he does when he isn't pleased. In fact, I can't even be sure he won't decide to take back what he has provided, no matter what I do.

There is also the matter of my fellow citizens of the kingdom. What can I count on from them? Will they respect my rights? Will they accept that what is mine is mine, and that it is not for them to take? With those uncertainties, maybe I'd better figure out ways to keep and protect all that I have, so that neither the Provider nor anyone else can take it away from me.

That raises some serious questions. How can I keep and protect all that I have? What steps must I take to keep the Provider, or citizens of the kingdom, from taking what is rightfully mine? I can hoard it. I can store it in vaults. I can bury it deep in the earth. I can build a fortress in which to keep it and assemble an army to man it. I can marshal my forces to repel any attempts to take it. I can do anything that my imagination conceives to make sure that it remains mine.

The problem is that I won't have much time or energy to enjoy any of it. But at least I'll have it all.

Another problem rears its ugly head. In my wildest imagination, I'm not at all sure that I can so completely protect what is mine that I can stop worrying about the possibility that it can be taken from me. Again, I don't know how powerful the Provider is, nor when he might choose to reclaim what he has given me. Nor am I certain that other citizens of the kingdom can't figure out ways to break through my defenses, and so take what I have claimed to be mine.

Neither of the options that I am considering seem to be satisfactory.

Another option open to me is to assume that I can use what the Provider has provided to me in any way that I choose. I don't have to worry about whether it is, in fact, all mine, or whether I am just a caretaker. I use it as if it is mine to do with as I please. However, I need to keep in mind that some uses may be wise and productive, and others may not be. I tell myself that, if I use it wisely, the Provider might reward me.

It occurs to me that this option is much like trying to please. I won't know until I get the reward if I have been wise. If I have not been, it will be too late.

Wait a minute.

What is this deciding process I am using? I'm worrying about trying to please the Provider? I'm considering focusing my attention on trying to keep everything from being taken from me? I'm thinking about getting rewards from the Provider by being smart about how I use what I have? There's something wrong with my process.

I don't get any messages that the Provider is requiring me to know about and to meet some kinds of requirements in order to please the Provider. I have no support for the idea that the main thing for me to do is to safeguard what I have at any cost. I don't remember any promise about rewards if I am wise in the use of what I have. I don't recall anything about the gift of everything being conditional. I have been thinking in wrong terms about how to decide.

The reality is that I am a citizen of the kingdom. Everything is provided – available – for me to have a wonderful life. But there's nothing about having to have a wonderful life before it can all be mine. There aren't any strings attached to it. I can make any decision – think any way – go in any direction – use in any way. The Provider has provided everything and left in my hands the decisions about the use of it.

The Provider has also disclosed what outcomes I might expect in response to my decisions. If I want to test the accuracy of any of them, I simply make a particular kind of decision and then see what the outcome is.

If I choose to hoard and protect what I have, I can expect a life of fear and anxiety – always wondering if I have done enough – always fearful that, somehow, it will be taken away. I will forever be looking over my shoulder. I will always be on guard. I will never be able to trust anyone. I'll have what the Provider has made available to me, but I won't be able to enjoy it because I will be so involved with my fear and anxiety.

If I choose to try to please the Provider so that I can keep what I have, my life will still be marked by anxiety and uncertainty. I won't know if I have done enough? I won't have any way to know if I have done the right things. I can't possibly know whether or not I have adequately pleased him.

I have yet another option.

Suppose I simply accept that I am a citizen of the kingdom; that the Provider has provided all that I need to have a wonderful life; that there aren't any strings or requirements that go with the gift; that I am, in fact, totally free to do with what I have exactly as I please.

Suppose I simply accept all that. And then, suppose that I choose to use what I have to enrich my life, and that of my fellow citizens. I use it. I enjoy it. I share it. There always seems to be enough for us all. And, more and more, I notice that other citizens are doing the same with what they have.

When I choose and act on this option, I begin to realize and to believe that my life is truly wonderful. When I do, I want everybody else to know about this wonderful life.

What can I do to help them to know?

I can keep on being like the Provider.