

Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms (Richard A. MULLER)

... providentia: *providence*

the continuing act of divine power, subsequent to the act of creation, by means of which God

- (i) preserves all things in being,
- (ii) supports their actions,
- (iii) governs them according to his established order,
- (iv) and direct them toward their ordained ends.

Systematic Theology (Wayne GRUDEM)

Though the term providence is not found in Scripture, it has been traditionally used to summarize God's ongoing relationship to his creation.

When we accept the biblical doctrine of providence, we avoid four common errors in thinking about God's relationship to creation.

The biblical doctrine is not *deism* (which teaches that God created the world and then essentially abandoned it), nor *pantheism* (which teaches that the creation does not have a real, distinct existence in itself, but is only part of God), but *providence* which teaches that though God is actively related to and involved in the creation at each moment, creation is distinct from him. Moreover, the biblical doctrine does not teach that events in creation are determined by *chance* (or randomness), nor are they determined by impersonal *fate* (or determinism), but by God, who is the personal yet infinitely powerful Creator and Lord.

We may define God's providence as follows:

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 fulfil his purposes.

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1. God the good Creator of all things, in His infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by His most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of His own will; to the praise of the glory of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

(Hebrews 1:3; Job 38:11, Isaiah 46:10, 11; Psalm 135:6; Matthew 10:29-31; Ephesians 1:11)

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BRIEF SCAN

Author of Divine Providence:

Foundation of Divine Providence:

Essence of Divine Providence:

Objects of Divine Providence:

Nature of Divine Providence:

Compatibility of Divine Providence:

Determining Cause of Divine Providence:

Goal of Divine Providence:

IN-DEPTH

ESSENCE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*God . . . has in these last days spoken to us by His Son . . .
through whom also He made the worlds . . .
and upholding all things by the word of His power*
HEBREWS 1:1-3

*You alone are the Lord; You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and
everything on it, the seas and all that is in them, and You preserve them all.
The host of heaven worships You.*
NEHEMIAH 9:6

*But our God is in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.*
PSALM 115:3

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*Whatever the Lord pleases He does,
in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places.*

PSALM 135:6

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,' . . . Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it.

ISAIAH 46:9-10

ACTS 17:24-26

IN-DEPTH
OBJECTS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

HEBREWS 1:14

JOB 1:12

JOB 12:13-25

PROVERBS 21:1

MATTHEW 10:29-31

IN-DEPTH
GOAL OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

Baptist Catechism (1695)

Q10. What are the decrees of God?

The decrees of God are His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, He hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

Baptist Catechism (1695)

Q11. How doth God execute His decrees?

God executeth His decrees in the works of creation and providence.

Q14. What are God's works of providence?

God's works of providence are His most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all His creatures, and all their actions.

Q15. What special act of providence did God exercise towards man in the estate wherein he was created?

*When God had created man,
He entered into a covenant of life with him upon condition of perfect obedience:
forbidding him to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
upon pain of death.*

IN-DEPTH
AUTHOR OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

2. Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; so that there is not anything befalls any by chance, or without his providence; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently.

(Acts 2:23, Proverbs 16:33, Genesis 8:22)

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- The Cause(s) of Divine Providence
 - First Cause

 - Second Causes

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*The lot is cast into the lap,
But its every decision is from the Lord.*
PROVERBS 16:33

*The horse is prepared for the day of battle,
But deliverance is of the Lord.*
PROVERBS 21:31

*Plans are established by counsel;
By wise counsel wage war.*
PROVERBS 20:18

*Then she left, and went and gleaned in the field after the reapers.
And she happened to come to the part of the field
belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech.*
RUTH 2:3

*Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers,
But a prudent wife is from the Lord.*
PROVERBS 19:14

*Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God,
you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;*
ACTS 2:23

*And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart,
"I will never again curse the ground for man's sake,
although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth;
nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.
While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat,
winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease."*
GENESIS 8:21-22

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CHAPTER 5 ~ OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

*But Micaiah said, "If you ever return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me."
And he said, "Take heed, all you people!"*

1 KINGS 22:28

*Now a certain man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor.
So he said to the driver of his chariot, "Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded."*

1 KINGS 22:34

- 3. God, in His ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure.

(Acts 27:31, 44; Isaiah 55:10; 11; Hosea 1:7; Romans 4:19-21; Daniel 3:27)

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- Divine Providence and Means

- **ACTS 27:21-44**

- Without means

*Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"
And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Highest will overshadow you;
therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."*

LUKE 1:34-35

- Above means

And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.

ROMANS 4:19-21

- Against means

So the man of God said, "Where did it fall?" And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float.

2 KINGS 6:6

Orthodox Catechism

Q26. *What is the providence of God?*

- A. The almighty power of God, everywhere present, whereby He does, as it were, by His hand uphold and govern heaven and earth, with all creatures therein, so that those things which grow in the earth, as likewise rain and drought, fruitfulness and barrenness, meat and drink, health and sickness, riches and poverty, in a word, all things come not rashly and by chance, but by His fatherly counsel and will

(Psalm 94:9, Isaiah 29:15, Ezekiel 8:12; Acts 17:25

Hebrews 1:2-3

Proverbs 22:2; Jeremiah 5:24; John 9:3; Acts 14:17)

Q27. *What does this knowledge of the creation and providence of God profit us?*

- A. That in adversity we may be patient, and thankful in prosperity, and have hereafter our chief hope reposed in God our most faithful Father. We can be sure that there is nothing which may withdraw us from His love, forasmuch as all creatures are so in His power, that without His will they are not able not only to do anything, but not so much as once to move.

(Job 1:21, Romans 5:3

Deuteronomy 8:10, 1 Thessalonians 5:18

Romans 5:4-5

Romans 8:19, 38

Job 1:12, 2:6, Proverbs 21:1. Acts 17:27)

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

(Romans 11:32-34; 2 Samuel 24:1; 1 Chronicles 21:1; 2 Kings 19:28; Psalm 76:10; Genesis 1:20; Isaiah 10:6, 7, 12; Psalm 1:21; 1 John 2:16)

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Divine Providence and Sin

- Looking at the Confession
 - What do we see in divine providence?
 - What are included in divine providence?
 - What methods are employed in such providence?
 - What are the ends (goals) in view for such providence?
 - What clarifications are needed in understanding such providence?

- Reading the Scriptures
 - **1 CHRONICLES 21:1-2, 7-8**
2 SAMUEL 24:1, 10
 - **1 CHRONICLES 10:4, 13-14**
 - **ACTS 2:23**
ACTS 4:27-28
 - **PSALM 76:10 (ESV)**

- GENESIS 45:5
GENESIS 50:20

- ISAIAH 10:5-7

- 1 JOHN 2:6
JAMES 1:13-14

5. The most wise, righteous, and gracious God doth oftentimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations and the corruptions of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled; and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself; and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for other just and holy ends. So that whatsoever befalls any of his elect is by his appointment, for his glory, and their good.

(2 Chronicles 32:25, 26, 31; 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Romans 8:28)

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Divine Providence and Sin of Believers

- Looking at the Confession
 - *A most fearful* fact:

 - *A greatly comforting* reminder:

 - A listing of the reasons *why*:

 - A listing of the aims *targeted*:

 - Another *comforting* reminder:

- Reading the Scriptures
 - **2 CHRONICLES 32:24-26, 31**
ISAIAH 39

 - **2 CORINTHIANS 12:7, 10**

 - **ROMANS 8:29-29**

6. As for those wicked and ungodly men whom God, as the righteous judge, for former sin doth blind and harden; from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understanding, and wrought upon their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasion of sin; and withal, gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of Satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, under those means which God useth for the softening of others.

(Romans 1:24-26, 28; Romans 11:7-8; Deuteronomy 29:4; Matthew 13:2; Deuteronomy 2:20; 2 Kings 8:12-13; Psalm 81:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Exodus 8:15, 32; Isaiah 6:9-10; 1 Peter 2:7-8)

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Divine Providence and Sin of Unbelievers

- Gleaning from various passages
 - **ROMANS 1:24-26, 28**

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. ²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature . . . ²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

What is their sin?

What is God's punishment on their sin of idolatry?

○ **ROMANS 11:7-8**

⁷ What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded. ⁸ Just as it is written:

*“God has given them a spirit of stupor,
Eyes that they should not see
And ears that they should not hear,
To this very day.”*

Why has God given Israel a spirit of stupor?

○ **PSALM 81:11-12**

*¹¹ “But My people would not heed My voice,
And Israel would have none of Me.
¹² So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart,
To walk in their own counsels.*

Why did God give His people over to their own stubborn heart?

○ **2 THESSALONIANS 2:10-12**

¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. ¹¹ And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, ¹² that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

What is the reason for God to send strong delusion to these people, that they should believe the lie?

○ **1 PETER 2:7-8**

⁷ Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient,

*“The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,”*

⁸ and

*“A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense.”*

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.

What is the reason for “they stumble”?

○ **2 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16**

14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?

What is the message of this passage?

7. As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a more special manner it taketh care of his church, and disposeth of all things to the good thereof.

(1 Timothy 4:10; Amos 9:8-9; Isaiah 43:3-5)

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Divine Providence and The Church

- View from the Old Testament

○ **AMOS 9:8-9**

*⁸ “Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are on the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth;
Yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,”
Says the Lord.*

*⁹ “For surely I will command,
And will sift the house of Israel among all nations,
As grain is sifted in a sieve;
Yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.*

○ **ISAIAH 43:3-5**

³ For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;

I gave Egypt for your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in your place.

⁴ Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored,

And I have loved you;

Therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life.

⁵ Fear not, for I am with you;

I will bring your descendants from the east, and gather you from the west;

▪ View from the New Testament

○ **ROMANS 8:28-30**

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

○ **EPHESIANS 1:11-12, 22-23**

¹¹ In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory . . . ²² And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.