

PROVIDENCE or SUPERSTITION?

PROVIDENCE: 1. Foresight; 2. Economy; 3. Divine direction.
Biblical: God's management of His creation.

SUPERSTITION: 1a. A belief, practice, or rite held in spite of evidence to the contrary, resulting from ignorance of the laws of nature or from faith in magic or chance.
1b. A fearful or abject state of mind resulting from such ignorance or irrationality.
2. A body of superstitious beliefs.

Are you superstitious?

Name some superstitions other people accept, which of course, you do not.

Why do we blow out the candles on a birthday cake (other than to spit on the cake)?
To make our wish come true?

Do you have a "lucky" charm, rabbit's foot, coin, or horseshoe?

Most hotels do not have a floor numbered the 13th, why not?
The answer is not that they are only 12 stories high.

Will you walk under a ladder? What happens when you break a mirror?

Do you "knock on wood?" We laugh at natives beating on a hollow log to ward off evil spirits while we blow horns at traffic jams.

Do you sometimes read your horoscope (just out of curiosity. Of course)?
Is our life in any way influenced by the alignment of the moon, sun, stars and planets on the occasion of our instant of birth?

Must we eat black-eyed peas on New Year's Day?

All of this may at first seem to be harmless. Yet, it is a serious matter to attribute power for good or evil to an object or action other than God.

Jeremiah 44:15-23

Acts 17:26

Mark 7:1-16

When a person attributes power to an object or action, other than to God, they are, in effect, denying the providence of God.

Does God really control (direct) the events of history? If so, to what degree?
What has God omitted from His providence?
What does God NOT control?

PROVIDENCE or SUPERSTITION?

God's providence over:

a) Nature or the physical universe:

Nahum 1:3 The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The LORD has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

Ex 9:26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, there was no hail.

Mt 5:45 ..that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Amos 4:7 I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered.

Act 14:17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.

Isa 40:12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, measured heaven with a span and calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?

b) The animal creation:

Mt 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

Mt 6:26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Dan 6:22 My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.

Ps 104:21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God.

Gen 31:9 So God has taken away the livestock of your father and given them to me.

PROVIDENCE or SUPERSTITION?

c) Nations:

Dan 4:17 This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.

Dan 2:21 And He changes the times and the seasons; he removes kings and raises up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.

Isa 40:15 Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted the small dust on the scales; look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing.

Ps 33:10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he makes the plans of the peoples of no effect.

Amos 3:6 If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?

Hab 1:6 For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans, a bitter and hasty nation which marches through the breadth of the earth, to possess dwelling places that are not theirs.

e) Individual men:

Prov 21:1 The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, like the rivers of water; he turns it wherever He wishes.

Ps 37:23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way.

Ja 4:15 Instead you ought to say, " If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that."

1 Cor 4:7 For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast if you had not received it?

Isa 64:8 But now, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand.

Ex 11:7 But against none of the children of Israel shall a dog move its tongue, against man or beast, that you may know that the LORD does make a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

PROVIDENCE or SUPERSTITION?

e) The free acts of men:

Phil 2:13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

Ex 12:36 And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they granted them what they requested. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.

Ez 7:6 this Ezra came up from Babylon; and he was a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given. The king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

Eze 36:27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

f) The sinful acts of men:

Act 4:27-28 For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

Jn 19:11 Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."

2 Sam 16:10 But the king said, "What have I to do with you, you sons of Zeruiah? So let him curse, because the LORD has said to him, 'Curse David.' Who then shall say, 'Why have you done so?' "

Ex 14:17 And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen.

g) The fortuitous events or "chance happenings":

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

Jonah 1:7 And they said to one another, "Come, let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this trouble has come upon us." So they cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah.

Act 1:24 And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen."

PROVIDENCE or SUPERSTITION?

Job 36:32 He covers His hands with lightning, and commands it to strike.

1 King 22:28 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 King 22:34 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."

Then how can God justly find fault with my actions, since I am only doing what He ordains? Romans 9: 6-24 (20)

"Perhaps the relationship between divine sovereignty and human freedom can best be summed up in these words: God so presents the outside inducements that man acts in accordance with his own nature, yet does exactly what God planned for him to do." Boettner

This study presents the absolute control of God over His creation. In another study, it can be demonstrated that although God is sovereign, man is responsible for his sin and is subject to the righteous judgment of God. The purpose of this study is to direct men to the true God who alone is able to save, but does so on His own terms, and only by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The outline and Scripture references are taken from Loraine Boettner;
The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination.

Any one is at liberty to use material from this book with or without credit. In preparing this book the writer has received help from many sources, some acknowledged and many unacknowledged. He believes the material herein set forth to be a true statement of Scripture teaching, and his desire is to further, not to restrict, its use.

[From the copyright page.]

Jim Gunn

March 17, 1996
July 23, 2008