**RESEARCH NOTES ON “PROVIDENCE”**

**DEFINITIONS:**

Piper, *Providence* (Crossway)

* In brief: **“purposeful sovereignty”** (691). Piper works this.
  + It is “all-embracing, all-pervasive, and invincible” (691)
  + Guided by “the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11)
  + “…is the purposeful sovereignty that carries those plans into action, guides all things toward God’s ultimate goal, and leads to the final consummation.” Cites Job 42:2; Isa 46:10
* See his closing chapter for a summary of his work (691ff.)
* Piper’s book proclaims his view in Church readable language…he does not probe the philosophical and theological issues it may imply. [CHECK CAREFULLY]

Paul Helm, *The Providence of God* (IVP) Helm and Spiegel deal with the broader phil/theo issues.

* Helm works the theme of **“God’s activity now.”** (17, 27)
* “…we are to be concerned with God’s action in our world, and with *HOW* [emphasis mine], according to Scripture, that activity is carried out.” (17)
* Providence is directive, purposive, certain. Providence is also difficult for us “to see” in our tunnel vision.
* Helm sees three contexts of operation for Prov. : 1/ individual Christian; 2/ the Church; and 3/ Creation. [is this adequate? Prov also orchestrates the nations, etc.]

James S. Spiegel, *the Benefits of Providence: A New Look at Divine Sovereignty*

* Slow to define, but uses phrases such as:
  + “…he guides every event in human history, and that he is coordinating all aspects of the cosmos toward a glorious end.” (9)
* Spiegel quickly notes the perspective of Open Theism (Greg Boyd, Sanders?)
  + “The classical Christian view or providence affirms God’s exhaustive foreknowledge and complete control over the cosmos.” (14)
  + OT, however, maintains “that God passively allows many things to happen, even limiting his own knowledge about the future.” (13)
  + QUES … how does classical theism view “human freedom” in this matrix.
  + SO, one’s view of providence and human freedom are in tandum.

Mark W. Elliott, *Providence: a Biblical, Historical, and Theological Account* (Baker)

* Interesting beginning where he frames providence as an implicational, even creative construct, more than direct.
* NOTE… it is interesting how the belief in providence REQUIRES a belief in the Bible’s presentation of a sovereign God. The post-renaissance culture pushed against a God-control view of the world.
* Elliott evaluates providence historically…
  + In the OT:
  + STJ viewed pro/noia as “the story of the people of Israel: providence is God taking care of things, which involves responding to humans in need and difficulty as well as ongoing supply of the goods of creation, and this according to some intentional, even planned action.” (11) He mentions the “metaphor of the kingship of God” in the OT as important.
  + In the NT.

Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Thiselton Companion to Christian Theology* (Eerdmans), 699ff.

* “Surprisingly, the main Greek word for “providence,” *pronoia*, is not applied to God in the NT, although it occurs many times in Greek writers...(BDAG 872)
* Thiselton goes on to build a case by implications.

**REFLECTIONS**

Read the articles included. As you will observe, they are part of how Western Confessional documents have addressed providence.

**GROCERY LIST OF KEY TEXTS IMPLYING PROVIDENCE/SOVEREIGNTY**

Pull texts from articles provided and your research.

**THEOLOGICAL ISSUES RELATED TO PROVIDENCE/SOVEREIGNTY**

* Does providential sovereignty require “fatalism” on some scale?
* “God will provide” (Gen 22) … but in many lives “God does not provide” (Paul’s issue…but more to the point relates to physical evil in life.). “God helps those who help themselves” seems a better route at times.

**PROVIDENCE RELATES TO OUR DAILY DECISION MAKING…LARGE AND SMALL**