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CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE¹

THE doctrine of Divine Providence encounters strong opposition in various quarters. It is contradicted by the postulates of many philosophical and theological systems. Since its object is to account for the personal activity of God in the universe, a continuous activity, the effects of which are realized in the details of everyday life, and since this activity expresses itself before our eyes in events that frequently appear to be contradictory, the doctrine is rejected or else modified in such a manner that it loses its *raison d'être*, which is to testify to the absolute sovereignty and omnipotence of God in His creation.

The doctrine is attacked by non-Christians because apart from Christianity there can be no real knowledge of a personal God. Leaving out of account materialist philosophies which definitely exclude metaphysics, there are certain determinist systems that conceive the universe as the mechanical product of anterior circumstances into which it would be impossible to interpose a divine hand.

One of the attempts to explain the world which vigorously rejects the notion of Providence is the system called Deism. By its conception of a universe set in motion by a First Cause which, however, cannot intervene in its subsequent ordering, Deism excludes the personal activity of God equally with pantheism. According to this latter system the Deity is resorbed in His creatures, and a divine plan and its providential realization are thus rendered impossible.

Philosophical systems apart, the mass of humanity is unfavourable to the doctrine of Divine Providence because it appears to contradict the facts of experience. For some it is chance that rules the universe, for others fate. At first sight everything would appear to indicate absence of plan and reason

¹ The principal sources that have been consulted are Calvin's tractate against the Libertines (op. vii. 145-252), his treatise *De aeterna Dei Praedestinatione* (viii. 249-366) and the *Institutio* (I. xvi, xvii). Where no further reference is given, the *Institutio* (1559) is intended.

in the world; suffering, injustice and death are difficult to reconcile with the Christian belief in Providence.

Even among those who call themselves Christians, there are some who deny the Biblical teaching on the subject. The partisans of systems which claim for man liberty of action and decision, frequently declare that this liberty renders human actions incapable of being foreseen by God Himself, and that He could not have established in advance an eternal plan the successive stages of which should be executed by His Providence. By this notion of human liberty—liberty which they feel bound to postulate in order to safeguard human responsibility—these teachers understand that the divine control does not extend to the material, social, economic, artistic world; in short, that it is excluded from all that does not properly belong to the religious and moral sphere. All other spheres are the appanage of man, and in them reason reigns supreme. The natural order, instead of being entirely subject to God and maintained by the power of His Spirit, is represented as matter in revolt against spirit, matter which man must subjugate for God by his reason; man is no mere administrator of goods received from Providence, but an auxiliary indispensable to the regeneration of the universe.

It would seem that Karl Barth rejects, if not the doctrine of Providence, at least those consequences of it which lead Calvinism to speak of common grace, a grace diffused among all created beings independently of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. This attitude proceeds from Barth's fear lest the natural theology of Roman Catholicism and of certain forms of religious Rationalism, should supplant the theology of saving grace.

In the face of these various forms of opposition, it will be useful to state clearly the Calvinist position in regard to the doctrine. Such a statement will remove misunderstandings and may enable some to find a real joy in the manifestation of Providence to the glory of God.

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God in His wisdom has ordained that the course of the universe shall proceed according to a plan pre-established by Him even in its details. Although we cannot visualise this plan in its entirety and cannot understand its arrangements, faith assures us that it has for its object the glory of the Creator,

and for its corollary the felicity and well-being of the creature. That is to say, every created being has his special mission, and can attain the plenitude of his nature in the order willed by God.

This plan God realizes by His Providence, for He is no *roi fainéant* who limits himself to contemplating his kingdom from the height of his throne. "The Providence that we mean," says Calvin, "is not one by which the Deity, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but one by which He, as it were, holds the helm, and overrules all events."¹ "God is deemed omnipotent, not because He can act though He may cease or be idle, or because by a general instinct He continues the order of nature previously appointed; but because, governing heaven and earth by His Providence, He so overrules things that nothing occurs without His counsel. For when it is said in the Psalms, 'He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased' (Ps. cxv. 3), the thing meant is His sure and deliberate purpose."²

The universe once created does not exist independently of its Creator. The power of God is indispensable to the life of the world in such a manner that if for a single instant He were to withdraw from His work, the world would be disorganised immediately. "Est hoc quidem verum: sicuti admirabili Dei sapientia tam pulchre dispositum fuit mundi opificium: ita nisi quatenus praesenti eius virtute sustinetur, non posse manere in suo statu."³ We could not exist for one moment without the support of His divine hand, "for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 28). Calvin develops this theme in his treatise "Against the fantastic and furious sect of the Libertines".⁴

Although God's action on the universe is absolute, we observe in the world a large number of influences which appear to destroy or neutralise it, degrees among men and things so dissimilar that the idea of the organization of creation by God, of effective control of events by Him, is a stumbling-block to many people. No doubt they conceive "a certain government, but confused and general", and not directive of the actions of men and other creatures in detail. This general Providence

¹ I. xvi. 4.

² I. xvi. 3.

³ *Opera*, ii. 146.

⁴ *Opera quae supersunt omnia*, vii. 14 passim.

does not prevent creatures from doing whatever seems good to them.

In order to explain more clearly the nature of Divine Providence, it will be convenient, in Calvin's words, "to consider that God employs three distinct operations in regard to the government of the world."¹ These distinctions are not essential, that is to say, they are not the result of three separate powers in God, but the work of the Holy Spirit, the Power of God, will be clearer to us if we envisage its unity in our diversity.

I

GENERAL PROVIDENCE

"First there is a universal operation by which He directs all creatures according to the condition and property which He has given to each one in forming them. This direction is no other than that which we call the order of nature."¹ It is this continuous operation of God, this sollicitation that knows no relaxation, which conditions the laws of nature. It is because God is faithful and does not vary capriciously that we can affirm the invariability of these laws, for they have no other reality than the will of the Eternal. Instead of being astonished by a miracle which is the rupture of these laws, we ought to admire the fixity of these laws which is itself a miracle.²

This general Providence must not be confounded with what pantheistic philosophers term "the soul of the world", for it is a personal activity, a particular will of God. In the first instance it applies to material things, such as the sun and the stars, all of which obey the Eternal. "With regard to inanimate objects, we must maintain that though each is possessed of its peculiar properties, yet all of them exert their force only in so far as directed by the immediate hand of God. Hence they are merely instruments into which God constantly infuses what energy He sees meet, and turns and converts to any purpose at His pleasure."³

Calvin thus takes the opposite view to the common "scientific" conception of the universe, which is in reality a geocentric conception, and his doctrine throws a flood of

¹ *Opera*, vii. 186.

² Not, of course, in the theological sense of the term.

³ I. xvi. 2.

light on the miraculous element in the Bible which disturbs so many modern scientists. "I will not hesitate", he declares, "simply to confess with Augustine (*de Gen. ad Lit.*, vi. 15) that the will of God is necessity, and that everything is necessary which He has willed."¹ If all is an instrument in the hands of the Creator, if the natural order of things is only necessary because He demands it, the Red Sea could open before Moses and the people of Israel, Elisha's axe could float and the sun be stayed for Joshua, without the ordinary laws of nature being compromised. "It is true, indeed, that each species of created objects is moved by a secret instinct of nature, as if they obeyed the eternal command of God, and spontaneously followed the course which He at first appointed. And to this we may refer our Saviour's words, that He and His Father have always been at work from the beginning (John v. 17). . . . But some, under pretext of the general, conceal and obscure the special Providence, which is so surely and clearly taught in Scripture."²

The work of general Providence is not limited to the inanimate creation. It applies also to beings endowed with sense and reason. It does not lead men to a moral end, but provides the material required to enable them to realize their nature fully and to fulfil their destiny; "It does not prevent each creature whether in heaven or on earth, from having and retaining its quality and nature, and following its own inclination."³ This power then permits different beings to produce fruits corresponding to their tendencies. By its means an angelic nature will bring forth angelic fruits; by it the devil himself will bring forth the fruit of his devilry. The more God dispenses common grace to His creatures, the more surely will they injure themselves by their sin if they are corrupt. It is necessary to state this in order to understand in what manner evil itself is restrained and used to achieve the divine purpose.

II

PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OR COMMON GRACE

In order to canalise and utilise the expansive force conferred by general Providence, there is need for a restrictive force. For all motive power a brake and a direction are necessary, and

¹ III. xxiii. 8.

² I. xvi. 4.

³ *Opera*, vii. 187, cf. viii. 349.

to furnish these is the function of the second mode of Divine Providence. "Universalis providentiae notitia per se vaga et confusa esset, nisi simul teneamus, Deum singulas creaturas cura sua complecti."¹ Indeed, it is all-important for us to realize that God penetrates the most insignificant details, and is the cause of them as well as of great events. "The second manner or fashion by which God works in His creatures is that He causes them to subserve His goodness, justice and judgment, according to which He wills now to assist His servants, now to punish the wicked, and now to try the patience of His faithful or to chastise them paternally."² It is in this operation that the paternal solicitude of God manifests itself. He utilises the possibilities of each creature for the development of the others. He leads each in his particular way, leaving to some the free disposition of their own nature in order to accomplish a useful task, restraining others and breaking their flight in order to prevent them from committing a crime which would possess no utility for His work. It is thus that God presides absolutely over the courses of the stars and over meteorological conditions, according as He wills to bless a people or to make them feel a need.³ It is thus that He modifies the seasons at will and utilises natural forces for the benefit of those whom He is pleased to bless. As an example, we may take the wind which precipitated the quails on the camp of Israel (Num. xi. 31).

Just as the power of God over inanimate things is absolute, even so He has all power over human and other spirits. "Furthermore it is to be noted that, in order to execute His will by their means, not only does He aid in this manner irrational creatures, but also men and even demons."⁴

Particular Providence fashions beings, giving them all the qualities and virtues necessary for the conduct of the world ; to it we owe the diversity of nature, for each individual has his rôle, and receives the talents indispensable for its fulfilment. This providential action is called common grace. While the first mode of Providence was the material cause of creatures, this latter constitutes the formal cause. It fashions them according to their type, and furnishes them with natural gifts which we see as much among unbelievers as among the faithful, as much among the pagans of antiquity as among the saints. "For

¹ Ibid., viii. 348.

² Ibid., vii. 187.

³ I. xvi. 7, cf. *Opera*, vii. 187.

⁴ *Opera*, vii. 188.

what is said as to the Spirit indwelling the faithful only, is to be understood of the Spirit of sanctification, by whom we are consecrated to God as His temples. Notwithstanding this, He fills, moves and invigorates all things by the virtue of the Spirit, and that according to the peculiar nature which each class of beings has received by the law of creation.”¹

It will be understood, of course, that this “grace” does not coincide with saving grace, and that the reprobate might be endowed with great talents, while the elect were denied every gift. In the world as God created it, general Providence conferred on the creature a life which had no reason to cease. In the actual state of things, it is a mercy to put a term to the lives of beings who accumulate more and more faults the longer they live. In the same way common grace has been bestowed upon all beings. It may be suggested that some are deprived of it to-day, “but although certain individuals are born without reason, that defect does not impair the general grace of God; it serves rather to remind us that whatever we retain, ought justly to be ascribed to the divine liberality. Had God not so spared us, our revolt would have carried along with it the entire destruction of nature. In that some excel in acuteness and some in judgement, while others possess greater aptitude to learn some particular art, God, by this variety, commends His favour towards us, lest anyone should presume to attribute to himself that which proceeds from the divine indulgence”.²

Thus it is to particular Providence that humanity owes its geniuses, its savants, as well as the intelligence of which we have all received little or much. From it flow equally the arts and the political, social and economic orders. Finally, this divine operation limits the effect of general Providence by putting a term to that liberty which it has procured for our individual development. Since for a sinner the attainment of this development entails estrangement from the source of life, it is very salutary that our liberty should be thus curtailed.

III

SPECIAL PROVIDENCE OR SAVING GRACE

“The third species of divine operation consists in this, that God governs the faithful, dwelling and reigning in them

¹ II. ii. 16.

² II. ii. 17.

by His Holy Spirit.”¹ We are concerned now with saving grace, with the Holy Spirit of Pentecost, with the operation of God “according to which He is conjoined and united with His own by means of His Son”.²

General Providence gives to human nature its plenitude and completion. Particular Providence directs the effects of this nature. Saving Providence brings to man the elements of a new nature or of nature restored, “for seeing that we are corrupted by original sin, we resemble a land dry and sterile, which cannot produce any good fruit. . . . Being such, not only have we no power at all to apply ourselves to good, but, what is more, we are not even fit to conceive a single good thought. ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God’ (2 Cor. iii. 5). Behold then how God works in His children. In abolishing their perversity, He leads them by His Spirit into His obedience”.³

The Holy Ghost produces in us both the will and the deed ; He enlightens us in order to lead us to the knowledge of God ; He forms in us new hearts and gives us power to resist the temptations of the evil one. “By nature we have within us choice and will. Nevertheless, since by sin both are depraved, the Lord transforms them and changes them from evil into good. That we are able to will and to do this or that, is by a natural gift. That we are able to choose and desire nothing but evil, springs from the corruption of sin. That we desire to do well and have the power to do so, is by the supernatural grace of the Spirit who regenerates us to a divine life.”⁴ The consequence of the operation of this third mode of Providence then is sanctification.

It may be asked how the providential action of God can realize its ends in the universe. By what means does God govern the world ? For it is not always easy to discern His hand in daily events. Frequently we find ourselves in situations from which God would seem to be absent. Moreover, we have become accustomed to consider that when God intervenes in the ordinary course of circumstances, He manifests His intervention by a miracle. Now we do not see every day that which

¹ *Opera*, vii. 190.

² *Ibid.*, viii. 349, n. 4.

³ *Ibid.*, vii. 190, 191.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 191.

we call a miracle, a prodigy which clashes with our ideas of the universe.

It must be understood, of course, that the action of God is absolutely sovereign ; at His disposal are all the means to execute His decrees and to accomplish them in His creation. But God having fixed the laws of the universe and given life to creatures, utilizes these laws and these creatures to accomplish His will and realise His plan.

(a) *Natural Means.* The reason why it does not appear evident to everybody that God intervenes in all the details of the life of the universe, is that God uses natural means to accomplish the proposed task. In order to chastise a people, He provokes a long drought (1 Kings xvii). He makes use of a tempest in order to cause His message to be proclaimed in a distant city by the prophet Jonah. Examples that might be cited are legion. Indeed for Christians there is not an event, however unimportant, e.g. the reading of a book or a conversation, which may not become an occasion for confessing the omnipotence and omniscience of God. The forces of evil themselves contribute to the divine work of Providence. If Job had not suffered outrage at the hands of the Chaldeans, if he had not experienced affliction, he would have become like one of the impenitent Pharisees who despise the justice of God being satisfied with their own. The Eternal uses the most insignificant daily occurrences for our salvation. "In regard to men, good as well as bad, the Christian will acknowledge that their counsels, desires, aims and faculties, are so under the hand of God that He has full power to turn them in whatever direction and constrain them as often as He pleases. . . . Everything therefore which turns out prosperous and according to his desire, the Christian will ascribe entirely to God, whether he has experienced the divine beneficence through human instrumentality or been aided by inanimate creatures."¹

Let it be noted in passing that this does not exclude the honour and the gratitude that we owe to men who benefit us, for they are in this "the ministers and dispensers of God's bounty".

(b) *Supernatural Means.* God sometimes acts supernaturally, i.e. by means of super-terrestrial agencies. Angels are His messengers. They are necessary only because of the dullness

¹ I. xvii. 6, 7; *Opera*, iii. 257, 259.

of our understanding, and they are ordained because God knows that the help of sight and of the direct word, will confirm our faith. The devils also are "ministers" of God, not by their obedience, but because their revolt cannot bear fruit except where God judges that it will subserve His eternal plan.

(c) *Miracle*. When God in His sovereignty acts without the above-mentioned means, we call this action miracle. It is only because our modern world has deified cosmic laws in attributing to them an immutability that is not theirs by nature, but which they borrow from the preserving will of God, that it has stumbled at miracle and attempted to empty it of its content. The only truly constant and immutable thing in the universe is the will of God ; all else, being created, subsists only for a time. If in order to save His people, it pleases God to suspend the ordinary course of events, He can do it by right and in fact. So the miraculous birth of Christ, the drying up of the Red Sea, the resurrection of Lazarus, events which we take at random from the long list of supernatural acts recorded in the Bible, are not only probable, but certain facts, because they contribute to the accomplishment of the divine plan. If physical science complains of being unable to analyse and codify such facts, it is because God has not chosen science as a means of salvation, but solely as a means of investigation of the framework in which creation has been placed.

(d) Finally, we must notice that God is free to act "contrary to all means", that is to say, He can dispense with an agent which might be emancipated from His tutelage, and which would thus fail to respond to His aim. When an intermediary such as the Church, whose mission is to proclaim the Gospel, neglects its task or seeks to appropriate the glory that belongs to God, He can raise up against it a new (and temporary) means of action, until it returns to obedience and amends its ways. The most striking example of this is furnished to us by the Reformation as it confronted the mediaeval Roman Church.

.

From the beginning, the doctrine of Providence has encountered a fierce opposition which the centuries have not reduced to silence. This opposition is based on the objection which an observer of facts cannot fail to raise : the existence of evil. How can God be omnipotent, it is asked, how can He

exercise an absolute control over the universe, how can He have a plan, unless evil be excluded from it? Some even dare to question the morality of permitting the existence of those malign forces which render the lives of His creatures so tragic; while others suggest that He must have deliberately resigned part of His sovereignty to the creatures that He has Himself endowed with reason. The existence of evil, of suffering and death, is explained on the hypothesis that God does not desire to exercise strict control over the fallen creature, and that His divine rôle contents itself with limiting the havoc caused by the Fall, reconstituting the cosmos and saving all or part of the beings affected by sin.

A conception of this sort appears at first sight to render a faithful account of what experience teaches us. Actually, it leads to despair and contempt of the thrice-holy God, for if, in spite of what is revealed to us in Scripture, we postulate a limited deity (even admitting that he may have freely assigned to himself the limits), such a deity may be outwitted by the development of sin. He is no longer the undisputed master of the entire creation, a fact which must eventually lead to dualism. The attempt is made to explain the abdication of God by ascribing it to love for His creatures, but it is forgotten that the love thus attributed to Him is one of feebleness and inconscience rather than a real charity. The love of which God gives proof in not alienating a particle of His sovereignty, is infinitely more majestic and divine than the tolerance which these theorists attribute to Him.

For Calvinism, the apparent contradiction between the God who is love, and the existence of evil, gives a better account of revelation than all the theories which, to suppress an antimony, would deprive God of His sovereignty and deliver over the world to the incalculable and perverse inclination of the creature.

The will of God, for Calvin, is the necessity of all things,¹ yet nevertheless God is not the author of evil. The wicked can do nothing without His appointment, and His holiness is not tarnished by their evil deeds. "The works of creatures are to be esteemed good or bad according as they are done to obey God or to offend Him. Nevertheless He is above all, directing all things to a good end, and He turns the evil into good, or

¹ I. xvi. 9; *Opera*, viii. 354.

at least draws good from that which is evil, working according to His nature, that is to say, in justice and equity, and making use even of the devil, but in such a manner that He has nothing in common with him, neither does He entangle Himself in any evil association, nor efface the nature of evil by His justice. For even as the sun, by shedding its rays on a carcass, causes in it a certain putrefaction, yet does not draw from it any corruption or spot, nor cause by its purity that the carcass shall cease to be fetid and infected ; even so God works His purposes by means of the wicked, so that the sanctity which is in Him does not justify them at all, while the infection which is in them does not contaminate Him at all.”¹

Many good Christians are shocked by the idea that evil can be accomplished by a divine decision. This is due to failure to distinguish between action and intention. From the devil proceeds the motive which prompts the sinner to commit a guilty action. This motive might remain in the state of intention without ever provoking a crime. A man might covet his neighbour’s house or his wife violently, while appearing to the eyes of his fellow-men as a person of exemplary conduct. He would not on this account be less a sinner in the eyes of God, for his covetousness is the proof of the corruption of his heart, which does not content itself with God’s gifts but desires the things bestowed upon others. This covetousness may burn within his breast all unknown to his most intimate friends, and whether on account of his education or through fear of punishment, it may never materialise. It may, however, enter into the purposes of God to utilise this covetousness in furnishing the man with an occasion to commit a theft or an adultery. At the moment men may be doubtful whether he is a malefactor ; God knows that he has already been one for a long time. God can cause a great good to spring from the spoliation to which a man’s covetousness has subjected his neighbour. What really matters is not so much the act accomplished as the state of rebellion which it manifests.

Thus the acts of creatures are not good or bad according as they injure or do not injure society (which is the popular view of the matter nowadays even in religious circles), but the criterion of their morality resides in whether they have been done to obey God or to offend Him.

¹ *Opera*, vi. 190.

Now the motives to which creatures yield constitute their responsibility. It is by their choice, their decision to yield to such a solicitation rather than to such another, that one may learn who is the master ruling their lives. This choice, of which they assume the responsibility, gives birth to their actions ; for these actions would never have been accomplished if the will had not previously been turned towards their accomplishment. God cannot be held responsible for the evil when such motives prompt the creature to action.

Again, the action cannot take place except with God's consent. The sinner cannot commit a sin unless God by His general Providence grants him the power necessary for action, and this power is only granted when the circumstances are such that a maximum of good will proceed from the action to the glory of God.

Moreover, we must guard ourselves from speaking of a simple permission given to the malefactor to accomplish his misdeed. God does not permit ; He wills. By this we must understand that He is ever present to control, moderate, canalise towards the end envisaged by Him, the disordered energies which could not otherwise have free course without causing catastrophic mischief. God hates evil, but we must not lose sight of the fact that when He contemplates the world, He has before His eyes only a state of corruption ; if His hatred of evil caused Him to turn away His face, He would certainly turn away from us—but He is the Saviour God ! We must admit then that He utilizes and overrules the evil for the redemption of sinners.

We must not conclude from what has just been said that the wicked are passive in the hands of God. "Satan and the wicked are not instruments of God in such a sense that they cannot be said equally well to act on their own account. For we cannot imagine that God works by an evil man as by a stone or the trunk of a tree, but He uses him as a rational creature, according to the quality of his nature which He has given to him. When we say then that God works through the wicked, this does not prevent them from working also on their own part."¹ A typical example is furnished by Calvin himself : "When Job hears the news of the loss of his goods, of the death of his children, of so many calamities that have come upon him,

¹ *Opera*, vi. 188.

he recognizes divine visitation in these events, saying : ‘ The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away.’ . . . Did he not know all the time that the devil had mixed his cup for him ? Was he not informed that the Chaldeans had stolen his cattle ? Did he praise robbers and brigands or excuse the devil because the affliction had come to him from God ? No, for he knew well that an important distinction must be observed here.”¹

Elsewhere, considering the same example, Calvin continues his explanation in the same terms : “ How can we attribute the same work to God, to Satan and to man, without either excusing Satan by the interference of God, or making God the author of the crime ? This is easily done if we look first to the end, and then to the mode of acting.”²

For God the end, the object, is to discipline His servant against temptations, causing him to realize that he owes all to his Lord : the divine plan is for the creature’s good. For the devil, on the other hand, the impoverishment of Job must lead him to blasphemy and rebellion. For the brigands the object envisaged is their own enrichment. “ Such diversity of purpose makes a wide distinction in the act. In the mode there is not less difference. The Lord permits Satan to afflict His servant ; and the Chaldeans, who had been chosen as the ministers to execute the deed, He delivers over to the impulses of Satan, who, urging on the already depraved Chaldeans with his poisoned darts, instigates them to commit the crime. They rush furiously on to the unrighteous deed, and become its guilty perpetrators. Here Satan is properly said to act in the reprobate, over whom he exercises his sway, which is that of iniquity. God also is said to act in His own way, because even Satan, when he is the instrument of divine wrath, is completely under the command of God, who turns him as He will in the execution of His just judgments. . . . Thus we see that there is no inconsistency in attributing the same act to God, to Satan and to man, while from the difference in the end and mode of action, the spotless righteousness of God shines forth at the same time that the iniquity of Satan and of man is manifested in all its deformity.”³

To summarize, two things emerge from the doctrine which we have endeavoured to expound : on the one hand, the fact that the sin does not lie in the concrete act which injures men,

¹ *Opera*, vi. 189.

² II. iv. 2.

³ *Ibid.*

but in the judgment of values which causes the understanding to incline the will towards the sinful act. On the other hand, it is not sufficient that a rebel should decide to accomplish an action in order that it may take place, for he lacks the power ; this power is not given except when the occasion presents itself, and the occasion is dependent on Divine Providence.

To treat the question of the relations between God and evil would necessitate a study far beyond the limits of this article. We trust, however, that the few points which have been discussed will make plain the position that dominates Calvin's entire conception of Christian doctrine ; the place of evil in the plan of redemption, the doctrine of predestination, the morality of salvation by grace, these and other matters attach themselves as corollaries to the doctrine of Divine Providence.

Without discussing it at length, we have touched upon an equally thorny question which has caused much ink to flow, and has produced many doughty champions, namely, that of human liberty. This question cannot be treated here for lack of space. In view of Divine Providence, it would seem at first sight that there can be no place for human decision, yet we know that such decisions are made since we have all experienced the tortures of a dilemma. In distinguishing between formal and material liberty, Calvin sheds a living light on the question, showing what must be ascribed to human responsibility and what must be resigned to divine sovereignty, so that we may be entirely responsible for our personal decisions, and at the same time unable to act freely since we are either slaves of sin or servants of Almighty God.

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