

DIVINE PROVIDENCE

By Father Reginald Garrigou Lagrange, O.P.

In times of great affliction not a few interior souls have found peace and even joy, though circumstances continued to give immense pain, when through God's inspiration they have conceived the idea of making a vow of self-abandonment to Providence.

When a soul is prompted by grace to make such a vow and is firmly resolved not to divorce self-abandonment from fidelity to daily duties, this form may be used. Renew it daily during a prayer of thanksgiving.

Whenever the will of God is expressed in a cross, I will yield myself to it entirely and with a note of joy, paying no regard to what was instrumental in bringing it about. In difficulties that in any way distress me I will avoid all self-probing introspection and idle pre-occupations; I will steep myself more deeply in confidence, and seek to solve my difficulties through the action of grace. I will take up this attitude of mind and heart and plunge myself in God the instant something occurs to wound me. And all this I will do with an exceeding great love.

This self-abandonment, should be accompanied by close fidelity to grace and illuminations received in prayer.

The first principle is that everything which comes to pass has been foreseen by Almighty God from all eternity and has been willed by Him or at least permitted by Him. Nothing comes to pass either in the material or the spiritual world, but God has foreseen it from all eternity; because with Him there is no passing from ignorance to knowledge as with us, and He has nothing to learn from events as they occur. Not only has God foreseen everything that is happening now or will happen in the future, but whatever reality and goodness there is in these things He has willed; and whatever evil or moral disorder is in them, He has merely permitted. Holy Scripture is explicit on this point, and, as the councils have declared, no room is left for doubt in the matter.

The second principle is that nothing can be willed or permitted by God that does not contribute to the end He purposed in creating,

which is the manifestation of His goodness and infinite perfections, and the glory of the God-man-Jesus Christ, His only Son. As St. Paul says, "*All are yours. And you are Christ's. And Christ is God's.*" (1 Cor. 2: 23)

In addition to these two principles, there is a third, which St. Paul states thus: "*We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good: to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints.*" (Rom. 8: 28) Almighty God sees to it that everything contributes to their spiritual welfare, not only the grace He bestows on them, not only those natural qualities He endows them with, but sickness too, and contradictions and reverses; as St. Augustine tells us, even their very sins, which God only permits in order to lead them on to a truer humility and thereby to a purer love. It was thus He permitted the threefold denial of St. Peter, to make the great Apostle more humble, more mistrustful of self, and by this very means become stronger and trust more in the divine mercy.

N.B.

Providence literally means foresight, but is generally used to denote Almighty God's preserving and governing all things by means of second causes (Ps. 18:35; 63:8; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3). Almighty God's providence extends to the natural world (Ps. 104:14; 135:5-7; Acts 14:17), the brute creation (Ps. 104:21-29; Matt. 6:26; 10:29), and the affairs of men (Ps. 47:7; Prov. 21:1; Job 12:23; Dan. 2:21; 4:25), and of individuals (1 Sam. 2:6; Ps. 18:30; Luke 1:53; James 4:13-15). It extends also to the free actions of men (Ex. 12:36; 1 Sam. 24:9-15; Ps. 33:14, 15; Prov. 16:1; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1), and things sinful (2 Sam. 16:10; 24:1; Rom. 11:32; Acts 4:27, 28), as well as to their good actions (Phil. 2:13; 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9, 10; Eph. 2:10; Gal. 5:22-25). As regards sinful actions of men, they are represented as occurring by Almighty God's permission (Gen. 45:5; 50:20. Comp. 1 Sam. 6:6; Ex. 7:13; 14:17; Acts 2:3; 3:18; 4:27, 28), and as controlled (Ps. 76:10) and overruled for good (Gen. 50:20; Acts 3:13). Almighty God does not cause or approve of sin, but only limits, restrains, overrules it for good. The mode of Almighty God's providential government is altogether unexplained. We only know that it is a fact that Almighty God does govern all his creatures and all their actions; that this government is universal (Ps. 103:17-19), particular (Matt. 10:29-31), efficacious (Ps. 33:11; Job 23:13), embraces events apparently contingent (Prov. 16:9, 33; 19:21; 21:1), is consistent with his own perfection (2 Tim. 2:13), and to his own glory (Rom. 9:17; 11:36).