Suk Yu Chan

Heavenly Providence

A Historical Exploration of the Development of Calvin's Biblical Doctrine of Divine Providence

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

Reformed Historical Theology

Edited by
Herman J. Selderhuis

In co-operation with
Emidio Campi, Irene Dingel, Benyamin F. Intan,
Elsie Anne McKee, Richard A. Muller, and Risto Saarinen

Volume 75

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek:
The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data available online: https://dnb.de.

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Typesetting: le-tex publishing services, Leipzig
Cover design: SchwabScantechnik, Göttingen

Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage | www.vandenhoeck-ruprecht-verlage.com

ISSN 2197–1137
ISBN 978–3–647–56071–7

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

Preface

Heavenly Providence is a revised version of my doctoral thesis supervised by Professor Mark W. Elliott at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. I am especially grateful to Professor Elliott, Dr William Hyland, Dr Jon Balserak, and to the editors of Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht for their comprehensive reviews and helpful feedback to enhance this version. I am also indebted to the E-library of Hong Kong Evangel Seminary, which made its resources accessible during the Covid-19 pandemic. I am grateful to the donors, my home church, and Hong Kong Alliance Bible Seminary, who supported me continuously. I wish to thank the management team of my seminary for recommending me to apply for the Ming Yee Scholarship from North Point Baptist Church. I am extremely grateful for this scholarship which was the major financial source for my doctoral study. I am also very grateful for the Student Research Fellowship granted to me by the H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies in Grand Rapids, which enabled me to work on my research at this center from April-May 2019. In addition, I would like to thank my family in Hong Kong for their love, humour, and blessings, regardless of the difficult times they were experiencing. From all these people's selfless support, I have experienced divine providence.

This study is a revisit of John Calvin's interpretation of the doctrine of divine providence and it builds upon a vast repository of quality research conducted by previous Reformation scholars. It adopts an historical approach to explore Calvin's works from 1534–1559, and it argues that from 1534–1541, Calvin uses the image of the fountain to portray God as the source of everything, who has power to preserve and give life to all creatures on earth. Between the Latin edition of the *Institutes* in 1539 and the French translation of that work in 1541, Calvin is indecisive about the definition of special providence, articulating a fitful relationship between providence and soteriology in these two texts. In 1552, Calvin gradually ceased using the image of the fountain to portray God as the source of everything, and he also delivered three definitions of divine providence: general providence, special providence, and the very presence of God. Based on the theological understanding of divine providence which he developed from 1534–1552, Calvin presented his exegesis on the Book of Job and the Book of Psalms through his sermons and commentaries. He contrasts two biblical figures, Job and David, to support his exegesis and to present a more detailed elaboration of providence through the doctrine of heavenly providence. Furthermore, Calvin also discusses the importance of the human role in God's providence. While Calvin's theological understanding

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of God's providence was inherited by his successor, Theodore Beza, Beza applied it differently in his exegesis on the Book of Job.

This research argues that through an historical analysis, a full picture of the spectrum of Calvin's development of the doctrine God's providence from 1534–1559 can be appreciated. While God's providence is gradually less associated with soteriological matters for the ungodly, salvation in heavenly providence for the godly is increasingly assured. Calvin conveys the message that divine providence is truly heavenly providence from the point of view of the faithful. There is a genuine existence of human agency as secondary cause in heavenly providence.

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Iob respondant au Seigneur, dit,
Ie say que tu peux tout, et que nulle pensee ne sera empeschee de toy.
Qui est celuy qui obscurcist le conseil sans science? i'ay parlé, et n'entendoye point:
ces choses sont merveilleuses sur moy: ie ne les ay point cognues.
Escoute donc, ie parleray: ie t'interrogueray, afin que tu m'enseignes.
I'avoye ouy de toy de mon aureille: maintenant mon œil t'a veu.
Livre de Iob 42:1–5

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1. Introduction

Research related to John Calvin's interpretation of *providentia Dei*[1] has adopted various methodologies, including philosophical and historical approaches. Researchers

1 William J. Abraham, "Divine Action in Predestination in John Calvin" in *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press Scholarship Online, 2017), 1–24; Josef Bohatec, "Calvin's Vorsehungslehre", in *Calvinstudien: Festschrift Zum 400. Geburtstage Johann Calvins* (Leipzig: Rudolph Haupt, 1909), 339–441; I. Bohatec "Gott Und Die Geschichte Nach Calvin", *Philosophia Reformata*, vol. 1, no. 3, (1936): 129–161; Oliver D. Crisp, "Calvin on Creation and Providence", in *John Calvin and Evangelical Theology: Legacy and Prospect*, edited by Sung Wook Chung (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 43–65; Edward A. Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 239–240; Mark W. Elliott, *Providence Perceived: Divine Action from a Human Point of View* (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2015), 141–148; Mary Potter Engel, *Perspectival Structure of Calvin's Anthropology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 123–149; David Fergusson, *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 84–109; Bruce Gordon, *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: a Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016); Paul Helm, "Calvin, the 'Two Issues' and the Structure of the Institutes", *Calvin Theological Journal* 42, no. 2 (2007): 341–48; Paul Helm, "Providence and Predestination", in *Calvin at the Centre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 132–162; Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 93–128; Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 16–17; Stephen Leigh Hunt, "Predestination in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536–1559", in *An Elaboration of the Theology of Calvin*, edited by Richard C. Gamble (New York: Garland, 1992), 185–192; Sung-Sup Kim, *Deus Providebit-Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth on the Providence of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014); W. J. Torrance Kirby, "Stoic and Epicurean? Calvin's Dialectical Account of Providence in the Institutes", *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5, no. 3 (2003): 309–322; Christian Link, "Wie handelt Gott in der Welt?-Calvins Vorsehungslehre", in *Calvin entdecken: Wirkungsgeschichte-Theologie-Sozialethik*, edited by Traugott Jähnichen, Thomas K. Kuhn, and Arno Lohmann (Berlin: Lit, 2010), 65–79; Peter Miln, "Hommes D'une Bonne Cause: Calvin's Sermons on the Book of Job" (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 1989); Richard A. Muller, "Reception and Response Referencing and Understanding Calvin in Seventeenth-Century Calvinism", in *Calvin and His Influence, 1509–2009* (Oxford Scholarship Online: 2011), 182–196; Richard A. Muller, "The Placement of Predestination in Reformed Theology: Issue or Non-Issue?", *Calvin Theological Journal*, 40, (2005): 184–210; Joseph P. Murphy, *The Fountain of Life in John Calvin and the Devotio Moderna: Metaphorical Theology of the Trinity in Word and Sacrament* (Palo Alto, CA: Academica Press, 2011), 59–60; Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, translated by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), 61–79; Meng-Chai Ong, "John Calvin on Providence: The *Locus Classicus* in Context" (PhD diss., King's College, London, 2003); Charles Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977); Joseph A., Jr Pipa, "Creation and Providence: Institutes 1.14, 16–18", in *A Theological Guide to Calvin's Institutes: Essays and Analysis*, edited by

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

such as Paul Helm[2] who follow the philosophical approach, only focus on *De occulta providentia Dei* 1558 and the 1559 *Institutes*, so they miss many critical links between *providentia Dei* and other theological elements in different genres of Calvin's writings. Researchers who follow the historical approach, such as Stephen Leigh Hunt, explore the development of the doctrine of predestination from the 1536 to 1559 *Institutes*, which simply provides an historical outline of various editions of that work, while other works in different genres, such as commentaries, sermons, and treatises are ignored. The recent discussion by William J. Abraham adopts both approaches in a work that considers topics concerning divine agency and divine action, and that amounts to three volumes of systematic theology.[3] Abraham offers a diachronic analysis of the interpretation of divine agency by theologians, such as the Apostle Paul, Athanasius, various Cappadocians, Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin. Abraham reminds readers that the chapter, 'Divine action in predestination in John Calvin' is for theologians and philosophers to appreciate.[4] Using mainly the

David W. Hall and Peter A. Lillback (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2008), 123–150; Michelle Chaplin Sanchez, "Providence: from pronoia to immanent affirmation in John Calvin's Institutes of 1559" (PhD diss., Massachusetts: Harvard University, 2014); Susan Schreiner, "Exegesis and Double Justice in Calvin's Sermons on Job", *Church History*, vol. 58, 03 (September 1989): 322–338; Susan Schreiner, "Why do the wicked live? Job and David in Calvin's sermons on Job", in *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, edited by Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 129–143; Susan Schreiner, *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found? Calvin's Exegesis of Job from Medieval and Modern Perspectives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994); Susan Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995); Susan Schreiner, "Calvin as an Interpreter of Job", in *Calvin and the Bible*, edited by Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53–84; Susan Schreiner, "Creation and Providence", in *The Calvin Handbook*, edited by Herman J. Selderhuis (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 267–275; Herman J. Selderhuis, *Calvin's theology of the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007); Herman J. Selderhuis, "God, the Caring One: The Providence of God According to Calvin's Psalms Commentary", *La Revue Farel* 1 (2006): 17–32; Richard Stauffer, *Dieu, la Création et la Providence dans la Prédication de Calvin* (Bern: P. Lang, 1978); George Stroup, *Calvin* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2009): 30–33; George H. Tavard, "The Mystery of Divine Providence", *Theological Studies* 64, no. 4 (2003): 707–718; Derek Thomas, *Proclaiming the Incomprehensible God: Calvin's Teaching on Job* (Fearn: Mentor, 2004); Francois Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 177–184.

2 Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 132–162

3 William J. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume I: Exploring and Evaluation the Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume II: Soundings in the Christian Tradition*; William J. Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume III: Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

4 Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume II*, 176.

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1559 *Institutes* to support his arguments, Abraham asserts that Calvin's doctrine of predestination does not allow any influence of secondary causes in predestination. It appears that most studies concerning Calvin's doctrine of *providentia Dei* only refer to the 1559 *Institutes*,[5] just as David Fergusson asserts in his recent monograph, *The Providence of God: A Polyphonic Approach*, '…the most influential Reformed approach to providence is set out in John Calvin's *Institutes*'.[6]

My research addresses the questions of how and why Calvin interpreted God's providence at different stages of his life. To answer these questions, it is necessary to adopt an historical analysis to obtain a detailed investigation into the development of Calvin's doctrine of *providentia Dei* from 1534 to 1559, and to grasp how this development affects the message Calvin delivered to believers. This historical analysis involves exploring Calvin's formulation of the doctrine of *providentia Dei* in his treaties, commentaries, sermons, and polemical works published during this period to revisit all the related issues. This kind of analysis has not been comprehensively done by any previous scholars, and therefore my study aims to fill this research gap to discover a more complete picture of Calvin's development of the doctrine of *providentia Dei*.

I argue that Calvin's development of *providentia Dei* can be divided into two stages, but also that his interpretation is consistently related to soteriological matters. How does Calvin support this argument? This work will show that he uses the doctrine of heavenly providence to link providence to predestination. Furthermore, does Calvin agree that human beings participate in *providentia Dei*? If yes, how does this work? Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza appreciates Calvin's interpretation of the doctrines of *providentia Dei* and predestination, but he also uses other methods to explain many aspects of these doctrines. Does the use of these methods cause any differences in Beza's application? Hence this work also looks at the differences between Beza and Calvin in their exegesis of the Book of Job, their application of the doctrines to analyse Job's case, and their understanding of the issues concerning causality. Before offering an outline of this work, the most recent research, and some representative findings on Calvin's doctrine of *providentia Dei* need to be analysed.

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5 "Book 1, Chapters 16–18 of the 1559 *Institutes,* according to Calvin himself, is definitive and can, therefore, be safely considered the *locus classicus* of his thought on providence." Ong, "John Calvin on Providence: The *Locus Classicus* in Context", 31; Sanchez, "Providence: from Pronoia to Immanent Affirmation in John Calvin's Institutes of 1559", 4; Tavard, "The Mystery of Divine Providence", 710; Kirby, "Stoic and Epicurean? Calvin's Dialectical Account of Providence in the Institutes", 309–322; Pipa, "Creation and Providence: Institutes 1.14, 16–18", 123–150.

6 Fergusson, *The Providence of God*, 84. See also Bruce Gordon's analysis of a worldly reception of the 1559 *Institutes* from the end of the sixteenth century to the twenty first century. Gordon, *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

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There is some discussion about the placement of the doctrines of providence and predestination in Calvin's works over the years.[7] In *Calvin at the Centre*, Helm suggests that the change in the placement of the doctrines of providence and predestination is because of pedagogic reasons only, and not because there is a doctrinal separation between the two topics.[8] This work agrees with Helm's argument that 'the two doctrines are nevertheless closely interrelated in Calvin's thought',[9] however, it also suggests that there is another doctrine, which is developed later in Calvin's life, to link these two doctrines together.

Abraham has recently contributed a total of three volumes of theological work concerning the topic of divine agency and divine action, and in volume II, he introduces a chapter concerning divine action in Calvin's understanding of predestination.[10] Writing within the Arminian tradition, he alleges that 'Calvin cannot allow for genuine human action and thus Calvin eliminates human agency as a crucial category in Christian theology'.[11] Abraham's argument is based on his belief that Calvin's doctrine of predestination to salvation is to be found in his doctrine of justification, and that people are not saved by works.[12] He also argues that Calvin's description of the fall of Adam in the 1559 *Institutes* implies that God is the author of sin, as He decides Adam's fall.[13] Furthermore, Abraham also asserts that Calvin's reasoning of the hiddenness of God as an explanation of Him condemning some people is too vague and unconvincing.[14] Based on only one of Calvin's works, Abraham concludes: Calvin's radical theocentric doctrine suggests that there is no human freedom in predestination but just a matter of necessity.[15] Abraham's arguments lack validity as they only rely on one source-the 1559 *Institutes*, and hence he misses significant features of Calvin's doctrines. Abraham is not alone in this failing, but he is representative of a fairly widespread view of Calvin as a monist or determinist. Importantly, Calvin's doctrine of predestination is not to be understood through the lens of the doctrine of justification, but through the doctrine of heavenly providence.

7 Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, 178; Muller, "The Placement of Predestination in Reformed Theology: Issue or Non-Issue?"; Helm, "Calvin, the 'Two Issues' and the Structure of the Institutes".

8 Helm, *Calvin at the Centre*, 135, 143.

9 Ibid.,143.

10 Abraham, *Divine Agency and Divine Action, Volume II: Soundings in the Christian Tradition*, 176–197.

11 Ibid., 196.

12 Ibid., 179–180.

13 Ibid., 185.

14 Ibid., 186.

15 Ibid., 196.

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Calvin's doctrine of predestination is always related to the doctrine of providence, and it also reveals the interaction between divine and human actions. Calvin suggests that there is a seamless relationship between the doctrine of *providentia Dei* and predestination. For example, the involvement of secondary cause in the reprobation aspect of predestination, is explained in the area of *providentia Dei*, which is in the area of secret providence precisely, but not in the area of predestination. The people who can benefit from predestination are those being cared for by very special providence. However, it is impossible to spot this relationship in just one of Calvin's works because his theology is 'in process' throughout his life. Therefore, one needs to read a more comprehensive selection of Calvin's works in order to appreciate this link.

In *Providence Perceived: divine action from a human point of view*, Mark W. Elliott gives an historical account of the doctrine of providence from the era of the early Christian church up to recent times.[16] Elliott's monograph includes a section on the current discussion of Calvin's doctrine of providence, and he asserts that the central tenet of God's providence is that He endows believers with special providence to enable them to live on earth. Thus, God's providence should be understood as special providence. Elliott agrees with Charles Partee that God's providence is not universal, implying that certain aspects in *providentia Dei* are related to predestination.[17] '*Providentia specialissima*' is a term used by theologians after Calvin, including Gulielmus Bucanus,[18] J. F. König,[19] Partee, and Werner Krusche,[20] to describe this non-universal providence for believers. The working of the Holy Spirit is in this aspect of providence,[21] and the question must be asked: does Calvin have a similar thought or a specific term to describe the relationship between the doctrines of

16 Elliott, *Providence Perceived: Divine Action from a Human Point of View*.

17 Ibid., 142. Cf. Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 135.

18 Gulielmus Bucanus could be the first Reformed theologian who used '*specialissima*' to describe this non-universal providence. Gulielmus Bucanus, *Institio theologica* (Lausanne, 1605), 151. Also quoted in Elliott, *Providence Perceived: Divine Action from a Human Point of View*, 154.

19 The influence spread to Lutheran theology in the seventeenth century. J. F. König, a Lutheran theologian, discussed *providentia* as having the most particular objects *(specialissime* objectum) of each believer briefly in 1664. He was one of the early Lutheran theologians who used this term, and to include *concursus* in it: "Specialissime autem objectum ejus sunt homines pii & fideles, Deut 32:9. seqq. Ps(s) 4:4; 33:18; 37:19,25; 73:24; 77:20; 91:11; Heb 1:14; Matt 10:31." J. F. König, *Theologia Positiva Acroamatica* (Rostock 1664), edited and translated by Andreas Stegmann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), §260, §277. Cf. Christopher R. J. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes–in dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 215.

20 Werner Krusche, *Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin* (Göttingen: Vandenhoech & Ruprecht, 1957), 14. Also in Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 135.

21 Partee, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy*, 135.

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providentia Dei and predestination? Furthermore, how does Calvin's thinking on this very special kind of providence develop? These questions are left unanswered by Elliott's work, which admittedly is not a work devoted to Calvin.

Sung Sup Kim's doctoral thesis considers a comparison between Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth on the providence of God.[22] In particular, Kim uses Calvin's doctrine of predestination and the theology of prayer to defend Calvin's doctrine of God's providence against Barth's criticism of a lack of Christology in this doctrine. Kim stresses that there are three kinds of providence in Calvin's doctrine of providence. *Providentia universalis/generalis* is God's creation, guidance, and preservation in the order of nature. *Providentia singularis* is God's guidance for individual creation, which involves '*concursus*' and '*gubernatio*'.[23] Kim uses the terms from seventeenth-century Reformed theology to explain Calvin's meaning of special providence in the sixteenth-century context,[24] and although divine concurrence is not a theological term which Calvin adopts, it does explain the working of secondary causes in Calvin's doctrine of *providentia Dei*. However, the question arises: what precisely does human participation mean when divine concurrence is involved?

The third kind of providence is one especially for the Church and it is also the point Kim uses to argue that Calvin's doctrine of providence is Christocentric and inseparable from his doctrine of predestination.[25] Kim believes that Barth has missed this point, since Barth only focused on Calvin's later work such as the 1559 *Institutes*, but Calvin's doctrine of providence and its relationship with predestination should be understood in the various editions of the *Institutes* together with commentaries.[26] Calvin uses a special term to define this kind of providence for the Church in *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione* 1552. It was probably the first work in which Calvin used this term to describe God's providence for the Church. There is no mentioning of this significant work of Calvin in Kim's thesis even though he highlights the importance of reading different works of Calvin. While there is a development of God's providence for the Church in Calvin's formulation of the doctrine of *providentia Die*, Kim misses this. Furthermore, Kim asserts that prayer is necessary as it is a response to God's faithful providence,[27] but how does human prayer influence *providentia Dei* according to Calvin?

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22 Kim, *Deus Providebit: Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth on the Providence of God.*

23 Ibid., 26.

24 Cf. Crisp, "Calvin on Creation and Providence", 52. Crisp also refers Calvin's doctrine of God's providence to divine concurrence. In addition, Crisp uses the term 'meticulous providence' but Calvin does not use this term.

25 Kim, *Deus Providebit: Calvin, Schleiermacher, and Barth on the Providence of God*, 46.

26 Ibid., 43.

27 Ibid., 76.

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ISBN Print: 9783525560716 — ISBN E-Book: 9783647560717

Calvin was already emphasising the relevance of prayer in providence when he preached his sermons on Job early in 1554, and he also used a biblical illustration to both encourage the public congregation, and to testify to his own personal conviction. Calvin's argument about the significance of prayer offered in his sermons on Job provides an indispensable support to his claim in the 1559 *Institutes*. However, Calvin's sermons are absent in Kim's discussion, and instead Kim's view of prayer focuses rather too much on the 1559 *Institutes*.[28] Kim's discussions of the three kinds of providence and of the gradual relationship between providence and predestination are helpful to understanding Calvin's doctrine of providence. However, some questions stemming from his arguments raised above need further exploration. If one reads Calvin's works across their different genres, one can locate a deeper relationship between different kinds of providence and then, a stronger bond between the doctrines of providence and predestination can also be found. The indivisible relationship between these two doctrines allows human participation and it can confirm that there is a genuine existence of secondary causes in God's providence.

Richard Stauffer studies Calvin's sermons in a chronological order and subsequently discusses them according to the topics of general revelation, special revelation, the attributes of God, the Trinity, creation, and providence.[29] Under the topic of providence, Stauffer's focus is on general providence and special providence, and '*le probléme de théodicée qu'elle ne manque pas de poser*'.[30] In the discussions on the two kinds of providence, Stauffer consults many sermons on different Biblical books of Calvin including his *Sermons sur le livre de Job*. He demonstrates that things do not happen by coincidence, and that God's general providence governs in the order of nature.[31] Also, God governs human history with His power and justice in His special providence.[32] In both kinds of providence, God uses human beings as the intermediaries to accomplish His purpose and he describes this process as '*concursus*'.[33]

Stauffer considers God's actions in His special providence is particularly for the Church,[34] and his study commences the interest in the exploration of Calvin's

28 Ibid., 53.

29 Stauffer, *Dieu, la création et la Providence dans la prédication de Calvin*.

30 Ibid., 261.

31 Ibid., 262, 267.

32 Ibid., 272.

33 "Manifestation de Ia puissance et de la justice de Dieu, la Providence spéciale agit dans l'histoire avec le concours des hommes *(concursus).* De même que Dieu se sert des créatures pour œuvrer dans l'ordre de nature, de même il a recours à des 'moyens inférieurs.'" Ibid., 273.

34 "Si, comme nous venons dele voir, la Providence spéciale exerce une activité de 'maintenance' et de 'pourvoyance' en faveur de l'humanité, elle joue aussi pour celle-ci un rôle de 'direction' et de 'gouvernement'. A la *manutenentia* et à la *conservatio* effectuées par la Providence spéciale s'ajoutent

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sermons. However, there are many critical questions stemming from Stauffer's research which need further investigation. For instance, Stauffer observes that God governs human history with His actions of power and justice, but are these actions also related to the doctrine of predestination? Furthermore, what is the relationship between the doctrines of providence and predestination according to Calvin's sermons on Job. Undoubtedly, the special providence of God is related to providence for the Church, but how precisely is this link developed? Additionally, what is the process of '*concursus*' being explained by Calvin in the sermons on Job? Job has shown his humility,[35] but is this a norm or is it the result of the trial for the goodness of his nature? These questions are not elaborated in Stauffer's monograph.

Edward Dowey's work on *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology* endeavours to explain Calvin's meaning of the knowledge of God. Dowey argues that people are unable to know God directly through His creative activity, but only through His revelation in Scripture and redemption. Therefore, only the faithful can attain to the knowledge of God.[36] This assertion is insightful but how does Calvin describe the links between God's activity, His revelation, and the knowledge of God?

Although this work only reviews the studies of scholars on Calvin's interpretation of *providentia Dei* spanning the last 50 years, two significant works of Josef Bohatec published in the early 1900s need to be examined.[37] In the chapter of '*Calvins Vorsehungslehre*', Bohatec aims to refute Alexander Schweizer's arguments for the doctrine of predestination as being Calvin's central doctrine. Bohatec examines the interpretation of *providentia Dei* by Calvin's predecessors, and he discovers that Zwingli used the term '*summum bonum*' at the beginning of his sermons on God's providence. Bohatec finds this term connotes ethical issues because it includes the meaning of goodness, wisdom, and justice, and also has the metaphorical concept

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la *rectio* et la *gubernatio.* Dieu conduit et gouverne en effet les sociétés humaines, et, *a fortiori,* cette société particulière qu'est l'Eglise." Ibid., 270.

35 Ibid., 278.

36 Dowey, *The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology*, 239–240.

37 Bohatec, "Calvins Vorsehungslehre", 340–441; Bohatec, 'Gott und die Geschichte nach Calvin', 129–161.

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