


THEOLOGICAL
GUIDE TO
CALVIN'S
INSTITUTES

ESSAYS AND ANALYSIS

EDITED BY

DAVID W. HALL

and

PETER A. LILLBACK


P U B L I S H I N G
P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

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ELECTION AND PREDESTINATION:
THE SOVEREIGN EXPRESSIONS
OF GOD

INSTITUTES 3.21–24

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No person in the history of Christianity, with the possible exception of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), has been so identified with the doctrine of election as John Calvin (1509–64) has been. This is a remarkable fact for a variety of reasons. First, it is remarkable since in his own summary of this doctrine, he did not come to teaching it formally and explicitly until book 3 of the *Institutes*.¹ As Richard Muller notes, much ahistorical mischief has been perpetrated in

1. Brian Gerrish says provocatively, "if you begin with predestination, it becomes virtually impossible to hear Calvin say anything else." B. A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 170.

Calvin studies on this point.² For Calvin, the location of his discussion of predestination has more to do with what he regarded as the order of right teaching than any peculiarity of Calvin's theology. Second, that Calvin should be considered the predestinarian theologian par excellence says more about the success of anti-Calvin Lutheran polemics and the effect of the Enlightenment on historiography than it does about Calvin's exegesis, theology, or preaching.³ The doctrine of predestination is a catholic doctrine. Augustine taught a robust doctrine of predestination against the Pelagians and semi-Pelagians.⁴ Prosper of Aquitaine (c. 390–c. 460) followed Augustine's predestination. It is true that the Second Council of Orange (529) rejected the doctrine of reprobation, but the doctrine of double predestination persisted into the early medieval period in Godescalc of Orbais (c. 804–c. 869) and his supporters (e.g., Ratramnus of Corbie) and throughout the entire medieval period.⁵ Predestination was "one of the central issues in medieval theology" so that nearly every medieval theologian discussed it to one extent or another.⁶ The question whether "it is possible or not for the predestined to be damned" and whether "it is possible for the reprobate to be saved"⁷ was a standard

2. "Calvin did not, as has often been stated, remove the doctrine of predestination from the doctrine of God and place it in an a posteriori position in order to avoid the theological problems of the '*Deus nudus absconditus*,' speculative determinism, and central dogmas." Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 129. Rather, as Muller notes, the organization of the *Institutes* was influenced by Melanchthon's *Loci Communes* and the structure of Romans.

3. On the Lutheran view of Calvin see R. Scott Clark, "Calvin: A Negative Boundary Marker in American Lutheran Self-Identity 1871–1934," in *The Modern Calvin: John Calvin in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Memory Cultures*, ed. Johann de Niet, et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2008).

4. E.g., *De praedestinatione sanctorum* in J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Garnier Bros., 1844), 44:955–92.

5. Godescalc, *Oeuvres Théologiques et Grammaticales de Godescalc d' Orbais*, *Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense Etudes et Documents* 20 (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1945), 52–78, 180–258, 338–46.

6. Russell L. Friedman, "The Sentences Commentary, 1250–1320. General Trends, the Impact of the Religious Orders, and the Test Case of Predestination," in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard: Current Research*, ed. G. R. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 43.

7. "... ut cum dicitur: 'Praedestinatus potest vel non potest damnari' et 'reprobatus potest salvari.'" Peter Lombard, *Magistri Petri Lombardi Parisiensis Episcopi Sententiae in IV*

theological topic that Peter Lombard (c. 1100–1160) discussed in his *Sentences* (1.40–41), the standard theology textbook until the middle of the sixteenth century.

In the high medieval period, Thomas Aquinas (c. 1224–74) taught double predestination as clearly and unequivocally as anyone in the history of the church.⁸ His contemporary, Bonaventure (c. 1217–74), minister general of the Franciscans, discussed election and reprobation under the heading of the divine wisdom (*sapientia*).⁹ The doctrine of predestination was developed and elaborated in the late medieval period in response to the perception that William of Ockham's construction of the divine will and human freedom was Pelagian.¹⁰ Indeed, Heiko Oberman warned against the "fallacy of the long-defended thesis that, on the eve of the Reformation, St. Augustine had been forgotten except for some isolated Augustinian lights in a Pelagian night."¹¹ Thomas Bradwardine (c. 1295–1349) vigorously championed double predestination against Ockham and his followers.¹² Gregory of Rimini (c. 1300–1358) and Marsilius von Inghen (c. 1340–96) "defended the authority of Augustine just as passionately as Thomas Bradwardine had done half a century before." Rimini, whose formulations would influence the leading Reformed theologian Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562),¹³ was responding to an argument by Peter Auriol (c. 1280–1322) that God, by his will of complacency, wills all and none

Libris Distinctae. Sententiarum, 2 vols. (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1971–81), 1:285.

8. E.g., see Thomas Gilby, ed., *Summa Theologiae*, 60 vols. (London and New York: Blackfriars, 1963), 1a 23 [all], 83.1.

9. Bonaventure, *Tria Opuscula: Breuiloquium, Itinerarium Mentis in Deum & De Reductione Artium ad Theologiam* (Florence: St. Bonaventure College Press, 1911), 52.

10. On Ockham's doctrine of predestination see Marilyn McCord Adams and Norman Kretzmann, eds., *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, 2d ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

11. Heiko A. Oberman, ed., *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought Illustrated by Key Documents*, trans. Paul L. Nyhus (London: Lutterworth, 1967), 131.

12. Thomas Bradwardine, *De Causa Dei contra Pelagianorum* (London, 1618). Portions of this work are translated into English in Oberman, ed., *Forerunners*, 151–64.

13. Frank A. James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 128–48.

in particular to be saved.¹⁴ Luther's father confessor Johann von Staupitz preached an equally muscular doctrine of predestination, which he described as the covenant of grace between God and the elect.¹⁵ From a different philosophical approach (realism), John Wycliffe (c. 1320–84) augmented his political theory with the doctrine of double predestination.¹⁶

Double or absolute predestination was not only a catholic doctrine, that is, taught throughout the history of the church, but also a pan-Protestant doctrine through much of the sixteenth century. Warfield was quite right to say,

And so little is it a peculiarity of the Reformed theology, that it underlay and gave its form and power to the whole Reformation movement. . . . There was accordingly no difference among the Reformers on this point: Luther and Melanchthon and the compromising Butzer were no less jealous for absolute predestination than Zwingli and Calvin. Even Zwingli could not surpass Luther

14. Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, 3d ed. (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983), 196. See also 204–6; Chrus Schabel, "Parisian Commentaries from Peter Auriol to Gregory of Rimini, and the Problem of Predestination," in *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 1, ed. G. R. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 223. James L. Halverson is right to say that there is considerable ambiguity in the way historians use the word "predestination" in this discussion. He challenges the assumption that what he calls the doctrine of "double-particular election" was the dominant anti-Pelagian view in the late medieval church. He argues that Rimini was among the few who taught the "strong" doctrine of double predestination by which God actively elects and reprobates. See James L. Halverson, *Peter Auriol on Predestination: A Challenge to Late Medieval Thought*, Studies in the History of Christian Thought 88 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 7–8.

15. Johann von Staupitz, *Libellus de executione eternae praedestinationis* (Nuremberg, 1517). Selections of this work are translated into English in Oberman, ed., *Forerunners*, 139, 175–203. On the relations between Staupitz and Luther see David C. Steinmetz, *Misericordia Dei: The Theology of Johannes von Staupitz in Its Late Medieval Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 1968); idem, *Luther and Staupitz: An Essay in the Intellectual Origins of the Protestant Reformation* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1980).

16. Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400–1400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 256–57. See also Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Reformation of the Church and Dogma (1300–1700)*, vol. 4, of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 32–33. There is disagreement, however, among medievalists. G. R. Evans argues that Wycliffe rejected double predestination and "was not a forerunner of Calvin." See G. R. Evans, *John Wycliffe: Myth and Reality* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2005), 218.

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in sharp and unqualified assertion of it: and it was not Calvin but Melanchthon who gave it a formal place in his primary scientific statement of the elements of the Protestant faith.¹⁷

Among the magisterial Protestants, contrary to some popular presentations, the doctrine of double predestination was taught virtually without exception. Philipp Melanchthon (1497–1560) published his *Loci Communes*, the first Protestant system, in 1521. The first thing he discussed after the distinction between law and gospel was the doctrine of predestination:

And still, what does it matter whether I take up first or last in my compendium that which will intrude into all parts of our disputation? And since free will had to be discussed in the very first topic, how could I conceal the position of Scripture when it deprives our will of freedom by the necessity of predestination? I think it makes considerable difference that young minds are immediately imbued with this idea that all things come to pass, not according to the plans and efforts of men but according to the will of God.¹⁸

Clearly, Melanchthon was carried away with enthusiasm for what was, for him, a newly discovered doctrinal treasure that he regarded as both revolutionary and fundamental. In later editions of his *Common Places* (from 1533) he would relocate his doctrine of predestination away from soteriology, discussing it under ecclesiology and focusing more on what he called external freedom, but he never abandoned it completely.¹⁹

17. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "Calvinism," in *Calvin and Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931), 357–58.

18. Wilhelm Pauck, ed., *Melanchthon and Bucer*, Library of Christian Classics 19 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 25–26. "Quamquam quid attinet in compendio, primo in prostremo loco id agam, quod in omnes disputationis nostrae partes incidet? Et cum de libero arbitrio omnino primo loco agendum esset, qui potui dissimulare sententiam scripturae de praedestinatione, quando voluntati nostrae libertatem per praedestinationis necessitatem adimit scriptura? Quamquam non omnino nihil puto referre statim pueriles mentes hac sententia imbui, quod omnia eveniant, non iuxta hominum consilia et conatus, sed iuxta dei voluntatem." Philipp Melanchthon, *Melanchthons Werke in Auswahl*, 7 vols. (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1955), 2./1.27–12.6.

19. See R. Scott Clark, *Caspar Olevian and the Substance of the Covenant: The Double Benefit of Christ*, Rutherford Studies in Historical Theology (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2005),

One of the most striking and rhetorically powerful statements of double predestination was Luther's 1525 *De servo arbitrio* (*On the Bondage of the Will*) written and published in response to Erasmus's critique of Luther's doctrine of predestination.²⁰ Among the English Protestants, William Tyndale's (c. 1494–1536) doctrine of predestination focused, in his preface to Romans, on the comfort it brings to the believer.²¹ On the continent, Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) taught clearly the doctrine of double predestination in his 1530 treatise *On Providence*.²² Calvin's sometime colleague Martin Bucer (1491–1551) defended the doctrine of double predestination in his massive commentary on Romans.²³ It has been claimed that Heinrich Bullinger (1504–1575), Zwingli's successor in Zurich, rejected double predestination.²⁴ Cornelis Venema has shown, however, that Bullinger's concerns about double predestination were not theological but homiletical and practical.²⁵

It is evident that the doctrines of predestination and double predestination were not unique to Calvin at all but the common property since

172–73. See also Randall Zachman's helpful discussion of Calvin's relations to Melancthon in Randall C. Zachman, *John Calvin as Teacher, Pastor, and Theologian: The Shape of His Writings and Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 36–44.

20. Martin Luther, *Luthers Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. H. Böhlau, 1883), 18:600–787; Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1958), vol. 33 (hereafter, WA).

21. William Tyndale, *The Works of William Tyndale*, 2 vols., Parker Society for the Publication of the Works of the Fathers and Early Writers of the Reformed English Church (Cambridge: University Press, 1848), 1:504–5. Dewey D. Wallace Jr. argues that, though it was subdued, there is a strong organic connection between the early English Protestant doctrine of predestination and that taught by Calvin later. See Dewey D. Wallace Jr., "The Doctrine of Predestination in the Early English Reformation," *Church History* 43 (1974): 201–15.

22. Huldrych Zwingli, *Huldrici Zuingli Opera Completa*, 8 vols., ed. M. Schuler and J. Schultess (Zurich: F. Schultess, 1828–42), 4:79–144. Ulrich Zwingli, *On Providence and Other Essays* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1983), 180–92. See also W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 97–107.

23. Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et Enarrationes Perpetuae. In Epistolam ad Romanos* (Strasbourg, 1536). See also Joel Edward Kok, "The Influence of Martin Bucer on John Calvin's Interpretation of Romans: A Comparative Case Study" (Duke University, 1993); David C. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 141–50.

24. J. Wayne Baker, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenant: The Other Reformed Tradition* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980).

25. Cornelis P. Venema, *Heinrich Bullinger and the Doctrine of Predestination: Author of "the Other Reformed Tradition,"* Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

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Augustine. Why then is Calvin so closely identified with this complex of doctrines? There are several reasons. First, during the confessional period, from the 1550s, the doctrine of double predestination became a point of contention between Lutheran and Reformed orthodox theologians. Most of the confessional Lutheran theologians taught unconditional predestination to salvation but denied the doctrine of reprobation.²⁶ It was in this context, and in the context of Jerome Bolsec's (d. 1584) opposition to Calvin's doctrine of predestination, that Theodore Beza (1519–1605), Calvin's successor and close colleague, defended the propriety and pastoral use of teaching and preaching the doctrine of election in his *Summa totius christianismi* in 1555.²⁷ The nearly thirty-year controversy between the Reformed and the Remonstrants, culminating in the Canons of the Synod of Dort (1619), focused on the doctrine of predestination, giving the appearance to the critics of the Reformed churches that the Calvinists were obsessed with predestination. The Reformed orthodox contested vehemently the rise of biblicism and rationalism in the Socinians and subsequent related movements. These precursors of modernity have become heroes in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment historiography. The theological underpinnings of modernity and postmodernity are the autonomy of human persons with respect to all other persons (including God), the universal fatherhood of God, and the universal fraternity of humanity. Calvin's doctrine of predestination contained within it the antitheses of each of these modernist fundamentals. Thus, it is not surprising that the honest modernists simply dismissed Calvin's doctrine as a relic of an unenlightened age, and others have sought to make it palatable to late modern sensibilities.

It will surprise no one to learn that the secondary literature surrounding Calvin's doctrine of predestination is immense, defying adequate survey here. It must suffice to say that for much of the nineteenth and twentieth

26. See Heinrich Schmid, *The Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. Charles A. Hay and Henry E. Jacobs, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publication Society, 1889), 273–92.

27. See Richard A. Muller, "The Use and Abuse of a Document: Beza's *Tabula Praedestinationis*, the Bolsec Controversy, and the Origins of Reformed Orthodoxy," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1999), 33–61.

centuries, driven by the “Kerygma to Dogma” historiography, there was an unfortunate scholarly consensus that where Luther’s *Zentraldogma* (i.e., that principle from which the rest of his theology was deduced) was justification,²⁸ Calvin’s was said to be predestination.²⁹ According to Richard Gamble, “this outdated view of Calvin has been rejected. As a matter of fact, most leading scholars today maintain that there is no one single key to unlock the door of Calvin’s theology.”³⁰ In 1998 Richard Muller was more concerned that, though there are positive signs in Calvin studies, there are also unhappy trends. Some scholars seem to be “moving backward or down various pre-established *cul-de-sacs*.”³¹

Whereas in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and even today among certain Lutheran schools of thought, it was common to see Calvin described as a rationalist, dogmatic theologian, in two recent accounts, the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction.³² The degree to which the pendulum has swung is illustrated by the recent biographies by Suzanne Selinger and William J. Bouwsma describing an anxious, antidogmatic Calvin.³³ This view of Calvin staring into the abyss is complemented by a recent trend to focus on Calvin as a relational

28. Richard A. Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1986), 180. See also idem, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2d ed., 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 1:123–32. Warfield’s objection to the “central dogma” method is notable for its uniqueness. See Warfield, “Calvinism,” 357.

29. E.g., I. A. Dorner, *History of Protestant Theology*, trans. George Robson and Sophia Taylor, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1871), 1:415–17. This view has persisted and been modified in modern scholarship. David N. Wiley argues that Calvin’s doctrine of predestination was “primarily a soteriological doctrine” (as opposed to being a subset of his doctrine of providence). Wiley denies that predestination was Calvin’s central dogma but “it was something close to this within his soteriology.” David Neeld Wiley, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination: His Principal Soteriological and Polemical Doctrine” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1971), iii, 3, 171.

30. Richard C. Gamble, “Current Trends in Calvin Research, 1982–90,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 106.

31. Richard A. Muller, “Directions in Current Calvin Research,” in *Calvin Studies IX: Papers Presented at the Ninth Colloquium on Calvin Studies*, ed. John H. Leith and Robert A. Johnson (Davidson, NC: 1998), 87. Muller expands on these themes in idem, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*.

32. See Clark, “Calvin: A Negative Boundary Marker,” for documentation of this claim.

33. Suzanne Selinger, *Calvin against Himself: An Inquiry in Intellectual History* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984); William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century*

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theologian or as a theologian of union with Christ, even ontological union with Christ. Thomas L. Wenger describes this move as the "New Perspective on Calvin."³⁴

In contrast with the Enlightenment picture of Calvin where his doctrine of predestination served as a metaphor for or a corollary to his alleged tyranny over Geneva, and in distinction from the frequently ahistorical neoorthodox approach to Calvin which has focused almost exclusively on the *Institutes*, and in opposition to the partisan confessional Lutheran account of Calvin's allegedly rationalist doctrine of election, this essay will argue that Calvin's doctrine of predestination was exegetical, theological, and pastoral in character.

Following the example of François Wendel, T. H. L. Parker, David Steinmetz, Anthony N. S. Lane, and Richard Muller, by making a good-faith effort to understand Calvin's doctrine of predestination in its historical context,³⁵ and in line with the methodological agenda sketched by Muller to pursue "careful historical and contextual study of Calvin's exegesis, preaching, and theology," this essay will survey Calvin's exegesis on Romans 9, his theological formulations in the *Institutes* and his *Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, and conclude with a brief account of Calvin's preaching of the doctrine of predestination.³⁶

The Context

It is commonplace in Enlightenment-inspired accounts of Calvin that he was the tyrant of Geneva.³⁷ In his appallingly unhistorical account,

Portrait (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). See also Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 79–98.

34. Thomas L. Wenger, "The New Perspective on Calvin: Responding to Recent Calvin Interpretations," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007): 311–28.

35. François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origin and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper and Row, 1950); T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975); Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*; A. N. S. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999); Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*.

36. Muller, "Directions in Current Calvin Research," 87. See also idem, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 29, 105.

37. Timothy George, "Introduction," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 15.

Stefan Zweig writes of Calvin's seizure of power in Geneva.³⁸ As a matter of fact, forced to flee Paris after the Affair of the Placards, Calvin arrived in Geneva as a refugee in 1536, was expelled once to a sabbatical of sorts in Strasbourg, and returned reluctantly primarily out of an exaggerated sense of guilt and duty. He spent the remainder of his life as an alien in a frequently hostile city.³⁹ Of Calvin's second tenure in Geneva, only the last ten years can be considered settled, and even then he was unable to control the city.⁴⁰ This is not to suggest that he exercised no influence in the city. He exercised enormous influence, but his authority was primarily moral, persuasive, and ecclesiastical, that is to say, ministerial.⁴¹

When Calvin first arrived in Geneva, the independence of the republic was precarious. Having been invaded by Savoy in 1535, the city relied on the protection of the king of France and the Swiss canton (county) of Bern. Thus, to a significant degree, Geneva was not her own. Theological controversy was necessarily a civil affair. As Steinmetz reminds us, when Calvin first arrived in Geneva, "the Reformation was still a fresh experiment."⁴² Intolerant of the very sort of controversy swirling around Calvin (who was involved in controversies with Anabaptists and a violent argument with Pierre Caroli in which the latter charged Calvin with Arianism) and bent on satisfying their protectors in Bern, who were making demands of the Genevan churches that Calvin and the pastors were opposing, the larger council of two hundred discharged Calvin during Easter week of 1538.⁴³

38. Stefan Zweig, *The Right to Heresy: Castellio against Calvin*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (London: Cassell, 1936), 29–56.

39. H. A. Oberman, "Europa Afflicta: The Reformation of the Refugees," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 83 (1992): 91–111.

40. William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 213–14.

41. On Calvin's life in Geneva see Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 9–20; Wendel, *Calvin*, 69–107; Parker, *John Calvin*, 51–66, 82–132; Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the Coming Wars of Religion, 1555–1563* (Geneva: Droz, 1956); William Monter, *Calvin's Geneva* (New York: Wiley, 1967); Gillian Lewis, "Calvinism in Geneva in the Time of Calvin and Beza, 1541–1605," in *International Calvinism 1541–1715*, ed. Menna Prestwich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan*.

42. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 11.

43. Parker, *John Calvin*, 64–66.

Having been recalled by Geneva in 1541, he returned reluctantly, taking up his sermon in St. Pierre where he had ended it earlier, "indicating by this that I had only temporarily interrupted my office of preaching and had not given it up entirely."⁴⁴ Through the 1540s he and the pastors went about instituting Reformed worship, catechesis, and church order. He was faced with the regular problems that burden any pastor in addition to his remarkable schedule of preaching, writing, correspondence, lecturing, leadership of the consistory and the company of pastors, and his de facto leadership of the francophone Reformed churches.

His theology was not without challenge. His second tenure in Geneva was "filled with theological controversy" requiring him to dispute with internal critics (Sebastian Castellion, Jerome Bolsec), Lutheran theologians (Andreas Osiander, Joachim Westphal, Tilemann Heshussen), rationalists (Miguel Servetus, Laelius Socinus), Anabaptists (Menno Simons), and "a host of nameless figures he somewhat imprecisely categorized as Epicureans, Libertines, Anabaptists, Nicodemites, Sorbonnists, and Sophists."⁴⁵ When the reorganized and expanded edition of the *Institutes* appeared in 1539, chapter 8, "De Praedestinatione et Providentia Dei,"⁴⁶ was forwarded to the Dutch Roman theologian Albert Pigge (Pighius) (c. 1490–1542), who published a scathing critique, *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia*, in ten books.⁴⁷ In his *Defense of the Sane and Orthodox Doctrine concerning the Bondage and Liberation of the Human Will against the Calumnies of Albert Pigge of Kampen* (1543), Calvin was able to reply to the first six chapters of Pigge's treatise in time for the Frankfurt book fair in the fall of

44. "Locum explicandum assumpsi in quo substitutoram." John Calvin, *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, 59 vols., Corpus Reformatorum (Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Sons, 1863), 11:365.49–366.14 (hereafter CO); T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 59–60.

45. Steinmetz, *Calvin in Context*, 18.

46. This was chapter 8 in the 1539 edition but in later editions (to 1554) it was chapter 14. Thus in the CO it is given as XIV (VIII). See Richard F. Wevers, ed., *Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin, 1539: Text and Concordance*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, 1988), 1:216; CO 1:861–62. This section became 3.21–24 in the 1559 edition.

47. Cologne, 1542. For a brief survey of Pigge's life and work see F. L. Schulze, *Calvin's Reply to Pighius*, vol. 9, Human Sciences Research Council (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege, 1971), 11–18.

1543.⁴⁸ He intended to reply to the remaining chapters in 1544 but, since Pigge died in 1542, Calvin was distracted from finishing the task.⁴⁹

Another controversy over predestination erupted in 1551 when Jerome Bolsec, a former Carmelite monk turned physician, who had vacillated between the Reformation and Rome, attacked Calvin's doctrine of predestination during a meeting of the congregation.⁵⁰ Bolsec, "a poor theologian technically" and "particularly weak on the history doctrines," charged Calvin with making God the author of sin.⁵¹ Absent for the first part of Bolsec's complaint, Calvin arrived unseen and stood to reply extempore for one hour.⁵² He replied to Bolsec in print in 1552 with *De aeterna dei praedestinatione*.⁵³ We must read the development of Calvin's theology in the light of his own personal development (he was a young man when he arrived in Geneva) and in the light of the various challenges to his doctrine of predestination.

Commentarius in Epistolam ad Romanos (1540)

There is some uncertainty as to the exact origins of Calvin's commentary on Romans. He was appointed "doctor of the sacred letters" (*sacrarum litterarum doctor*) "with the task of expounding Scripture in lectures."⁵⁴ There is some evidence that he began his lectures in the Pauline epistles by lecturing through Romans. According to T. H. L. Parker, these lectures

48. *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae doctrinae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias alberti pighii campensis* (Geneva, 1543). CO 6:225–404. A. N. S. Lane, ed., *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defence of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), xiv.

49. Lane, ed., *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, xv. See also idem, *John Calvin: Student of the Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 179–89.

50. Bernard Cottret, *Calvin: A Biography*, trans. M. Wallace McDonald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 209–212.

51. Parker, *John Calvin*, 113.

52. After which Bolsec was arrested and taken to prison to await trial.

53. *De aeterna dei praedestinatione qua in salutem alios ex hominibus elegit, alios suo exitio reliquit: item de providentia qua res humanas gubernat, consensus pastorum genevensis ecclesiae* (Geneva, 1552) in CO 8:257–366. The modern critical English translation is John Calvin, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, trans. J. K. S. Reid (London: James Clarke, 1961).

54. CO 21:126.

likely formed the basis of the commentary that he completed in Strasbourg in 1539.⁵⁵ It was revised in 1551 and again in 1556 for style and to reflect the controversies over predestination with Bolsec and Pighius.⁵⁶

In his dedicatory epistle to the great humanist Simon Grynée (1493–1541), Erasmus's successor in Basel, dated November 15, 1539,⁵⁷ Calvin revealed to the public that they had been discussing for some time the best method for commenting on Scripture and had agreed upon "perspicuous brevity" (*perspicua brevitate*).⁵⁸ Melancthon's focus on disputed points in his 1532 commentary left too much of Paul's argument untouched,⁵⁹ and Bucer's lengthy discourses made his commentary unwieldy. In his argumentum, Calvin made it clear that he regarded Romans as carefully constructed, and thus, by implication, his own work would follow Paul's example.⁶⁰ The whole epistle was not only "*methodica*," but the "principal question of the whole epistle is our justification by faith."⁶¹ When he had hardly begun commenting, Calvin was compelled to make clear that our "only righteousness" is "the mercy of God in Christ, offered in the gospel, apprehended by faith."⁶² These comments by Calvin recommend that, from the outset, we consider Calvin's doctrine of predestination to be both exegetical and theological. Any account of Calvin's doctrine of predestination must reckon with the fact that he developed it out of his exegetical

55. T. H. L. Parker, ed., *Commentarius in Epistolam Pauli ad Romanos*, Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia, Series II: Ioannis Calvini Opera Exegetica 13 (Geneva: Droz, 1999), xiii (hereafter, *OE* 13 followed by page and line numbers). Bernard Cottret speculates that the commentary arose out his lectures in Johann Sturm's gymnasium. Cottret, *Calvin*, 143.

56. *Ibid.*, xiii–xix.

57. This is the date, under the Julian calendar, given in the Latin text (*ibid.*, 6.9).

58. *Ibid.*, 3.9.

59. G. C. Bretschneider, ed., *Corpus Reformatorum* (Brunswick: Schwetschke et Sons, 1834), 15:495–796. The modern critical edition is *Melancthon's Werke*, vol. 5. The English translation is Philipp Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992). For more on sixteenth-century commentaries on Romans see Clark, *Caspar Olevian*, 141–48; *idem*, "Olevianus and Paul," in *Paul in the Reformation*, ed. R. Ward Holder (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

60. *OE* 13.7.12–13.

61. "Atque ingreditur principalem totius epistolae quaestionem, fide nos iustificari." *Ibid.*, 7.19–20.

62. "Unicam esse hominibus iustitiam, Dei misericordiam in Christo, dum per Euan-gelium oblata, fide apprehenditur." *Ibid.*, 7.22–23.

work in Romans, which book he read to be chiefly about the material doctrine of the Reformation: justification *sola fide*.

Given his overtly theological reading of the epistle, his reading of Romans 9 is not surprising but is striking nonetheless. He begins where the chapter begins, with the historical and rhetorical problem that Paul faced: How to account for the fact that the Jews, the *primarios custodes* and *haeredes* of the covenant (*foederis*), have “turned away from Christ” (*a Christo abhorrere*).⁶³ Is it the case that the covenant has been transferred (*translatum*) from the “posterity of Abraham” (*ab Abrahae posteritate*) or that Christ is not the promised Redeemer?⁶⁴ Having accounted for Paul’s rhetorical move to disarm his critics, Calvin turned to Paul’s doctrine of election as the source of explanation. The *genus* of the sons of Abraham was *duplex*.⁶⁵ Not everyone who was *secundum carnem* was to be reckoned (*censeri*) “in the seed with respect to participating in the covenant of grace.”⁶⁶ There were some who were *extraneos* and who “through faith were engrafted, to be reckoned in the position of sons.”⁶⁷ This fact can be explained only by recourse to the *exemplum* of Jacob and Esau.⁶⁸ “So then, Paul here recalls us to the election of God,” and it is this doctrine on which (*unde*) we are to regard “the whole business” (*totum negotium*) necessarily to depend.⁶⁹ “Further, since this election depends on the mercy of God alone,” it is “vain” (*frustra*) to seek its cause “in human worth.”⁷⁰ For most of the church through most of its history, Calvin’s position of the gracious, unconditional election of Jacob is relatively uncontroversial. Accounting for Esau, however, was another matter. Here we come to the “other side” (*ex adverso*) of the question, the *reiectio* (of Esau).⁷¹ Even though (*tametsi*) the righteousness (*iustitia*)

63. Ibid., 10.31–32.

64. Ibid., 10.33–35.

65. Ibid., 10.40.

66. “In semine ad participandam foederis gratiam.” Ibid., 11.1.

67. “Per fidem inserantur, filiorum haberi loco.” Ibid., 11.2.

68. Ibid., 11.3.

69. “Proinde hic nos ad electionem Dei revocat, unde totum negotium dependere necessario reputandum est.” Ibid., 11.3–4.

70. “Porro quum haec electio sola Dei misericordia nitatur, frustra eius causa quaeritur in hominum dignitate.” Ibid., 11.4–5.

71. Ibid., 11.6.

of God's decree of reprobation is certain (*certa*), the implication is clear that a problem remains since "there exists no cause superior to the will of God."⁷²

Calvin unfolded these lines of argumentation in the commentary proper. However concerned Paul was to remove unnecessary obstacles to faith in Christ, he will not "concede a whit to them" if it results in the *detrimentum Euangelii*.⁷³ Paul shows "no lack of skill" (*non caret artificio*) in beginning with his own grief (*cruciavit*) at the unbelief among the Jews and at the "destruction of the Jews."⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Paul knew that their unbelief must be explained by "God's will and disposing."⁷⁵ For Calvin, there is no conflict between grieving (*ingemiscamus*) over the reprobate (*ad perditorum hominum ruinam*) and recognizing that they are "destined by the righteous judgment of God."⁷⁶ Paul's invocation of the divine anathema upon himself was genuine. He did this, not with his own sure election, but with the salvation of his own people in view.⁷⁷ He spoke out of love. The "scope of Paul's entire prayer" is that, in spite of their "impious separation" from God, nevertheless the "light of grace was not extinct" among them.⁷⁸ They had the advantage of being the adopted, national, covenant people of God, through whom the Messiah had come.

Nevertheless, for Calvin, Paul's *propositio* is that the promise was given to Abraham and to his seed, but there is a more important determinant in reckoning the stability of the covenant promise and the seed of Abraham: election.⁷⁹ The Lord willed that his covenant be sealed (*obsignari*) no less in Ishmael and Esau than it is in Isaac and Jacob.⁸⁰ Calvin was careful to note that Esau and Ishmael were both *promissionis filios* (quoting Gal. 4:28) and *fili pactorum* (quoting Acts 3:25).⁸¹ They had this status, "even

72. "Causa tamen Dei voluntate superior non extat." *Ibid.*, 11.7.

73. *Ibid.*, 186.19–20.

74. *Ibid.*, 11.27.

75. "Deo volente atque ita disponente." *Ibid.*, 187.27–28.

76. "Sciemus iusto Dei iudicio destinatos." *Ibid.*, 187.29–30.

77. *Ibid.*, 188.6–15.

78. "Ad hunc scopum dirigitur tota Pauli oratio, utcunque defectione sua Iudaei impium cum Deo divortium fecerint, non tamen prorsus extinctam in illis esse lucem gratiae Dei." *Ibid.*, 189.34–36.

79. *Ibid.*, 192.31–193.4.

80. *Ibid.*, 193.6.

81. *Ibid.*, 193.4, 10.

though they were *infidels*," because they were physically descended from Abraham.⁸² He cited Ezekiel 16:20–21 as evidence that the Lord called them sons.⁸³ Indeed, Calvin was pointed about the reality of the administration of the covenant of grace. In language that he repeated almost verbatim in the *Institutio* (see below), he warned against speaking of the covenant of grace with *contumelia*.⁸⁴

Calvin, however, qualified his account of the administration of the covenant of grace with a second (*alterum*) point.⁸⁵ This sealing, however, does not mean that Esau and Ishmael had the same relation to God, salvation, and grace that Isaac and Jacob enjoyed. The sons of the promise "properly" or narrowly reckoned are those in whom the "power and efficacy" of the covenant of grace are found.⁸⁶ "For this reason," Calvin reminds his readers, "Paul denies that all the sons of Abraham are sons of God, even though the covenant was initiated with them by the Lord."⁸⁷

The distinction (*differentia*) that Calvin made here, between those who are genuinely a part of the administration of the covenant of grace, recipients of the offer (*oblata*) of salvation confirmed by the "symbol of circumcision," and those who actually receive what has been offered and sealed is election.⁸⁸ "Paul denies that they were included in the true election of God."⁸⁹ He restated the distinction this way, which he described in *Institutio* 3.21.7 as the distinction between *electio generalis* and *electio specialis*,⁹⁰ as a distinction between "the election common to the Israelite people" (*communis populi Israelitici electio*), which he also described as a *foedus vitae*, and God's free choosing (*deligat*) by his "secret counsel"

82. *Ibid.*, 193.9–10.

83. *Ibid.*, 193.14–16.

84. "Quod sine Dei contumelia dici non potest." *Ibid.*, 196.8. "Quod non sine foederis contumelia diceretur." Petrus Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, eds., *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, 5 vols. (Munich: Christian Kaiser, 1926), 4:368 (hereafter OS, followed by page and line numbers), 4.378.26–27.

85. OE 13.193.11.

86. "Filius promissionis proprie nuncupari in quibus ipsius virtus et efficacia extet." *Ibid.*; 193.11–12.

87. "Ea ratione hic negat Paulus, omnes Abrahae filios esse filios Dei, etiamsi pactum cum illis initum esset a Domino." *Ibid.*, 193.12–14.

88. *Ibid.*, 193.18–19, 20–21.

89. "Paul eos esse comprehensos in vera Dei electione negat." *Ibid.*, 193.23.

90. OS 4.377.34–378.5.

(*arcano suo consilio*) whom he will.⁹¹ For Calvin, this distinction was only an application of the same distinction that he made in his comments on Romans 2:28. A “true Jew is not to be reckoned either by family descent, or by title of profession, or from eternal symbol.” It is not circumcision (or baptism, as he made clear in his comments on Rom. 2:25) that “constitutes” one a Jew, that is, a believer, but one must be so internally.⁹²

In the same way, in his comments on Romans 9:6, Calvin wrote that Paul “denies that ‘all who are of Israel and all who are of the seed of Abraham are Israelites.’”⁹³ He did not accuse Paul of equivocating on election, but he described Paul’s usage as paronomasia whereby in the first clause he included all who are physically Israelite, and in the second clause he referred only to “true sons” (*tantum filios*) who demonstrated their election by remaining faithful.⁹⁴ Paul shows that the “external call” (*externam vocationem*) is controlled by the “hidden election” (*electionem arcanam*).⁹⁵

He made this point even clearer in his comments on Romans 9:11. Even though all the circumcised are adopted (*adoptati*) into the *foederis societatem*, nevertheless grace is not efficacious in all.⁹⁶ “Therefore those who enjoy the benefit of God are the sons of the promise.”⁹⁷ The distinction between those who receive the benefits of Christ and those who do not is determined solely by election. “The whole cause is referred to the election of God.”⁹⁸ “And,” Calvin adds, “that election is gracious.”⁹⁹ “Nothing superior to the goodness of God is to be sought in the salvation of the pious, in the destruction of the reprobate, nothing higher is to be sought than his righteous severity.”¹⁰⁰

91. OE 13.193.23–25, 27.

92. Ibid., 54.24–33. For more on how this distinction has functioned in Reformed theology, see R. Scott Clark, “Baptism and the Benefits of Christ: The Double Mode of Communion,” *Confessional Presbyterian Journal* 2 (2006): 3–19.

93. “Quod autem omnes qui sunt ex Israele, negat esse Israelitas, et omnes qui sunt ex semini Abrahæ, esse filios.” Ibid., 193.29–30.

94. S.v. “paranomazo,” in Henry George Liddell et al., eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996).

95. OE 13.193.33–34.

96. Ibid., 195.17–18.

97. “Eos ergo qui fruuntur Dei beneficio, esse promissionis filios.” Ibid., 195.18–19.

98. “Causam totam ad electionem Dei refert.” Ibid., 195.20–21.

99. “Eamque gratuitam.” Ibid., 195.21.

100. “Nihil superius quaeratur Dei bonitate, in salute piorum, in reprobatorum exitio, nihil superius iusta eius severitate.” Ibid., 195.22–23.

As he continued working clause by clause through verses 11 and 12, Calvin was at pains to reiterate the gracious character of election, salvation, and justification over against the “sophists,” that is, the theologians of the Sorbonne. “Therefore,” he concludes, “we have the whole stability of our election confined only in the purpose of God.”¹⁰¹

As he did in the *Institutio*, having laid out his fundamental view, his reading of Paul’s doctrine of election, in his commentary on the remainder of Romans 9, he elaborated on the same basic themes and distinctions, working carefully through the Greek text clause by clause and word by word,¹⁰² at every turn reasserting this fundamental distinction between the sovereign decree (election and reprobation) and its administration among the visible people of God.

The Institutes of the Christian Religion (1559) 3.21–24

It is beyond the scope of this essay to address the development of Calvin’s doctrine of election in the *Institutes*, so it must do to say that his account of election developed chiefly in response to the sort of external challenges already described, and partly because of Calvin’s own growth as a pastor and theologian, but his doctrine of election did not change fundamentally in the twenty-three years from the first Latin edition to the last.¹⁰³ He always taught an unequivocal doctrine of double predestination.

Where in his commentary on Romans the discussion of election is firmly situated in the concrete historical setting of Paul’s proclamation of the gospel and the problem of the Jewish national covenant, in *Institutio* 3.21.1, the question is more generic, although the language is analogous (both have to do with covenants): “The covenant of life (*foedus vitae*) is not preached equally to all men, and among those to whom it is preached it does not find the same place equally or perpetually.”¹⁰⁴ How does one

101. “Habemus ergo, totam electionis nostrae firmitudinem in solo Dei proposito esse conclusam.” *Ibid.*, 196.36–38.

102. Parker, “Introduction,” in *ibid.*, xxxii.

103. E.g., CO 1:73–77.

104. “Iam vero quod non apud omnes peraeque homines foedus vitae praedicatur, et apud eos quibus praedicatur, non eundem locum vel aequaliter vel perpetuo reperit.” OS 4.368.33–35.

explain how it is that not all hear the gospel or that not all who hear it believe? The answer is in the heading for the chapter in the 1559 edition: "Concerning Eternal Election by Which God Has Predestined Some to Salvation and Others to Perdition."¹⁰⁵ In this diversity the "marvelous height of the divine judgment discloses itself."¹⁰⁶

Calvin's theological agenda was not only to explain why things are as they are, why some come to faith and others do not, but also to give assurance to those who do believe. "We shall never be persuaded clearly that our salvation flows from the font of God's gracious mercy, until his eternal election is made clear to us: which by this comparison illustrates the grace of God, which does not adopt all promiscuously into the hope of salvation, but gives to some what it denies to others."¹⁰⁷ In other words, given that, in the end, some do not believe, and that unbelief is traceable to the divine will, the fact that one does believe is a source of great encouragement, for it means that one has been unconditionally elected by Christ's sovereign grace. Ignorance of this doctrine has two effects: First, it diminishes (*imminuat*) the glory of God. Second, it detracts from true humility.¹⁰⁸ Those who would refuse to teach this doctrine are tearing up the "root of humility."¹⁰⁹ Those who cover up this doctrine deny to Christians a ground of "solid confidence" (*solidae fiduciae*).¹¹⁰

From the very outset of his discussion of the *locus* of predestination it is clear that this is not a mere academic exercise. Calvin writes about predestination with pastoral care for the spiritual well-being of his readers and of those to whom they would preach and counsel. This pastoral concern becomes even clearer when, in his introduction of the question, he warns about a potential problem. "The curiosity of men" makes "disputation about predestination, already a difficult thing in itself, perplexing

105. "De electione aeterna, qua Deus alios ad salutem, alios ad interitum praedestinavit." OS 4.368.31–32.

106. "In ea diversitate mirabilis divini iudicii altitudo se profert." Ibid., 4.368.35–36.

107. "Nunquam liquido ut decet persuasi erimus salutem nostram ex fonte gratuita misericordiae Dei fluere, donec innotuerit nobis aeterna eius electio: quae hac comparatione gratiam Dei illustrat, quod non omnes promiscue adoptat in spem salutis, sed dat aliis quod aliis negat." Ibid., 4.369.10–14.

108. Ibid., 4.369.15–16.

109. "Humilitatis radicem evellunt." Ibid., 4.369.27.

110. Ibid., 4.369.35.

and hazardous."¹¹¹ If unbridled, this curiosity will lead one straight into a labyrinth.¹¹² The only safe path, therefore, when inquiring into predestination, is to give oneself over to those "secrets of his will" (*voluntatis suae arcana*) that he has determined to reveal in his Word.¹¹³

In 3.21.2–3, Calvin elaborates on the themes established in section 1. In 3.21.4, however, he addresses the problem of those "profane men" (*profani homines*) who "take hold" (*arripiunt*) of the doctrine of predestination in order to mock it.¹¹⁴ Their mocking, however, should not discourage the pious. These same fellows will also mock creation, the Trinity, and other *dogmata fidei*.¹¹⁵

There is another danger, however, that is more subtle. Those who would be regarded as pious do not openly reject "predestination by which God adopts some to life and sentences others to eternal death"¹¹⁶ Rather, instead of the unconditioned divine will, they make election conditional upon divine foreknowledge (*praescientiam faciunt eius causam*).¹¹⁷ There is no question whether God has foreknowledge and whether he predestines. The question is the relation between the two. To make God's foreknowledge the cause of election is to move the ground of election from God to the creature. For Calvin, in such a case, election would no longer be a free divine act, grounded in the free divine will. It would condition the divine will by something outside of God, and this, for Calvin, was almost unthinkable.

Further, such a construal of the relations between foreknowledge and predestination entails a redefinition of foreknowledge. When Calvin said *praescientia* he meant that "all things are and remain perpetually before his

111. "Disputationem de praedestinatione, quam per se sit aliquantum impedita, valde perplexam atque adeo periculosam reddit hominum curiositas." *Ibid.*, 4.370.12–14. See also *Institutes* 3.23.12–15.

112. *Ibid.*, 4.370.23.

113. *Ibid.*, 4.370.28–29.

114. *Ibid.*, 4.372.1–2.

115. *Ibid.*, 4.372.4.

116. "Praedestinationem, qua Deus alios in spem vitae adoptat, alios adiudicat aeternae morti." *Ibid.*, 4.373.31–34. The verb *adiudicat* is difficult to translate. Ford Lewis Battles's choice of "sentence" seems apt. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 vols., Library of Christian Classics 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 3.21.5 (hereafter, *Institutes*).

117. OS 4.374.2.

eyes."¹¹⁸ To God, nothing is "future or past" (*futurum aut praeteritum*).¹¹⁹ Thus he defined predestination as "the eternal decree of God, by which he held as constituted with himself what he wills to be concerning each man."¹²⁰ Some are predestined to life, others to death. This decree of election "remains inviolable" (*inviolabilis manet*), even in the administration of the temporary, typological election of national Israel, and even when the *signa* do not always appear.¹²¹

The cases of Ishmael and Isaac and of Jacob and Esau offered to Calvin incontrovertible evidence of the nature of particular election (3.21.6). Both Ishmael and Isaac were "of the same race of Abraham" (*ex eodem genere Abrahae*), the *spirituale foedus* was sealed (*obsignatum*) to both of them by circumcision, but Ishmael was "cut off" (*exciditur*).¹²² Calvin observed the same pattern in Saul, Jacob, and throughout the *sacra historia*.¹²³ They were all a part of the visible people of God and recipients of certain benefits; nevertheless, God repudiated some (*repudiavit*), favoring (*fovendo*) others.¹²⁴ This is the outworking of the "second, more restricted degree" of election which manifests God's *gratia magis specialis*.¹²⁵

Gracious election is only "half exposita" (*ex parte exposita*) by the case of national Israel. One must account for the election of "individual persons" (*singulas personas*). The explanation is that God, by his *occulto consilio*, freely elects those whom he will and rejects others (3.21.7).¹²⁶ God not only "offers" (*offert*) salvation, he actually assigns (*assignat*) so that it is not (as it is in the Roman view) a matter of doubt or suspense.¹²⁷ Because God has made an "eternal covenant of life" (*vitae aeternae pacto*),¹²⁸ particular election is certain. Because the Father has "collected" his elect

118. "Omnia semper fuisse ac perpetuo manere sub eius oculis." *Ibid.*, 4.374.5-6.

119. *Ibid.*, 4.374.6.

120. "Praedestinationem vocamus aeternum Dei decretum, quo apud se constitutum habuit quid de unoquoque homine fieri vellet." *Ibid.*, 4.374.11-13.

121. *Ibid.*, 4.376.21-22.

122. *Ibid.*, 4.376.27-28.

123. *Ibid.*, 4.376.34.

124. *Ibid.*, 4.376.25.

125. "Secundus gradus restrictior." *Ibid.*, 4.376.23-24.

126. *Ibid.*, 4.377.19-22.

127. *Ibid.*, 4.377.23.

128. *Ibid.*, 4.377.34-35.

and bound (*devinxit*) them to himself with an “insoluble nexus,”¹²⁹ they receive a “special mode of election.”¹³⁰ Grace does not elect all promiscuously and efficaciously.¹³¹

As in the commentary on Romans 9, Jacob and Esau provide the definitive case study.¹³² “Jacob have I loved” refers both to a class of people and also to particular individuals.¹³³ The prophet juxtaposes (*opponit*) the class of those who are identified with Jacob with the class of those identified with Esau. The *electio generalis* is not always “firm.”¹³⁴ All those who participate in the covenant have an *externa mutatio*, but they do not all receive the “interior efficacious grace” (*interiori gratiae efficacia*) and the “Spirit of regeneration,” and therefore they do not persevere to the end.¹³⁵ It was not “worthless and unfruitful” (*inanis et infructuosa*) to be a part of the visible image (*imago*) and seed (*seminis*) of Abraham, to participate in the administration of the covenant of grace—to say that would dishonor the covenant—but the administration of the covenant is subject to the *immutabile Dei consilium*.¹³⁶ By this immutable counsel, God has predestined some to salvation and damned others.¹³⁷

“Scripture shows clearly” that election to life is not conditioned by human dignity (*nullo humanae dignitatis respectu*), but rather by God’s “eternal and immutable counsel.”¹³⁸ His election to salvation is grounded in “his gracious mercy” (*in gratuita eius misericordia*), and his reprobation is a “holy, irreproachable but incomprehensible judgment.”¹³⁹ For those who are elect, prior to glorification there are two testimonies of election. The first is efficacious, inward *vocatio*. The second is *iustificatio*.¹⁴⁰

129. “Electos suos caelestis Pater inter se colligavit, et sibi insolubili nexu devinxit.” *Ibid.*, 4.377.28–29.

130. “Specialem electionis modum.” *Ibid.*, 4.377.34–35.

131. *Ibid.*, 4.377.35–36.

132. See also *Institutes* 3.22.4–6.

133. OS 4.377.36–378.1.

134. *Ibid.*, 4.378.4–5.

135. *Ibid.*, 4.378.6–9.

136. *Ibid.*, 4.378.21–27.

137. *Ibid.*, 4.378.28–29.

138. *Ibid.*, 4.378.32.

139. “Iusto quidem et irreprehensibili, sed incomprehensibili ipsius iudicio.” *Ibid.*, 4.379.1–3.

140. *Ibid.*, 4.379.3–4. See also *Institutes* 3.22.10.

“By vocation and justification the Lord seals the elect” and excludes the reprobate “from the knowledge of his name and from his Spirit of sanctification.”¹⁴¹ These comments, as Calvin summarizes his doctrine of election and reprobation, validate Wiley’s conclusion that, through his doctrine of justification, Calvin “defended the theological validity of the Reformation’s doctrine of gratuitous justification apart from meritorious works.”¹⁴²

The basic lines of Calvin’s theology of the decree are clear enough. The following chapters, 22–24, merely elaborate and defend the arguments already laid out in the commentary on Romans and in *Institutio* 3.21. In 3.22.2 he makes clear that, when he rejected making foreknowledge the ground of election, that rejection included the notion of *merita fore praevidet*.¹⁴³ By this commitment to unconditional election, he rejected the notion that we are elected because of foreseen sanctity (3.22.3). For Calvin, such a claim “inverts Paul’s order.”¹⁴⁴

In 3.23.1 his apology (*Refutatio calumniarum*) for double predestination addressed the possibility of a doctrine of election without a doctrine of reprobation.¹⁴⁵ Some “acknowledge election as they deny that anyone is reprobated.”¹⁴⁶ Election can only be understood in the light of reprobation. Calvin was not opposed to saying that God passes by (*praeterit*) some so long as it is understood that, by preterition, God reprobates (*reprobat*) them.¹⁴⁷ God wills (*vult*) to exclude the reprobate.¹⁴⁸ As Calvin saw it, the problem the critics have with the doctrine of reprobation is that they will not be “curbed” (*fraenari*) by the Word of God.¹⁴⁹ Calvin recognized that Paul ascribes to the reprobate “the guilt of perdition who bring it on

141. “Quemadmodum autem vocatione et iustificatione electos suos Dominus signat, ita reprobos vel a notitia sui nominis, vel a Spiritus sui sanctificatione excludendo.” *Ibid.*, 4.379.6–8.

142. Wiley, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Predestination,” iv.

143. OS 4.379.22. The references to Aquinas’s *Summa Theologiae* in the Battles edition are provided by the editor and not embedded in the Latin text.

144. “Et ordinem Pauli invertes.” *Ibid.*, 4.382.12.

145. OS 4.393.34.

146. “Electionem ita fatentur ut negent quenquam reprobari.” *Ibid.*, 4.394.1–2.

147. *Ibid.*, 4.394.6.

148. *Ibid.*, 4.394.8.

149. *Ibid.*, 4.394.9.

themselves by their own will."¹⁵⁰ Paul employed a variety of ways of speaking (*diversa loquendi*) to mitigate (*lenire*) the severity (*asperitatem*) of this doctrine,¹⁵¹ but his rhetorical strategy does not change the fact that the *praeparationem ad interitum* (preparation for condemnation) cannot be transferred to any other place than the *arcanum consilium Dei* (the secret counsel of God).¹⁵²

As has become evident throughout this survey, Calvin turned repeatedly to the divine will as the ultimate explanation. Nowhere is that clearer than in the next section (3.23.2) where he raises the question whether such a doctrine makes God capricious. His answer: the pious will recognize the shamelessness (*improbitas*) of investigating (*percontari*) the "causes of the divine will" (*causas divinae voluntatis*).¹⁵³

For his will is, and rightly ought to be, the cause of all things that are. For if it has any cause, something must precede it, to which it is, as it were, bound; this is unlawful to imagine. For God's will (*Dei voluntas*) is so much the highest (*summa*) rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous. When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has willed it.¹⁵⁴

There is nothing behind God's will to which one may appeal. Nevertheless, Calvin is not arguing for a sort of Ockhamist voluntarism. "Neither do we agree with the fiction of 'absolute power,' as this is profane and rightly ought to be detestable to us."¹⁵⁵ The *commentum* he rejected was certainly the claim that, theoretically, God the Son could have become incarnate as a donkey. Neither, however, was Calvin an intellectualist. God does not will according to some

150. "Perditionis culpam reicit in eos qui proprio arbitrio ipsam sibi accersunt." *Ibid.*, 4.395.7-8.

151. *Ibid.*, 4.395.9-10.

152. *Ibid.*, 4.395.10-11.

153. *Ibid.*, 4.395.33-34.

154. *Institutes*, 3.24.2; OS 4.395-96.5.

155. "Neque tamen commentum ingerimus absolutae potentiae: quod sicuti profanum est, ita merito detestabile nobis esse debet." *Ibid.*, 4.396.16-18. On Calvin's relations to voluntarism see R. Scott Clark, "Calvin on the *Lex Naturalis*," *Stulos Theological Journal* 6 (1998): 13-14.

external norm, but he wills according to his own nature. It is not given to creatures to bring reproach (3.23.4) upon God. Calvin appealed again to Romans 9:20–21, “O homo, tu quis est . . . ?”¹⁵⁶ Paul calls God’s judgments “inscrutable” (3.25.5).¹⁵⁷

As to the question why God “imputes” (*imputaret*) as sin those things that necessarily happened (e.g., the fall) according to the decree:¹⁵⁸ having rejected a couple of possible solutions as inadequate, Calvin concluded that God foreknows (*praevideat*) future contingents only because (*quia*) he has “decreed them to be” (*fierent decrevit*).¹⁵⁹ Nor will it do to appeal to the distinction between the will and permission (*voluntatis et permissionis*, 3.23.8).¹⁶⁰ Calvin was not opposed to all talk of permission, but he did reject the notion of things occurring *sola Dei permissione* (only by the divine permission) if that mere permission excludes the divine ordination,¹⁶¹ since predestination is nothing else but the dispensation of the justice of God.¹⁶² There is, however, a useful way of speaking about permission. The perdition of the reprobate “depends upon the predestination of God, so that the cause and occasion (*materia*) are to be found in themselves.”¹⁶³ In other words, for Calvin, though there is no cause or occasion in anyone for his election to salvation, and despite his strong emphasis on the freedom and inscrutability of the divine will, the decree of reprobation is not exactly parallel, in every respect, to the decree of election. There is, in the reprobate, at least an occasion of damnation.

In the last chapter on predestination (3.24) Calvin spends seventeen sections answering objections and restating earlier points in answer to the variations on earlier criticisms. In 3.24.4, however, he touches on a new theme for these chapters, namely, the question of how not to think about election. Just as they err who make the power of election contingent upon

156. OS 3.397.30.

157. *Ibid.*, 3.399.22.

158. *Ibid.*, 3.399.33.

159. *Ibid.*, 3.401.3–4.

160. *Ibid.*, 3.402.12.

161. *Ibid.*, 3.402.15–16.

162. *Ibid.*, 3.402.27–28.

163. “Adhoc, sic ex Dei praedestinatione pendet eorum perditio, ut causa et materia in ipsis reperiatur.” *Ibid.*, 4.402.31–32.

faith,¹⁶⁴ so too Satan has no more “grave or dangerous temptation” by which he discourages and disquiets the faithful with doubts about their election than to lead them to inquire “with cupidity” about their election “outside the way.”¹⁶⁵ It is going “outside the way” (*extra viam*) when a “little man” (*homuncio*) seeks to “break through” (*perrumpere*) into the recesses of the “hidden divine wisdom” (*abditos divinae sapientiae recessus*) to find out what the tribunal of God has constituted with respect to himself.¹⁶⁶ By such attempts at knowing the hidden decree one only covers oneself in “an abyss of darkness.”¹⁶⁷ The way to assurance and peace is to avoid being dashed against the rock of destruction by asking directly about one’s election. We are all tempted to ask, “What revelation is there of your election?”¹⁶⁸ The answer instead is to give oneself to the promises of the Word. “Therefore let this be our way of inquiring, that we might make a beginning from the call of God, and that we might end in the same place.”¹⁶⁹

The call in view here is the external call of the preached gospel (*Evangelii praedicationem*).¹⁷⁰ To find assurance, to find “the mercy and favor of the Father, we must turn our eyes to Christ, in whom alone the Spirit of the Father rests” (3.24.5).¹⁷¹ After all, the elect are not chosen “in themselves” (*in ipsis*) but “in Christo suo” (in his Christ).¹⁷² If we are “elect in him,” then we do not discover (*reperiemus*) the certainty of our election in ourselves,” as if we had access to God the Father apart from Christ. “Christ, therefore, is the mirror in whom it is appropriate to regard our election, and without deception.”¹⁷³

164. “Ergo ut perperam faciunt qui electionis vim suspendunt a fide Evangelii.” *Ibid.*, 4.414.6–7.

165. “Nulla tentatione vel gravius vel periculosius fideles percellit Satan, quam dum ipsos suae electionis dubitatione inquietans, simul prava eius extra viam inquirendae cupiditate sollicitat.” *Ibid.*, 4.414.10–13.

166. *Ibid.*, 4.414.3–15.

167. “Caliginis abysso se adobruit.” *Ibid.*, 4.414.19.

168. “Electionis porro quae tibi revelatio?” *Ibid.*, 4.414.25.

169. “Sit igitur haec nobis inquirendi via, ut exordium sumamus a Dei vocatione, et in ipsam desinamus.” *Ibid.*, 3.415.3–4.

170. *Ibid.*, 4.416.10.

171. “Primum, si paternam Dei clementiam propitiumque animum quaerimus, ad Christum convertendi sunt oculi, in quo solo Patris anima acquiescit.” *Ibid.*, 4.415.27–29.

172. *Ibid.*, 4.415.27–37.

173. “Quod si in eo sumus electi, non in nobis ipsis reperiemus electionis nostrae certitudinem: ac ne in Deo quidem Patre, si nudum illum absque Filio imaginamur. Christus

Calvin accepted as a given Luther's dictum that God in himself (*in se*) is hidden (*absconditus*) and unknowable (*Institutes* 1.17.2).¹⁷⁴ We know him only as he reveals himself to us in Christ. Thus, for Calvin to invoke Christ as the mirror is to say that he is "God revealed" (*Deus revelatus*) to us. Therefore, Calvin is not here being merely poetic, but quite precise. There is a very important theological point here. He means to say, "Christ is the point at which God's election pierces, as it were, through the cloud of secrecy in which God's decree is normally veiled."¹⁷⁵ In short, the question for Calvin is not "Am I elect?" but "Do I believe the good news of Christ crucified and raised for me?" The syllogism is clearly implied: only the elect believe the gospel, I believe the gospel, ergo I am elect. The source of assurance, however, is the revealed gospel promise to believing sinners.

Having considered Calvin's exegetical and theological approach to predestination, we may turn briefly to notice how he preached the same to his congregation.

The Sermons on Ephesians (1558)

Calvin had the highest possible view of Scripture. The text of Scripture is God's Word and therefore inherently authoritative. The proclamation of that word to the congregation carries with it "the authority of the Word of God" and possesses "the authority of God himself."¹⁷⁶ Thus, we cannot understand fully his doctrine of predestination in his commentary on Romans and in the *Institutes* until we reckon with the way he preached it. The two sermons to be considered below were the first two in a series on the book of Ephesians preached

ergo speculum est in quo electionem nostram contemplari convenit, et sine fraude licet." *Ibid.*, 4.415.34–416.4.

174. OS 3.204.15, 23, 25. Luther said, "Theologus gloriae dicit malum bonum et bonum malum, Theologus crucis dicit id quod res est." *WA*, 1.354. See also *ibid.*, 17.684–85. See Herman Selderhuis, *Calvin's Theology of the Psalms*, Texts and Studies in Reformation and Post-Reformation Thought (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 179–94.

175. Jonathan H. Rainbow, *The Will of God and the Cross: An Historical and Theological Study of John Calvin's Doctrine of Limited Redemption*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 22 (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1990), 87.

176. T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 41.

on Sunday mornings to a lay congregation in Saint Peter's Cathedral from May 1558 to March 1559.¹⁷⁷

The first sermon, on Ephesians 1:1–3, sets the tone for the rest. Calvin spent much of it establishing the nature of the book, of sermons in general, but also of the Christ whom he was preaching. The first lesson to be learned is that “our faith must not waver one way or another, but have a sure and immovable foundation to rest on, namely, God's truth, even as it is contained in the gospel.”¹⁷⁸ We ought not “doubt that God's Spirit speaks to us at this day by his mouth.”¹⁷⁹

In the second sermon (1:3–4), Calvin came to one of the gospel doctrines for which he had worked to prepare the congregation in the first. He begins with Pauline doxology, but now it is reckoned, not relative to the obligations of the law upon the Christian (*tertius usus legis*), but relative to the gospel. Though we are “subject to much misery in this world, yet there is good reason for us to content ourselves with God's choosing of us after that fashion and with his calling of us to himself, for it is witnessed to us by the gospel that he is our Father . . . inasmuch as he has joined us to our Lord Jesus Christ as members to their head.”¹⁸⁰

The “principal cause” of this rejoicing is not just that the gospel has been made known, and not that with it having been revealed, it is within every man's power to believe—if that were the case then we would have merit before God—but rather it is that “there is no distinction between men except that some receive God's grace and others refuse it.”¹⁸¹ To exclude human merit and to show that “all comes from God's pure goodness and grace,” Paul says that God has “blessed us according to his election beforehand.” This explains why it is that when the gospel is preached, “some will be affected with lively faith in their hearts and others will go away as they came without benefiting at all or else they harden themselves

177. *Ibid.*, 152; Wendel, *Calvin*, 53–56. These sermons were published as *Sermons de Jean Caluin sur epistre S. Paul apostre aux Ephesiens* (Geneva, 1562). The English translation is, John Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, trans. Arthur Golding (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1973).

178. Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 10.

179. *Ibid.*

180. *Ibid.*, 22.

181. *Ibid.*

against God. . . . What is the reason for this difference? Even this, that God directs the one sort by his Holy Spirit and leaves the other sort in their natural corruption."¹⁸²

The preaching of the gospel is the "thing in which God's goodness shines forth most to us," but when "it is received by us with heart and affection, that is yet a further and more special token by which we perceive" God's fatherly adoption of us.¹⁸³ We will never know where our salvation comes from until we have "lifted up our minds to God's eternal counsel by which he has chosen us . . . and left the remainder in their confusion and ruin."¹⁸⁴ It is significant that in more academic settings, for example, in the *Institutes* (and treatises against Pigge and Bolsec) and in the commentary on Romans, Calvin was willing to speak of reprobation as "passing by" so long as it was clearly understood as a way of speaking about God's willing. In this sermon, however, he seems content to speak of reprobation with less precision and force and in terms of the divine preterition. Where the emphasis in the academic settings was on the role of the divine will in reprobation, in the pulpit the emphasis was upon the fallen condition of the reprobate.

Calvin recognized that some think this doctrine "strange and hard," because it "does not fit in at all with man's natural understanding."¹⁸⁵ The natural tendency and that of the philosophers is to try to correlate God's love and human worth. Calvin warns the congregation against measuring God "by our own yardstick" and against the presumption of imposing a law upon God. The reason that some find the doctrine of predestination difficult is not the doctrine itself, but that they are "too much wedded to their own opinion" and they are arrogant.¹⁸⁶ He also warns against those who grant the truth of predestination but want it "buried so that it might never be spoken of." If this were granted, we would deprive ourselves of a great source of consolation. They must be Manichees who would so mutilate the gospel.¹⁸⁷

182. *Ibid.*, 23.

183. *Ibid.*

184. *Ibid.*

185. *Ibid.*, 23-24.

186. *Ibid.*, 24.

187. *Ibid.*, 25.

The preaching of God's Word to his people is a "singular benefit" but the preaching of election is a "double grace" because we will not believe the word that is preached unless God reveals himself to us by his Holy Spirit and speaks thereby to our hearts. That some believe and others do not "makes God's grace more apparent to us."¹⁸⁸

Calvin warned against those who would overturn Paul's doctrine that we were elected before the world began and therefore have nothing to offer to God. The "papists," however, "show much subtlety on this point," because they affirm unconditional election on one hand and on the other teach that God elects on the basis of foreseen merits or that "he did it to make them deserve it."¹⁸⁹ Such a view does not account for the nature of human corruption in Adam. If God waited a century, "it is certain that we should never come to him nor do anything else but increase the mischief continually to our own condemnation."¹⁹⁰ Rather we are to regard election as a "token of his free grace." As is typical, Calvin returns to Romans 9, to Jacob and Esau, as proof of the unconditioned nature of election.¹⁹¹

As in the *Institutes*, Calvin pressed the point that we were not elected in ourselves, but in Christ. God did not first of all have "an eye to us" when he "vouchsafed to love us," but he must have had "before him his pattern and mirror in which to see us, that is to say, he must have first looked on our Lord Jesus Christ before he could choose us and call us."¹⁹² God's election is the "book of life," and "Jesus Christ serves as a register. It is in him that we are written down and acknowledged by God as his children."¹⁹³

For Calvin, preaching entailed not only gospel preaching, including election, but also moral application. In this sermon (and it is typical of the other sermons on election), knowing that we are God's children, in Christ, and loved by God from eternity out of free grace, we ought to "walk in all righteousness before God." The gracious election by God "does not provide us with license to do evil and to lead a disordered life, or to run

188. *Ibid.*, 26.

189. *Ibid.*, 31.

190. *Ibid.*, 31–32.

191. In 1579 the English Presbyterian John Field issued a translation of thirteen of Calvin's sermons on Jacob and Esau. See John Calvin, *Sermons on Election and Reprobation*, trans. John Field (Audubon, NJ: Old Paths, 1996 reprint).

192. Calvin, *Sermons on Ephesians*, 33.

193. *Ibid.*

amok.”¹⁹⁴ The morally, logically necessary change in our lives ought to flow from this electing grace. God’s election and vocation “to holiness are things joined inseparably together.”¹⁹⁵ This being a preparatory sermon before the Lord’s Supper, “which is a pledge to us of our election, as well as the hope of our salvation and of all the spiritual benefits that come forth from this source and fountain of God’s free love,” Calvin called the congregation to refuse to abuse such privileges but to use them to glorify God.

In the *Institutes*, Calvin had argued for the necessity and pastoral benefits of preaching the doctrines of election and reprobation. Calvin took his own advice. He preached the doctrines of election and reprobation as sources of comfort to believers (and as a source of discomfort to unbelievers) but the tenor is different. In this sermon particularly, he elaborated on the metaphor of the mirror and used other equally powerful images to point the congregation to Christ as the revelation of God’s grace to sinners and the sole mediator between God and his people. For Calvin, the doctrine of election was not an inducement to moral sloth, but inasmuch as election is an expression of free grace in Christ to needy sinners, it is a powerful inducement to piety.

Conclusions

The one thing that most know about Calvin is that he taught the doctrine of predestination, and from this “knowledge” people are wont to make assumption and deductions about what must also be true about Calvin’s doctrines of election and predestination.

A close contextual reading of Calvin’s doctrine of election, however, reveals a multilayered approach to a difficult set of questions. The first, diachronic, aspect of his context is the historical development of the doctrine of double predestination. Calvin was not only an heir of centuries

194. *Ibid.*

195. *Ibid.*, 33–34. On this theme in Calvin’s theology see Cornelis P. Venema, “The Twofold Nature of the Gospel in Calvin’s Theology: The *Duplex Gratia Dei* and the Interpretation of Calvin’s Theology” (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1985); R. Scott Clark, “The Benefits of Christ: Double Justification in Protestant Theology before the Westminster Assembly,” in *The Faith Once Delivered: Essays in Honor of Wayne R. Spear*, ed. Anthony T. Selvaggio (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2007), 107–34.

of theological reflection on the Genesis narratives, texts such as Malachi 1:2, and Romans 9:13. He was also heir to centuries of anti-Pelagian rhetoric beginning with Augustine and running through Godescalc and into the neo-Augustinians of the late medieval church. Moreover, he was also heir to a broad Protestant consensus on these doctrines. The formal principle of the Reformation was *sola scriptura*, and whether it was Luther's *Bondage of the Will* or Melancthon's *Loci Communes* (1521), or Bucer's commentary on Romans, Calvin's influences and colleagues were all reading the same passages the same way and saying essentially the same thing on election and predestination. Thus, however strange this doctrine may seem to late modern readers steeped in assumptions about human autonomy and freedom, Calvin, though aware of such notions, lived largely in a world where repudiation of double predestination was a form of unbelief and apostasy.

The second or synchronic context for his doctrine of predestination was the Reformation of the Genevan congregations and the controversies which stimulated the development of his doctrine of predestination. Just as his reaction to Andreas Osiander stimulated a massive expansion of his explanation of his doctrine of justification, so too his arguments with Pigge, Bolsec, and others prodded him to elaborate upon what began as a brief discussion in 1536 until it became the expansive, detailed, and sometimes polemical discussion of predestination in the 1559 edition.

Certainly there is no support either in modern Calvin studies or in the text of Calvin's writings, for the old caricature that Calvin invented the doctrine of double predestination out of his head. Rather, it is clear from his commentary on Romans—forgetting for the moment his commentaries on Genesis, Ephesians, and others—that Calvin was driven to his doctrine of double predestination by his reading of Scripture. It is a remarkable feature of Calvin's exegetical work that it still stands up to critical scrutiny after 450 years. This fact is a testimony to the care with which he handled the text of Scripture and the grammar, art, and theology of the text of Scripture. At every turn in his commentary on Romans, Calvin was asking and answering the question: What does the text intend that we think?

How Calvin viewed the doctrines of election and predestination pastorally is evident in his sermons on Ephesians. He was conscious that these were difficult doctrines to accept. Perhaps the most striking feature of his sermons on predestination is their gospel orientation. Though he did not refuse to preach the doctrine of reprobation, he presented the election to salvation as good news for sinners and a source of encouragement to believers. Christians may have confidence because they have been awakened to faith, and shall be kept in the same, by the same sovereign grace which elected them from all eternity.

Finally, his *Institutio* must be read in the context of his exegetical and homiletical work with the doctrine. The *Institutes* (and other treatises) was the place where he harvested the theological reflections that grew out of his preaching and lecturing on Scripture. The *Institutio* was to be a preliminary text, a starting point for students and pastors. Calvin intended his *Institutio* to be read along with his biblical commentaries and, in the case of those who were able, along with the daily and weekly expositions of Scripture and the administration of the sacraments on the Lord's Day.

As this essay has tried to follow the method Calvin intended, it has tried to understand Calvin's doctrine of double predestination as he intended, as an exegetical, theological, and pastoral doctrine. Derived from Scripture, developed and advanced in relation to other key doctrines such as the doctrines of God, sin, grace, justification, Christ, and the church, the doctrine of predestination is understood by Calvin to teach that God has, in Christ, elected to salvation a certain number from all eternity and reprobated others, or decreed that they remain in the state of sin, and that this decree must be traced finally to the unquestionable and inscrutable will of God. He understood this doctrine to be biblical *and* theologically necessary, and he understood it as a pastoral doctrine, a source of comfort and assurance for those tempted to doubt their own salvation.