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THE CONCEPT OF PREDESTINATION ACCORDING TO
MARTIN LUTHER AND JOHN CALVIN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Won Yong Ji

June 1954

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Approved by:

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Reader

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Dedicated

to

The Rev. and Mrs. Ernest H. Drews, the pastor of
Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minnesota
Rev. Drews who, with his wife, led us into the Lutheran
Church and has sustained and comforted us
throughout our studies in the U. S. A.;
Rev. Drews whose example as the wife of a minister
of the Gospel and the father of seven children has
always been an inspiration to us.

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to

The Rev. and Mrs. Ernest R. Drews, the pastor of
Jehovah Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minnesota:

Rev. Drews who, under God, led me into the Lutheran
Church and lent assistance and counsel to me
throughout my student life in the U. S. A.;

Mrs. Drews whose example as the wife of a minister
of the Gospel and the mother of seven children has
always been an inspiration to me.

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Translated by John Allen, Philadelphia: American Board
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after, in this work, indicated as "Inst."

W. Mitchell Hunter, The Institutes of Calvin (Los Angeles)
Fleming & Howell Company, 1901, p. 112.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

We are to deal with a doctrine, predestination, upon which great division of opinion prevailed among theologians of the past and present. In it such large topics as the relation of the divine will to the universe, and to mankind, His eternal plan or design, are considered. Indeed there were reasons in St. Augustine's saying concerning predestination: "Inscrutabilia sunt judicia Dei." And the Council of Trent called predestination a "hidden mystery." Predestination is indeed a sublime mystery. John Calvin, one of the two men to be studied in this thesis, who is often identified as the originator of the doctrine of predestination, though such opinion may be far from the truth, described the doctrine as "intricate," "perplexed," and "dangerous" to explore too far.¹ "No one was more keenly aware than Calvin of the insolvable perplexities surrounding this doctrine (of predestination). Anyone who seeks to satisfy his curiosity, he warns us, will find himself in a labyrinth, out of which he can find no way."²

The present thesis grew out of two desires. One is to

¹John Calvin, Institutes of The Christian Religion, Translated by John Allen (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1813), III, 21, 1. This book will be, hereafter, in this thesis, indicated as "Inst."

²A. Mitchell Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin (Los Angeles: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1950), p. 116.

become more acquainted with the teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the subject of predestination, which has a substantial relationship with many important doctrines, such as, those of election, of God, of the means of Grace, and of the attributes of God. Since Luther and Calvin were opposed to each other on the vital Christian doctrines mentioned above, such a study as this has a practical value. It is to study the two and to differentiate between their teachings. The teaching on predestination, at the same time, is a Biblical question. In the Holy Scriptures, four times the term "predestination" is mentioned: twice in the Epistle to the Romans, and twice in the Epistle to the Ephesians. And other related terms, such as "foreordained," "foreknew," "foreknowledge," and "ordained," are likewise often used in the Bible.³ The second purpose is a practical one. Korea, the home land of the author, is now one of the strongholds of the Reformed Church or the Calvinists, despite the young history of Christian Church in that country. To meet such a situation appropriately and effectively, with an intention to build a new mission of the Lutheran Church there, it is an indispensable item to acquire a thorough knowledge of, and a clear insight into such a vital doctrine as predestination, according to both the Reformed Church and the Lutheran Church.

³W. Taylor, The Election of Grace (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1875), pp. 137 ff.

In an approach to those two groups, in the author's estimation, there is no better means than to go first to Calvin and Luther who are commonly considered as the founders of the two churches.

Again the great problem lies in the unfathomable wisdom of God in His act, His predestination. Inevitably we face the questions, in Luther's theology, of the Deus revelatus and the inexplicable Deus absconditus. How about the problems of "Cur alii prae aliis? . . ." and other unanswerable challenging questions concerning the saved and the non-saved? We shall study, in this thesis, what are the answers of Luther. On the theology of Calvin, we confront a contradictory problem between the Scripture and Human Reason; between the love of God and the teaching of "double predestination." Is Calvin self-contradictory? If not, what are the explanations, to those problems, of the "humanistically," "logically," "philosophically," and "legally" trained man, John Calvin?⁴

To make this more than a superficial study, the author has limited himself to the theme of this thesis, that is, the predestination taught by Luther and Calvin. Each chapter was written with this principle in mind. Due to the broad scope of the subject, Predestination, this thesis does not include a detailed or even synthetic history of the doctrine of

⁴B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism (London: Oxford University Press, c. 1931), pp. 9, 20-21.

predestination from the days of early Greek Fathers through the Middle Ages. Only Saint Augustine and Martin Bucer are mentioned, in the paper, in conjunction with Luther and Calvin. Luther and Calvin are the two men who are to have the spotlight focused upon them. The question is what is their doctrine of predestination? What do they teach and write and think and believe about predestination? Hence the primary purpose of this thesis is to analyze and synthesize Luther's and Calvin's views on predestination, and to compare them with each other. To be correct, we shall have to make a distinction between "Luther's views" and "Lutheran views," and between "Calvin's ideas" and "Calvinists' ideas." The former phrases mean the conceptions set forth by Martin Luther and John Calvin, and the latter expressions cover views held by the Lutheran Church and Calvinists' Church respectively. Many think that both of these terms describe identical views. This view is correct in only a general way.

Are Luther's and Calvin's views on predestination based upon the Scriptures? If so, in what way? This is the goal of the paper. For this reason, the author has used only those materials of both writers, Luther and Calvin, that have specifically dealt with predestination. In the case of Luther, this has meant only a fraction of the pertinent materials. Under predestination itself only those areas have been treated in which crucial problems exist.

Three chapters have treated Luther's views: his approach to predestination; his fundamental teachings on the Wills of God; and the doctrine of the universal Grace of God. On Calvin's teachings three chapters are also, on his grounds of the system of predestination, his system of predestination, and his typical teaching, the "double predestination." In the chapter on the comparison of the two men's views, the writer attempts to describe their similar and dissimilar teachings on predestination.

Beyond what is commonly understood by the term "predestination" -- destined beforehand by God -- the writer prefers to leave it undefined at the beginning. It is true that such a procedure might leave the question as unanswered at the end as it is at the beginning. But the primary purpose of this thesis is not to define as closely as possible "predestination," it is rather to analyze and synthesize the dogmatic point of views of Luther's and Calvin's doctrine of predestination.

CHAPTER II

LUTHER'S APPROACH TO PREDESTINATION

Development of Luther's Theology

In our study of Luther's approach to predestination, which is the theme of this chapter, it may be appropriate to take a cursory glance at the development of Luther's theology. The Luther who stood at the Diet of Worms, in April, 1521, proclaiming the classical statement, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise. So help me, God." was the same Luther who had become confused in his thinking during the five years of graduate work when he was studying the various systems of thought of the Middle Ages. The man was the same but his theology had been changed.

His theological development, however, since the beginning of his spiritual struggle in the monastery at Erfurt, was a "gradual" process, a steady drift from the Catholic fold.¹ That makes it impossible to say that his doctrine of predestination appeared at any given moment in his life. He was steeped in the traditional doctrine that one cannot say with respect to this doctrine that one day Luther was a "Romanist" and the next a "Lutheran."

¹E. G. Schwiebert, Luther and His Time (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 416.

Thus a difference between the earlier and the later doctrinal utterance of Luther is only "relative." No radical distinction between the types of his writings in their chronological sequence, occurs in the survey of Luther's theology. "If we consider the technical terminology, there is indeed a manifest difference; but if we have in view the actual content and logical results of his ideas, we can scarcely reach any other conclusion than that Luther had before A.D. 1517 already grasped the conceptions and attained the points of view which gave character to his life-work. (Vol. II, p. 223, Eng. tr.)."² The difference between "young Luther" and the "old Luther," therefore, is not in essence but in degree of emphasis; e.g., the former emphasized faith more, "the just shall live by faith," and the latter, the Word and the Sacraments. Yet, neither part was ever ignored, neither faith, Word, nor the Sacraments.

Luther had previously been controlled entirely by his thorough-going antagonism to the Pelagianism of the Romish Church, and metaphysical statements concerning God and the divine agency which derived not from the revealed Word but from the fundamental conceptions of omnipotence and absolute will as inherent in the nature of the absolute God.

Now, furthermore, Luther emphasized the same conception

²Hugh Thomson Kerr, Jr., A Compend of Luther's Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1943), p. xi.

of salvation, in the means of grace which was exalted in his controversy with the Fanatics. His personal apprehension and presentation of doctrine that the inference formerly deduced from the divine power, was completely dominated by the distinguishing central point of his Christian faith, to wit, Christ and the sincere love of God manifested in Him. A logical consistency was placed on an emphasis of the Word of Scripture. The controlling thought in Luther was not the metaphysical idea of absolute power or divine foreknowledge, but an antagonism to all human merit which is based upon practical religious interest, and a longing desire for a deliverance proceeding entirely from God and thus bearing with it a positive assurance for our faith.³

The forementioned development of Luther's theology had already appeared, during 1513-1514, in his first course on the Psalms. The progress of his mind, from the year of 1513, reached, step by step, a distinct perception and firm grasp of the doctrine that salvation, from the beginning to the end, is an absolute free gift of God's grace. As early as 1516, Luther propounded the statement that faith is our justitia interior; that yet it is the gift of God, and the source, not the consequence, of good works. His conviction was based solely upon the Word of God and the personal faith

³cf. Julius Koestlin, Theology of Luther, translated by Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publishing Society, 1897), II, 309-310.

of the believer which is the bedrock of true religion. It was developed more fully and independently in the expositions on Romans (1515-16), Galatians (1516-17), and Hebrews (1517-1518). Faith, on which Luther laid such stress, is no mere theological conception, but a living force in his daily life of toil and struggle. Faith is freedom, limited only by a compelling submission to the word, the Gospel.⁴

There was, between 1517-1521, a rapid progress in Luther's development as a Reformer, the "renovator of faith."⁵

In 1517, finally, Luther's conception on sin and grace, law and Gospel, which was not tolerable to the Pope and the Romanists, had been openly disclosed. He affirmed, in the Ninety-Five Theses, that the Pope can remit no penalties which he had not the power to impose (Theses: 5, 20); that he had no more power in relation to purgatory than any other bishop, or even any other curate has within his own precinct (Theses: 25); that true contrition seek and loves punishment (Theses: 40); that the true treasure of the Church is the

⁴Cf. James Mackinnon, Luther and the Reformation (New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green, and Co. Ltd., 1928), II, 329-333.

⁵Ibid., p. 326.

Holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God (Theses: 62).⁶

The Disputation of Leipzig, in July, 1519, was the occasion when Luther had arrived at the avowal of a conviction that the Church could exist without a pope and that not even a General Council is infallible. Religion for Luther had by now become something entirely spiritual, a personal relationship with God. In this relationship the supreme good work is faith. It was during the last half of the year 1520, that there issued from his pen three publications of great historical significance: "The Address to the Christian Nobility," in which Luther struck a blow at the root of the entire hierarchical system; "On the Babylonian Captivity," which took up the subject of the Sacraments; "On the freedom of a Christian Man," in which it is stated that freedom belongs to the soul united by a living faith to God and Christ.⁷

⁶Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1923), VI, 160-166. Theses 5: "The Pope has neither the will nor power to remit any penalties, except those which he has imposed by his own authority, or by that of the canons." Theses 20: "Therefore the Pope, when he speaks of the plenary remission of all penalties, does not mean simply of all, but only of those imposed by himself." Theses 25: "Such power as the Pope has over purgatory in general, such as every bishop in his own diocese, and every curate in his own parish, in particular." Theses 40: "True contrition seeks and loves punishment; while the amplex of pardons relaxes it, and causes men to hate it, or at least gives occasion for them to do so." Theses 62: "The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God."

⁷George Park Fischer, History of Christian Doctrine (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1923), pp. 270-71.

The starting point of Luther was invariably the living religious experiences. Thus the genesis of the Reformation was undoubtedly to be sought in the sphere of religious experience rather than in that of theological speculations, even though there were the controversies over faith and works, the law and the Gospel, grace and free will. From this flows that Luther never in any of his writings directly undertook to lay down with any scientific accuracy propositions concerning God and His nature. The doctrine of grace was taught, wherein the definite view of predestination was already hinted at in the Expositions of the Psalms. More and more he attached to the objective character of the Word and the Sacraments, yet without in the least weakening the former testimony as to the necessity of faith in the recipient.⁸

Luther, who once was an authentic Augustinian and influenced by the German Mystics, spoke of predestination as early as 1517-18 in his Heidelberg theses, and his developed doctrine was declared in his famous reply to Erasmus entitled De Servo Arbitrio.

He emphasized particularly man's inability to help in any way towards his salvation. In the early stages of the writings of Luther, predestination was a part of the experiences of those early years of the anger of God and it remained

⁸Cf. Julius Koestlin, Theology of Luther, translated by Charles E. Hay (Philadelphia: Lutheran Publishing Society, 1897), I, 141-42.

so. No doubt it was also stressed at this stage as a necessary reaction against Semi-Pelagianism, and an Augustinian influence was also present.

What Luther considered then was the Word of God, His revealed Will. He "no longer carries out the idea of hidden God, and His Will, to such conclusions as he had formerly drawn from it, and as he had transferred to the sphere of the divine will manifested in revelation."⁹

Definition of Predestination

How did Luther approach predestination? Predestination⁹ by Luther proceeded, not from his conception of God, but rather from the doctrine of sin and grace. He and the Lutheran symbols are very cautious about the doctrine.

The doctrine of election or predestination is a mystery. It contains the unfathomable mysteries of such questions as "Why are some converted and others not, though by nature all men are in the same guilt (*eadem culpa*) and are saved by grace alone (*sola gratia*)?" Cur alii, alii non? Cur non omnes? Cur alii prae aliis?¹⁰ We neither can nor should investigate and

⁹Koestlin, II, op. cit., 308.

¹⁰John Theodore Mueller, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1934), p. 58. "Predestination" and the "doctrine of eternal election" are used synonymously in Luther's writings and the Lutheran symbols.

fathom everything in this article of faith, the eternal election of God. St. Paul declared, after having argued much concerning this article from the revealed Word of God, when he arrived at the point of God's hidden wisdom concerning this mystery, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?" (Romans 11: 33-34) It was the position of Luther, concerning predestination, that man should not be hypercritical on the subject, but firmly believe that he would be predestined.

Sei nicht besorgt wegen der Praedestination, und dringe auch nicht als ein Vorwissiger in Gottes Heiligthum ein, denn du kannst wegen der Schwaeche (hebetudine) deiner Augen so tiefe Geheimnisse mit deinem eigenen Vermoegen nicht durchdringen. Aber hoere Christum, siehe auch hin auf Christum, in welchem der Vater die geheime Meinung seiner Praedestination kundgethan hat, in welchem, ein fuer allemal das offenbart ist, was lange verborgen gewesen war.¹¹

The term "Versehung" is, for Luther, entirely synonymous with "predestination," or "eternal election," since it combines in one the conceptions of the foreknowledge and the purpose of God. "Was fuer ein Vorsatz (prothesis) dies sei, brauchen wir nicht zu erraten. Der Apostel besehreibt diesen Voraass sofort naecher als Gottes Zuvorerkennen (proginosken -- Luther: Zuvorversehen), das die Zuvorverordnung (proorizein) zur

¹¹Martin Luther, Saemmtliche Schriften, herausgegeben von Dr. Joh. Georg Walch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1904), XXIIb, 3225-26. This book will be, hereafter, in this thesis, indicated as "St. L."

Herrlichkeit in sich schliesse."¹²

"Predestination" can be classified into two categories, the foreknowledge (praescientia) of God and the election of grace (praedestinatio). The former is used in a broader sense, and the latter in a narrower sense. Luther however thinks for all practical purposes there is no great difference between them.

God's foreknowledge extends to all creatures and things both evil and good. It is nothing else than that God knows all things before they happen. Prognosis: "das Vorauswissen, prognosis lambanein teleian, (I King. 44:2)"¹³ This foreknowledge extends alike over the godly and the wicked, but it is not the cause of evil. God foresees and foreknows everything that is or will be, which is occurring or will occur, whether it be good or bad.

The eternal election of grace, on the other hand, extends to God's children and all good things. It is the cause of their salvation. The gracious election of God in Christ and His merits is revealed in Scriptures and sealed in the Sacraments. This predestination of God is not to be investigated in the secret counsel of God, but to be sought in the Word of God, where it is also revealed.¹⁴ Eternal election is an

¹²D. Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), III, 537.

¹³See Prognosis: Walter Bauer, Griechisch-Deutsches Woerterbuch (Berlin: Verlag Alfred Toepelmann, 1952).

¹⁴Cf. E. H. Klotsche, Christian Symbolics (Burlington, Iowa: The Lutheran Literary Board, 1929), pp. 152-53.

election of grace, i.e., a predestination to salvation only. God's eternal election, stated in the Formula of Concord, "does not extend at once over the godly and the wicked, but only over the children of God, who were elected and ordained to eternal life before the foundation of the world was laid, as Paul says in Ephesians 1:4, 5: 'He had chosen us in Him, having predestined us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.'" It is also said further that the election of God is to be considered in Christ. Not our goodness or virtue, but the merit of Christ and the gracious will of His Father are the causes of our election.¹⁵ God has given us the ground to stand on, that is, Jesus Christ, and through Him we may climb to heaven. He is the only way and the only gate to the Father. Despite this authentic truth, man would begin to discuss predestination outside or without Christ. The consequence is obvious. The more he speculates and disputes, the more he despairs. "This is never the case when Christians follow St. Paul in Romans 8:31 ff."¹⁶ "Wir koennen daher die Gnadenwahl so beschreiben: Die ewige Erwaehlung ist die Handlung Gottes an den Christen, wodurch Gott sie von Ewigkeit aus Gnaden um Christi willen mit Berufung, Belehrung, Rechtfertigung, Heiligung und Erhaltung bedacht hat. . . . Kurz,

¹⁵Martin Luther, Concordia Triglotta, edited by F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), pp. 1065, 1087.

¹⁶Luther Poellot, "The Doctrine of Predestination on Romans 8:28-29," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 23, No. 5 (May, 1952), 347.

die Erkenntnis der ewigen Erwahlung faellt mit dem Glauben an das Evangelium zusammen."¹⁷

The doctrine of election is a great comfort for the Christians, especially in the times of tribulations and persecutions. It affords glorious consolation under the cross and amid temptations, for God in His counsel, before the foundation of the world, determined and decreed that He would assist us in all distresses.

Scripture, the Sole Source of
the Doctrine of Predestination

Martin Luther was primarily a religious reformer taking his stand on the Bible. Not human reason, but the Holy Scripture was his starting point. He praised and insulted alternately the following three things: the princes,¹⁸ the lawyers, and reason. Whenever these three had promoted what he believed to be the pure interpretation of the Bible, he was prepared to accept help from them. Otherwise he disputed and neglected them totally. Against reason, Luther said the "great whore," reason.¹⁹

¹⁷Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, op. cit., pp. 536, 546.

¹⁸Martin Luther, Dr. Martin Luthers Werke (Weimar: Hermann Boehlaus Nachfolger, 1883-1928), VII, 545. This book, hereafter, in this thesis, will be indicated as "W."
". . . gotfurchtige Fursten nennet Engel gottes, ja auch gotter, widerumb schedliche Fursten nennet sie Lewen, Trachen unnd wuetende thier, . . ."

¹⁹H. H. Kramm, The Theology of Martin Luther (London: James Clarke and Co., Ltd., 1947), p. 21.

The Scripture, according to Luther, was the sole source of the doctrine of predestination. He made an immediate and self-evidencing appeal to the Scripture. God's grace and eternal election (predestination) are known only in the means of grace. The Word is the means of grace. His grace therefore cannot be known to men without or outside the revealed Word of God. God stepped out of His unapproachable majesty which is beyond our limited human comprehension. In His Word, that is, He has become man, and spoke to us in a human manner, so that we can understand it. "Gott mit uns nicht handelt nach seiner Majestaet," thus described Luther, "sondern nimmt menschliche Gestalt an sich, und redet mit uns durch die ganze Schrift, wie ein Mensch mit dem andern redet. . . so gar redet er Alles mit uns ohne Majestaet und, dass ich es also nenne, aus der erniedrigten Gestalt Gottes."²⁰ On Exodus 15:16, Luther remarked as follows: "Gott hat gesagt: Wenn das Wort von Christo gepredigt wird, dann bin ich in deinem Munde, und ich gehe mit dem Worte durch deine Ohren in das Herz."²¹

In the word of the Gospel have all the saints found comfort and assurance in regard to their election to eternal life; not in any special revelation (spirit) in regard to their predestination, but in faith in Christ. The faith of which

²⁰St. L. I, 1442.

²¹St. L. III, 925. Exodus 15:16: "Terror and dread falleth upon them; by the greatness of thine arm they are as still as a stone; Till thy people pass over, O Lord, Till the people pass over that thou hast purchased."

Scripture speaks always begins and continues only vis-a-vis its correlative, the Word of the Gospel. (Rom. 10:14; Mark: 1:15; 16:15-16). Therefore man should not have to inquire or search out whether he had been predestined or not; but he must hold for the Gospel and faith to all men. Concerning John 6:63, Luther commented as follows:

Gott hat seinen Heiligen Geist geordnet, dass er ordentlicher Weise komme durchs Wort. Solches spricht Christus selber an diesem Ort. . . . Er will dir nicht zulassen, dass du hin und wieder flattern sollest, einen Geist zu suchen und zu ertraeumen, dass man spreche: Ich habe es aus Einsprechen des Heiligen Geistes. . . . Solch Einsprechen will Christus nicht haben, bindet allein an das Wort; er will den Heiligen Geist nicht abgesondert haben von seinem Wort. Darum hoerst du einen ruemen, er habe etwas aus Eingebung oder Einsprechung des Heiligen Geistes, und es ist ohne Gottes Wort, es sei, was es wolle, so sprich, es sei der leidige Teufel.²²

Salvation and the election of God or predestination pertain to persons not to the church collectively. It is not a problem of our "organization" or "group," but "my" problem and the problem of "umas" and "emas." "I" is the one who is included in the gracious election of God in Christ and was determined to be saved from before the foundation of the world. God, interested in "me," not "my group," became a man to redeem "me." "Diese ewige Gnadenhandlung ist nicht absolut, sondern wie en Christoi (Eph. 1:4), so auch en arismoi pneumatos kai pistei aletheias geschehen (2 Thess. 2:13), das heisst, sie gruendet sich auf Christi Verdienst, und. . . die Wirkung der Gnadenmittel hineingewoben. . . .

²²St. L. VII, 2389, 2388.

Nach der Schriftlehre von der Gnadenwahl hat Gott nicht einen Grundsatz, sondern Personen erwählt; 2 Thess. 2:13: 'Gott hat euch (umas) erwählt'; Eph. 1:4: 'Gott hat uns (emas) erwählt.'²³ "Since God has put my salvation out of the way of my will," stated expressly Luther in his book De Servo Arbitrio, "and has taken it under His own, and has promised to save me, not according to my working or manner of life, but according to His own grace and mercy, I rest fully assured and persuaded that He is faithful, and will not lie, and moreover great and powerful, so that no devils, no adversaries can destroy Him, or pluck me out of His hand."²⁴

The preaching of repentance and the promise of the Gospel, which is universal, is the duty of all who are chosen into the eternal election and salvation of God appropriated in Jesus Christ. This message pertains to all men.²⁵ The passage, ". . . who separated me from my mother's womb. . ." in the Epistle to the Galatians (1:15) is a Hebrew expression which means to sanctify, to ordain, and to prepare. Paul was saying that God ordained while he was yet in his mother's womb, where he could neither think nor perform any good work. To crown it all, the Lord called Paul "to preach the Gospel

²³Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, op. cit., pp. 540, 543.

²⁴Martin Luther, The Bondage of the Will, translated by Henry Cole (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1931), p. 385.

²⁵Cf. Luke 24:47; John 3:16; 1:29; 6:51; I John 1:7; 2:2; Matt. 11:28; Rom. 11:32; 2Pet. 3:9; Rom. 10:12; 3:22; John 6:40; 1Tim. 2:4; Ezk. 18:23, 32.

to others."²⁶

²⁶Martin Luther, A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, translated by Theodore Graebner (Third Edition, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), pp. 40-41.

... of the Bible -- is not "let's not argue about," but because the Bible uses vague and indefinite language in teaching the truth, would not people want to reach everything out and not want to stop where the Holy Scripture stops. It is not for the believer in faith but for the natural Christian that God having been satisfied with the teachings of the Bible, who try to figure out some way to make the natural good more reasonable. They are hindered by very inevitable in-coming and by "our will and ability" only God knows the answer, it is none of our business to speculate about it, and it is altogether fruitless even though we try it, where the Scripture stops, we must stop too. The rest is dangerous speculation.

Luther precisely distinguished between the hidden God and the revealed or proclaimed God; the secret will of God and His revealed will; the majestic God, in whom we live and move and have our being, and God manifested in Christ; God's unsearchable judgments and ways past finding out, and His merciful promises in the Gospel. The former is not in real conflict with God revealed in the Bible, and that the secret

CHAPTER III

THE WILLS OF GOD ACCORDING TO LUTHER

The teaching of predestination -- one of the difficult doctrine of the Bible -- is not "milk" but strong "meat," not because the Bible uses vague and indefinite language in teaching it, but because most people want to reason everything out and do not want to stop where the Holy Scripture stops. It is not for the beginner in faith but for the mature Christian. Not having been satisfied with the teachings of the Bible, men try to figure out some way to make the matter sound more reasonable. They are bothered by many inscrutable inquiries such as "Cur alii prae aliis?" Only God knows the answer. It is none of our business to speculate about it, and it is altogether fruitless even though we try it. Where the Scripture stops, man ought to stop too. The rest is dangerous speculation.¹

Luther precisely distinguished between the hidden God and the revealed or proclaimed God; the secret will of God and His revealed will; the majestic God, in whom we live and move and have our being, and God manifested in Christ; God's unsearchable judgments and ways past finding out, and His merciful promise in the Gospel. The former is not in real conflict with God revealed in the Bible, and that the secret

¹"Predestination," The Northwestern Lutheran, XXXIII, No. 6 (March 17, 1946), 89-90.

will of God does not in the least invalidate the gracious will of the Gospel. Luther earnestly warned against all speculations concerning the hidden God as futile, foolish and wicked. "God's majesty is unfathomable, His judgments are unsearchable, His ways past finding out."² In reply to De Servo Arbitrio, Luther stated that Erasmus did not discriminate between the Word of God (God as preached) and God Himself (God as concealed).³

We have thus in Luther two views on predestination side by side. The one view points to God's inscrutable will, the other to the universality of God's grace. Klert (Morphologie, Band I) has called this "predestination in disjunction." That is predestination not in conjunction but predestination in disjunction.⁴

The Will Which Is the Grace and Favor of God
to All Men

The will of God is the grace and favor of God to all men. God would have "all men to be saved and come to the knowledge

²See Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

³Cp. Koestlin, Vol. I, op. cit., 491-492. Luther, The Bondage of the Will, op. cit., p. 173.

⁴Cf. Dr. S. Hebart, "Lecture Notes," presented to the fourth year class in Dogmatics at Immanuel Theological Seminary, North Adelaide, South Australia, 1950 (Notes taken by T. T. Reuther), p. 43.

of the truth." (I Tim. 2:4). His will is ordinate will (voluntas ordinata -- voluntas conditionata) which is independent of human worthiness. No man has ever glorified God fully, but all sinned and "ustero" ⁵ of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). Man is justified, therefore, apart from works of law, by the faith in Christ (satisfactio vicaria), for the law cannot justify man. (Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16). According to His gracious will, God will have all men to be saved without the deeds of the law, for Christ's sake, by faith in Him. The Scripture calls this gracious will of God "the wisdom of God in mystery," "the hidden wisdom" (I Cor. 2:6-9), but this mystery has been revealed to us by God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16). ⁶ In an opinion rendered by the Faculty of Wittenberg to the Council of Nuernberg, 1533, Luther said: "Dass auch gedachte Absolution CONDITIONALIS ist, ist sie, wiesonst eine gemeine Predigt; und eine jede Absolutio, beide gemein und privat, hat die conditio des Glaubens; denn ohne Glauben entbindet sie nicht, und ist darum nicht ein Fehl-Schluessel. Denn der Glaube bauet nicht auf unsere Wuerdigkeit, sondern ist nur so viel, dass einer die Absolution annimmt, und Ja dazu spricht." ⁷

⁵See Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1889), "ustereo": (R.V. fall short) in Romans 3:23: to be behind, to fail, to be in want of, lack, etc.

⁶Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Walter W. F. Albrecht (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), II, 40.

⁷St. L. XXib, 1850.

Luther stressed the "independentness" and "absoluteness" of God's will again and again. He proclaimed that the Will of God acts by neither any rule nor standard, nor from any cause nor reason. If it acts by those things, it can no longer be called the will of God. "God is that Being, . . . nothing is superior or equal to it, but it is itself the rule of all things." In this sense God is "der ganz Ander." Wherefore, what God wills, is not therefore right, because He ought or ever was bound so to will; but on the contrary, what takes place is therefore right, because He so wills. A cause and reason are assigned for the will of us, the creatures but not for the will of the Creator; unless man sets up over Him another Creator. By reasoning and speculating about the unfathomable will of God, man requires God to act according to human law, and to do what seems right unto man, or cease to be God.⁸ Luther himself realized the difficulty and impossibility of a reasonable harmony between the prescience of God and the "free will," and comprehension of the two purely on the basis of human reason. Seemingly there is an open contradiction between them. Luther however stressed that such "contradictions" do not clash.

For if we believe it to be true, that God fore-knows and fore-ordains all things; that He can be neither deceived nor hindered in His Prescience and Predestination; and that nothing can take place but according to His Will (which reason herself is compelled to confess;) then, even

⁸Luther, The Bondage of the Will, op. cit., pp. 230-31, 265.

according to the testimony of reason herself, there can be no "free will" -- in man, -- in angel, -- or in any creature! . . . God foreknows nothing by contingency, but that He foresees, purposes, and does all things according to His immutable, eternal, and infallible will. By this thunderbolt, "free-will" is thrown prostrate, and utterly dashed to pieces.⁹

In conjunction with the inability and "nothingness" of man's "free-will," man raises such conventional questions as "Is man then responsible for his sins, where his 'will' is nothing and only God's Will counts?" To this inquiry the Holy Scripture tells us that man is responsible for his sins.

Although God desires all men to be saved and to come unto Him by the Word of salvation, it is the fault of man's will which does not receive Him, as He said in Matthew 23:37: ". . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, . . . , and ye would not." We find Luther maintaining unconditionally the "paradox": whatever is done by us, is done, not by free will, from pure necessity (mera necessitate).¹⁰

For further enlightenment on the Will of God and human will and his understanding, the following sections may give appropriate explanations.

Deus Absconditus and Deus Revelatus

There are passages in the Bible claiming that "God willeth that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the

⁹Ibid., pp. 390, 38; Cf. p. 240.

¹⁰Cf. Koestlin, op. cit., I, 486, 482.

truth" (I Tim. 2:4); on the other hand there are utterances showing that, in spite of this will of the almighty God, many people are lost for ever (Matt. 13:11-15). Luther did not try to reconcile apparent contradictions in the Bible. He took both sides as he stood without trying to smooth over the cleavage. For Luther, in fact, the two sides do not contradict each other in spite of the fact that they seem to be contradictory. Salvation comes by God's grace through the work and merit of Christ. But damnation is brought by man's own fault. (Hosea 13:9). Luther treated the two separately. He made a distinction: There is God as revealed to us, the "Deus revelatus," God who wants to invite all mankind to be saved. But there is a riddle in God, the "Deus absconditus," who causes, or at least permits, many human beings to be lost forever. The latter we cannot understand, but we know it exists. An attempt to explore the inexorable will of God must be discouraged.¹¹ By exploring the unknowable man gains nothing but loses everything, his faith, his reverence to God, and finally abandons the promises of God. There is no science and knowledge of God in so far as He is not revealed. Luther was particularly fond of quoting Proverbs 25:27 (" . . . So for men to search out their own glory grievous.") and Eccles. 3:22 (" . . . there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his work; for that is his portion: . . .").¹² We must look at the voluntas

¹¹cf. Kramm, op. cit., pp. 41 f.

¹²Koestlin, op. cit., II, 307.

signi, or the will revealed in Christ, the Gospel and the Sacraments,¹³ for God does not act by His majesty but through the means. ". . . ueber die Sprache, die Gott in der biblischen Offenbarung mit uns fuehre, ganz allgemein: 'Deus non agit nobiscum per totam scripturam sicut homo cum homine; . . . omnia sine maiestate et, ut sic dicam, exinanita forma Dei loquitur nobiscum.'"¹⁴

The two sides in God's will, hidden and revealed, should be dealt with separately. A confusion of the two creates confusion in man in his understanding of God and His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. Luther explains it thus: "We are to argue in one way, concerning the will of God preached, revealed, and offered unto us, and worshiped by us; and in another, concerning God Himself not preached, not revealed, not offered unto us, and worshiped by us. In whatever, therefore, God hides Himself and will be unknown by us, that is nothing to us; and here, that sentiment stands good -- 'What is above us, does not concern us.' . . . God, . . . , is to be left to remain in His own Nature and Majesty; for in this respect, we have nothing to do with Him, nor does He wish us to have in this respect, anything to do with Him: but we have to do with Him, as far as He is clothed in, and delivered to us by His

¹³Ibid., p. 295. St. L. I, 489.

¹⁴Julius Koestlin, Luthers Theologie (Stuttgart: Druck und Verlag von T. F. Steinkopf, 1901), II, 73.

Word." (Cf. Chapter I).¹⁵ The following statement, which was written by Luther in 1528 to an unknown person, summarizes his teaching on the voluntas revelata and abscondita. Luther here says that God the Almighty:

alle Dinge weiss, und muessen alle Werk und Gedanken in allen Kreaturen nach seinem Willen geschehen, juxta decretum voluntatis suae. . . . So ist doch sein (Gottes) ernstlicher Will und Menschen selig und der ewigen Freude teilhaftig zu machen, wie Ezechiel am 18 (23) Kapitel klaerlich gemeldt wird, da er saget: 'Gott will nicht den Tod des Suenders, sondern dass er sich bekehre und lebe,' Will er nun die Suender, die unter dem weiten, hohen Himmel allenthalben leben und schweben, selig machen und haben, so wollet Ihr euch durch Euer naerrische Gedanken, vom Teufel eingegeben, nicht absondern und von der Gnade Gottes scheiden.¹⁶

Deus Absconditus -- Hidden Will or Hidden God

God is hidden as well as revealed. The question is this⁷ then: In what sense, according to Luther, is God hidden; and how should we understand the relation between God's hiddenness and His revealed will in Christ?

Luther speaks of the hiddenness of God in three connections. God is hidden in predestination, in Christ, and in creation. Behind all three there lies the same concept of the hiddenness of God.

God is hidden in predestination. In his De Servo Arbitrio,⁷ Luther sets forth how God works in all men, both good and bad. When God works in those who are evil, evil results. Is not

¹⁵Luther, The Bondage of the Will, op. cit., pp. 171-72.

¹⁶St. L. X, 1736 f.

God then evil himself, since the result of his activity in evil man is evil? This question Luther answers with an affirmation of the goodness of God. Even though God is good, it is because agents through whom He works are evil that evil results. The beginning and the cause of evil is not God's foreknowledge or predestination (for God does not create and effect or work evil, neither does He help or promote it); but the wicked, perverse will of the devil and evil man which rejects or perverts the means and instruments of the Holy Spirit that God offers man through the call (Hosea 13:9; Ps. 5:4; Matt. 23:37; Lk. 8:13.)¹⁷ The Formula of Concord reproduces, in Articles I, II, and XI, Luther's doctrine of grace, according to which God alone is the cause of man's salvation, while man alone is the cause of his damnation.¹⁸ Luther nevertheless does not stop there. He is aware that one can ask why God does not change men's wills, making them good. For if God were to do that they would become agents of good. Why does God not exercise His almighty power to make man good? Why does He not then change, in His motion, those evils which He moves? Why did He permit Adam to fall, and for us to be affected by his sin? To these Luther replies that no answer is possible to man, for it lies in the secrecy of the divine majesty into which man cannot penetrate. It is where "His judgments are past finding out." Nor is it ours to search into, but to

¹⁷Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., pp. 1065, 1077.

¹⁸Klotsche, op. cit., p. 154.

adore these mysteries. His majesty ought to be adored and feared by men.¹⁹

God is hidden in Christ. In Christ God reveals His love to man who has fallen into sin. In this sense God is revealed in Christ. But God is at the same time hidden in Christ. As truly human, Christ came under the law and became the object of God's wrath. He tasted the deepest anguish, recognized Himself as rejected of God. Thus even while God manifests His love in Christ, as Deus revelatus, He also shows in Christ that He can reject man, letting him come under God's wrath. By the blunt rejection of and disobedience to Christ, in whom God's grace and love are entrusted, man has been placed under God's eternal wrath. In this way Christ shows us a hidden God.

Finally, God is hidden in the work of creation. Luther characterizes the created things as the masks through which God works. In His love God sustains all created things and works through them. All that is created is ruled by God's love and is the instrument thereof. To believe in God then implies that all that has been made is the means of God's love. From the foregoing, it is clear that God is hidden in the sense that the things which are the means of God's love can be the instruments of His wrath. In other words, the means of His love can simultaneously be the tools of His wrath. But in love or wrath, God is directly present and active in His creation. This apparent discrepancy between the love of God and

¹⁹Luther, The Bondage of the Will, op. cit., pp. 230, 241.

His wrath, electio particularis, and the decree of predestination moved only by His grace and the redemption of Christ, and the gratia universalis (vocatio seria), we acknowledge as mystery, which is indeed beyond reason and we should neither criticize nor try to explain it.²⁰ To try to explore such "never solved" questions (language in The Bondage of the Will, p. 388) is indeed "sinnloss." "Man komme in Verzweiflung und breche sich den Hals, meint er, wenn man den sinnlosen 'Spekulationen' ueber den verborgenen Gott nachhaenge mit den Fragen, wie und warum Gott die einen oder die anderen praedestiniert habe."²¹ Man cannot get a perfect and complete knowledge of God, the absolutely independent One who is the beginning, middle, and end of all things, pervading and ruling everything according to His wisdom and knowledge, which are wholly beyond man. In Him, there is an abundance both of that which man ought to know, and of that which man ought not to know. "It is enough to know only, that there is in God a certain will inscrutable: but what, why, and how far that will wills, it is not lawful to inquire, . . . it is only to be feared and adored! . . . That will of Majesty. . . should be exalted to silence and reverence. . . . Asking those eternal questions, . . . it is not in the power of man to do, . . . not

²⁰Mueller, op. cit., p. 177.

²¹cf. W. 36, 61; 42, 670; 43, 459 f.

to inquire. . . inquire much, yet you will never find out. . ."22]

Consistent with Luther's view of God as revealed and hidden is his view of law and Gospel. The Gospel is God's declaration of love to sinners. Through the law God commands and condemns man, and sets him under divine wrath. It is because God is simultaneously revealed and hidden that he simultaneously confronts man through both Gospel and law. The Gospel proclaims the love of God as revealed in Christ. But the Law shows that the wrath of God can reject man. In this way the hiddenness of God is seen in the law. God's presence is real in the law; so the law brings judgment and condemnation to men. Thus it is hidden from man that God really purposes to save men. It should be noted how Luther's thought involves a tension which must be viewed in an eschatological perspective.

There seems to be a contradiction between the hidden will of God and His will as revealed in Christ, which will be treated in the next section. How can God, who reveals His love in Christ, leave to perdition one who has no power to void it? Is not God's hidden will irreconcilable with His revealed will? "

To this Luther replies that, as long as we live in time, we are not able to see how these two aspects of God's action are to be reconciled. The essential thing for us is to note that he who is borne up in faith knows that God, even as the

²²Luther, The Bondage of the Will, op. cit., pp. 181, 183, 173.

hidden God, is still the God of love, as He is revealed in Christ. But even to such faith God remains the hidden God. The tension is characteristic of faith. God stands as He who may reject man. Faith is thereby confronted with the temptation to distrust God's love. Yet faith holds to the conviction that God, though hidden, is He who reveals His love in Christ. There God no longer is hidden. This conception of God as both revealed and hidden determines Luther's view of the assurance of election or salvation. In faith man meets God as both revealed and hidden. "Denn kein Mensch kann aus sich selbst heraus wissen, dass er vor Gott so ist, wenn ihm das nicht Gott selbst offenbaren wuerde."²³

Deus Revelatus -- Revealed Will or Revealed God

God is revealed God, for in Christ He reveals His love towards man. In Christ is a true knowledge of God fully revealed; and it is only in Christ that God reveals Himself as one whose love goes out to sinners. (I Cor. 2:10; John 3:16-18) Luther's theology revolves around the gracious will of God, whose nature is love, the agape, which is revealed in Christ.²⁴ In Christ and faith in Him, man has ever known the eternal council and predestination of God.²⁵

²³Erich Seeberg, Christus Wirklichkeit und Urbild (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1931), II, 155.

²⁴Cp. Edgar M. Carlson, The Reinterpretation of Luther (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), pp. 79, 77.

²⁵Cf. Koestlin, Luthers Theologie, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

We should cling to the revealed will alone, according to Luther, as it is known to us in God's Word and the Sacraments. Thus from the very start Luther stressed also the universality of God's grace, and opposed an arbitrary subjectivism of God which could amount to a double predestination. Through the Word and Sacraments, the invisible and unknowable "hidden" God has been revealed and become perceptible to man. The outward words spoken by the servants of God and the Sacraments are the signs and recorded testimonies. It is the Will of the Father, for us, to cling to the means of grace and to His Son Jesus Christ. "Vocatur voluntas SIGNI effectus Dei, quando ipse foras procedit ad nos, nobiscum agens per aliquod involudrum et externas res, quas possumus apprehendere, sicut verbum Dei et caeremoniae ab ipso institutae."²⁶ Only the Will of God which is revealed through the means of grace is comprehensible for us. This is the limit of human reason and understanding, i. e., through the media of the Word and the Sacraments.

Den Gotteswillen, der in Christo geoffenbart ist und im Wort und den Sacramenten sich uns darbietet, unterscheidet Luther . . . von der substantialis voluntas Dei, die ihm eins ist mit der unda majestas. . . . Gottes Wesen and Wille sei der menschlichen Vernunft ganz unbegreiflich und verborgen, und wenn etwas davon erkannt werden sollte, koenne es nur durch die Offenbarung des gottlichen Wortes geschehen. . . .²⁷

²⁶st. L. I, 489.

²⁷Koestlin, Luthers Theologie, op. cit., pp. 74 f.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNIVERSAL GRACE OF GOD IN LUTHER

God's Universal Grace -- The Effective "Call" Extended to All People

One cannot find a better definition of the word "grace" than that given by Martin Luther. He said: "Gratia est remissio peccatorum."¹ This grace of God, according to Luther, is universal. All men everywhere are able to come under the grace of God through Jesus Christ. In Him men are no longer under the wrath of God but become His children, for Christ fulfilled the total demand of the Law and brought men before the gracious Father. His blood cleansed sins of all men everywhere in all time.² This unmerited love and favor of God in Christ extends not merely to the elect, but to all men³ without exception. It is not a particular grace but rather the universal grace of God, that is, Christ is the Savior of the whole world. (Ezk. 33:11; 18:23) "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from the heaven, and giveth life unto the world." (John 6:33). In this proclamation of the Savior, the unchanging truths are expressed that the Father wishes all men to hear and desires that they come to Christ.

¹W. 40, 3, 411.

²St. L. 7, 1682; 5, 1084.

³St. L. 5, 473: "Gnade bezeichnet die Gunst, durch welche Gott uns annimmt, indem er die Sunden vergibt, und emsonst aus Gnaden durch Christum gerecht macht."

His Word is extended to all men by the preaching and the administration of the Sacraments.⁴ "Doch soll niemand ver-zweifeln, ob wir fallen, allein, dass wir das Wort nicht fah-ren lassen; denn sein Wort und Gnade ist groesser und mehr denn aller Menschen Suende."⁵

Let us study in detail how Luther interprets "grace" in his writings.

God's saving grace (charis soterios) is His gracious disposition (gratuitus Dei favor). "Dextera autem iustorum est favor et gratia dei."⁶ Grace, by which God is moved to forgive sin and to bestow salvation upon fallen mankind, according to Luther, is God's "bona gratia," and "bona volun-tate."⁷ It is the redemptive application of the Divine will or the work of the Spirit of God. By this Luther meant: "Gratiam accipio hic proprie pro favore dei, sicut debet, non pro qualitate animi, ut nostri recentiores docuerunt, atque haec gratia tandem vere pacem cordis operatur, ut homo a cor-ruptione sua sabatus, etiam propitium deum habere se sen-tiat."⁸ What Luther emphasized, likewise, points out the "Herrschaft" of God that He is ever active in all works of the Spirit. "Veniat regnum tuum, hoc est, da spiritum sanctum,

⁴Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., p. 1085.

⁵St. L. 3, 531.

⁶W. 3, 480.

⁷W. 43, 536.

⁸W. 8, 106.

qui nos gubernet, . . ."9

God's benevolent inclination, mediated through the vicarious atonement of Christ, is revealed in the Word and witnessed to men in order that all men may be saved. His love or grace has been cherished toward men in Himself, that is in Jesus Christ.¹⁰ Without Christ, for men, no manifestation of "God Himself," no forgiveness of sins, and no salvation are possible, and no grace of God is obtainable by men. Only in Him, the Savior, are the "wealth," "riches," and His righteousness alone endureth forever. "Ecce haec fides est donum dei, quae gratiam dei nobis obtinet et peccatum illud expurgat, et salvos certosque facit, non nostris sed Christi operibus, ut subsistere et permanere in aeternum possimus, sicut scriptum est: 'Iustitia eius manet in seculum seculi.'" (Ps. 112:3)¹¹ The aforementioned describes fully the gratuitus Dei favor to save fallen mankind by faith in His beloved Son, who is the grace Himself, as Luther said: ". . . non nisi in fide Christi iustos fieri posse."¹² "Christus enim seu gratia Christi, quae est in spiritu potestas et virtus dei in sanctis, ipsa dextera Dei."¹³

⁹W. 43, 136.

¹⁰Cf. W. 8, 107.

¹¹W. 8, 112.

¹²W. 4, 388.

¹³W. 4, 60.

Concerning the nature of God's grace, Luther explained further that "Gratia enim dei accepta ut dixi est iustitia."¹⁴ God's grace is nothing other than the operation of the Spirit of God. It is a continual process in man's history, to save all in all generations. "Gratia est continua operatio, qua exercitatur per spiritum facientes, loquentes placentia deo. Spiritus non res mortua sed vivax."¹⁵

The Certainty and Assurance of One's Election

The concept of the elect or predestination was in Luther the purely Christian assurance of being wholly chosen by God's love and redeemed by His grace. God was to him essentially the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by forgiving men's sins, restores them to Himself, gives them His Spirit, and enables them to turn this common life into a true holy service.

A common inquiry, however, is the certainty of one's election, that is, whether one is elected or not. Luther claimed to be sure about his "salvation" in Christ but not about his predestination which belongs to the secret council of God. The depths of Divine foreknowledge or predestination are above and beyond human reason. "Freilich weiss Luther, dass ueber der Christlichen Religion **schliesslich**

¹⁴W. 3, 47.

¹⁵W. 40, 2, 422.

doch auch im Hinblick auf Christus das Geheimnis der Praedestination liegt, die zutiefst ueber alles entscheidet."¹⁶

It must be learned that predestination does not rest upon our worthiness and merit, for then Satan could every moment make it doubtful and overthrow it; but it rests in the hands of God and is founded upon His mercy and grace, which is unwavering and eternal. The foreknowledge of God is certain and infallible. Luther commented, on the I Pet. 1:1-2, " . . . the elect . . . according to the foreknowledge of God," as follows: ". . . die Vernehmung nicht auf unsere Wuerdigkeit und Verdienst, wie die Sophisten vorgeben, gegrundet sei, da sie der Teufel koennte alle Augenblick ungewiss machen und umstossen; sondern in Gottes Hand steht sie, und auf seine Barmherzigkeit, die unwandelbar und ewig ist, ist sie gegrundet; daher sie auch Gottes Vernehmung heisst, und deshalb gewiss ist, und nichtfehlen kann."¹⁷

The assurance of one's election and salvation can be obtained from the following three means: The objective means (word), subjective means (faith), and in Christ.

God's Word is the ground or the foundation of the faith of man as well as the "Scriptura est venter, unde oritur veritas divina et ecclesia."¹⁸ Therein have all the saints

¹⁶Koestlin, Luthers Theologie, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁷st. L. IX, 1115.

¹⁸w. 3, 454.

found comfort and assurance in regard to their election to eternal life; not in any special revelation in regard to their predestination, but in faith in Christ. Man should not inquire or search out whether he has been predestined or not; but he ought to hold forth the Gospel, and the Word of God which assures the promises of God to save "all" men, the universal salvation.¹⁹

God's election gives man the faith. Man is not elected in view of faith but to faith. Justitia Dei, first of all, for Christians, is "iustificati ex fide et gratia,"²⁰ and it is called the "justification by grace alone." All those who come to faith are freely elected to God's grace. Thus the primary problem is not whether faith assures one's election

¹⁹Kerr, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

Rom. 11:32 -- "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

Rom. 10:11 -- "For the Scriptures saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

I Tim. 2:4 -- "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."

2 Pet. 3:9 -- "The Lord. . . is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

John 3:16 -- "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I John 2:2 -- "he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

I Pet. 5:10 -- "But the God of all grace who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, . . ."

Ezek. 18:23, 32 -- "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live? (v. 23). For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord: Wherefore turn yourselves, and live. (v. 32)"

²⁰W. 3, 614.

or not but the fact that "all men have not faith." (2Thess. 3:2)²¹ Whoever therefore believes in the word of God is also predestined, and the "rechtfertigende Gnade ist der Glaube." "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16)²² "Luther legt das groesste Gewicht darauf, dass der wirkliche Glaube von der goettlichen Gnade eingegossen oder durch den heil. Geist in der Seele gewirkt werde (W. 25, 327; 2, 722). . . . Im Glauben vollzieht sich in der Seele die continua operatio der Gnade oder des Heil(Cf. W. 40, 2, 422; 40, 1, 312)."²³

The gracious will of God and His pleasure in Christ is the most convincing assurance of our election. He promised to us not to let any man or any other creature pluck us out of His hand. "I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28) Even the power of hell will not be able to prevail against the Word of God. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) ". . . as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48) Upon the predestination

²¹W. 25, 10.

²²Reinholds Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Werner Scholl, 1917), IV, v. 1, 111.

²³Ibid., p. 317.
See George Stoeckhardt, The Epistle to the Ephesians, translated by Erwin W. Koehlinger (St. Louis: Concordia Mimeo-graph Company, 1951), p. 7. "If we are predestined to adoption, then we are also predestined to faith."

of God our salvation is to firmly founded that no one can separate us from the love of God. ". . . Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39). It is enough for us to know that he who is finally preserved in repentance and faith is certainly one of the elect. Luther maintains this position with great earnestness, in opposition to the reckless spirits then so numerous, who held that no sin could further injure him who had once become a believer in Christ.²⁴ By Christ everyone is called and brought into faith in which man knows his election to salvation. This means, that faith is the way of realizing the predestination of God.²⁵ In his commentary on chapters IX, X, and XI of the Epistle to the Romans, Luther teaches that God's eternal predestination exists whether one believes or not, whether one is rid of sin or not rid of it. Thus our becoming righteous is taken entirely out of our hands and put in the hand of God. And that is most highly necessary, for we are so weak and uncertain.²⁶ Our knowledge is so limited that none of us know it, on a rational basis, whether or not the Divine grace possesses an active force, and exactly how far this force extends. It is one of the realms which is

²⁴Koestlin, op. cit., II, 466.

²⁵cf. W. 43, 457-63.

²⁶Works of Martin Luther (Philadelphia Edition; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1932), VI, 459.

beyond the capacity of human comprehension.²⁷ "Denn durch Christum sind wir gewiss gemacht worden, dass jeder, der da glaubt, vom Vater Praedestinirt sei. Denn, wen er verordnet hat, den hat er auch berufen (Romans 8:30) durch das Evangelium, dass er glauben solle und durch den Glauben gerechtfertigt werde."²⁸

Man ought to not to presume to be able to explore the depths of divine foreknowledge with his reason which is so limited. If he does, unfortunately, he will certainly go astray and either sink into gloomy fatalism or turn to Epicurianism. For this reason Luther admonished and encouraged thus in the following paragraph.

Sondern halt dich an die Verheissung des Evangelii, die wird dich lehren, dass Christus, Gottes Sohn, in die Welt kommen sei, dass er alle Voelker auf Erden segnen, das ist, von Suende und Tod erloesen, gerecht und selig machen sollte, und dass er solches aus Befehl und gnaedigem Willen Gottes, des himmlischen Vaters, getan habe, der die Welt also geliebet hat, dass er seinen einigen Sohn gab, auf dass alle, die an ihm glauben, nicht verloren werden, sondern das ewige Leben haben, Joh. 3:16. Folgst du dem Rat, naemlich, erkennst du zuvor, dass du ein Kind des Zorns von Natur bist, des ewigen Todes und Verdammnis schuldig, daraus dich keine Kreatur, weder menschlich' noch engelisch', erretten koenne, und ergreifst danach Gottes Verheissung, glaubst, dass er ein barmherziger, wahrhaftiger Gott sei, der treulich halte aus lauter Gnade, ohne all unser Zutun und Verdienst, was er geredet habe, und habe darum Christum, seinen einigen

²⁷Cf. Karl Hall, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte (Tuebingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr-Paul Siebeck, 1932), I, 139.

²⁸St. L. XXib, 3226.

W. T 2 (Tischreden), 112. "Das tun wir nicht, IDEO DEI EST NOBIS INCOMPREHENSIBILIS, INCOGNITABILIS; er wirt nicht begreifen, er will vngefast sein extra Christum. . . . Vun bei dem Christo solt ir finden, was, wer ich bin, vnd was ich haben will; sonst solt irs im himel vnd erden nicht finden."

Sohn,, gesandt, dass er fuer deine Suenden sollte genug-
tum und dir seine Unschuld und Gerechtigkeit schenken,
dich endlich auch von allerlei Not und Tod erlossen: so
zweifle nicht daran, du gehoerest unter das Haeuflein
der Erwaehten. Wenn man auf solche Weise, wie denn St.
Paulus auch pflegt, die Versehung handelt, ist die ueber
die Massen troestlich. Wer es anders vernimmt, dem ist
sie achrecklich. 29

29st. L. IX, 1115.

CHAPTER V

THE GROUNDS OF CALVIN'S SYSTEM OF PREDESTINATION

Influences from Saint Augustine and Martin Bucer

John Calvin, who is often credited with the teaching of "predestination," is not the originator of the teaching or the founder of the system of predestination. Even so censorious a man as Calvin could scarcely get away from the external influences of either his contemporaries or the generations that preceded him. Among numerous persons who had great influence on him, there were Saint Augustine and Martin Bucer. The extent to which these men did influence the theology of Calvin, we shall briefly examine.

Saint Augustine

Calvin simply carried the Augustinian theology to its logical and necessary conclusion; and he was the first to adopt the doctrine of predestination as a cardinal point or primordial principle of a theological system. His system, however, is no more than a logical influence from St. Augustine.)

¹B. B. Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism (London: Oxford University Press, c.1931), p. 3: "It is doubtless legendary, that the censoriousness of his bearing earned for him from his associates the nickname of 'The Accusative Case.'" The root idea of the "Accusative Case" seemingly relates to an action or a motion towards a place, and indicates the direction, extension, or an end of action.

On the main issues on predestination, in the supposed interests of evangelical piety, and in an attempt to synthesize faith and culture, Calvin had subscribed to the views of St. Augustine whole heartedly, with whom he did not differ even "one pin's point."² Often the latter was quoted for an explanation and proof of the former's position. For example, Calvin did let Augustine answer for him the question of "the consistency of God's Calling;"³ the question of God's favor to His elect;⁴ the "human justice" and the "justice of God;"⁵

²John Calvin, Calvin's Calvinism, translated by Henry Cole ("The Eternal Predestination of God," "The Secret Providence of God," by John Calvin, Geneva, A.D. 1552) (London: Sovereign Grace Union, 1927), pp. 38, 52, 127, 73. See "On Calvin and Augustine": "In a word, Augustine is so wholly with me, that if I had wished to write a confession of my faith, I could do so with all fulness and satisfaction to myself out of his writings. . . . he does not differ from me one pin's point. . . . I cannot find words more appropriate than his wherewith to express the mind of Christ in the Evangelist. . . . To these sentiments (on God's Will) of the holy man I subscribe with all my heart. . . of the admirable Augustine."

³Inst., III, 22, 10: "Let Augustine answer for me: 'Do you wish to dispute with me: Rather unite with me in admiration, and exclaim, O the depth! Let us both agree in fear, lest we perish in error.'"

⁴Inst., III, 22, 8: Calvin quotes the words of Augustine: "God favours his elect because he will, and has mercy because he will. For this oracle, 'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and show mercy on whom I will show mercy (Ex. 33: 19),' is equivalent to the declaration, that God is excited to mercy by no other motive than his own will to be merciful."

⁵Inst., III, 24, 17: "Now, while many arguments are advanced on both sides let our conclusion be to stand astonished with Paul at so great a mystery, and admit the clamour of petulant tongues let us not be ashamed of exclaiming with him, 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?' for, as Augustine justly contends. . . ."

and the "willingness" of man to come to the Father.⁶

What were the primary principles of Augustine's teaching? The fundamental starting point in Augustinianism is the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. According to Augustine, God in all eternity had an infinite number of choices as to how He might create His world and man, a potentia absoluta. Yet God, in His infinite wisdom, made the world according to His final choice, the potentia ordinata which now exists. The wisdom in His established order, no human being may be able to question or to answer. From Augustine the overwhelming sense of God's "universal causality" -- His eternal foreknowledge on the causes of all things⁷ -- has been formalized and thereby become a vital part of Calvin's theology on the doctrine of God. From the sinfulness and impotency of all men, Augustine deduced the doctrine of unconditional predestination, that is, man's election or damnation is an absolute consequence of God's eternal, unattainable will. However, he did not directly say that there is a predestination to damnation; he stressed that there is a choice but the elect

⁶Cole, op. cit., pp. 52 f: ". . . the holy father (Augustine) arrives at this conclusion: . . . the sacred matter is not perfected unless he is willing to come and does come. Now every one that had learned of the Father has not only the power to come, but does come. . . . those whom He does teach, He teaches in mercy; but whose whom He does not teach, in judgment He teaches them not (Rom. 9:18)."

⁷Cf. Saint Augustine, The City of God, translated by Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1950), pp. 154-55. See N. P. Williams, The Idea of the Fall and of Original Sin (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), p. 322.

has cause under the influence of the gratia particularis. They who believe in the Gospel with a saving faith are not merely elected to be the recipients of the heavenly reward; they are elected to be the recipients of faith.⁸

Faith itself is the gift of God. Calvin cites the words of Augustine on faith, "Faith, . . . , from its beginning to its perfection is the gift of God. . . . But why faith is not given to all men ought not to concern the believer, who knows that all men by sin of one came into most just condemnation."⁸ In the Augustinian theology, faith precedes knowledge and is the key to knowledge. Thus the knowledge is the reward of faith. Calvin made the comment, in his commentary on Acts 10:43, that faith depends upon God's election, and the favor of God comes through the benefit of Christ alone and His mediation.

Martin Bucer

One may hardly over-estimate the admiration of Calvin for Martin Bucer. As for Calvin, such tributary appraisals were not unusual for his "spiritual father," Martin Bucer: "Most excellent servant of Christ," and "that most faithful teacher or excellent Doctor of the Church of Christ." Not only did Bucer inspire and influence much of Calvin's literary

⁸Fischer, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

⁹Cole, op. cit., p. 39.

work, he also, either directly or indirectly, provided him with the liturgy, which has become a powerful influence upon the worship of French Reformed Churches, and in Calvin's personal and private life. "Bucer did not hesitate to teach the young Calvin the need of self-control and diplomatic tact, 'as was well illustrated in the case of Caroli.' . . . It was upon the Bucer's advice Calvin finally decided to take a wife, and with Bucer's help that he selected Idolette de Bure."¹⁰

Martin Bucer, preacher in Strassburg, whose "Theologie war der grosse Vermittlungstheologe,"¹¹ stood half way between Zwingli and Luther in his views.¹² Formerly he was a Zwinglian, but after the Marburg Conference he regarded with less disfavor the Lutheran opinion.¹³ Of all the men called to teach at Strassburg through Bucer's influence none became more celebrated than John Calvin and John Sturm. The conversion of Calvin and his early relation with Bucer form one of the most baffling myteries of the Reformation. Thus Calvin came to Strasburg, drawn by the magnet of Bucer's persuasion and

¹⁰Hastings Eells, Martin Bucer (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1931), pp. 235 ff.

¹¹Reinhold Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte (Erlangen; Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Verner Scholl, 1920), IV, Part 2, 552.

¹²R. W. Miles, That Frenchman, John Calvin (New York, London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939), p. 102.

¹³Fischer, op. cit., p. 290.

stimulation by the vigor of his personality. In the flush of youthful enthusiasm he found in Bucer an inspiration to greater things. In 1538, Calvin went to Strasburg and was given a temporary lodging first by Capita, and later by Bucer. Bucer's kindness and encouragement gained the undying gratitude of Calvin, for it was the younger man who profited by far the most from their relationship.¹⁴ Calvin praised Bucer's erudition, his copious knowledge, his perspicuity, and his other virtues. From the commentary on Romans it is evident that in this and similar works, Calvin made an extensive use of Bucer's writings both as models and as source of information, of which he made a grateful acknowledgment:

In the last place comes Bucer, who by publishing his works, has given as it were the finishing stroke. For in addition to his recondite learning and enlarged knowledge of things, and to the clearness of his mind, and much reading and many other excellencies, in which he is hardly surpassed by any at this day, equalled by few and excelled by still fewer -- he possesses, as you know this praise as his own -- that no one in our age has been with so much labor engaged in the work of expounding Scripture. . . . Bucer is too diffuse for men in business to read, and too profound to be understood by such as are simple and not capable of much application: for whatever be the subject which he handles, as many things are suggested to him through the incredible fecundity of his mind, in which he excels, that he knows not when to stop.¹⁵

¹⁴Kells, *op. cit.*, pp. 227, 229, 233. Calvin described some of his experiences with Bucer in the "Preface" of his commentary on Psalms (Vol. I, xviii): ". . . I resolved to live in a private station, free from the burden and cares of any public charges when that most excellent servant of Christ, Martin Bucer, . . . , drew me back to a new station. . . ."

¹⁵John Calvin, Commentaries on the Romans, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1947), pp. xxv f.

In the preface to his commentary on the Psalms, Calvin expressly declared that his own book would have been of little use had he not read carefully what Bucer wrote before him.

"... in fact, I have kept away from this subject, because that most faithful teacher of the Church of God, Martin Bucer, had labored in this field with such singular learning, diligence, fidelity, and success, that at least there was not so great need that I should put my hand to the work."¹⁶

Calvin's Criteria of Reasoning

1. The Scripture

John Calvin, according to his own words, found, in the Scripture, his ultimate and decisive authority for the doctrine of predestination on both of his ideas of election and reprobation. What he did actually mean by certain expressions concerning the Holy Scripture is not in the scope of this thesis; however, we rather try to synthesize the spoken words of Calvin on the Holy Writ. His mind had received a strong bias towards certain views on the subject from men like St. Augustine and Martin Bucer whose influences had been predominant in Calvin. His conviction rested on various grounds. Indeed Calvin was an heir of the past.¹⁷ "To desire any other

¹⁶John Calvin, Commentary on the Psalms, translated by Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), I, xxxv.

¹⁷Cf. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 98, 100, 38048.

knowledge of predestination than what is founded in the Word of God," said Calvin, "indicates as great folly as a wish to walk through unpassable roads, or to see in the dark."¹⁸ The Word of God affords a certain rule for the understanding of man. For it is the "school of the Holy Spirit, in which, as nothing necessary and useful to be known is omitted, so nothing is taught which is not beneficial to know. Whatever, therefore, is taught in the Bible concerning predestination we must be cautious not to withhold from believers."¹⁹ Calvin urged man to "search the Scripture,"²⁰ for the Scripture is the source in which our knowledge of God is revealed.²¹ In his letter to William Rabot, on the 24th of July, 1550, Calvin exalted him with the following words: ". . . you must first of all give devoted submission to the will of the Lord, . . . fortify yourself by his sacred doctrines, . . . make a constant study of the Word of the Lord, you will be quite able to guide your life to the highest excellence."²²

Calvin goes behind both Luther's emphasis on the immediate

¹⁸Inst., III, 21, 2.

¹⁹Inst., III, 21, 3.

²⁰Inst., I, 17, 3.

²¹Inst., I, 6, 1-4.

²²Jules Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, translated and compiled from the Latin and French languages (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), II, 279.

and self-evidencing appeal of Scripture and the Occamist pre-supposition of an infused faith to the cause of the state of mind and heart. An acceptance of the Scripture as the Word of God, he recognized, could make one to know the working and witness of the Holy Spirit. No proof for its activity, but the Scripture, would be suffice.²³

Concerning the questions on the secret counsel of God, Calvin holds the position of Deut. 29:29, "the secret things belong to the Lord. . .,"²⁴ Prov. 16:4, "the Lord hath made everything for its own end. . .,"²⁵ and Romans 9:20, 21, "O man, who art thou. . ."²⁶ He asserted one should not be ashamed "to be ignorant of something relative to a subject in which there is a kind of learned ignorance."²⁷ Calvin's remark on his own position was stated in one of his letters, saying, ". . . I am free to confess, . . . which I maintain to be true. . . , not without good grounds and evidence from holy writ."²⁸

2. Human Experiences and Reason

Calvin drew his whole theology from the Scripture and

²³Inst., II, 2, 20.

²⁴Inst., III, 21, 3.

²⁵Inst., III, 23, 6.

²⁶Inst., III, 23, 4.

²⁷Inst., III, 21, 21.

²⁸Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, II, op. cit., 365.

the classical authorities of the ancient Church. It was a fixed principle with him that he would not go beyond what the express teaching of Scripture authorized. Even as the doctrine of predestination itself, it is difficult to understand the conception of Calvin on predestination in conjunction with human reason and the revealed Word of God. It seems that there is a contradiction between his dialectical reasoning and an open acknowledgment of the inability of human reason; and between his emphasis on the Holy Scripture and his conclusion of the teaching on reprobation. Everything that does not conform to the exigencies of his dialectic, Calvin either contests or rejects. For him a rational proof and an incontrovertible logic are the signs and proof of truth. He would have not believed if belief did not support itself by a syllogism in proper form. Thus Calvin transformed religion into an affair of intellect. If it were true that Calvin was no Rationalist,²⁹ he would have at least been rationally minded. As Calvin's rigorous logic earned the title of "courage,"³⁰ it would have also created the teaching of "reprobation" which was, for Calvin, an inevitable inference of his logic from the fact of the patent rejection of the Gospel by so many, which cannot imply the failure or thwarting of God's plan in their case, but must be in accordance with His will. There

²⁹Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, IV, Part 2, op. cit., 637.

³⁰Williams, op. cit., p. 436.

is precise inconsistency between this conclusion and his assertion that God gave us the Bible as it is, so much and no more,³¹ because the Bible does not teach reprobation. The question on "reprobation" is a hidden mystery which cannot be answered.

On the other hand, Calvin realizes the inability of human reason and man's "utter ignorance." In regard to the cause and the authority of "Fall," it is a "secret manifest far too far to be penetrated by any stretch and acuteness of human intellect. . . . I (Calvin) confess my utter ignorance . . . in the blaze of His own inaccessible light."³²

Human reason, then neither approaches, nor tends, to direct its views towards this truth, to understand who is the true God, or in what character he will manifest himself to us . . . we should neither scrutinize those things which the Lord has left concealed, nor neglect those which he has openly exhibited, lest we be condemned for excessive curiosity on the one hand, or for ingratitude on the other.³³

Every supernatural being is clearly "beyond our comprehension," said Calvin in his commentary on the Ephesians 5:32.³⁴ An inevitable dilemma was thus created in his teaching of reprobation, which is not "revealed" in the Word of God, and such of his statements as these: ". . . those who seek to know more than God has revealed are madmen!"³⁵ ". . . I submit

³¹Inst., I, 13, 21.

³²Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 128, 96.

³³Inst., II, 2, 18; III, 21, 4.

³⁴See Calvin's commentary on the Ephesians, p. 326.

³⁵Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 127.

my will and my affections . . . to the obedience of God; . . . to those by whom I hope that the Lord himself will speak to me."³⁶ "The Scripture. . . shows us clearly that God has predestined men to such ends as he chose them to reach. But as to why or how this is done, we must remain ignorant, because it has not been revealed to us."³⁷ Calvin's solution for this dilemma was borrowed from the words of St. Augustine.

When the last day (says Augustine) shall have come, then will be seen in the brightest light of understanding that which the godly now hold in faith, until it shall be then understood by the fullest comprehension. . . . He wills nothing that He cannot do!³⁸

3. The Doctrine of God by Calvin

For Calvin, God is law and justice, for Luther love and grace. This is the main difference between the theologies of the two men. To know God and to glorify Him were the key to Calvin, in whose decree the salvation of man was placed. Whether or not Calvin was a "God-intoxicated man,"³⁹ it is not easy for us to conclude; nevertheless, his concept was thoroughly centered in the "God" who governs the world which He Himself has created, and perpetuates the eternal rulership

³⁶Jules Bonnet, compiled, edited, and translated from the Latin and French languages, Letters of John Calvin (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858) I, 281.

³⁷Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, II, op. cit., 367.

³⁸Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 256.

³⁹Miles, op. cit., p. 112.

of all things, maintaining their safety and preservation. God, to Calvin, whose nature is "just," whose action is solely based upon "His own perfect justice," and in whose judgment "the highest rule of the highest equity" are stemmed, is absolutely sovereign (Thus interprets Calvin: Romans 9:6-24) in His choice and management of nations, for world functions so as to bring all at last in subjection to Himself.⁴⁰ Not only Calvin emphasized the freedom of grace, the unmerited character, but equally the sovereignty of God in the bestowal of it. The idea is that apart from this sovereignty in the selection of the subjects of it, grace would not be grace. This doctrine of God's sovereignty, and the use made of it, is one thing that differentiates Calvinism from Lutheranism. God's wisdom, for Calvin, is the highest of all true wisdom, that is by holding the will of God to be the highest rule of righteousness. He does so govern and guide all things by His secret and sovereign counsel, that He does bring to pass those things which He has determined, even by the wicked and Satan.⁴¹

On the attributes of God, Calvin enumerated such qualities of perfection as clemency, goodness, mercy, justice, and truth, on the basis of Psalms 64. "These three things it is certainly

⁴⁰Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 72, 193, 283.

⁴¹Cf. John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Acts, edited from the original English Translation of Christopher Fetherstone by Henry Beveridge (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1949), I, 187.

of the highest importance for us to know," thus explained Calvin, "-- mercy, in which alone consists all our salvation; judgment, which is executed on the wicked every day, and awaits them in a still heavier degree to eternal destruction; righteousness, by which the faithful are preserved, and most graciously supported."⁴² He holds the position that we should see that there was no inner contradiction at all, and that when God is just, He does not cease to be loving. The knowledge of God being afforded us in the Scripture invites us to the fear of God, to the confidence in Him, to sincere obedience to His will, and to a total dependence on His goodness.⁴³ God is the "first cause" and His will is the supreme cause of all things; and yet, He is not the author of evils that are done therein. This, the authorship of sin by God, "I (Calvin) most solemnly deny."⁴⁴

The "experience" of Calvin, as he testified, made him draw these conclusions on faith: "Faith . . . is the gate and the first beginning of salvation. . . ; God's election is the cause of faith and salvation (faith depends upon God's election) . . . ; the election of God is . . . approved by faith . . . which is revealed to us in the Gospel."⁴⁵ According to

⁴²Inst., I, 10, 2.

⁴³Hunter, op. cit., p. 51. Inst., I, 10, 2.

⁴⁴Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 251, 233, 192, 246 f.

⁴⁵Calvin, Commentary on Acts, I, op. cit., 555 ff.

Calvin, the grace of God which, together with the faith of men, is a gift of God, the "beginning of the whole saving process and is given only to the elect." (Gratia particularis).⁴⁶ His claim concerning predestination, based on experiences, is as follows.

God's sovereign election of some, and preterition of others, they make the subject of formal accusation against him, but if this is the known fact, what will they gain by quarrelling with God? We teach nothing but what experience has proved, that God has always been at liberty to bestow his grace on whom he chooses.⁴⁷

4. The Relation of "Predestination" to Christ and Faith according to Calvin

In Calvin's reasoning, predestination, the work of Christ, and faith are somewhat loosely related. The relative importance of Christ and faith in the predestination of men is not clearly stated. He calls Christ the Speculum praedestinationis,⁴⁸ the author and the instrument of election which precedes grace.⁴⁹ Christ's merit is divinely determined as sufficient and made available to the elect. Christ had purchased it for men, and all things that belong to our salvation are accomplished in Him whose blood washed away the sins of men. Election is not irrespective of Christ, "for without

⁴⁶Hunter, op. cit., p. 113. Cf. Calvin's commentary on Jer. 32:39 ff. and Ezek. 11:19.

⁴⁷Inst., III, 22, 1.

⁴⁸Inst., III, 24, 5.

⁴⁹Inst., III, 22, 1.

Christ, his majesty will always be terrible and fearful to us, . . . But when we know that all grace resteth in Jesus Christ, then we may be assured that God loved us, although we were unworthy."⁵⁰ Whether redemption could have been effected without the work of Christ or some equivalent, Calvin would have refused to consider, in consistency with his whole attitude to ultimate mysteries. It was enough for Calvin that "God chose the 'way of salvation' through Christ; . . . therefore our eyes must be directed to Christ."⁵¹

Salvation and election of men are inseparably connected with their faith, however, faith is not the cause of our salvation, but the eternal will of God. It occupies the "second place."⁵² Election precedes faith as to its Divine order, but it is seen and understood by faith. Christ is the only door by which many men can enter the kingdom of heaven.⁵³

⁵⁰James A. Bill, translated and compiled, Calvin and Luther (Sermons of Calvin and Luther and their brief Biographies) (Philadelphia: James A. Bill, 1849), p. 49. Cf. Ibid., pp. 56 f.

⁵¹Inst., III, 24, 5.

⁵²Inst., III, 22, 10.

⁵³Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 111, 133. See William G. T. Shedd, Dogmatic Theology (Second Edition; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1889), I, 448-450: "In the Calvinistic system, 'election precedes faith, and preterition precedes perseverance in unbelief.' . . . The election and preterition are sovereign, not judicial acts. A man is elected, because of God's good pleasure (kata eudokian), not because of faith. . . . They are those of persons: namely, Peter, James, Judas, and the like."

CHAPTER VI

CALVIN'S SYSTEM OF PREDESTINATION

We turn to the fundamental principle of Calvin's theology, sometimes spoken of simply as Calvinism, or sometimes more generally as the theology of the Reformed Church, which has been developed in the leading parts of his theological system. The doctrine of predestination occupies a prominent place in the system of Calvin's theology. It deals with God's relation to the ultimate destinies of individual men in its limited sense, that is, concerned solely with the fate of men hereafter. "Fuer Calvin ist die Praedestination nicht eine abstrakte Idee, die Ueber der Wirklichkeit schwebt, sondern sie ist die beherrschende innere Ursache in der Entwicklung des wirklichen Lebens und seiner Zustaende. Die Erwaehlung bedingt naemlich das eigentuemlich kraftvolle Wirken (gratia potentior), durch das ein Teil der Menschen zum Glauben und dadurch zum Heil gelangt."¹

For an overview of Calvin's system of predestination, it might be appropriate to approach it in the light of the Calvinist-Arminian controversy in the early Seventeenth Century. The controverted "Five Articles" by Calvinists, being contrasted with the views of the Remonstrants (or Arminians), may adequately present the major portion of Calvin's idea

¹Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, op. cit., p. 579.

on predestination. Therefore, we shall take up those points separately in conjunction with Calvin's own concepts as they appeared in his writings.

As a historical resumé, immediately succeeding generations of Calvin, we could find a general tendency of the human reason to revolt against Calvin's decretum horribile of absolute predestination. Salvation and damnation, meted out without regard to merit or demerit, have aroused opposition in thinking minds from the first promulgation of the dogma by Calvin. His reckless tenets had banished love and mercy from the hearts of his followers and had everywhere aroused a fierce spirit of strife and opposition. A leader was sure to rise from the Calvinistic ranks who would point out the baneful corollaries of the Geneva Creed. Such a leader was the Jacobus Arminius.²

Absolute Predestination

The first word in Calvinism is God, the absolutely sovereign God. On Him, creation, life, and our righteousness depend absolutely and continually.³ What Calvin did was to mold doctrines, such as the doctrines of the Trinity and of the person of Christ and, above all, the doctrine of

²Jacobus Arminius (Jakob Hermanzoon), professor at the University of Leyden, was born in 1560 (died in 1609). His followers (the Remonstrants) declared themselves opposed to the doctrines (Five Points) of Calvin and his followers (the Ultra-Calvinists).

³Cf. Inst., II, 16, 3.

predestination, into a logically articulated system, under the guidance of his determining thought of God's absolute sovereignty in the world both of nature and of spirit, and to give them a form fitted to exercise the strongest influence on both intellect and will, in the individuals and peoples accepting them. Calvin's defined form of predestination was as if God by an eternal and irrevocable decision had destined men, some to eternal bliss, others to eternal damnation, without any other law than His own pleasure. His conclusion, therefore, was that God creates whom He chooses to be His children by gratuitous adoption -- without any influence of merit of men - - ; that the cause of this is wholly in Himself; because He exclusively regards His own secret determination.⁴ Thus Calvin and his adherents had developed, with increasing clearness and boldness, an "absolute, bifurcated predestination," that is, a capricious election to eternal damnation as well as the salvation.⁵

As in the case of Augustine's doctrine of predestination, likewise, the assertion of Calvin is that the sovereign God acts in time in the salvation of the believers. His view is definitely an absolute predestination which has been considered as a "necessary sequence of Divine omnipotence and omniscience."⁶ He confines it, however, like Augustine to

⁴Inst., III, 22, 7.

⁵Concordia Triglotta, op. cit., p. 198.

⁶Schaff, IV, op. cit., 525.

the limits of the infralapsarian scheme,⁷ with an express exclusion of God from the authorship of sin. The sovereign will of God is the cause of His selection of men. The election which is unconditional in nature, has nothing to do with His foreknowledge⁸ except in so far as He foreknows who are to be members of the human race.⁹ Predestination and fate, according to Calvin, are not identical. In contrast to the idea of fate,¹⁰ he made the following comments on predestination: "I define (predestination) to be, according to the Holy Scripture, that free and unfettered counsel of God by which He rules all mankind, and all men and things, and also all parts and particles of the world by His infinite wisdom and incomprehensible justice."¹¹

⁷See Klotsche, op. cit., p. 209: "The INFRALAPSARIANS (from INFRA--below; LAPSUS--the fall) place the degree of predestination 'below' or after that of the fall, that is, the objects of predestination are viewed as FALLEN. According to the infraview the order of decrees is as follows: (1) the decree to create man; (2) the decree to permit man to fall; (3) the decree to elect out of fallen humanity some to eternal life, and to leave the other to the just consequences of their sins; (4) to provide salvation for the elect."

⁸Cf. Westminster Confession Chapter III, 2.

⁹Hunter, op. cit., p. 167

¹⁰Cp. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 257, 261, 262. On "Fate": It is "the term which is profane," said Calvin. "Fate is a term given by the Stoics to their doctrine of necessity, which they had formed out of a multiplex labyrinth of contradictory reasoning; a doctrine calculated to call God Himself to order, and to set Him laws whereby to work."

¹¹Ibid., p. 261.

Limited Atonement

Christ's atonement is limited to the "elect," thus Calvin had taught. It is the doctrine of election according to which the chosen were counted as necessarily and unavoidably blessed and the outcasts necessarily and unavoidably lost. Calvin, with his adherents, boldly rejected the universality of God's grace, of Christ's redemption, and of the Spirit's efficacious operation through the means of grace, and taught that, in the last analysis, also the eternal doom of the damned was absolutely due to an absolute decree of divine reprobation.¹² Christ's suffering and death are efficient "only for the elect," and the reprobate is excluded from the universal redemption in Christ. In his commentary on I John 2:2, "He is the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world," Calvin clearly stated that "Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution was commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what had been said is true, yet, . . . then under the word ALL or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world."¹³

¹²In the views of Calvin and his adherents, the "reprobation" is a logical complement of election.

¹³John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistle, translated and edited by John Owen (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 173.

Predestination in the final analysis, to Calvin, was only the application of God's Providence. His decree of predestination was that Christ should die only for the elect (Limited Atonement) and that God would later effectively call and convert only those who were elected; the rest of mankind He would pass by; the Gospel, even if they would hear it, would not be a power of God unto them. ". . . he (God) invites men universally to come to him, and receives only a few elect, . . . that by ^{external} eternal preaching all are called to repentance and faith, and yet that the spirit of repentance and faith is not given to all. . . . Let this suffice, that though the voice of the Gospel addresses all men generally, yet the gift of faith is bestowed on few."¹⁴

Such words as "whole world," "the world," "whosoever," explained by Calvin as meaning universal grace, are no more than an expedient means by which God can "cut off every excuse from unbelievers." Faith is not common to all, but only to the elect. By faith alone man may be able to open his eyes and to come to know Christ. It is therefore an inevitable logical conclusion, based upon the premises of Calvin, that those who are not elected cannot come to Christ, and God's redemptive work through Christ is foreign to them. Such inference is further substantiated by Calvin's own words, in his commentary on John 3:16:

¹⁴Inst., III, 22, 10.

and he has employed the universal term WHOSOEVER, both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the import of the term WORLD, . . . he (God) shows himself to be reconciled to the whole world, when he invites all men without exception to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life. Let us remember, on the other hand, that whole life is promised universally to ALL WHO BELIEVE IN CHRIST, still faith is not common to all. For Christ is made known and held out to the view of all, but the elect alone are they whose eyes God opens, that they may see him by faith.¹⁵

Total Depravity of Man¹⁶

Man is viewed by Calvin as made a pure being, in his Creator's image, but now a fallen and corrupted being through his voluntary defection from the good. This corruption of nature preceeds from the first parents of the race to all of their posterity, man's natural gifts, as Calvin phrases it after Augustine, being corrupted by sin and his supernatural gifts withdrawn. ". . . I much approve of that common observation which has been borrowed from Augustine, that the natural talents in man have been corrupted by sin, but that of the supernatural ones he has been wholly deprived."¹⁷ In his doctrine of hereditary corruption, universal depravation, and complete lose of spiritual freedom on the part of man,

¹⁵See Calvin's commentary on the Gospel of John. Cf. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), *op. cit.*, p. 95; ". . . so that. . . inexcusable."

¹⁶Total depravity, i. e., depravity of man in all the parts or faculties of his nature. Calvin treats the Fall of man as "a standing lesson of humility to all his posterity; a lesson from which they may learn that they are nothing in themselves, and can do nothing to regain eternal life."

¹⁷Inst., II, 2, 12.

Calvin takes over almost unchanged the doctrine of Augustine. However it is by no means the case that the doctrine of "total depravity" is held by Calvin to imply that every human being is as bad as he can be, or that there are not wide distinctions of character among men, or there are not natural virtues, "images of virtues," capabilities even of splendid achievement, among those who are not yet regenerated. Some of the most interesting sections in Calvin are those in which he illustrates these very teachings in his book, the Institutes of the Christian Religion:

We should not consider human nature to be totally corrupted; since, from its instinctive bias, some have not only been eminent for noble actions, but have uniformly conducted themselves in a most virtuous manner through the whole course of their lives. . . . amidst this corruption of nature there is some room for Divine grace, not to purify it, but internally to restrain its operation.¹⁸

These virtues and endowments Calvin explains partly through what remains of the natural image of God in man, partly through restraining grace preventing the full development of corruption, but especially through a work of God's Spirit. Man's will, being wholly disabled for spiritual good by sin, can be restored to freedom and goodness only by an omnipotent act of God's grace. Divine grace in the work of human renewal is spoken of as "irresistible," in the sense that the natural will cannot resist grace. When Calvin, with Augustine, speaks of efficacious grace, what he has in view is a grace which

¹⁸Inst., II, 3, 3. Also read II, 2, 12-17, 22, 23; II, 3, 4.

renews the will and restores it to its true freedom -- it freely chooses the good. "I (Calvin) do not deny, that whatever excellences appear in unbelievers, they are the gift of God, . . . since there is nothing in any respect laudable which does not proceed from him (God)."¹⁹

In opposition to the synergists, Calvin describes God's effectual calling as follows:

Here two errors to be avoided. For some suppose man to be a cooperator with God, so that the validity of election depends on his consent; thus according to them, the will of man is superior to the counsel of God. As though the Scripture taught, that we are only given an ability to believe, and not faith itself.²⁰

Here we come upon one of the most elusive elements in Calvin's system, resulting from his attempt to escape from the apparent irreconcilability of the positions he takes up. Man could not help being what he is and inevitably incurs the penalty attached to inevitable sin, while yet he must be regarded as in some wise responsible for his sin, and therefore as meriting his condemnation. Fate masters him and yet he is master of his fate. The solution of Calvin to this paradox is that:

God has furnished the soul of man . . . with a mind capable of discerning good from evil, and just from unjust; and of discovering, by the light of reason, what ought to be pursued or avoided. . . . To this he has annexed the will, on which depends the choice. The primitive condition of man was enabled with those eminent faculties. . . . In this integrity man was endowed with free will, by which, if he has chosen, he might have

¹⁹Inst., III, 14, 2.

²⁰Inst., III, 24, 3.

obtained eternal life. . . . Adam . . . could have stood if he would, since he fell merely by his own will. . . .²¹

The choice of men was predetermined by the condition of his nature, which was wholly "sold under sin." He could not choose good because he would not. Calvin described "free will" as a "grave peril." The idea that man could do good if he would, and that he could will good if he liked, was to threaten the foundation of the whole doctrine of the grace of God as the only cause and agent of salvation and so indirectly and implicitly to impugn the sovereignty of God. Calvin, therefore, was strongly in favor of the abolition of the term "free will" for a practical advantage to the Church.²²

Irresistible Grace of God

The grace of God affects the elect only, testified Calvin, and His calling is effectual and irresistible. Those who are reprobated cannot participate in this through their conversion. This is one of the strongly opposed points in contrast to the claims of the "Remonstrants" that man may resist Divine grace. To Calvin the doctrine of predestination is not an abstract problem but one which is related as a part of the doctrine of salvation, both to the goodness of God and the sin of His creatures. This leaves upon them the moral impressions that God's mercy is wholly unmerited by them. In contrast

²¹Inst., I, 15, 8.

²²Cf. Hunter, op. cit., p. 121.

to the premises of the teaching on the "irresistible grace of God," some inevitable counter-inquiries may arise. As for example, if the grace of God is irresistible, how has man fallen away from His grace? And the age-old question, "Cur alii, alii non?" Calvin renders the fact that man could have been fallen under the "irresistible grace" of God, to the will of God. This is all that he could and would discuss with the inquirers. For him there is no such high will as God's. God's will is the highest. In the Christian Institutes, it is described thus: "the will of God is the highest rule of justice; so that what he wills must be considered just, for this very reason, because he wills it. When it is inquired, therefore, why the Lord did so, the answer must be, because he would."²³ Calvin used the words of Augustine, saying.

Wherefore let us not hesitate to say with Augustine, "God could convert to good the will of the wicked, because he is omnipotent. It is evident that he could. Why, then, does he not? Because he would not. Why he would not, remains with himself." For we ought not to aim at more wisdom than becomes us. . . . Though we cannot comprehend the reason of this, let us be content with some degree of ignorance where the wisdom of God soars into its own sublimity.²⁴

Under the wisdom of God, man has no power or ability in the matter of salvation. It depends solely upon God's mercy and His irresistible grace.²⁵ Since the salvation of men depends upon the mercy of God alone, and God saves none but

²³Inst., III, 23, 2.

²⁴Inst., III, 24, 13 f.

²⁵Calvin, Commentary on Romans, op. cit., p. 443.

those whom He chooses by His own secret good pleasure, explained Calvin, "there can absolutely be nothing left for men to do, will, or determine, in the matter of salvation."²⁶)

Perseverance of the Saints

According to the teaching of the "perseverance of the saints," those who had once attained true saving grace can never lose it and be wholly debased. For the elect there is no falling out of God's hand. Destiny, fixed in eternity, was settled for good or bad; nothing could or would change it. That which God had eternally willed would surely be. On the Gospel of John, 10:27-28, ". . . I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand," Calvin made the following interpretation: ". . . we are taught that the salvation of all the elect is not less certain than the power of God is invincible . . . we infer that the statement of Christ is intended to show that the elect are absolutely certain of their salvation."²⁷

²⁶Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 65.

²⁷Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel according to John, op. cit., p. 416.

CHAPTER VII

DOUBLE PREDESTINATION ACCORDING TO CALVIN

We treat the teaching of "double predestination" by Calvin under an independent chapter in this thesis, because this doctrine that "salvation is freely offered to some, and others are prevented from attaining it,"¹ is so vital and significant in his teaching of predestination. Calvin taught that God created and foreordained some to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. Man's election means that he has been created for eternal life; man's reprobation, that he has been created for eternal damnation. We read from his writing, that men, according to the predestination or the eternal decree of God, are "not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say, he is predestined either to life or to death."² Those who are excluded from the elect of God are made as the "vessels of God's wrath" and are born for the use and service of God's chosen. Among them are included the common mass of mankind who were not ordained to eternal life. How did Calvin explain the consequent misery and horror, among the non-elect, the great portion of the human race, ending in the eternal ruin? He observed that it is a "decretum

¹Cf. Inst., III, 21, 1, 5 f.

²Inst., III, 21, 5.

quidem horrible" (horrible decree), but no one can deny that God foreknew the future final fate of man before he created man, and that He did foreknow it because it was appointed by His own decree.³ How this terrible decree or doctrine can be reconciled with the love of God, Calvin nowhere explains. It is harmonized, stressed Calvin, with His justice by the familiar Augustinian expedient of postulating a peculiar, mysterious and "occultae quidem" kind of "divinae iustitiae" which has little or nothing in common with what we know as human justice. This somewhat contradictory position, to Calvin, was a logical necessity in dealing with the teaching of predestination. Nothing in man accounts for God's election or reprobation. Everything in man and his life is thereby by God's appointment.⁴

The point is clear, at any rate, for Calvin, that "God elects some and passes by others,"⁵ that is, God's salvation is not offered to all men.⁶ He had not mercy upon all because He wills not to have mercy upon all.⁷ The cause, however, must not be sought. In God's own purpose is the cause. He is not bound by any law that should compel Him to show mercy

³Inst., III, 23, 7.

⁴Cf. Inst., III, 23, 8.

⁵Thus commented Calvin in his commentary on Romans 9:14: "What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid."

⁶Cf. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 92.

⁷Ibid., p. 282.

unto all men indiscriminately and alike. He is His own law and a law unto Himself.⁸ "Now, forasmuch as God doth gather only a part, or a certain number, this grace is restricted unto election, that it may be the first cause of our salvation."⁹ It is not, therefore, in the power of men to keep themselves elected and saved. Only the gratuitous goodness of God is the security and assurance as it were of their salvation.¹⁰ God is no secondary or contingent cause but He is the direct and immediate cause of all happenings in men's life. This analysis made Calvin to conclude an absolute double predestination -- of the elect to eternal life and of the reprobate to eternal loss. Let us now proceed to examine the two kinds of predestination of God taught by Calvin.

Predestination to Life

Calvin defined predestination as the eternal decree of God, by which He decided with Himself what is to become of each and every individual. They are not all created to a similar destiny. Every man is thus predestined either to life or to death. Only one class of men, the elect, is

⁸Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 283.

⁹Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Acts, op. cit., p. 134. On Acts 2:47: "Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

¹⁰See Calvin's commentary on the Minor Prophets, II, 112. On Joel 2:32: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon unto blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord."

foreordained to eternal life. It is the decree of God, made before the foundation of the world, what He would do with regard to every man, and He assigned to everyone, by His secret counsel, his respective place. This counsel of God, as far as the elect are concerned, is founded on His gratuitous mercy, totally irrespective of human merit.¹¹ God's calling of men depends on His secret election. He appoints, chooses, separates, and sanctifies men (the elect) by "his own purpose,"¹² and "according to His own will."¹³ God decreed to convert none but His own elect who are included in His eternal and secret counsel. The gift of conversion is not common to all men. God's own children and His own elect people are the only ones concerning whom He has recorded His promise to save. None but God's elect, therefore, ever do turn from their wickedness. God enlightens, according to Calvin, all men with the eternal doctrine of conditional life. In this primary manner He calls, or invites all men into eternal life. But, in the latter case, He brings unto eternal life those whom He willed according to His eternal purpose, regenerating by His Spirit, as an eternal Father, His own children only.¹⁴

¹¹Inst., III, 21, 7.

¹²See Galatians 1:15 in Calvin's commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.

¹³See Jer. 1:5 in Calvin's commentary on the Jeremiah.

¹⁴Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 100. Cf. Calvin's commentary on I John 2:19, and Jer. 31:33.

Calvin realizes the importance of having clear concept of the doctrine of election. This knowledge is "profitable" to men, assures their salvation, and eliminates the doubt of one's salvation. "We shall never be clearly convinced as we ought to be," said Calvin, "that our salvation flows from the fountain of God's free mercy, till we are acquainted with His eternal election, . . ."¹⁵ God's gratuitous election is but half shown till we come to particular individuals, to whom God not only offers salvation, but assigns it in such a manner, that the certainty of the elect is liable to no suspense or doubt.

The goodness of God shall never be thoroughly known, until this election be laid before us; and we are taught that we are called at this time, because it pleased God to extend his mercy to us before we were born. . . . Thus we see how profitable this doctrine of election is to us: it serveth to humble us, knowing that our salvation hangeth not upon our deserts, neither upon the virtue which God might have found in us; but upon the election that was made before we were born; before we could do either good or evil. When we know that according to this unchangeable election God hath called us to himself, we are so much the more put out of doubt of our salvation.¹⁶

Reprobation

The peculiarity of Calvin's doctrine of predestination is that it includes in it the decree of reprobation. This the

¹⁵Inst., III, 21, 1.

¹⁶Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., pp. 45, 102-03.

Lutheran confessions exclude. According to Calvin, God has determined by an eternal decree "what He would have to become of every individual of mankind." Eternal life is foreordained for some, and eternal damnation for others. The reprobate like the elect are appointed to be so by the secret counsel of God's will and by nothing else. Every one is created for one or the other of these ends.¹⁷ God has once for all determined "whom He would admit to salvation and whom He would condemn to destruction."¹⁸ Calvin categorically taught this teaching of reprobation as the "necessary reverse" or other side of a predestination to salvation, or a "logical counterpart." There could be no election without its opposite, reprobation, according to Calvin's logical inference. He reprimands all those who, while teaching an election to salvation, reject a predestination to damnation, in severe and rude language. He declared the rejection of a predestination to damnation to be exceedingly "inscite nimis et puerilliter," and "plus quam insulse."¹⁹

The reprobate had no part in the Kingdom of God. The Gospel to them is accursed. They at no time accept the Gospel as the good news from God. Their state of reprobation makes them foreign to the Gospel. In one of his sermons, Calvin stated the following concerning the Gospel and the reprobate:

¹⁷Inst., III, 21, 5.

¹⁸Inst., III, 21, 7.

¹⁹cf. Inst., III, 23, 1; II, p. 161.

The Gospel is preached to a great number, which, notwithstanding, are reprobate; yea, and God discovereth and showeth that he hath cursed them: that they have no part nor portion in his kingdom, because they resist the gospel and cast away the grace that is offered them. . . . for it is said plainly, that God hath saved us. Does this refer to all without exception? NO; he speaketh only of the faithful. . . . they (people) made themselves unworthy of the salvation which was offered to them: therefore they were reprobate.²⁰

In Christ, according to Calvin's conclusion, the infinite goodness of God was manifested, but not the salvation of all. A heavy judgment awaits the reprobate because they reject the testimony of divine love. They are created to a "life of shame and a death of destruction," and become the "instruments" of God's wrath. The Word of God is preached to them, and they at the same time have the opportunity to hear it; nevertheless, their objection becomes greater and greater and their stubborn hearts become harder and harder, increasing their blindness and stupidity.²¹

Calvin, like Augustine, traces the beginning or origin of election to the free and gratuitous will of God, and places reprobation in His mere will likewise. So that the security or our salvation stands in that will also, in nothing else.²²

Someone may ask, why God has not from the beginning predestined all men to life, instead of some to death, who, not

²⁰Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., pp. 50, 53-54.

²¹Cf. Inst., III, 24, 2.

²²Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 41, 44.

yet being brought into existence and could not yet deserve the sentence of death. This question could be asked by both the Christians and non-Christians. To this question, Calvin answers that it is due to the fault of man. What they are they owe to themselves. They are chosen to be judged by their own perverted nature and disobedient life towards God. Calvin, therefore, attempted to answer the challenging inquiry with a counter-question, i.e., ". . .if all whom the Lord predestines to death are in their natural condition liable to the sentence of death, what injustice do they complain of receiving from him?"²³ "Man falls, therefore, according to the appointment of Divine Providence; yet he falls by his own fault. (*Cadit igitur homo Dei providentia sui ordinante, sed suo vitio cadit.*)"²⁴

Calvin consistently assigns reprobation to two causes, the will of God and the sin of man. The sin of man, however, was not the ultimate reason of his rejection, but its justification. Rejection preceded actual sin, and it was an eternal decree of God. Sin was the consequence of that decree, being itself decreed to provide justification for the divine rejection. "The opposing party thinks that I (Calvin) contradict myself, when I teach that a man ought rather to search for the cause of his condemnation in his corrupt nature, than in the predestination of God; . . . there are two causes,

²³Inst., III, 23, 3.

²⁴Inst., III, 23, 8.

the one concealed in the eternal counsel of God, and the other open and manifest, in the sin of man."²⁵

Sin of man is spontaneous, stressed Calvin. It is the result of the exercise of a will invariably following its native disposition towards evil. Man's will is so bound by the slavery of sin, and must will what is evil and corrupt in nature. We must therefore observe this grand point of distinction, that man, having been corrupted by his fall, sins voluntarily, not with reluctance or constraint.

Calvin does not go as far as Zwingli in extending the number of the elect,²⁶ but there is nothing in his principle to forbid such extension. He acknowledges that salvation depends upon God's sovereign grace, not based upon the visible means of grace, and the impossibility of man to discern the elect from the damned. To discriminate between those who belong to God and those who are not is not our domain. It is entirely God's business. In the explanation of the Third Article (Vierter Teil, according to Calvin) of the Apostle's Creed, Calvin made the following noteworthy comment:

Sonst waere voellig zweck -- und wertlos unser Glaube an eine katholische Kirche, wenn nemlich nicht jeder sich fuer ein Glied derselben ansaehe. Ubrigens von den uebrigen sicher entscheiden zu wollen, ob sie zur (Kirche)

²⁵Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, op. cit., p. 366.

²⁶Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 150. On this point, Calvin quoted Augustine: "Since we know not (said Augustine) who belongeth to the number of the predestined, and who doth not, we ought so to feel as to wish all to be saved. . ."

Gemeinde zählen oder nicht, und die Auserwählten von den Verdammten obzusehen, ist nicht unseres Amtes. Dies ist nemlich das einzigartige ausschliessliche Vorrecht Gottes, zu wissen, welches die Seinigen sind, wie Paulus bezeugt (2 Tim. 2:19).²⁷

For Calvin, nevertheless, it is impossible to deny that the elect of God are in a certain fixed number, as long as he holds the view that "election itself could not exist without being opposed to reprobation."²⁸

A curious question is this, why ~~has~~^{have} Calvin and his followers (Calvinist) ~~have~~ been doing mission work among people, to try to convert them to Christianity, who have already been predestined to be either one of the two classes of people: to be predestined to salvation or to damnation. In fact, there is a "fortunate inconsistency"²⁹ between Calvin's idea on predestination and its practice by his followers in the later generations.

²⁷Joh. Calvins Christliche Glaubenslehre (nach der aertesten Ausgabe: von Hohre 1536, Basel), Bernhard Spiess, zum erstenmal ins Deutsche uebersetzt von (Wiesbaden: Verlag von Chr. Limbarth, 1887), p. 104. 2 Tim. 2:19: ". . .The Lord knoweth them that his: and, Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness."

²⁸Inst., III, 23, 1.

²⁹Mueller, op. cit., p. 120. Cf. Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, III, op. cit., 122.

CHAPTER VIII

THE VIEWS OF CALVIN AND LUTHER COMPARED¹

In this chapter we are to examine briefly the theology of Luther and Calvin side by side, especially of those phases which are, either directly or indirectly, "related to the doctrine of predestination or the election of God." We shall extend our study, first to a general review of the two men; secondly, to those points wherein a difference of the two on predestination is located; and, finally, the similar claims of Luther and Calvin.

There would be a reasonable amount of truth and accuracy in "an epigram that the watchword of Luther was war, that of Calvin, order; the one stormed, the other furnished the citadel of truth."² A part of this statement is proven by Luther's own words, which appeared in one of his letters to Master Philippus Melancthon, describing himself, "I am rough, boisterous, stormy, and altogether warlike. I am born to fight against innumerable monsters and devils. I must remove stumps and stones, cut away thistles and thorns, and clear the wild forests; . . ."³

¹See APPENDIX: "Interpretations of certain passages on predestination by Martin Luther and John Calvin."

²Hunter, op. cit., p. 7.

³Schaff, VI, op. cit., p. 193. Luther himself was aware of his harsh language and begged pardon for it: Cf. St. L. XX, 204 f.; 201 f.

Both, Luther and Calvin, were warriors and furnishers of the Reformation. Only the sphere of their actions was somewhat different. One, the preacher of the Reformation, crowded in the "furniture" of the Reformation; the other, a systematic theologian, put it into its proper place. One had too little of the "truncheon" in him, the other too little of the "bludgeon." Luther, the more originaive person, had cleared the ground and provided the rough materials; Calvin, the more systematic and architectonic minded, shaped and built the material into its proper place, and so fashioned an organized Church defined by his own system of belief.⁴ Calvin's admiration and respect for Luther,⁵ and his sharp remarks about Luther, shown in the following letter of Calvin addressed to Henry Bullinger, give us some of the nature and

⁴Cf. Hunter, op. cit., pp. 7 f.

⁵Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, I, op. cit., 440-442.

Calvin wrote Luther in his letter, on the 21st of January, 1545: To the very excellent pastor of the Christian Church, D. M. Luther, my much respected father, . . . desires to hear your opinion, which as they do deservedly hold in reverence, so it shall serve greatly to confirm them. . . . for them [Calvin's fellow countrymen in France] to have the benefit of your authority, . . . much respected father (Luther) in the Lord, I beseech you by Christ, . . . Adieu, most renowned sir, most distinguished minister of Christ, and my ever-honored father. The Lord himself rule and direct you by his own Spirit, that you may preserve even unto the end, for the common benefit and good of his own Church, -- Yours, John Calvin. See Melanchthon to Calvin, MSS. of Geneva, Vol. 106. As quoted in Ibid.: Only letter from Calvin to Luther -- "Spured by the quarrel about the sacraments, . . . Melanchthon did not even endure to present the letter of Calvin, whom he wrote in sadness: 'I have not shewn your letter to Dr. Martin, for he takes up many things suspiciously, and does not like his replies to questions of this kind you have proposed to him, to be carried round and handed from one to another. . . .'"

activities of the two men:

You would consider how eminent a man Luther is, and the excellent endowments wherewith he is gifted, with what strength of mind and resolute constancy, with how great skill, with what efficiency and power of doctrinal statement, he hath hitherto devoted his whole energy to overthrow the reign of Anti-Christ, and at the same time to diffuse far and near the doctrine of salvation. . . an illustrious and a most distinguished servant of Christ, to whom we are all of us largely indebted; . . . at the same time under serious faults. . . uneasy temperaments . . . little careful in the acknowledgement of his own vices . . . over-indulgent to himself.⁶

On the theological side, it has become quite fashionable to speak of an essential agreement between Luther and Calvin in their professions on God, a revealed and a hidden will of God, the Gospel and election, the Word of God, God's grace, and the operation of God; nevertheless, in the matter itself, they differed completely.⁷ On these points, the following

⁶Ibid., p. 433. The letter was written on the 25th of November, 1544 from Geneva. Henry Bullinger was born July 18, 1504 at Bremgarten. He was a friend of Zwingli and a minister of the parish of Bremgarten in 1529. Died in 1575. See "footnote" of Ibid., p. 65.

⁷Geo. F. Fritschel, Die zwei Lehrweisen ueber die Praedestination (Zur Einigung, Nr. 2. Zu beziehen von dem Verfasser), pp. 6 f. "Der fundamentale Unterschied zwischen Calvins Lehre von der Praedestination und der Lehre der Lutherischen Kirche darueber (beider Tropen) wird mit Recht darin gefunden, dass wir es bei der ersteren mit einer menschlichen Spekulation zu tun haben, fuer die man nachher Schriftgrund gesucht. Die lesstere ist aus Gottes wort direkt angenommen. . . . Bei der ersteren versetzt man sich in seinen Gedanken in die Ewigkeit und ueberblickt von da aus, was Gott sich vorgenommen zu tun. Das ist nicht die Weise Luthers. Luther has diese a priori Weise bei Scholastikern kennen gelernt und war durch sie an den Rand der Verzweiflung gekommen, bis ihm Staupitz eine andere Methode zeigte."

comparisons can be made.

✓ For the doctrinal system of Calvin, the infinite and transcendent sovereignty of God is the dominant thought. God, according to his analogy, is the Lord and the supreme justice who rules the world and life omnipotently. Men have acts of compulsion, subjection, law, and service in their hearts. ✓ It is true that Luther too admits the sovereignty of God, His majesty, and the immutability --- "unveraenderlich" -- of God's judgment. ✓ Notwithstanding, this precept is not the "dominant thought" in Luther, but a phase which belongs to the Deus absconditus. ✓ The grace and love of God in Christ is the primary consideration in Luther's theology.⁸ In it are the inward conquest by the power of love, free self-surrender, and filial love without compulsion.⁹

✓ Luther accepts without reservation a seeming contradiction between God's revealed will and the incomprehensible judgment of God (Deus absconditus).¹⁰ Calvin, too, to be sure, affirms that man cannot penetrate into God's eternal will and the direct knowledge of God's election.¹¹ ✓ However, he assumes that through faith's experience of God (spiritus illuminatione),¹² it is possible to reach a supratemporal knowledge

⁸Cf. St. L. XXIB, 3226.

⁹Cf. Klotsche, op. cit., pp. 206 f. Cf. Seeberg, History of Doctrine, II, 416 f. As quoted in the Ibid.

¹⁰Cf. St. L. XVIII, 1965 f.

¹¹See Hunter, op. cit., p. 99.

✓¹²Cf. Inst., II, 5, 5.

of God's eternal election. Such an analogy is excluded by Luther's view. Thus Calvin places the incomprehensible judgments of God in real contradiction to the revealed will; he seeks to establish a harmony by nullifying the revealed will by the hidden.

✓ Luther did not draw his assurance from the doctrine of predestination but from his confidence in the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. His assurance is in the Gospel which offers God's forgiving love and grace to all. ✓ Calvin, on the other hand, found his unshakable assurance in the certainty of his election mediated by the conscious possession of saving faith.¹³ This practical value of the doctrine, he was never tired of impressing upon his hearers and readers, making it one of its chief recommendations.

Placing human reason subservient to the teachings of the Word, Luther lets the Word of God tell what the gracious will of God is, how far it extends, and what it effects. But Calvin's approach is this that one draws a final conclusion on a subject, according to a a priori concept, then, tries to prove it by the Scripture, i. e., to try to find proof texts. He lets the effectus or the historical experientia determine what God's gracious will is.

✓ Luther teaches the universal grace, as taught in the

¹³Cf. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 111, 133.

Scripture. God's grace and mercy rest in Himself alone.¹⁴ —

"Gnade ist die Grundstellung Gottes zum Menschen: cuus prop-
rium est misereri. Daher waren die gratia evangelica mitsamt
der ihr korrespondierenden iustitia fidei immer vorhanden,
nur dass sie den Menschen noch nicht offenbart waren."¹⁵

✓ For Calvin, on the other hand, the effect of the Gospel or
God's grace is only "particular." // Concerning the passage, 1
Ezek. 33:11, Calvin said, ". . . If we are to extend this to
the whole human race, why are not there very many . . . urged
to repentance?"¹⁶

God works, according to Luther, also on those who are
finally lost, to produce faith in them and avert their dam-
nation. Luther writes in De Servo Arbitrio: "God deplores
that death which He finds in the people and which He desires
to remove from them. For the revealed God (Deus praedicatus)
strives for this: that our sin and death being taken away, we
might be saved."¹⁷ This operation of God is exerted through
God's Word. ✓ It is however resistible by human resistance.
Calvin taught, on the other hand, that man cannot thwart the
will of God and so God does not at all work on those who are
lost to convert them. ". . . our God is in the heavens where ✓

¹⁴George Stoeckhardt, Commentary on the Romans, trans-
lated into English by Erwin W. Koehlinger (St. Louis: Con-
cordia Mimeograph Company, 1943), p. 125.

¹⁵W. 3, 560.

¹⁶Inst., III, 24, 16.

¹⁷st. L. XVIII, 1795.

He does whatever He hath pleased (Ps. 115:3).¹⁸ ". . . nothing can prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose."¹⁹ "Those, therefore, whom He has created to a life of shame and a death of destruction, that they might be the vessels of wrath and examples of His severity, He causes to reach their appointed end, sometimes by depriving them of the opportunity of hearing His word, sometimes by increasing their blindness and stupidity through the preaching of it."²⁰

Calvin

① Behind Calvin's system of doctrine there was not only⁷ revelation but also philosophy, though he had never openly espoused any one philosophical system. He, too, like Luther, — was a Scriptural theologian; nevertheless, his ideas were coined in the midst of the patristic metaphysics or medieval Scholasticism which operated upon his mind with a strength of which he was quite unconscious. His dialectic reasoning made⁷ him put the a priori concept under the a posteriori. The revealed and recorded facts in history are the source from which Calvin drew his final conclusion in his system of theology. He allowed himself no license in a priori reasoning. The empirical world is the root from which his doctrine of⁷ predestination (double predestination) springs, and the doctrine

^v 18 Inst., III, 24, 16.

19 See Calvin's commentary on Psalms, IV, 344.

^v 20 Inst., III, 24, 12.

is, furthermore, the root from which the formative principle of Calvinism comes forth, which is one of the logical consequences of God's predestination.²¹ A criticism of Luther by Calvin is the historical inaccuracy which appeared in one of his letters, saying: "Luther is not so particular as to propriety of expression or the historical accuracy; he is satisfied when he can draw from it some fruitful doctrine."²²

Calvin committed the folly of mixing the voluntas abscondita into the voluntas revelata, by claiming the spiritus illuminatio, and deduces from the inscrutable dispensation of God in history that there is no universal will of grace (denial of the universalis gratia). Certainly he admits that no eyes can discern God, but he likewise claims that God is "illuminated through faith by an internal revelation of God,"²³ that is, He is known to man by an "illumination of the Spirit."²⁴ The spoken word, i. e. the Word of God spoken through the mouth of man, is not enough for us to understand it. In order to understand the Word fully, God must speak to us "inwardly by His holy Spirit," for the spiritual illumination is the only means to bring us the knowledge of God's

²¹Cf. Warfield, op. cit., p. 357.

²²Bonnet, Letters of John Calvin, I, op. cit., 188.

²³Inst., I, 4, 14.

²⁴Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 164.

eternal Truth.²⁵ Holy Spirit, that is to say, works immediately without means. So the grace of God, according to Calvin, is like a current. Like lightning it strikes immediately and hence irresistibly. Since the Spirit and grace work "immediately," in the final analysis, there is no need, in Calvin's theology, of the means of grace.²⁶

"Spiritual illumination" and the so-called "special call," in Calvin's theology, come coordinately. The special call of God is extended to believers only whom God favors, by the inward illumination of His Spirit.²⁷ God by all means and in all things works in us through the Holy Spirit.²⁸ His salvation or election does not embrace every "individual" as such, but the group as a whole, the elect of God.²⁹

Luther

Luther's approach to predestination was not made from the angle of reason, nor on the basis of the Law of God, but always from the Gospel which proclaims that God does not desire anyone to perish. He always pointed to the objectivity

²⁵Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., p. 107.

²⁶Pieper, III, op. cit., 120 f.

²⁷Inst., III, 24, 8.

²⁸Cf. Nicolaum Balbani, gefuehret wirdt durch, Catechismus Herrn Johannis Calvini (Gedruckt zu Cassel durch Wilhelm Wessel: Anno 1606), p. 801. To the question: "Stehet aber dieses alles in unser Macht?" Calvin gives the answer: "Keines: Sondern Gott wircket es alles in uns durch einen heiligen Geist."

²⁹Cf. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., p. 141.

of God's means of grace, i. e. to the fact that God never interferes in letting them do their ^{work} woes. He stresses that we should cling to that will of God which alone is known to us, i. e. His will in Christ.]

Unlike Calvin, the characteristic point of Luther on] eternal election or predestination is that it deals with definite persons, individual Christians (Eph. 1:4), from the decree of redemption and the universal will of God's grace. It concerns each and every person of the elect and the children of God. When Scripture speaks of the elect, it concerns only] the children of God, foreknown and ordained. We should think of the believing Christians and include ourselves in the number of the elect. The decree of eternal election includes] that God foresaw before the foundation of the world, selected as His own, and destined to heavenly glory each and every person of the elect. God resolved to save just those persons and then also in time to lead them to the way of salvation.³⁰

Among many points that Luther had rejected, such as the Scholastic-Aristotelianism of Thomas Aquinas, the theology of Church counsels, and the theology of the Church fathers,³¹ the spiritual illumination or "self-illumination" was one of

³⁰Stoeckhardt, The Epistle to the Ephesians, op. cit., p. 5. Cf. George Stoeckhardt, Commentary on the Romans, translated by Erwin W. Koehlinger (St. Louis: Concordia Mimeograph Company, 1943), p. 114.

³¹Kerr, op. cit., p. viii.

the major views. Luther most clearly and emphatically rejected every separation of the working of the Spirit from the "external Word" and teaches that the Holy Ghost always exerts His influence "within the heart through the outward Word."

Luther said in his treatise AGAINST THE HEAVENLY PROPHETS:

So nun Gott heiles Evangelium hat uns lassen gehen, handelt er mit uns auf zweierlei Weise. Einmal auesserlich, das andere Mal innerlich. Auesserlich handelt er mit uns durchs muendliche Wort des Evangelii und durch die leiblichen Zeichen, als da ist Taufe und Sacrament. Innerlich handelt mit uns durch den Heiligen Geist und Glauben sammt andern Gaben. Aber das alles dermassen und der Ordnung, dass die auesserlichen Stuecke sollen und muessen vorgehen, und die innerlichen hernach und durch die auesserlichen kommen, also, dass er's beschlossen hat, keinen Menschen die innerlichen Stuecke zu geben, ohne durch die auesserlichen Stuecke; denn er will niemand den Geist durch Glauben geben ohne das auesserliche Wort und Zeichen, . . .³²

The doctrine of election is highly comforting for Christians. If we are troubled about our salvation, then we should know that God from eternity has taken our salvation and everything that belongs to it, also our faith, into His almighty hand. This doctrine affords special comfort for Christians in their cross and suffering. We should feel that we are invited to the Kingdom of God and are offered the truth, and should feel confident that we are saved, that God wants us to be believers. In this right understanding, the doctrine of predestination is not a terrifying but a consoling doctrine. But on the other hand, man should not rely on a false sense of security and should always remember that God is the ultimate

³²st. L. XX, 202 f.

judge.³³ He chose us in Christ in whom we have all our assurance and certainty. // "Nun wenn du dich durch den Glauben in Christo findest, so sollst du wissen, dass du praedestinirt seiest."³⁴

Similar Views, of Luther and Calvin, Their Theology in General, and the Predestination in Particular

Luther and Calvin have more in common than in distinction. In fact, the difference between the two is largely a matter of emphasis on various points in their theologies. If this analogy is true, that Calvin stands between Luther and Zwingli, it would be much more truthful to say that he depended more upon the former than the latter. Both Luther and Calvin agreed in the rejection of Roman hierarchism and Pelagianism as well as the recognition of the dogma of the ancient Church. "There are minor differences in their conception of the doctrine of sin and grace, faith and works, atonement and justification, repentance and sanctification. // Calvin differed from Luther particularly in his conception of predestination and the Sacraments as also in his aim and method of practical reform."³⁵

There seems to be little reason for distinguishing between Luther and Calvin by saying that the regnant principle of Luther's theology was justification by faith, while for Calvin

³³Kramm, op. cit., p. 42.

³⁴St. L. XXIB, 3226.

³⁵Klotsche, op. cit., pp. 194-95.

it was the sovereignty of God. This statement must be further modified. It ought not to leave the impression that Luther did not speak of the sovereignty of God or that Calvin did not treat of justification by faith. Calvin has come in for more misrepresentation here than has Luther. If the sovereignty of God is emphasized in Calvin, it is only because the sovereignty of God is also the God who justifies. If the same is less emphasized by Luther, it is only because the sovereignty of God is in the realm of Deus abconditus, but not because Luther completely ignored it.³⁶ As in the case of Luther, Calvin, too, distinguished between the hidden depths of God, "forbidden labyrinths . . . of the Divine secrets unscrutinized or unexplored," and the revelation in God's Word, the "knowledge of predestination. . . unfolded in the Word of God."³⁷ Calvin claimed that we should not seek to explore the hidden will of God, but rely on Christ and the Gospel.

If we seek the fatherly clemency and propitious heart of God, our eyes must be directed to Christ, in whom alone the Father is well pleased, . . . Christ, therefore, is the mirror, in which it behooves us to contemplate our election; and here may do it with safety. . . let us inquire whether he has committed us to Christ, whom he constituted the only Savior of all his people.³⁸

". . . we must not begin to ask, are we chosen? No, we can never climb so high, . . . to God's counsel, . . . Let us hear

³⁶Kerr, op. cit., p. xiii.

³⁷Inst., III, 21, 1 f; 24, 3.

³⁸Inst., III, 24, 5 f.

what is said in the gospel: His promise is in Christ."³⁹

Calvin expressly states the universalis vocatio by which God invites all men to come to Him, and "exalted all men, . . . that it is his will that all men should be saved (Ezek. 18:23, 33:11)."⁴⁰ What Calvin did mean by this statement and in others aforementioned is something else which we cannot explore on this occasion. However, there is no doubt, as far as his language and words are concerned, on various points, which are much similar to Luther's. Often his conclusion may come out to be an antithesis to Luther's. For instance, his analogy on the universal call ended up with the specialis vocatio on the "inward illumination of His Spirit."

Luther was fierce toward his opponents.⁴¹ So was Calvin.⁴²

³⁹Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., p. 51.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 103.

⁴¹Luther, as well as Calvin, called the pope "Anti-Christ," in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.

⁴²See Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 27, 189, 154, 155, 157, 192, 195. Calvin's doctrine of predestination was attacked, in 1543, by Albertus Pighius, a Dutch Roman Catholic controversialist, who taught the freedom of the will in the Semipelagian sense and predestination conditioned by foreknowledge. Calvin used the following expressions, referring to Pighius and his followers (Jerome Bolsec, and other): "I propose . . . to enter into the sacred battle with Pighius and George, the Sicilian, a pair of unclean beasts (Lev. 11:3) . . . certain worthless calumniator . . . worthless mortal . . . this worthless being, Pighius . . . vain mortal . . . imputant person . . . miserable creature . . . unclean barking dog . . . Barking dog. . ."

There is full agreement with Luther in Calvin's description of the nature and function of faith. It brings the believer into union with Christ so that Christ imparts to him all that is His. We are saved by the imputation of His righteousness, not on the ground of anything, not even faith which is imperfect in ourselves. Both agree that faith flows from the election, and not election from faith. Therefore, we Christians should reason backwards from our call, conversion, and justification to eternal election. In our call, we should perceive the election and become certain that we also belong to the elect and will receive eternal glory. Luther as well as Calvin makes personal assurance a part of saving faith.⁴³

Both hold fast to the Scriptures, testifying that there is nothing taught in it which is not useful and necessary for salvation. "If such truths were not useful to be known, God would never have ordered His prophets and Apostles to teach them." "God certifieth us by the Goâpel that he taketh us for his children, this testimony carries peace with it; being signed by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sealed by the Holy Ghost."⁴⁵ Calvin urged his followers, in his catechism, concerning the Word of God, that they must hear and study in the Church again and again with their fellow Christians. One instruction or two is not enough for men to continue in the Word throughout their lives.

⁴³Fischer, op. cit., p. 274.

⁴⁴Inst., II, 1, 4.

⁴⁵Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., p. 52.

So wiltu sagen/ Es sey nicht genug/ dass ein feder fuer sich selbs daheime lese: Soncern die muessen alle miteinander zusammen kommen/ on diese Lehr in der Gemeine anhoeren Ist es aber einen Christen nicht genug dass er von ihnen ein mal interrichtet sey. . .⁴⁶

As we are now to conclude our study on a comparison between Calvin and Luther, it may be appropriate to quote a view of Reinhold Seeberg which bears out the point so lucidly in conjunction with the means of grace which is the major cleavage between the two reformers.

Wie bei Luther faellt alles Gewicht auf das Wort. Durch Wort und Sacrament laesst Gott den Geist in den Seelen wirksam werden. Aber ohne das Wort waeren die Sacramente nichts. Mit dem Wort ist aber die Kraft des heil. Geistes so berbunden, dass es auch harte Herzen zu ueberwinden vermag. Die Wortverkuendung dient in der Regel zum Mittel der erleuchtenden Kraft des heil. Geistes, sodass der Mensch spuert, dass Gott selbst zu ihm redet und dadurch gehorsam wird. Aber Calvin kann doch auch -- anders als Luther -- erklaren, dass dies eben nur die Regel ist, dass Gott aber auch viele "interiore modo, spiritus illuminatione, nulla intercedente praedicatione" mit seine Erkenntnis begabt habe. Das Sacrament definiert Calvin als "externum symbolum, quo benevolentiae erga nos suae promissiones conscientiae nostris dominus obsignat ad sustinendam fidei nostrae imbecillitatem, et nos vicissim pietatem erga eum . . . testatur." Das Sacrament als solches ist also die symbolische Bestaetigung der durch die betr.⁴⁷

⁴⁶Balbani, op. cit., pp. 602-604.

⁴⁷Seeberg, Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte, op. cit., pp. 603-604.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

// Both Martin Luther and John Calvin are theologians whose doctrine of predestination has a marked significance for succeeding generations. Although there are some differences between the theology which Luther faced and that against which Calvin was reacting, and vice versa, there are many points in common in them. Both uphold, though there were different degrees in emphasis, the sovereignty of God, creatureliness and inability of man, and unmerited grace of God, and the necessity of God's eternal election, and the indispensable place of faith in man's forgiveness of sins.¹ Both stress the radicalness of sin in opposition to theologians and philosophers for whom sin had become at most a moral perversion. Both emphasize the Holy Scripture² as the primary source of their theological system, theocentricity in their theology and doctrine of predestination, and Christocentricity for the redemption of man. Both have the view that God is not any speculative Absolute but the living God. To them, what is really important is the relationship set up between that Creator God and man.

To produce, however, an objective comparison between

¹Cf. Cole (Calvin's Calvinism), op. cit., pp. 111, 133.

²Cf. Bill (Sermons of Calvin), op. cit., p. 103.

Luther and Calvin is not an easy matter. Where then do differences arise between them? In answer to this question it must be kept in mind that the difference exists because each man was reacting against a slightly different antithesis. Both Luther and Calvin are Christian theologians and reformers who use the Bible as the source of Divine revelation. Ultimately the Scripture and the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins which is the core of the Scripture must be the judge. No answer, nevertheless, can be expected by asking Luther what he thinks of Calvin. But the Geneva-reformer, Calvin, leaves none in doubt concerning what he thinks about Luther.³

While Luther was no systematic theologian, Calvin's calling in theology was to systematize. While Luther placed his capital emphasis on the grace and love of God, Calvin on the "sovereignty" of God. All these factors make an objective comparison of the two men more difficult.

The area where there are most marked dissimilarities, with different emphases, between Luther and Calvin is in their teachings on the doctrine of God, the Will of God, and the nature of the grace of God. For Luther, the "loving" or "gracious" God, who has both the hidden will, which cannot be discerned by men, and the revealed will being manifested in the Scripture and in Christ, embraces all men, the gratia universalis. The sole criterion, for his theological analogy]

³See Chapter VIII of this thesis, pp. 84-85.

is the Scripture, and the limit of his reasoning is the same. As far as the Scripture goes, so does Luther likewise, but no further. He regarded that there are many things in this life unanswered, which evidently belong to God's majesty. Our full knowledge is in heaven. Our theology on earth is no more than a "kindergarten course."⁴ "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."⁵

To Calvin, on the other hand, the "sovereign" God limits His atonement to His elect only. The non-elect are placed under the "wrath" of the "just" God and His indisputable Law.⁶ Calvin concludes, finally, his teaching into the "double predestination." His criteria of reasoning are reason or his dialectical system of thinking and the Scripture, but not the latter alone. // In detail, the aforementioned analogy of Luther and Calvin has already been given in chapters two through seven, and further compared in chapter eight. STOP

We therefore conclude, in regard to the difference between Luther and Calvin, that the main factor in their difference is not of a qualitative but only of a quantitative nature. "The one does not necessarily exclude the other; but the tone and emphasis give rise to the difference which backs

⁴Spoken by Dr. John Theodore Mueller, a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

⁵I Cor. 13:12.

⁶Inst., I, 2, 2.

undeniably exist."⁷

In the writer's estimation, there are several significant points referred to in this study which are worthy of a more thorough study. It must be remembered that the doctrine of predestination, as viewed by Luther and Calvin, to a great extent from the basis of divergent followers. Their theology has taken a dominant place in the minds of millions of their respective adherents. This study has no intention of being polemic and disputatious. Its intention was to examine the views of the two men respectively, to synthesize their similar points, to analyze their dissimilar views. We would like to recommend a further study in this field. In so doing we may find theological significance and a practical value for our missions, both home and abroad, wherever we are to work side by side with the Calvinistic churches. Through a thorough knowledge of our neighbors, a mutual contribution and edification may be made. The adherents and admirers of Calvin may learn as much a valuable lesson from Luther as the followers of Luther from Calvin. This does not, however, imply that the two views are reconcilable or that emerging of the two schools can be effected. It still remains:

God's Word is our great heritage, And shall be ours forever
To spread its light from age to age,
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way, In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure, Throughout all generations.⁸

⁷Klotsche, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

⁸Lutheran Hymnal, No. 283. (Written by Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig, 1817; translated by Ole G. Belsheim.)

APPENDIX*

Interpretations of certain Bible passages on predestination
by Martin Luther and John Calvin

LUTHER

CALVIN

Romans 8:28-30: "...all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained...and whom he foreordained them he also called..., them he also justified..."

Den durch Christum sind wir gewiss gemacht worden, dass jeder, der da glaubt, von Vater praedestinirt sei. Den, wen er verordnet hat, den hat er auch berufen durch das Evangelium, dass der glauben solle und durch den Glauben gerechtfertigt werde.
St. L. XXib, 3226.

Luther translates "*οὓς προέγνω*":
"welche er zuvor versehen hat."
Pieper, III, op. cit., p. 551.

God designed to call, to convert, to bring to Christ...the call is the fulfilment of this Divine plan...a historical occurrence which falls in time. The Divine purpose...lies beyond time.... This design is identified with eternal election...This foreknowledge is an eternal act of God's will,... This passage(is) the locus classicus for the doctrine of eternal election.

Stoeckhardt, Comm. on Romans,
op. cit., pp. 112-114.

But the foreknowledge of God, which Paul mentions, is not a bare prescience...but the adoption by which he had always distinguished his children from the reprobate.... this knowledge is connected with God's good pleasure; for he foreknew nothing out of himself, in adopting those whom he was pleased to adopt; but only marked out those whom he had purposed to elect ... God had so determined that all whom he has adopted should be the image of Christ;... the word FORE-DETERMINE does not refer to election, but to that purpose or decree of God by which he has ordained that the cross is to be borne by his people;...

Calvin, Comm. on Romans, op. cit., pp. 317, 318, 319.

Romans 11:32: "For God shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all."

*See Chapter VIII.

But as He is the one and the true God, and moreover incomprehensible by human reason,...when he shall reveal His glory, we shall all see, and probably feel, that He ever was, and is,--just!...
Luther, The Bondage of the Will,
 op. cit., pp. 386, 387.

...goettliche Vorauswissen fuer uns Menschen ein unerforschliches Geheimnis ist....
Concordia Triglotta, op. cit.,
 pp. 1081, 54f.

All the elect of the Jews and Gentiles. Then all God for a time left to their disobedience,...
Stoeckhardt, Comm. on Romans, op. cit., p. 165.

Ephesians 1: 4-5: "...he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world...Having predestined us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

The predestination or eternal election of God,..., extends only over the godly, beloved children of God, being a cause of their salvation, which He also provides, as well as disposes what belongs thereto. Upon this predestination of God our salvation is founded so firmly...
Concordia Triglotta, op. cit.,
 p. 833.

...the "us" points to definite persons, to Christians, to individual Christians....Paul teaches in our passage an election of persons, a particular election. God had elected us. And every individual Christians should include himself in this "us."
Stoeckhardt, Ephesians, op. cit., p. 5.

...for it intimates that God is bound to none, and that he therefore saves all freely, for they are all equally lost. But extremely gross is their folly who hence conclude that all shall be saved; for Paul simply means that both Jews and Gentiles do not otherwise obtain salvation than through the mercy of God, and thus he leaves to none any reason for complaint. It is indeed true that this mercy is without any difference offered to all, but everyone must seek it by faith.
Ibid., p. 443.

...certainly precludes any consideration of merit in us; ...we were adopted in Christ to the heavenly inheritance, because in ourselves we were incapable of such high dignity. Inst.,

The very time when the election took place proves it to be free; for what could we have deserved,...not worthy. We were all lost in Adam. Calvin, Comm. on Ephesians, op. cit., p. 198.

...it fully refutes the error which derives election from foreknowledge;...Paul, ...declares that all the virtue discovered in man is the effect of election.
Inst.,

John 10:27-28: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."

...God has not my salvation out of the way of my will, and has taken it under His own, and has promised to save me, not according to my working or manner of life, but according to His own grace and mercy ...He is faithful...great and powerful, so that no devils, no adversaries can destroy Him, or pluck me out of His hand.
Luther, The Bondage of The Will, op. cit., p. 385.

We are taught that the salvation of all the elect is not less certain than the power of God is invincible....we infer that the statement of Christ is intended to show that the elect are absolutely certain of their salvation.
Calvin, Comm. on the Gospel of John, op. cit., p. 416.

Ezk. 18:23, 32: "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? ...for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord: wherefore turn yourselves and live."

But, why it is, that some are touched by the Law and some are not touched, why some receive the offered grace and some despise it,...because, he is speaking of THE PREACHED AND OFFERED MERCY OF GOD, not of that SECRET AND TO BE FEARED WILL OF GOD, who, according to His own counsel, ordains whom, and such as, He will to be receivers and partakers of the preached and offered mercy: which will,...as the most profound SECRET OF THE DIVINE MERCY, which He receives into Himself and keeps hidden from us,...
Ibid., p. 171.

God desires...that.(man) should return into the way of safety....God thus does not so wish all men to be saved as to remove the difference between good and evil; but repentance...must precede pardon....If any one should object -- then there is no election of God, by which he has predestinated a fixed number to salvation, ...the Prophet...recalls miserable men from despair, that they may apprehend the hope of pardon, and repent and embrace the offered salvation...he wishes to keep our attention close to God's Word, his incomprehensible plans.
Calvin, Comm. on Ezekiel, op. cit., pp. 247-48.

...we may judge that it is his will that all men should be saved:... Calvin, Sermons of Calvin, op. cit., p. 103.

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