A DEFENSE OF THE DOCTRINE

OF JOHN CALVIN

CONCERNING THE ABSOLUTE DECREE OF REPROBATION

Refutation Against an Anonymous Writer

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TO THE MOST EXCELLENT MAN, WORTHY OF ALL PRAISE,

JOHN MAXIMILIAN LANGLAIS,

MINISTER OF THE DIVINE WORD AMONG THE PEOPLE OF ROUEN

It was certainly not by chance—but by the most certain providence of God—that, REVEREND SIR, the very moment I received into my hands the little book On the Absolute Decree of Reprobation, I also received a letter from your most hopeful and distinguished son, in which you warned me about its publication. You called it pestilent and destructive, and encouraged me by your wise counsel to undertake its refutation.

You hoped, indeed, that if I devoted my efforts to that task, I would perform a service pleasing to all good men, for reasons which you, in your great kindness toward me, partly explained clearly and partly alluded to more subtly—reasons that are easily understood and which, as you well know, we encountered a few years ago.

Now, whether God has providentially guided the matter in this way, I dare not confidently affirm; perhaps the outcome will one day make it plain. Yet I will not deny that by some impulse, I felt inwardly strengthened, so that—after only the delay necessary to consult with my most distinguished and learned colleagues—I resolved to obey your request and set my hand to the work.

Not that those earlier reasons, whether the danger this writing might pose to the truth, or the hope that I might do something noteworthy in its defense, greatly moved me. For you, MOST EXCELLENT SIR, and many others—both in the Low Countries, where the book was printed,

and in our own France, where it was most disastrously imported—were far more capable of refuting the attacks of this anonymous author.

Nor do I accept the praise you assign to me, except insofar as it bears witness to your exceptional goodwill toward me.

But to speak plainly, besides the reasons for taking on this work that I briefly mentioned in the preface, what moved me most was what you suggested later in your letter: that, for some reason I cannot explain, rumors have been spread about me—concerning views which I have always, and most vehemently, abhorred. It seemed to me that I had finally found an opportunity to set the record straight, more clearly and fully than I have ever done before, by disputing the doctrines of election and reprobation against the opinions of Arminius.

In this, I did not so much aim to preserve my reputation (for to be indifferent about one's reputation—especially when one holds public office and is entrusted with the instruction of young men preparing for the sacred ministry—would be, in no way, praiseworthy). Rather, I strove to remove every scruple, if any remain in the minds of good men, and to deprive the disciples of Arminius of any reason for boasting—if, by chance, they believe they have supporters in this academy.

Indeed, I do not believe that any among them would be so foolish or brazen as to claim—after reading this disputation—that we secretly harbor syncretism in this place. And if they held us to be followers of Arminius before, they will certainly count us in the future among his fiercest opponents. I trust, therefore, that our brethren, with whom we share by God's grace the same convictions, will cast far from themselves all suspicion concerning us.

For anyone who says that we favor Arminius—while we closely adhere to the doctrine of Calvin, and defend it as carefully as we can—does as much as if he accused Hercules of cowardice, as the ancient Greek poet once put it.

Finally, REVEREND SIR, I was seeking some way to publicly bear witness to the high esteem in which I hold the outstanding virtues with which God, the Best and Greatest, has so richly adorned you—your singular and sincere piety, your deep and rare learning, your lofty and noble eloquence, your elevated and generous mind, and the many other excellent gifts by which you have deservedly gained such a great name.

Thus I rejoiced inwardly when the opportunity arose in which I could at once show obedience both to your counsel and to the affection I bear you in this matter. I only wish that He from whom every good gift comes had granted me those abilities by which I might have adorned your praises with greater elegance—or at least granted me a bit more leisure amidst my modest means, so that I could engage more freely in this disputation.

For whatever this work is, I studied more than I wrote it, squeezed in among the many responsibilities imposed by my office, the condition of human life, and—so it seems to me—some particular fate that always holds me under pressure and constraint.

And although the press here is extremely slow, I scarcely had the opportunity to review what was quickly written at first, or even to revise it slightly in the intervals granted by the publishers.

Nevertheless, I did not rush so hastily that I do not confidently trust in the Lord that nothing escaped my pen which is not in full agreement—not only with the doctrine of Calvin—but with the doctrine of Christ Himself.

On this basis, I do not doubt that this little work of mine will be pleasing and acceptable to you.

You certainly hold Calvin in great esteem, and truth itself in even greater.

Farewell, REVEREND SIR,

and continue, as you have, to love me.

Your most devoted,

AMYRAUT

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The author submitted this Defense of Calvin's Doctrine on the Absolute Decree of Reprobation to the Reverend Abel Barbier, Ecclesiastic of Pringé, and Stephen Blois, Ecclesiastic of Anjou, who, having been chosen by lot to fulfill the office of examiners, have both approved it. The testimonies of their approbation remain with the author.

JOHN CALVIN

DEFENSE

OF THE DOCTRINE OF JOHN CALVIN

CONCERNING THE ABSOLUTE DECREE OF REPROBATION

Against an Anonymous Pamphlet

PREFACE

Some time ago, a pamphlet on the absolute decree of reprobation was published at Amsterdam—said to be translated from English, though its author remains unknown. Whoever he is, if we may judge from the sample he has provided, he appears to be a learned man and not inexperienced in the controversies that, a few years back, so greatly agitated the Low Countries. However, he has wholly given his mind over to the opinions of Arminius in that well-known subject of predestination.

In this little work—undertaken for reasons I do not know—he made it his singular task to malign and scorn the doctrine embraced by Calvin, and received by our churches from him, concerning the causes of human ruin. He not only asserted that this doctrine is new and unheard of in the Church before the time of Augustine, but also that it is filled with hatred and infamy—Stoic, Manichaean, hostile to Scripture and to the divine nature, contrary to piety, a plague to Christian comfort—and deserving of many similar reproaches. He even attempted to demonstrate these accusations by arguments.

Indeed, there is hardly anything omitted in this work that might seem useful for its defamation. Above all—and this is a custom with such men—he believed it proper to lash out vehemently against Calvin and the Church of Geneva. When I first laid eyes on it, I considered it unworthy of a Christian man, though not at all surprising in our time. For such is the temper of our age, that scarcely anyone who differs from another on a point of religion refrains from not only attempting to refute his opinion with arguments (which is tolerable and sometimes even praiseworthy), but also burdens him with every kind of insult and calumny—by whatever right or wrong.

No one has taken up this fight more energetically than those who, in the Low Countries, chose to introduce a new religion and give themselves over to the discipline of Arminius. How deeply I myself detest their errors I have already testified in other writings, and it will become more evident in the disputation I now undertake.

It has always seemed to me that they detract greatly from the glory of God in the work of our salvation, that they attribute far too much to man—more than truth permits—and that they gravely undermine the foundations of piety and the consolation of the faithful. So much so that I dare confidently declare: it is scarcely possible for anyone who has truly felt the power of the Spirit of Christ to inwardly embrace the opinions of these men who, as they like to call themselves, are “defenders of piety.”

Yet since to err is human—and since many who have been swept along by the winds of Arminian doctrine still profess agreement with us in other matters of religion—and since some of them are gifted with learning that could be of great service to Christian truth, I have never been able to bring myself to attack them with insults (a practice foreign to my disposition), and even less could I refrain from grieving deeply that they have allowed themselves, by a kind of mental error and heated disputation, to be carried far from the shores of truth.

Above all, I cannot express how deeply I regret that a man such as Hugo Grotius—an outstanding ornament of his age and possessed of such admirable intellectual power—should have allied himself with that unfortunate party. But this did not happen by fate, as they so often accuse us of saying. Rather, it has always occurred by the most certain providence of God, that even among the loftiest and nearly incomparable minds—those who seem to surpass all others—some have fallen into the gravest errors.

Let no one, then, who embraces the truth and holds tightly to the doctrine of Christ, ever allow himself to believe that he has kept this treasure safe from the enticements and flatteries of the world, the temptations of the enemy of our salvation, or the cunning tricks of heretics and

deceivers, by the power of his own free will. Let him rather attribute it to the supreme mercy of God.

Our duty—our one task—is to cry out with unceasing prayers and heartfelt pleas to the most gracious God, that He would turn those redeemed by the blood of Christ and not otherwise opposed to the pursuit of religion, away from perverse doctrines by the power of His Holy Spirit, and flood them with the light of His truth. Meanwhile, if there is anything we can do to contribute to their correction, let us not be negligent in it.

It was this impulse that led me to reexamine that pamphlet and labor, as much as I could, to make clear—without envy, hatred, insult, or any of the other things by which the human spirit is so often stirred and disturbed—that the doctrine of the absolute decree of reprobation is not only undeserving of the reproaches hurled against it by its detractors, but also firmly rooted and established upon the solid, immovable foundations of the Word of God.

Once I have, by God's help, completed this purpose, I do not doubt that those who have opposed our churches with such great force and zeal will either abandon their opinion altogether or at least temper the hatred they have so freely and intemperately indulged until now.

As for why I have chosen to defend Calvin's teaching on this matter in particular, there are two main reasons.

First, the Papists and those called Arminians consider the doctrine of our churches to be in no way different from Calvin's; and it is only because they seek to inflame hatred against the renowned name of that man that they do not attack us all at once. Therefore, if either our doctrine or Calvin's is defended, both are by the same effort secured.

Second, the extraordinary virtues of that most excellent man—his labors undertaken and endured for the cause of truth (which were Herculean), and his incalculable contributions to the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ in the last century—seem not so much to request as to demand from us that we defend his memory from the calumnies of adversaries with special zeal.

He, certainly, relying on divine assistance and the power he drew from the truth, has nothing to fear from men. He will always overcome the schemes of his enemies and shine in the Christian world, like a fixed star, until the glorious return of Christ.

But if some share in the knowledge of the truth has implanted even a portion of generosity in our hearts, we will never permit those blessed souls whom God used to reform the Church to have cause to complain—justly and rightfully—about the affection we bear them.

Thus it is our duty—guided by the conscience of our humanity and commanded by the love of Christ—to defend the innocence of such outstanding men, to praise what they have rightly said and done, and, if anything did occur in their writings less appropriately or somewhat harshly expressed (for they did not consider themselves above all human weakness), to interpret it kindly, excuse it easily, and, if needed, forgive it in light of their remarkable virtues.

Having said these few words by way of preface, let us proceed to the matter itself—and begin, as is absolutely necessary, by stating the question.

CHAPTER ONE

The Question Stated

The anonymous author begins his pamphlet as follows:

Those who teach the absolute decree of reprobation make two claims. First, that the sole motivating cause of reprobation is the divine will—not sin, whether original or actual. Second, that the final impenitence and damnation of the reprobate are necessary and unavoidable due to the absolute decree of God.

Since these two assertions are either maliciously or falsely framed, we must examine them a bit more carefully.

What the disputant has omitted here—though it should not have been either ignored or passed over in silence by someone intending to dispute seriously and sincerely—is this: Whatever some may have said harshly concerning the object of predestination and reprobation, Calvin held that the will of God (which is the principal subject in this discussion) operates in that matter with respect to the mass of corrupted humanity.

He speaks thus in Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 23, Section 3:

> “If anyone attacks us with words like these—‘Why did God from the beginning predestine some to death, who, since they did not yet exist, could not yet deserve the sentence of death?’—we shall in return ask them what they think God owes to man, if He wishes to judge him by His own nature. Since we have all been corrupted by sin, we cannot avoid being hateful to God—and that not by any tyrannical cruelty, but by the most just judgment. Therefore, if all are liable to the judgment of death by their natural condition, whom the Lord predestines to death, I ask, with what injustice can His providence be charged? Let all the sons of Adam come forward and dispute with their Creator, because, by His eternal providence, they were destined to perpetual calamity before their birth. What could they possibly say against this defense, when God shall call them to His tribunal to render an account of themselves? If they were all taken from a corrupted mass, it is no wonder they are subject to condemnation.”

Likewise, at the beginning of the epistle prefixed to his Treatise on Predestination, Calvin writes:

> “God’s election is gratuitous, by which, from the lost and damned human race, He adopts those whom it pleases Him.”

And this same doctrine is found frequently in that book, in his commentary on Romans 9, in Institutes Book 3, Chapter 22, Sections 1 and 7, and elsewhere.

I refrain from citing these passages at greater length because they have been diligently gathered and faithfully transcribed by the distinguished [Pierre] Du Moulin at the end of his Anatomy of Arminianism, and have also been confirmed by Article 12 of the Confession of our Churches:

> "We believe that God, out of that general corruption and curse into which all men are plunged, delivers those whom in His eternal and immutable counsel He has elected."

And likewise by the Synod of Dort:

Canons of Dort, First Head, Article 7 (on Election), and Article 15 (on Reprobation).

Certainly, just as it pleased God to leave the fallen angels in their ruin without any hope of restoration, so if it had pleased Him to leave the entire human race to the same destruction, we would have no grounds on which to complain. By what right, by what law, was He obliged to redeem fallen men rather than the devils?

From this, two conclusions necessarily follow:

1. If no election or reprobation had been made (and none would have been, had God entirely closed the way of mercy to mankind), then the damnation of men would rightly be ascribed to their own sin, not to the absolute will of God. For no one says the fallen angels suffer eternal punishment from the absolute will of God apart from sin.

2. If God did will, after making an election, to deliver some men from destruction while passing over others and showing them no hope of salvation, then the elect would indeed have cause to glory in the incomprehensible mercy of God toward them—but the reprobate would have no cause to complain either of God's severity or to impute their destruction to His will. For what the elect receive without any merit of their own changes nothing in the condition of the rejected. They would have been in the same state with respect to God's will as if none had been chosen from among them.

It is as if, from a large group of criminals guilty of the same crime and equally deserving of the same punishment, a sovereign magistrate were to pardon some in mercy; the others would not on that account be less justly punished.

This, in fact, Calvin teaches both in the place from the Institutes already cited, and frequently elsewhere.

Now, since the misery of the human race must be considered in two respects—first, that all men are subject to eternal condemnation because of sin, and second, that even if some are granted deliverance (and this could only come through the cross of Christ), all are so disposed by nature that, unless God Himself intervenes, none can embrace the salvation offered, but all will proudly

reject it due to the invincible hardness of their hearts—we must ask what Calvin taught about the dispensation of the divine will in removing both of these evils.

Regarding the first (the curse of sin), Calvin consistently wrote that God was so disposed toward mankind that He willed to send His only-begotten Son into the world, to satisfy the inexorable justice of the Father by His death, under the condition that, without exception, whoever believes may partake of the fruits of that satisfaction.

Thus, according to Calvin, there is no one who may not aspire to salvation—provided he embraces Christ, the only Redeemer, with true faith.

He writes on John 3:16:

> "Since the whole substance of our salvation is to be found in Christ alone, we must consider whence Christ comes to us and why He has been offered as a Savior. Both are set forth distinctly here: namely, that faith in Christ brings life to all; and that Christ brought life because the heavenly Father, loving the human race, did not wish it to perish."

And in his Preface to the French Bible, he writes:

> "We are all called to that inheritance without distinction of persons—men and women, children and adults, servants and masters, students and teachers, clergy and laity, Jews and Greeks, French and Latins alike. No one is excluded, provided he receives what is offered with certain faith and embraces what is set before him—in a word, who receives Jesus Christ as the Father has given Him."

Likewise, in his Treatise on Predestination:

> "It is agreed that all are indiscriminately called to faith and repentance, and that one and the same Mediator is proposed to all, that they might be reconciled to God the Father through Him. Also, in the Gospel, God stretches forth His hand to all without distinction."

And so in many places.

And concerning the external proposal of the object [of salvation], Calvin's meaning is clear. As we have already seen, he wishes the external preaching [of the gospel] to be common and universal; yet he explains this by adding a distinction. Namely, he distinguishes between (1) the divine institution, by which the ministry of the gospel has been entrusted to men, and (2) the secret providence by which God governs the outcomes of things according to certain hidden reasons.

According to divine institution, Calvin insists that the Savior is to be offered to all people universally, so far as that can be done, and that no one is to be excluded from the offer of salvation who is willing to believe the gospel.

Thus he speaks in his Commentary on Matthew 28:19: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”:

> “Here Christ, removing all distinction, places Gentiles on equal footing with Jews, and admits both indiscriminately into the society of the covenant. The word ‘go’ also pertains to this. For under the Law, the limits of the prophets’ mission were confined to Judea. But now, with the wall of separation torn down, the Lord commands the ministers of the gospel to go far and wide, to spread the doctrine of salvation throughout every region of the world. For although the dignity of firstborn sons remained with the Jews in the earliest days, yet the inheritance of life became common to the Gentiles.”

To the same purpose he writes in the Preface to the French Bible:

> “When the fullness of time had come, the great Messiah appeared and accomplished perfectly everything necessary for our redemption and salvation. He was given not only to the Israelites, but to all men of all nations and regions, that through Him, human nature might be reconciled to God. And to make this known, our Lord Jesus—who is the very foundation and substance of the whole matter—appointed His apostles and gave them the charge to publish His grace throughout the whole world.”

Although these words plainly show that the matter is treated with utmost seriousness, Calvin expresses it even more emphatically when commenting on Acts 17:30:

> “God now declares to all men everywhere that they must repent.”

From this, we gather the reason for the preaching of the gospel: namely, that God might call us away from the errors of our former life to Himself. So, whenever the voice of the gospel sounds in our ears, we must understand that God Himself is calling us to repentance.

It is also worth noting that Calvin attributes to God the very person speaking, even though He speaks through men. For the gospel does not possess its full authority—the kind of authority that heavenly truth deserves—unless our faith looks to God as the One presiding over the prophetic office, and hangs upon His very mouth.

No more testimonies are needed to make this point.

Although this office is entrusted to all ministers of the gospel, Calvin also teaches that by God’s secret providence the preaching of the gospel is variously distributed. Indeed, even now, despite the torch of life having been carried through the world by gospel preachers, by God’s will, a large portion of the earth still remains in the densest darkness.

If you ask the reason for this, he does not deny that many nations have so far been deprived of that light because they showed themselves unworthy of the knowledge of Christ through their horrible vices. But if, in making a comparison between various peoples—many of them equally unworthy—you ask why God preferred some to others in granting that benefit, he refers the matter to God’s most free will and inscrutable counsel.

This Calvin does in many places—but nowhere more clearly than in his Commentary on Acts 16:6:

> “The apostles, when they began to teach, prepared to go without distinction wherever the wind took them, following their vocation and God’s command. For they had been sent to proclaim the gospel among the Gentiles without exception. But the Lord, in governing their journey, revealed His plan in the very moments of time, though it had been previously hidden. Here arises a difficult question: Why did the Lord forbid Paul from speaking in Asia and not allow him to enter Bithynia? If we answer that these peoples were unworthy of the doctrine of salvation, we could just as well ask: Was Macedonia more worthy? Those who are too eager to find reasons assign them to differences among men, as if the Lord granted His gospel to those whom He foresaw would be more inclined to obedience. But God Himself declares otherwise: that He appeared to those who had not sought Him and spoke to those who did not ask. Whence comes the willingness and docility to obey, if not from the Spirit of God? It is certain that no one is preferred for their own merit, since by nature and inclination all are equally opposed to faith. Therefore, nothing is better than to leave the matter to God’s free power, to bestow or withhold His grace on whomever He wills.”

And yet, God Himself is not without just reason for offering the fruit of the gospel to some and passing over others—but that reason lies hidden in His secret counsel.

Now as to the internal power of the Spirit, which alone can reform minds so that they no longer reject the gospel, two questions arise: First, whether God has indeed established any such distinction among men; second, if He has, what cause moved Him to do so.

Regarding the first, Calvin’s position is plain: He affirms that God from eternity elected certain individuals in whom He would exercise the most powerful and effectual working of His Spirit, so that, having faith divinely implanted in them, they would be brought infallibly to the possession of salvation. He also maintains that others were passed over—those to whom God did not choose to extend such a prerogative.

As for the second question—what caused God to make this distinction—Calvin sometimes attributes the election of the elect to mercy, and the reprobation of others to judgment.

For example, in the words cited from Augustine:

> “Why does God not teach all to come to Christ, except because He teaches by mercy those whom He teaches, and those whom He does not teach, He does not teach by judgment?”

And again, from the same author:

> “Who would be so impious as to say that God cannot convert the evil wills of men—when, where, and how He pleases? But when He does so, it is by mercy; when He does not, it is by judgment.”

Sometimes Calvin appears to attribute this solely to the will of God, without regard to any quality in man, whether sinful or otherwise.

But these views are easily reconciled if we remember the distinction drawn earlier from Calvin's own words regarding the preaching of the gospel. The reprobate, in this context, are to be considered in two ways: either absolutely in themselves, or in comparison to the elect.

If considered absolutely, he asserts that they were worthy to be passed over by God. For who would not be judged worthy of evil who is depraved from the womb, who throws himself into sin of his own accord, and who is so disposed as to hate God intensely—and therefore cannot but hate Him?

Thus, in that regard, they suffered nothing unjustly. And had they not been such, God would not have passed them over.

But if they are compared to the elect, they were all equally unworthy of such great grace. Equally worthy, in fact, of being left to lie in eternal sin.

So when all are equal in themselves, the reason for the difference must be sought elsewhere than in either their dignity or indignity.

Calvin teaches everywhere that no other reason can be found except this: because it so pleased God, according to His most free good pleasure—as in the saying, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

The explanation of the second point is no less necessary, except that it has already been clarified by the preceding. First, we must distinguish between things the disputant appears to confuse: namely, damnation and final impenitence.

Regarding final impenitence, Calvin considers the will of God in this matter in two ways. That is, God indeed decrees something in both election and reprobation: but in election He positively ordains to effect faith in the elect; whereas in reprobation He negatively decrees not to effect faith, but determines to leave them to their own nature. Hence it necessarily follows that they neither believe nor repent.

Yet that final impenitence, though inevitable, cannot be imputed to the divine will any more than darkness can be imputed to the sun when it is absent.

Certainly, it is an unavoidable consequence that, when God withholds the action which alone can change the minds of men, they become more and more hardened. But their hardening comes from their innate corruption, as its proper and adequate cause—not from the will of God, except as a deficient cause (i.e., by His withholding), which does not exert a positive influence on the result. It merely permits the effect, which depends upon another cause, to occur without any intervening action.

As when someone does not stretch out his hand to stop a heavy object from falling, the body naturally descends by its own weight—so here.

From this, the second issue follows concerning damnation. If final impenitence—considered in terms of the certainty of its outcome—is indeed inevitable, and if damnation necessarily follows impenitence, then damnation too is in a sense inevitable.

Yet just as impenitence is not ascribed to God's immutable and absolute decree except as a deficient cause, so it is fitting that damnation itself be referred to the divine will in the same way.

The anonymous author argues, "Just as the cause of the cause is the cause of the caused," so also, "a thing is not otherwise caused than as its cause is caused." But I can confirm with nearly infinite testimonies that Calvin taught otherwise—and that he most emphatically distanced himself from those stale and base slanders, as though he made God the author of sin.

Instead, he shows that the guilt of impenitence lies with the person alone, and that reprobation, in relation to God, consists in a mere negation of action—a mere passing by.

The words of that great man in his Treatise on Eternal Predestination are these:

> "I would like to know, if Esau and Jacob were both left in their common natural state, what greater merit God found in the latter than in the former? Both equally, with their hardened hearts, would have rejected the salvation offered to them."

Likewise:

> "God is said to have prepared vessels of mercy for glory: if this pertains to the elect, then it follows that the others were fitted for destruction, because they were left to their own nature, and were by that very fact doomed to ruin."

But why multiply words? The very title of the book he wrote on this subject makes his opinion unmistakable: On the Eternal Predestination of God, by which He chose some men to salvation, and left others to their own destruction.

To sum this up briefly: the controversy comes down to this—whether God, in the eternal decree of predestination, willed the causes from which faith is necessarily produced to be common to all men, or rather peculiar to certain individuals whom He determined to bring to salvation, having passed over others in just judgment.

Calvin himself concludes the matter with these words:

> "Christ calls those whom He wills to show mercy upon. If He had willed, He would have made the unconverted converted. But God calls those He favors, and makes religious those whom He wills."

Who does not see that the whole substance of this question is contained in these few words?

That not all come to Christ to obtain salvation is due to this: that God does not effectively touch their hearts.

The conversion of man must be ascribed to the gratuitous election of God.

Why He calls some while leaving others reprobate rests solely in His will, and must not be concealed.

These three heads contain and define the state of the question—a fact that no moderately sound mind could fail to recognize.

And so, having established the question, let us now proceed to examine the arguments of the opponent.

Chapter II

That Calvin's Opinion Is Not New

The anonymous author's criticism proceeds as follows:

"This doctrine seems to be discredited by its novelty. For they say that until the time of Augustine, no such thing was heard among Christians in the earlier centuries." Against this, testimonies of the ancient writers are produced.

In Minucius Felix, the pagan objects, "Whatever we do, you attribute to fate, as we do—only you call it God: therefore you feign an unjust God, who punishes fate in men, not their will." To which the Christian responds: "Since God foreknows all things, He also determines destinies according to the merits and qualities of individuals."

Jerome, on Galatians 1:15, says:

> "By the foreknowledge of God, it comes about that He loves the one whom He knows will be just even before he is born, and hates the one He knows will be a sinner even before he sins."

He says the same on Malachi 1:

> "God's love or hatred arises either from the foreknowledge of future things or from works; otherwise we know that God loves all and hates nothing that He has made."

And again, Against the Pelagians, Book 3:

> "God chooses the one whom He sees to be good."

Fulgentius, in Book 1 To Monimus:

> “Those whom God foreknew would end this life in sin, He predestined to eternal punishment.”

Likewise Prosper, Response to Objections to the Gallicans:

> “They were not predestined because they were doomed to perish, but they were not predestined because they were foreknown as such through their own transgression.”
> And again: “Because He foresaw that they would fall by their own will, He did not distinguish them by any predestination from the sons of perdition.”
> Also: “God did not withhold the power of obedience from anyone because He did not predestine them, but because He foresaw they would depart from it, therefore He did not predestine them.”

Thus this doctrine is accused, it seems, of novelty.

To this accusation Calvin himself responded in this way:

> “But because the authority of the ancient Church is offensively thrust upon us, it is worthwhile to briefly say how unjustly the truth of Christ is oppressed by such slanders—some false, some frivolous. I would rather dispel all this accusation using the words of Augustine than my own.”

For Pelagians once harassed that holy man with the same reproach: that he stood opposed to other Church writers. He begins by observing that before the rise of the Pelagian heresy, theologians did not treat the matter of predestination with such subtlety or precision.

> “What need is there,” he asks, “to examine the works of those who, before the appearance of that heresy, had no necessity to grapple with this difficult question?”

No doubt, had they been compelled to respond, they would have. A prudent and honest statement indeed. For unless the enemies of grace had stirred the question, he would never have been so intent on investigating the doctrine of election, as he himself admits.

In the book On the Gift of Perseverance, he writes:

> “This is the certain and manifest predestination of the saints, which I was later compelled by the necessity of disputing against a new sect to defend more diligently and laboriously.”
> “We have learned,” he says, “that each heresy has brought its own set of questions into the Church, prompting a more diligent defense of Scripture than would otherwise have occurred.”

So much for Augustine. Certainly then, the doctrine ought not to be judged entirely new, since Augustine was its champion.

Calvin does admit in one place that many of the earlier theologians before that holy Father used language that could easily be interpreted in a softer sense. But there are many considerations that drive away this charge and should remove all odium of novelty from Calvin's doctrine.

First, even if Augustine's teaching was less known before the Pelagian heresy arose, once he brought it into clearer light and confirmed it with arguments drawn from Scripture, it gained so many followers that anyone who opposed it was judged to have departed from the Catholic truth. This shows that the doctrine of nature and grace was taught more obscurely and imperfectly in earlier centuries. But the ancient doctors of the Church held it confusedly, and if anything in their language was hesitant or uncertain, the portion of truth still prevailed. For as soon as the doctrine was more clearly stated, it easily won its way into the minds of true Christians—just as those raised in dim light, when a brighter light suddenly shines, recognize and embrace it with joy.

Second, since before these heresies arose theologians spoke less cautiously on some heads of religion, as Augustine observes, it is not fair to weigh their testimonies against those of later and greater men, who were compelled by the attacks of heretics to examine divine mysteries with more diligence and care. For example, who would claim that on the controversies surrounding Christ's natures and person, the writings of Origen and others who lived before Arius should be preferred to those of Athanasius, Hilary, and others who labored so intensely to defend the Catholic doctrine?

Or, if a controversy arose over the efficacy of Christ's satisfaction, would anyone value the writings of those who lived centuries ago more than those of our own day who have painstakingly opposed the poisonous Socinian doctrine? Much excellent has been said by the ancients, yes—but I value Hugo Grotius's Disputation on the Satisfaction more than anything Tertullian or Lactantius wrote on the subject.

Why then should we not prefer Augustine, Prosper, and others who followed that path against Pelagius, to those earlier doctors who had not yet spoken with such clarity?

Third, Augustine himself vigorously denied that all the ancient writers were against him, as Pelagius' disciples claimed. He cited Ambrose to his side, and also others like Cyprian and Gregory. As we saw above, there are two chief points on which, according to Calvin, the question turns.

First, why is the Gospel preached to some and not to others?

Second, whether God, by a settled counsel, decreed to make the preaching of the Gospel effectual in some for generating faith, whereby they would, infallibly and above others, be brought to salvation.

Concerning the first, Jerome's words are explicit, in his Letter to Ctesiphon:

> "Your companion Porphyry is wont to object to us: Why would a merciful and gracious God allow all the nations from Adam to Moses, and from Moses to the coming of Christ, to

> perish in ignorance of the Law and the commandments of God? For neither Britain—a land of tyrants—nor the Scottish tribes, nor all the barbarous nations around the Ocean ever knew Moses or the prophets. Why then did Christ come at the end, and not sooner, before so many souls perished?"

This question, the blessed Apostle prudently addresses in Romans, not knowing these things and conceding them to the wisdom of God.

> "You too," Jerome adds, "must consent to be ignorant of them. Grant to God His power. He does not need your defense."

This is in full accord with Calvin's view.

As for the second question, the learned Vossius notes that the beginnings of faith and the first sparks of regeneration come from that grace of God which absolutely precedes the will, preparing it for the further gifts of virtue which follow from the same divine bounty—without which no one would fail to reject the cross of Christ.

And the most decisive argument is this: when Pelagius began to teach otherwise, he was condemned by the universal Church—not only as a deserter from Christian truth, but from the doctrine of the Catholic Fathers.

Two things must be noted here. First, although the teaching of the ancient Fathers is not complete in every detail (for something more should have been said about the reason and cause of the difference between men, and a fuller explanation given of the efficacy of God's grace and the certain outcome of faith, perseverance, and salvation), yet the things they did say, though imperfect or obscure, do not contradict what Augustine later added to complete and confirm the truth. Therefore, Calvin's doctrine must be in harmony with theirs, since even the opponents acknowledge that Calvin agrees with Augustine.

So then, this doctrine must not be charged with novelty simply because it was not taught in full before Augustine's debates with the Pelagians—any more than philosophy should be said to have been unknown before Aristotle, simply because he saw more clearly, refined more carefully, and treated more thoroughly those things which Plato, Socrates, Hippocrates, and others had set forth more vaguely and less precisely.

The words of Augustine in On the Gift of Perseverance, ch. 19, are worthy of deep reading:

> "Those great and excellent doctors—Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory, and the rest—who say that we have nothing of our own to boast in, which God has not given us, who assert that our own hearts and thoughts are not in our own power, but give all to God, affirming that it is from Him that we are turned to Him, that we come to see as good what is good, that we will what He wills, that we honor God, embrace Christ, become devout and believing, and confess the Trinity with our lips—these men attribute all this to God's grace and recognize these things as God's gifts, not from us but to us."

And would anyone say they confessed God's grace in this way while denying God's foreknowledge, which even the unlearned confess? If they knew God so well, how could they not know that He foreknew what He would give and to whom? Surely then, they knew the predestination we now defend more carefully and rigorously against new heresies.

The second point follows from this: those ancient teachers of the Church cannot be excused—if there are any—who made the cause of predestination and election to glory rest on foreseen human merits.

For what are those merits? And what could be more alien from true religion than that God should be anticipated by man, as though man, by merit, compelled God's grace?

Yet those who make foreseen faith the cause of predestination to glory, and foreseen unbelief the cause of the decree to damn reprobates, are not necessarily to be reckoned as Pelagians or Semi-Pelagians—if they believed, as Augustine often taught, that the faith which God foresaw was foreseen because He had decreed absolutely to grant it, and that unbelief was foreseen because He had decreed not to soften their hearts.

Whichever way Calvin or Augustine or any orthodox teacher may explain this issue, it comes to the same result.

These two statements are perfectly parallel:

> "I will save all who will believe."
> "But Peter will believe, because I have decreed to grant him the most powerful, irresistible grace."

Therefore:

> "I will certainly save Peter."

And:

> "I certainly will save Peter; therefore I will grant him faith—without which I have decreed to save no one."

If Arminians dislike this second way of speaking, but sincerely embrace the first, then no major disagreement need remain between us. That's what the blessed Amesius once generously wrote to Grevinchovius.

> "I have said," writes Amesius, "that predestination is not from faith, because it is to faith. He denies this, claiming there are two kinds of predestination—one from faith, one to faith. Then I asked, 'Do you acknowledge a particular predestination to faith for certain individuals?' And Grevinchovius answered: 'Yes, I affirm and acknowledge two particular decrees: as in general, so also in particular—there can be no election to salvation from foreseen faith unless there is first an election to faith.'"

Amesius concludes:

> “This is a noble reply. If it were sincere, it would end the quarrel. For I would not dispute over the order of these decrees in the mind of God with someone who agrees with me on the substance—that election in every way depends on the will of God and rests on no condition performed by man.”

For this is the head and hinge of the whole controversy which is now so hotly debated.

As for those who only argue over internal orderings and yet go about slandering others, don’t they thereby reveal themselves to be addicted to slander? How could they, for such trivial differences, hurl such enormous charges—accusing revered theologians of heresies as severe as Manichaeism, Stoicism, Libertinism, and Pelagianism?

Calvin rightly condemns that old error that founded predestination to glory on the foreknowledge of faith supposedly produced by free will. In Institutes 3.21, he writes:

> “By interposing the veil of foreknowledge, they not only obscure election, but imagine it arises from some other source.”
> “Nor is this view only found among the common people,” he adds, “for it has had great defenders in every age.”

This aligns with what Beza also wrote on Romans 9.

This passage is also especially worth noting against those who make the foresight of faith or works the cause of election. For this most shameful error, Origen led many of the early writers into—both Greek and Latin—until at last the Lord raised up Augustine through the Pelagian controversy to recognize and correct it. And how that ought to be understood, Calvin explains in Augustine’s own words.

Nor, moreover, did Augustine fail to point out that the word ‘foreknowledge’ is sometimes taken to mean God’s counsel or decree by which He predestines His own unto salvation. For no one denies that God foreknows who will be heirs of eternal life. The question, rather, is whether He foresees what they will do, or what kind of persons they will be of themselves.

Further, just as Christ will render the reward of righteousness to the elect, so I do not at all deny that the reprobate will receive the just penalty of their ungodliness and wickedness. Nor can anything in our doctrine be rightly twisted to mean that God has appointed either no punishment for the wicked or no reward for the good. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. But whence comes that righteousness and holiness in the godly, which will then be crowned, except that God has regenerated them by His Spirit unto newness of life? And whence this regeneration except from free adoption?

Pighius argues just as if someone were to deny that there is day because the sun causes it. Though I grant the analogy does not perfectly hold—for light, created in the beginning, properly

has God for its author, whereas the blame for our damnation lies so entirely with us that it is never lawful to shift it onto others. Yet I only wished briefly to show how absurd it is when Pighius tries to eliminate the remote cause by appealing to the near one. He insists that the wicked are condemned because they bring down God's wrath upon themselves by their sins. From this, he concludes that their damnation does not arise from God's decree.

But I say that they heap sin upon sin because they are so depraved that they can do nothing but sin. And though they sin from outward temptations, they still do so knowingly and willingly, by the spontaneous motion of their heart. Yet the source and fountain of all these evils is the corruption and depravity of nature, which cannot be denied unless one is willing to uproot the very rudiments of godliness.

If you ask why God does not correct in the reprobate that same corruption which He does correct in His elect, the answer must be: it lies hidden in His own counsel.

Therefore, if someone were to say to Calvin that God's decree is based on His foresight of who will believe and who will not, he would not oppose it—indeed, he would affirm it—provided you also grant in turn that the foresight of some believing and others not is itself grounded in the fact that God determined to give faith to some, and withhold the grace—by which alone faith is generated—from others. Not because the former were more worthy than the latter, but because so it pleased Him, in His most free and sovereign good pleasure.

CHAPTER III

That Calvin's doctrine ought not to bring hatred and infamy upon its defenders

Here the Anonymous continues: "This doctrine brings hatred and infamy upon its defenders, both among outsiders and among their own." Among outsiders indeed—for the Lutherans declare that they would rather embrace the Papist doctrine than admit the "sacramentarian and predestinarian plague" of the Calvinists, as that most learned knight reports in his English book entitled A Report on the State of Religion in the Western Churches. And among their own—for Molinæus himself admits in The Anatomy of Arminianism, chapter 12, concerning predestination, that "it is the part of a wise man to conceal and even to remain ignorant of this mystery of predestination, rather than to rashly proclaim it." "For," he says, "when proclaimed, it causes scruples and gives occasion to adversaries to bring reproach upon the true religion." But what kind of doctrine is that which flees the light?

It is a great injustice to treat the truth so unfairly, as though it must be judged by the opinion of those who have only halfway understood it and whose minds are overwhelmed by dark prejudices. If Calvin's doctrine deserves hatred and infamy because the Lutherans say they

would sooner embrace Popery than accept what they call the Calvinist pestilence, then what shall we say of the opinions of Arminius, which the Reformed so vehemently oppose? Shall the disputant, for this reason, judge that Arminian teachings should be rejected, simply because we are accustomed—without injustice—to call them Pelagian or at least Semi-Pelagian? Even if we speak harshly, and the Lutherans, to speak plainly, slander Calvin's doctrine with a zeal unbalanced by knowledge, I still would not want the disciples of Arminius to allow themselves to be turned away from their convictions by the force of such accusations or by the harshness of our words, if indeed anything overly harsh has been said.

I only ask this: that setting aside all emotion—and especially that self-love which naturally inflames and blinds the human mind—they would weigh the strength of arguments sincerely, and when truth is recognized, boast that they have been conquered by it. For he who is conquered by truth is in fact the victor.

Then what sort of accusation is this—that he joins the Calvinist doctrine of predestination with their doctrine of the sacraments, calling both a "plague"? Is that therefore a good reason why we should judge our doctrine of the sacraments to be hateful and infamous—because the Lutherans are bold enough to call it pestilential? Then should we also adopt their belief in ubiquity? And if some heated Remonstrant, carried away by passion, wishes to slander both our doctrine and the Lutheran one concerning the sacraments with infamous labels—what are we to do, if we are not allowed either to embrace another's view or hold our own without being struck by these accusations?

Shall our minds always waver in uncertainty, so that we dare never affirm anything in this part of religion? But, says the disputant, "This doctrine does not avoid scandal, even among our own." For Molinæus himself is said to have stated that these mysteries should rather be concealed than declared. I do not know what the distinguished Molinæus wrote in the place cited. Indeed, these words do not appear in the edition of The Anatomy that I possess, in the chapter on predestination.

This much I do know: in the first chapter of that book, the highly esteemed author indeed rebukes those who either attempt to intrude too curiously into God's secrets, or who—out of a presumptuous and unrestrained liberty of prophesying—use the explanation of these mysteries to display their own intellect before the people. From such behavior arise disturbances in the Church.

But in the second chapter, he testifies no less clearly his dislike for the irreligion of those who command pastors to abstain entirely from the doctrine of predestination. He does not believe that such advice can be followed without mutilating the word of God, shaking the foundation of our faith, diminishing the consolation of conscience, and inflicting a memorable injury upon both faith and piety.

It would be absurd indeed to claim—as he rightly observes—that the doctrine of reprobation is clearly and sufficiently taught in the word of God, which should be read, meditated upon, and committed to memory both day and night by the Christian people—and yet to impose silence on

theologians and pastors precisely on that article. Be that as it may, Calvin's doctrine never shunned the light, but has circulated freely throughout the whole Christian world: in his commentaries on Scripture, in his Institutes, in books written specifically on this topic, and even in sermons taken from his own mouth and still widely available today in both Latin and vernacular.

Why should that doctrine flee the light whose entire aim is to ascribe the whole praise of our salvation to God alone? Nevertheless, no one denies that, as in all things, discretion and a sense of timing should be employed. For who would ever encourage faith by preaching to people that the greater part of mankind has been eternally appointed to be left to their natural corruption, from which final impenitence will infallibly follow? Certainly, no one will issue such a call to repentance.

Not because that doctrine dreads the light, but because it was not ordained by the Spirit of God for the purpose of begetting faith and repentance. But other occasions present themselves in which it is not only not useless but absolutely necessary.

Sometimes, indeed, the minds of men must be fortified against the offense they may take from seeing that while the Gospel shines with such a bright light of truth and offers so many attractions to men's hearts, it is yet contemptuously rejected by many—many of whom are otherwise adorned with distinguished natural gifts or divine privileges. There is scarcely anything easier than for doubt to arise in our minds about the truth of the Gospel.

But the doctrine of reprobation remedies this evil. For what wonder is it that those stumble at Christ whose eyes God has not opened—eyes which were from birth closed and obstructed by native blindness?

Thus, in John 6, Christ—wanting to lessen the disciples' amazement at the Jews' murmuring and obstinate rebellion—says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him." Likewise, in Romans 9, Paul, so that no one might be offended that such a great number of Jews (a people God had evidently exalted above all others) had rejected the Gospel, diligently shows that nothing happened which had not been previously decreed, foretold by the prophets, shadowed forth in figures, and finally demonstrated by clear examples even from the earliest days of the Church.

Who, then, should be surprised at such things?

Nor is this doctrine any less useful for dispelling the scandal caused by the apostasy of some who had been thought to belong to Christ, lest any truly faithful conscience be terrified by their example. For the Apostle warns that whatever happens of this kind, "the foundation of God stands firm," that no one of the faithful might lose his confidence, as if such a thing might happen to all.

It is likewise a great comfort and source of assurance in affliction that "all things work together for good to those who love God, who are called according to His purpose." For "those whom He foreknew, He also predestined," etc.

Thus, after carefully recounting all the things that most strongly tend to foster faith, Paul promises true believers a most brilliant and unwavering victory.

Above all, the sense of election fills the conscience with incredible comfort and stirs the heart to gratefully remember the infinite mercy of God—since our security and steadfastness in faith, our hope of salvation, and our perseverance must be entirely credited to the God who, from all eternity, separated us from the rest.

That Calvin neither ignored nor kept silent about these things is evident from nearly countless testimonies. One notable example is found in his book On Predestination: “Now since it plainly appears that, of the many whom God addresses outwardly by the voice of the Gospel, very few believe; if I attribute the unbelief of the majority to this, that God deems only some worthy of illumination, I at the same time maintain the other truth—that the mercy of God is offered to both, so that those who are not inwardly taught may thereby be rendered inexcusable.”

Some distinguish that the Gospel is salutary in power for all, but not in effect. Yet they do not resolve the difficulty—for we are always brought back to this: whether the ability to believe is equally given to all. But why do not all obey the Gospel? Paul explains, citing Isaiah: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Astonished by the scarcity of believers, the prophet cries out that it is a shame that the Word of God, though it sounds in all ears, affects so few hearts inwardly. But lest anyone be troubled by such great perversity in the world, he immediately adds: “It has not been given to all.”

There is no need for more testimonies in such a clear matter. But if anyone has time or a desire to read more, let him look at the beginning of the Book on Predestination, the commentary on 2 Timothy 2:19, and the commentary on John 6:44 and 10.

CHAPTER IV

That Calvin’s doctrine does not introduce Stoic or Manichaean necessity.

The Anonymous Author now turns to the accusation concerning “Fate,” as if anything could be more unworthy of the Christian religion. “For,” he says, “this doctrine seems to introduce a kind of Stoic and Manichaean necessity. For the determination of an end implies a determination of the means to that end. So if someone is predestined by the decree of reprobation to damnation, he will also inevitably sin—for he cannot be damned without sin.” Hence, in his Loci Communes, Melanchthon calls this decree “Stoic Fate.” And in a certain letter to Peucer, he used these words: “Laelius writes to me concerning the Stoic Fate, and that such a controversy is being stirred up in Geneva, that someone was even thrown into prison because he differed from Zeno.” Miserable times!

Such is his claim. But if one were to examine more carefully the doctrine of those who assert God's absolute decree, it would seem even harsher than the doctrine of the Stoics or the Manichees. For the Stoics derive the necessity that they claim dominates human actions from the stars. The Manichees, on the other hand, refer it to two principles—one good, the author of good things, and another evil, the author of all evils. It is more tolerable to attribute the necessity and cause of evil actions either to Nature, with the Stoics, or to some evil principle, with the Manichees, than to ascribe them to God, who is supremely and infinitely good.

Therefore, if we are to believe the Anonymous Author, Calvin alone must be considered more irreligious than Zeno and more raving than Manes. Certainly I do not trouble myself over the charge that Calvin is guilty of the Manichees' madness. The slander is in itself so clear and vile that it scarcely needs a refutation.

Yet this same Anonymous Author confesses that there is no difference between Calvin's and Augustine's view of predestination. Therefore, if anything of that monstrous Manichaean error has crept in, Augustine himself must share the blame. And how can that be, when no one has ever written more or better against those heretics? Why has he always been regarded in the Church not only as their fiercest opponent but also as the most successful destroyer of Manichaeism? He who most diligently unfolded their unspeakable mysteries and penetrated them with the sharpness of his mind—could he really have failed to detect so great an affinity between his own doctrine and theirs? Or, if he did detect it and wished to hide or dissemble it, was his mouth so hardened and his heart so steely that he, being himself a Manichee among the Manichees, should refute the doctrines of the Manichees? Did he think them such fools and stumps that they would let themselves be so thoroughly deceived? Did he hope posterity would have nostrils so blocked up that they would never smell such shameless deceit?

Calvin himself once replied in this way to the accusation of fate: "You claim," he says to a certain slanderer, "that there is one point on which many fight against me more strongly than any other, and on which the arguments drawn from all my books so far cannot be refuted. You say this is about predestination or fate. I wish it had been your aim either to inquire modestly or at least to dispute honestly, rather than, with all shame cast aside, to confuse the most diverse things in order to extinguish the light. The Stoics called 'Fate' a necessity woven from a complex and tangled labyrinth, a necessity that in a way even compelled God Himself into its order. But as the Scriptures teach, I define predestination as the free counsel of God, by which He governs both the human race and each part of the world according to the boundless depth of His incomprehensible wisdom and justice. And since this, unless I am mistaken, ought to satisfy modest and unpresumptuous minds, I marvel that a learned man would continue to serve up the same reboiled cabbage here again." But so that, if possible, those who have such a lust for insulting Calvin's doctrine might finally hold their peace, let us examine the matter more precisely, as Cicero might say.

Fate, according to the opinion of the Stoics—as is mentioned by Cicero, Gellius, Augustine, and others—is said to consist in a certain eternal and natural chain of events, so interconnected by their own nature, that the outcomes of things necessarily follow from them, being immutable

even to God and unavoidable by creatures. Thus Homer describes it with the word εἱμαρμένη ["fated necessity"], to which even Jupiter himself is subject.

For they thought that nothing could be born, happen, or arise which did not have definite preceding causes conjoined and linked by nature, bound together by a certain eternal and unchangeable bond. Or else they believed it depends on the influence and disposition of the stars, which govern lower and sublunar things with such power that nothing escapes their rule inevitably.

Chrysippus defined that first kind of fate in this way, as reported by Gellius: "εἱμαρμένη φύσει σύνταξις τοῦ ὅλων ἐξ ἀϊδίου πλήθοντος τι ἑτέροις ἐπακολουθέντων, ἢ μετὰ πολλοῦ μέν ἐν ἀπαραβάτῳ οὔσης τῆς αὐτῆς συμπλοκῆς" — that is, "fate is a natural structure of the whole, in which from eternity certain things follow others, within a connection that is itself unalterable."

Of the latter kind, Manilius writes:

> "And first by art,
> The fates are seen to hang on the wandering stars."

Now, there are two kinds of things over which fate was believed to rule: some lack reason and will, others are endowed with understanding. So the power of fate, whatever it is, according to the Stoics, manifests in two ways in how it moves these things. The brutish and senseless natures, driven by external impulses, are moved in such a way that they contribute nothing from themselves to the motion. And in these, Chrysippus believed the concept of fate was sufficiently explained.

But when it came to beings that seem to have voluntary motion, he was greatly troubled and labored hard, unable to clearly resolve how necessity could coexist with the liberty of human reason. Nevertheless, he eventually concluded that human minds perceive the motion of fate according to how well or poorly they are constituted by nature. Those rightly ordered and disposed to virtue (κατ᾽ ἀρετήν) or to what is honest and praiseworthy by their natural fitness, transmit without resistance all the force that comes upon them from without, handling it smoothly and manageably. But those that are twisted, crude, and addicted to vice, though also impelled by fate, are nonetheless swept along by voluntary impulse and an inward inclination to sin.

To illustrate this, he used the well-known example of a cylinder: if you push it onto a slope, it receives the beginning of motion from you, but the rest of its movement comes from its own nature and inherent roll. So he believed the first inclination to action arises from the impulse of fate, but in the course of events, there is the guidance and governance of the will and reason.

For this reason, he denied that the excuses of those who shift the blame for their misdeeds onto fate should be heard, or that the gods should be accused as the authors of sin. He greatly praised those lines in Homer where the gods speak as follows:

> "Ah, how wrongly mortals blame the gods!
> For they say that evils come from us, but it is they

who bring these sorrows upon themselves by their own folly."

Now then, if that force of ἀνάγκη [necessity], which naturally binds all things together, has existed equally from eternity, what is left for fate to do that the daily providence of the divine mind does not already administer?

For if this interconnectedness is not the result of some foresight of reason concerning the future, but rather an innate entanglement of things themselves, said to have existed from eternity (according to that hypothesis), then what part does Providence claim in this matter? One which neither initiates the course of things, nor is able in their eternal constitution to bend anything in another direction than that to which it was altogether destined? Therefore, as we mentioned above, even Jupiter himself, in Homer, complains that he is bound by the chains of fate, such that he cannot restore his beloved Sarpedon to life.

But if all the power of fate is thought to reside in the stars, since they have their motions so fixed and determined that they always preserve the same course unchangeably throughout all time, and in addition pour themselves uniformly into inferior and sublunary things, then what room is left for Providence in all this?

But, whatever those men taught well or badly about Providence is not the issue. The one thing under discussion is what they judged about the necessity of fate and what Calvin's doctrine has in common with it.

This point is entirely free from difficulty. For what Calvin thought about the influence of the stars is clear—not only from other places, but especially from that most elegant and learned little book he wrote against judicial astrology. And just as far as the earth itself is from those heavenly bodies, so far does the judgment of the most excellent theologian differ from the notion of fate.

As to the other point, who has ever had such brazen-faced audacity as not to blush at attributing to Calvin this συμπλοκή and entanglement of all things—this physical web of interconnection? Who has ever more frequently or more clearly taught that all things are governed by the will of God, that there is nothing in heaven or on earth, not even the smallest things or those that seem least related to the perfection of the universe, which does not depend upon His will and daily administration?

For He wished many things to be carried out by divine providence without any intervention of secondary causes—such as miracles and many other things. And even those things which appear to be born connectedly and jointly from lower causes, He taught to depend on the same Providence, as things which, though often not bound by the necessity of nature, have been most wisely arranged and ordered to their appointed ends.

And finally, He taught that Providence presides over nature itself, dispenses even those things which are thought to happen by chance, and governs and moderates the movements of creatures which act by their own will, through certain hidden but wise reasons—as He confirms in six hundred places.

But this very thing is what the Anonymous criticizes. “It would be better,” he says, “for all things to be governed by Stoic fate, than for the minds of men to be subjected in this way to the providence of God.”

Even the learned Arminius once acted with somewhat more modesty. For when he frankly confessed that whatever necessity Calvin’s doctrine brings into religion, it is not Stoic fate, he was content to fault it merely for introducing some necessity—not less irresistible than if it were fatal. This, indeed, he could not stomach. For he thought all necessity ought to be far removed from human actions.

But is it fair to assail so harshly the doctrine which joins liberty with necessity?

For my part, I cannot help but be astonished at the audacity and presumption of the human mind—that unless it be established that our actions arise from a liberty which excludes all necessity, it does not hesitate to accuse God of sin. As if there were not in God such sanctity of nature, such effectiveness of power, and such wisdom of providence that He can, with perfect immunity from fault, rule the faculties of creatures—even those most corrupted by sin—by His command and moderate them with supreme certainty.

But let us weigh the arguments of our disputant, and let us see what power divine providence has in the matter at hand, and whether it contains anything that could have affinity with fate.

First, about the elect. “The determination of the end,” he says, “implies the determination of the means.” Let it be so—what then follows? It will follow, therefore, that God has certainly determined the means to salvation. Most certainly.

Therefore, will they believe of necessity?

First, faith is ascribed to divine providence and its efficacy, not to fate.

Then, by the power of predestination, faith is so generated in the hearts of the elect that it is joined with the necessity of futurity—if I may put it so—and with the highest liberty.

For there are three kinds of necessity. One is that of brute nature, whose appetites are determined to one thing alone—whether that force is in matter, in form, or in their conjunction—so that things are always moved in the same way, without having any knowledge of the reason for their movement, or knowing the end toward which or the object to which they are moved. So heavy things necessarily tend downward, and light things upward; fire necessarily burns, the sun shines, and iron follows or is attracted by the magnet.

This kind of necessity must be referred to that which appears in brute animals, when they are driven by objects. In this, indeed, they differ from things that are devoid of sense and are moved spontaneously and sometimes necessarily. Yet they do not understand either the nature of the object or the mode of their own motion. Rather, they are carried along by rash and thoughtless impulse, without any previous reflection or reasoning of the mind. Hence, they only react to

present stimuli, have no foresight of the future, and remember little or nothing of the past—and that dimly.

The second kind is from an external principle, whose force strikes the passive subject in such a way that, however much it resists and opposes, it is nevertheless compelled to yield, because what impels it is stronger than what resists it.

If the subjects of this kind of necessity are endowed with reason and will, they bear it with difficulty. If not, they do not bear it with difficulty except metaphorically (for no one would properly say that a stone is thrown upwards unwillingly and with displeasure). Still, they obey in such a way that they resist with all their strength, and do not stop resisting even if they are overpowered by the greater force.

So the wind drives a ship against its will, kata metaphoran; because if it did not blow, the ship would rest according to its nature. And likewise it drives the sailor against his will, properly speaking, if he wishes to steer his course eastward but is carried westward by the force of the storm.

The third kind [of necessity] is from a certain congruity and proportion, which arises from nature between faculties endowed with reason and will, and objects that correspond to the character of those faculties.

Thus, the intellect, rightly constituted by nature, necessarily perceives clearly and distinctly a truth that is properly proposed, and it cannot fail to perceive what is fittingly presented. For who, in his right mind, could stop himself from believing the proposition to be true that “if you take equal amounts from equals, the remainders will also be equal”? Or if a demonstration arises clearly and manifestly from first principles, how can a well-ordered mind withhold assent from it?

In the same way, the will is necessarily inclined toward the highest good. For all men desire the highest good. And things that always and everywhere happen in the same way must, as Aristotle teaches, have a necessary cause. But this cause is not a brute and senseless impulse, nor an external force bursting in, compelling one unwilling and resisting to pursue the highest good. Rather, it is a definite and irresistible congruity by which the object, being of such a nature, and the faculty, being of such a kind, correspond with each other: namely, that which is, in and of itself and in every way, to be sought after, and the power of desiring that is implanted in a nature endowed with reason—because it is such.

Therefore, each of those faculties, rightly disposed according to its nature, both rightly judges about the means that lead to the highest good, and necessarily embraces what it rightly judges and recognizes. For it certainly cannot be the case—as even our opponent will admit—that there should be some utterly inescapable necessity to desire the ultimate end, and yet none at all in regard to the choice of the means which pertain to the attainment of that end.

For just as means are not sought unless for the sake of an end, so also the end cannot be desired unless the means to attain it are desired as well. Therefore, from among many proposed means, that which appears more suitable, easier, more effective, and more certain will

doubtlessly be preferred and will necessarily attract the will to itself. But if many options present themselves, among which the choice is difficult because they appear equally advantageous and equally capable of achieving the goal, still one will be chosen—and the mind will not hang in perpetual suspense between equal estimations. Not because one may necessarily be better than another, but because the end cannot otherwise be obtained.

Thus, the soul is carried toward the end in such a way that it cannot restrain its ὁρμή [impulse]. Therefore, it must incline toward one specific rationale by which the end may be attained. And if there is only one means by which that may be done—as indeed faith in Christ is the sole way to salvation—it will, by necessity equal to that of the end itself, move the appetite and determine it toward itself.

So, God enlightens the intellect, bends the will, makes it willing, and affects it so powerfully that it cannot but will. And yet the will is not altogether ignorant of its own movement—like something falling to its center by its own weight—nor is it compelled. For what could compel the will to will? It wills not only willingly, as Aristotle says, but also deliberately and freely, being moved by an object by which it cannot but be moved, and by arguments which, although they most certainly and undoubtedly persuade, are nonetheless most suited to the nature of our understanding and will.

Now, if a necessity of this kind is to be called fatal, then we must also say that God Himself is holy by fate, because He cannot not be holy; and that the angels are good by fate, since they cannot fall away from goodness; and that fate will reign in the life to come, where there can be absolutely no place for sin; and that our Lord Jesus cultivated virtue and holiness by fate, He whom no one who is truly a Christian would ever say could have sinned.

Indeed, some of Arminius's disciples have not shrunk from uttering that blasphemous statement—that nothing prevents us from saying that Christ had the power to commit sin. But Arminius himself, as far as I can recall, never wrote this; nor do those who generally and zealously hold to his errors dare to defend this position, which borders on blasphemy.

Those who are not equally corrupted by the breath of that most impure man [i.e., Socinus] do not deny this praise to Christ: that He was not only free from sin, but even from the ability to sin—a "power" which is no power at all, but the height of ἀδυναμία [inability, weakness].

Our Lord, then, was so constituted that it was absolutely impossible for Him not to obey the Father in all things—especially in what pertains to obeying His command to lay down His life on the cross for our salvation. Therefore, if what is necessary and infallible is immediately deemed fatal, then not only was Christ, as we said above, "fated" to be holy, but we also were redeemed by fate.

Concerning the reprobate, the matter is no less clear. For final impenitence is indeed infallibly followed by damnation. But that infallibility arises not from fate, but from the order of justice. Nor have even the disciples of Arminius denied that those who are hardened and remain obstinately in sin until the end of life are most justly punished on the last day. But that this takes place by

the order of justice—who would say that it therefore occurs by fate? Unless perhaps one would also attribute the punishments of the devils to fate, which certainly and infallibly hang over them.

Yet final impenitence necessarily follows reprobation. Why not? But does it follow fatally for that reason? By a similar cause, shall we say that the wicked angels are fated to persist in evil, because they are altogether beyond correction forever? Just as God has immutably determined within himself not only not to recall the devils to repentance, but not even to invite them to it—whence it follows that their sinning is unavoidable—so also, though he has decreed to invite the reprobate to repentance, he has at the same time decreed not to exert that power in them which alone can make them obedient to such invitations. Therefore, it is just as inevitable that they remain in sin.

Accordingly, neither—or perhaps both—of these things is determined by fate. But why God has so willed it is not the present question. It is enough that we have shown there is nothing of fate in the matter.

To make this even more clear—and so obvious that even the blind may see how beautifully necessity agrees with liberty—let us also distinguish types of liberty.

We are said to be free either with respect to actions that proceed from those faculties which are subject to the will (such as the power of moving from one place to another, or any similar acts that obey the command of the will unless hindered by disease or force), or with respect to the actions of the will itself, in which no command is exercised over the will.

For the will certainly does not command itself to will. Suppose we imagine that it does command itself to will: then the act by which it commands itself would undoubtedly be a volition. So the will wills that it will—a notion that is sheer nonsense. Then it must be asked whether the will has authority over that act by which it supposedly commands itself to will. If it does, it cannot exercise that authority except through another volition. Then it wills to will that it may will. Or it commands itself to command itself to will. But this absurdity not only introduces incoherence but leads to the very consequence Aristotle everywhere avoids as a rock of shipwreck: namely, an infinite regress.

If it does not have such authority, then certainly there is some act of the will over which the will has no control. And what's the use of imagining that the will can command itself to will, if it cannot command itself to command itself to will?

For if that volition which immediately precedes the act depends on some prior volition, from whence does that prior volition arise? We have already shown that it does not depend on a third volition. Either, then, it has no cause, or if it has a cause, that cause is outside the will itself. For the will itself cannot be said to be the cause of its own volition.

The will must be considered either potentially (in its power) or actually (in its act). If it is considered in act, then it is already willing—and we are asking about the cause of its act. If it is considered only as a power, and not in act, then it does not yet constitute itself as willing. How, then, can a will which is merely potential bring itself into act without any other cause?

It is therefore altogether necessary that there be something outside the will itself by whose power the will is determined. The will may indeed have authority over inferior faculties, but it has none over itself or its own volitions.

In what, then, does our liberty consist? Clearly, in actions which proceed from faculties subject to the will, we are free when we are able to do what we will. Therefore, liberty is rightly defined by the Stoics as the power of doing what one wills.

For example, one whose legs are amputated or who is hindered by illness is not free with respect to the act of walking. Nor is one in chains free, insofar as that power is not in his control. By contrast, he is free who has no impediment placed before him, if he wills to act.

With respect to actions that proceed from the will itself, liberty cannot consist in the power of willing what one wills. What is that supposed to mean? Liberty must then consist in the fact that one wills what he wills spontaneously and deliberately. And so Aristotle always joins these two: that our actions are truly our own when they proceed neither from mere natural appetite (as heavy things move downward, or hunger arises in the stomach, or anything in the nutritive power), nor from some external force, but rather are done voluntarily and with choice [ἑκουσίως ἢ μετὰ προαιρέσεως].

Hence, those actions which are partly voluntary and partly involuntary—called mixed by the philosopher—such as throwing goods into the sea during a storm to lighten the ship, though if considered absolutely may be called involuntary, yet when considered in the moment they are performed, are rightly judged to be spontaneous and free.

For no one, unless under the threat of a storm, would throw his goods into the sea out of pleasure. But when someone does it for the sake of lightening the ship and preserving life, he does it willingly in that moment, choosing deliberately in that particular situation what seems best for preserving life.

Certainly, it is better to save one's life in any way than to lose it deliberately. Now, necessity is compatible with both kinds of liberty. First, with respect to the former. Suppose someone wants to walk and has limbs and faculties naturally granted for that purpose, and is not hindered by illness, nor bound by chains, nor obstructed by anything else—he will walk both freely and necessarily. Freely, because he does it of his own accord and willingly, not by compulsion. Necessarily, because it is impossible even to imagine that he should seriously will, be able, and yet not do it.

Aristotle teaches this explicitly in the Ethics, Book 7, Chapter 3:

> "For every belief, and every consequent impulse, when both propositions are present in the soul, the conclusion necessarily follows. There is necessity in the affirmation and declaration of what is concluded, and in actions, the soul acts immediately."
> Thus, if "everything sweet must be tasted" and "this is sweet" are brought together, then necessarily the one who can and is not hindered will immediately act on it.

Similar observations are found in On the Motion of Animals, Book 3, and in Metaphysics, Book 9, Chapter 5, and elsewhere.

This also holds for the latter liberty. For when liberty is properly located in choice (τῇ προαιρέσει), every volition—though it be ever so necessary—is still free if it arises from a prior election. That volition arises necessarily from deliberation is confirmed by experience and shown by Aristotle in the words previously cited. For surely no one tastes deliberately unless they are willing. So the act of tasting must be preceded by some volition. But Aristotle says tasting itself is necessary. Therefore, the volition that precedes it is also necessary.

It arises from the combination of two propositions: “sweet must be tasted” and “this is sweet.” That combination is nothing other than choice (προαίρεσις). Thus, choice necessarily produces that volition.

Therefore, either there is some kind of necessity that is not of the nature of fate, or else the necessity arising from choice is itself fated—which no one who knows what fate is (as we briefly explained above) would say or even think.

Indeed, Augustine testifies that he does not greatly object to the name “fate,” if by it is meant nothing other than the most wise and certain providence of God. But if the disciples of Arminius would submit everything—as they ought—to the will and judgment of God, suspending the minds and wills of men upon His direction, then perhaps there would be no dispute between us about words. We could endure it patiently if, having removed the term “fate” from the boundaries of religion, they would boast that they had destroyed fate itself.

But since—as is all too obvious—they wish to remove the human will from the government of divine providence, they call the doctrine which maintains that all things happen by the most certain counsel of God “fate” as a term of reproach and contempt. That, however, is intolerable and cannot be endured with any leniency or indulgence.

Let us add to what was said before: what similarity is there between that spiritual power which converts us from sin and that motion of fate which we described earlier? The latter imagines human minds inclined to virtue either by the goodness of nature or by study and practice; the former finds men corrupt and entangled in inescapable sin. The one merely assists the inclination to good, so that the praise of virtuous actions rests chiefly with human choice; the other ascribes all praise for our conversion to God alone.

The one is purely physical and supposes that minds are pushed like a hand against a cylinder that is unaware of its own motion; the other gently enters the soul, so fills it with light that it sees and recognizes a most beautiful and clearly divine object—whence arises a motion that is both conscious and filled with unspeakable delight.

But why should the reprobate complain that a fatal necessity has been imposed upon them by God? Chrysippus, though he tried to sever the blame of sins from fate, still admitted that they stemmed to some extent from external impulse. But God does not impel the reprobate to evil.

He does not harden them by any positive action. It is enough that He permits them to themselves, naturally prone and headlong into sin.

And when He has treated the reprobate with such great kindness as to call them to repentance, offering hope of pardon and blessed immortality if only they would believe and repent—what necessity, then, was there for them to perish or not believe, except that which they must attribute to themselves?

To obtain salvation, only one thing was necessary: faith. For faith to be rendered, the cross of Christ must be set before them as the object; and the mind must be teachable, not obstinate, not enslaved to vices or perverse affections. God, in supreme mercy, not only offered but continually presented this object, pressing it upon them with constant exhortations. What, then, hindered them from responding, except their own invincible and incurable malice?

Can it really be tolerated, then, that those who resisted such gentle invitations with such stubbornness should either accuse God of severity or claim their own malice was worthy of excuse—as if it were inevitable and fated?

That report which the Anonymus relates—that Melanchthon in his Loci Communes called Calvin's doctrine "Stoic fate"—should not greatly disturb us. Either he was not speaking of Calvin's doctrine (whom he does not name), or he did not understand it, or, if he did understand it, he was unjust in this regard, for he did not shrink from dishonoring a true opinion, supported by the authority of Scripture, with a slanderous label.

As for the Epistle to Peucer, I make no judgment, since I have not seen it. Neither Arminius—who was, as far as I know, the first to mention it—nor the Anonymus who followed Arminius, have indicated where it can be found. It certainly does not appear in the works of Melanchthon published at Basel in five volumes (now a hundred years old), nor in the smaller works added to the Corpus Doctrinae Christianae, published at Leipzig in 1560.

I will only advise the reader that Calvin, in the letter by which he dedicated his book on Predestination to the Syndics and Senate of Geneva, wrote the following:

"A rumor was spread in many places that the troublemaker who had stirred up the question of predestination and disturbed the Genevan church had been bound in chains, though he was plainly walking freely through the middle of the city. Some even maliciously fabricated the lie that we had demanded he be put to death—you yourselves are our best witnesses that this was false."

To refute such slanders until they vanish through silence and the calm strength of spirit is a mark of dignity and prudence. Thus there can be no doubt that Melanchthon—a man perhaps too credulous—may have been misled by such slanders.

But if this is the same story recounted by Beza in his Life of Calvin, under the year 1551 (and without a doubt it is, since the times match: the dedicatory letter to the book on Predestination is dated January 1, 1552), then the great man is entirely without fault.

For it was certainly Jerome Bolsec who was thrown into prison—a former monk of the Carmelite order, who falsely and hypocritically embraced the purer religion, and then, with the fickleness usual in such men, reverted back to the Roman Church. He was, I say, thrown into prison, and though he deserved the harshest punishment, the Genevan magistrate was content to expel him from the city, threatening heavier penalties if he were found either in Geneva or its jurisdiction again.

But this was done not because he disagreed with Calvin, but because—being a thoroughgoing Pelagian—he could not restrain himself from publicly raging against the truth and inciting disturbances dangerous to public order. And this was not done at the instigation of the theologians, but at the initiative and authority of the magistrates, whose duty it is to look after the peace of the commonwealth.

Nor was this done without consulting neighboring churches: the magistrates sought the judgment of the Swiss church synods before acting. The Genevans' leniency toward Bolsec—an utterly depraved man—turned out unhappily, for had they punished him as he deserved, he would not have later published that vile pamphlet in which, with unheard-of audacity and shameless impudence, he vomited every kind of slander against Calvin.

CHAPTER V

That Calvin's doctrine does not contradict Holy Scripture

At last, the Anonymus turns to the testimony of Scripture—against which, if Calvin had written anything in contradiction, neither would he have wished it himself to be upheld, nor would we dare to defend it. Let us, then, carefully weigh the matter.

The disputant says: "This doctrine seems to be most strongly opposed to Holy Scripture, and that in various places." For example, Ezekiel 33:11, "As I live," says the Lord, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." And lest anyone think this is said only about a sinner who has already repented, he points us also to Ezekiel 18:32: "For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," says the Lord God. In this passage, those whose destruction God does not delight in are the wicked—those who die because they have rejected grace. And if God does not even take pleasure in their death, then certainly He delights even less in the death of innocents or of those who bear only original sin.

Tertullian rightly exclaims, "God desires to be believed—oh, how blessed are we, for whom God swears! How wretched we would be if we did not believe a God who swears!" Certainly, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Could it then be possible that He, by sheer will or by some absolute decree, apart from any consideration of foreseen works, would consign to the inevitable necessity of eternal punishment so many thousands of men fallen in Adam?

It is worth hearing Calvin himself interpret these passages, so that his adversaries may see what he truly thought of them. Since he did not carry his commentary all the way to Ezekiel 33, let us take his interpretation from similar passages. Thus, on Ezekiel 18:31–32—"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of the one who dies," says the Sovereign LORD. "Therefore, turn and live."—

Calvin comments:

"Ezekiel again exhorts the people to stop complaining and to recognize that there is no remedy for their evils unless they are reconciled to God. And that cannot happen unless they repent. For God was not hostile to them without cause, nor did He pursue the innocent with unjust hatred, as though they had done nothing to deserve it. Here, God assumes the role of one lamenting: 'Why will you die, O house of Israel?' We see, then, that God is rejecting the false charge with which the Israelites burdened Him—namely, that they perished by an excessive and disproportionate severity, and that they could not see why He was so harsh toward them. God responds by announcing, on the contrary, that the cause of death lies with themselves. Then He shows the remedy—that they should amend their lives for the better, not merely in outward appearance, but with true sincerity of heart. At the same time, He testifies that He will be merciful to them. Indeed, He even runs to meet them to be reconciled, provided they genuinely repent and not merely in pretense."

And again, on verse 23 of the same chapter—"Do I indeed delight in the death of the wicked?"—Calvin says:

"He confirms that God desires nothing more than for all who are perishing and rushing toward death to return to the way of salvation. And for this very reason, not only is the Gospel proclaimed today to the world, but God has also, in every age, wished to declare how inclined He is to show mercy. Even the heathen, though they lacked the Law and the Prophets, still had some taste of this doctrine. To be sure, it was obscured by many errors—but we find that, by a hidden impulse, they were always led to seek forgiveness, because there was in them a kind of innate sense that God is placable to all who seek Him."

"But," he continues, "God declared this more clearly in the Law and the Prophets. And in the Gospel, we know how intimately He addresses us when He promises us forgiveness. This is the knowledge of salvation: to embrace the mercy that is offered to us in Christ. Therefore, what the Prophet now says is completely true—that God does not will the death of the sinner—because He comes forward willingly, and is not only ready to receive all who flee to His mercy, but He calls them loudly to Himself when He sees them alienated from all hope of salvation."

But it must be carefully observed in what manner God wills that all men be saved—namely, upon their conversion from their evil ways. God does not will the salvation of all in such a way that every distinction between good and evil is abolished. Rather, repentance precedes forgiveness, as the passage plainly affirms.

How then does God will all to be saved? In this way: just as the Spirit today, through the Gospel (as once through the Law and the Prophets), convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment—so also God reveals to men how miserable they are, that they might return to Him. He wounds, in order to heal; He kills, in order to give life.

Therefore, we now maintain that God does not will the death of the sinner, because He calls all indiscriminately to repentance and promises that He is ready to receive them—provided they repent sincerely. If anyone then objects, "Does this not mean there is no divine election, by which God predestined a certain number to salvation?"—the answer is at hand: the Prophet here is not speaking of the secret counsel of God, but only seeks to draw miserable men back from despair, that with hope of mercy they might embrace the salvation offered to them and repent.

What Calvin believed about the cause of human ruin, and about God's inclination to show mercy, is, I think, sufficiently and clearly shown in the words already cited. How those passages may be reconciled with the doctrine of the absolute decree of reprobation will be explained more fully later. For now, we simply ask the disciples of Arminius to stop imagining that, in Calvin's view, God delights in the death of men for its own sake. Not only is that notion far from the truth, but it was always utterly alien to the mind of that incomparable theologian.

Indeed, we only take delight in the things we love, and we love nothing except either as an end in itself (as what is noble and beautiful, καλόν), or as a means to an end (as what is useful, χρήσιμον), as Aristotle teaches. Now the death of the sinner, considered simply as death, is neither morally good (ἀγαθόν or καλόν) nor pleasant (ἡδύ). For what pleasure could God possibly take in the death of men? Only those whose passions have been inflamed by wrath and an excessive lust for vengeance take pleasure in the death of others. But God is subject to no passion, nor to any violent or excessive anger. Therefore, if God wills the death of the sinner, He wills it only as a means to an end—and thus He takes no delight in it except κατὰ συμβεβηκός (incidentally), inasmuch as by it the divine law, violated by human sin, is satisfied.

Here we must remember what we said earlier: damnation and reprobation are distinct. Damnation is the act of God as Judge, pronouncing a man worthy of punishment because of his unbelief and impenitence—a sentence which is followed by the infliction of punishment. Reprobation, by contrast, is not properly an act of God as Judge, but as supreme Lord of all things, who either gives or withholds His gifts according to His own free will. Thus, God justly withholds the gift of faith from the reprobate. In doing so, He acts justly; they were indeed worthy to be passed over. However, He did not withhold it as a punishment for their unbelief or impenitence (since those follow reprobation, rather than preceding it as a moving cause). Unbelief and impenitence God cannot fail to punish without compromising His justice—which even Socinus conceded, and the disciples of Arminius will not deny.

But God could not have rejected the reprobate without injustice unless there were no cause for their rejection over others—except His own good pleasure. And rightly did that most learned Grotius say somewhere: some things are done justly which, nevertheless, could have been omitted without injustice. He who punishes the guilty acts justly; yet there may be occasions

when mercy can be shown without injustice. He who demands repayment of a debt acts justly, but he may choose to forgive it freely, without injustice. And he who gives alms might, perhaps, have justly refused it, though he could also have given it mercifully—without doing wrong (ἐμὴ ἀδικῶν).

With these things explained, it is clear that in the decree of reprobation God was not pleased with the death of the sinner—not in itself, nor even incidentally. For reprobation does not concern the infliction of death, but the withholding of faith. So the Anonymous Writer asks in vain, as if in astonishment: “Could it have happened that God, by sheer will or some absolute decree, without regard to foreseen works, should have reserved countless thousands of men, lying in Adam’s sin, for the unavoidable necessity of eternal punishment?” These words are partly false and partly slanderous in their account of Calvin.

False—because Calvin nowhere traces that reservation unto eternal destruction back to God’s sheer will, without reference to sin. Slanderous—because the Writer, in mentioning the sin of Adam (in which these people lie), fails to explain what place that sin holds in the decree of damnation according to Calvin’s view. This we shall examine more thoroughly below.

He then continues:

Luke 19:10: “The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.”

He concludes: “Therefore He came to save all men, because all men were lost. But this cannot be consistent with an absolute decree of reprobation for many.”

If it were not my sole purpose here to defend Calvin’s position, I might simply reply that Christ does not say, “The Son of Man came to save all that was lost.” And without those words, the Anonymous Writer’s argument collapses. For even if Christ had redeemed only one man, would He not still have saved that which was lost?

But Calvin defends the passage differently. He comments on it in only a few words: “Lest Zacchaeus’s former life—as he was a chief tax collector—might seem to close the door of salvation to him, Christ reasons from His office, saying there is nothing in this change that should offend anyone, for He was sent by the Father to save that which was lost.”

And it is easy to supplement this from another passage, where Calvin more fully explains what he would have said here. Thus, in his Treatise on Predestination, he writes:

“It may not seem consistent with particular election that Christ, the Redeemer of the whole world, ordered the Gospel to be preached indiscriminately to all. And yet, the Gospel is the message of peace by which the world is reconciled to God, as Paul teaches—and it is proclaimed so that those who hear it may be saved. I reply briefly: Christ was indeed appointed for the salvation of the whole world, in order to save those who were given to Him by the Father; to be life to those for whom He is the Head; and to admit into the fellowship of His blessings those whom God, by His gracious good pleasure, adopted as heirs.”

So, then, Calvin certainly did not deny that Christ came to save all men—provided they believe. He only denied that it follows from this that no one was granted a prerogative not given to others—namely, truly to believe.

The Anonymous Writer Proceeds as Follows. John 15:22: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.”

He says, however, that if the absolute decree were true, they would seem to have a quite valid excuse—namely, their invincible inability, since Christ did not come for them, since God did not work efficaciously in them, and since by an absolute decree they had been predestined to eternal death.

Thus the Anonymous constructs the excuse of the reprobate in three ways:

1. That by an absolute decree God predestined them to death.

2. That Christ did not come for them.

3. That God did not work efficaciously in them.

Hence there is, in them, an inability to believe that is said to be invincible.

To the first, we have already replied: Calvin nowhere wrote that predestination to eternal death—which properly speaking is damnation—was absolute, if “absolute” means without regard to sin, especially to unbelief as a meritorious cause. This is explicitly confirmed by Calvin’s own commentary on the passage in question. On the words, “they would not have sin,” he writes:

> “It seems Christ here implies that unbelief alone is sin—and there are some who interpret it this way. Augustine, though more soberly, still comes to the same sense. For because faith remits and blots out all sin, he says there is one sin of unbelief which condemns. This is rightly said: for not only does unbelief prevent men from being freed from the guilt of death, but it is the fountain and cause of all evils. But the whole of that dispute has nothing to do with this present place.”

So then, unbelief is punished, and if it were absent, no other sin would be punished, says Calvin. Therefore, God decreed from eternity to punish unbelief. For from all eternity His works are known to Him.

To the second, let Calvin himself reply. “George (Sohn) thinks he argues cleverly when he says, “Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.” There is no dispute that Christ came to expiate the sins of the world. But the answer comes immediately: “That whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Again: although reconciliation is offered to all through the Gospel, the benefit is peculiar to the elect, who alone are gathered into fellowship with life.” Therefore, the reprobate’s excuse is null and void. For access to God’s mercy is open to them through Christ—if only they believe.

To the third point, again let us hear Calvin: “If I had not come…” Christ had said that the Jews hated the Gospel because they did not know God. But lest anyone think this could reduce their guilt, He adds that they are blind by malice—just as if a man were to shut his own eyes to avoid being forced to see the light. Otherwise, the objection would stand: if they are ignorant of the Father, why did You not correct their error? Why did You not even try to see whether they were completely incorrigible or not? Christ replies that He had fulfilled the task of a good teacher, but to no effect, because their own malice prevented them from returning to soundness of mind.

Do the disciples of Arminius not see that the inability they call invincible is indeed invincible—but invincible precisely because it is voluntary? Is it just, then, for unbelievers to excuse themselves by saying they were so wicked that not only did they freely close their eyes, but they did so with such stubbornness that it was simply impossible for them not to close them?

But God did not work efficaciously in them. That is true. Had He done so, such malice and obstinacy would not have persisted in them. In return, let the Anonymous answer me this: it is certain that a great many people do not believe. Did God work efficaciously in them—even by Arminian standards? It seems not—for had He done so, they would have believed.

Can it even be conceived that God should work efficaciously in someone to produce faith in the heart, and yet faith is not produced? What kind of efficacious operation produces no effect?

Nor can it be said that God efficaciously illuminated their minds, but that their wills resisted and refused to admit what was offered through that illumination. That escape route is closed for several reasons. First, it is absurd to speak of a mind being efficaciously illuminated without also drawing the will. For illumination is either (1) the act of God driving ignorance from the mind and introducing the knowledge of Christ, or (2) it is that very knowledge of Christ, implanted in the mind by divine action.

Therefore, a mind that is efficaciously illuminated knows that Christ is the Redeemer—apart from whom there is certain destruction. But if the mind knows this, and the will still rejects it, then the highest good, once known, is being rejected, and the greatest evil is being chosen by the will. No one who has even a taste of sound philosophy could say such a thing.

Let us suppose, further, that the mind is efficaciously illuminated but the will remains untouched and unmoved. But the disciples of Arminius place faith not in the illumination of the mind, but in the will’s indifference. According to them, God may indeed act efficaciously in the mind through the Spirit by the Gospel, but He does not act efficaciously in the will.

What was the point, then, of exerting His efficacious power in the part of man which—though excellent—is ineffective for salvation, if He does nothing in that part of man (the will) on which salvation or destruction depends?

Can not the unbelievers here complain that they were forsaken by God? Can they not claim as their excuse that God did not work efficaciously in them? Even if we grant, however absurdly, that God worked even in their wills—so far as to place them in a state of balance, so that they

might tip either way if they chose—still, by their own admission, He gave no inclination. Yet how important that inclination is is made evident both by reason and experience.

By reason: This imagined neutrality is itself a flaw. For whoever hesitates, uncertain whether to believe in Christ or to reject Him, does not yet believe. And whoever does not believe is still held back by sin. How can the will, still entangled in sin, tip itself toward faith of its own power? How can it loose itself from the bonds of sin which restrain it from believing?

By experience: Out of very many who are called, very few actually believe. Even if it were true, as they assert, that all minds are efficaciously and sufficiently enlightened, this fact would still powerfully demonstrate how great is the force of sin which continues to bind the will—even when supposedly placed in a state of equilibrium—and renders divine operations, no matter how efficacious, ineffective.

Therefore, even here, unbelievers can complain that God has not acted efficaciously enough. And they can argue that the thing itself is either outright impossible or so close to impossible as to be a miracle, if anyone were to promote himself from that state to true faith in Christ. They will cry out that it scarcely ever happens—if it happens at all—that a will burdened with sin, suspended and hanging between Christ and the world, does not immediately tilt in the direction that its sinful disposition naturally inclines it.

Thus, no matter what God may do for our salvation, there remains always either an invincible inability to believe, or something so close to invincible that it is rare indeed for it ever to be overcome.

Therefore, must God act far more efficaciously, lest it appear that He has offered the hope of salvation in vain? If so, then there will be no end to these complaints.

Finally, suppose—though it is utterly false and wholly untheological—that there really is such a thing as that imagined “indifference.” I ask: what explains this? From the countless multitude of men whom illumination is said to have freed from the inability to believe, why do so few believe while so many repel and spurn the God who draws them?

Just as things that always happen in the same way must have a necessary and determinate cause, so things that almost always turn out the same way must have a cause that borders on necessity.

What, then, is that cause?

Certainly not ἀδιαφορία (indifference). For ἀδιαφορία, by its nature, impels neither this way nor that—otherwise it would not be “indifference” at all. And if it could provide inclination toward either direction, then being indifferent, it would be reasonable to expect that it should as often incline toward faith as toward contempt of the Gospel. But in fact, the opposite happens. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that there is something implanted in the will by nature, and not removed by the efficacy of divine operation, that bends the will in one direction rather than the other.

If this is the case—as it certainly must be—then even if everything Arminians falsely assert were granted to be true, what would be the use of all these evasions?

God, they say, efficaciously illuminates the intellect, but does nothing at all in the will. Or, if He does something, it is only to place the will in a state of equilibrium so that it can believe or not believe, as it wills. Yet He neither grants that it wills, nor removes that natural impediment—whatever it is—by which it comes to pass that the will can hardly, if ever, desire to believe.

Hence, the vast majority of mankind either necessarily does not believe, or has no access to faith except by a path so obstructed and difficult that not one in a thousand ever walks it.

Would it not be simpler and more direct to descend to what Calvin teaches—following the mind of Christ Himself? That is, that all are indeed called externally by the indiscriminate preaching of the Word, but only those come whom the Father draws—and this drawing, says John 6:44–45, lies in this: that those who come are inwardly taught by the Spirit of God.

Now that which the Arminians regard as the crowning jewel of their doctrine—that the blame for man's ruin lies with man alone, because he could have believed if he had willed—is fully affirmed by Calvin's position as well. They could have believed, if they had willed—for the cross of Christ was offered to them, that they might embrace it.

Why, then, did they not will to believe? Or rather, why were they not able to will it? Calvin answers: because of one thing—malice—which the defenders of the absolute decree confess is not removed, and the disciples of Arminius, as we've seen above, are compelled to admit.

Neither party has claimed that unbelievers can appeal to their malice as a legitimate excuse for their unbelief. But if the Arminians say that this impediment of the will—naturally implanted—is not a vice (which they dare not say unless they wish to be thought absurd and ridiculous—for what genuine and proximate cause of unbelief could be morally neutral?), then Calvin's view is far superior. For he holds that it is malice alone which keeps the reprobate from believing.

Now malice, as a fault, belongs wholly to man. But the other thing—whatever it is—if it is not a moral defect and is without blame, must be from God without a doubt.

And finally, that which truly is Calvinism's crown jewel is this: that from Arminian principles it necessarily follows that when some believe while others resist the Gospel, the praise for faith (which is the greatest blessing and the very cause of salvation) must be attributed not to God's grace, but to man's free will. Calvin, by contrast, confesses that God alone is the beginner, promoter, perfecter, and finisher of our faith and salvation.

The Anonymous then proceeds to Romans 11:32: "God has shut up all in unbelief so that He may have mercy on all." From this verse, he argues that the two terms—all and on all—must be of equal extent and latitude.

Calvin, however, will reply for himself—without anyone's help.

“They grossly err,” says Calvin in his Commentary on this passage, “who infer from it that all shall be saved. For Paul simply means that both Jews and Gentiles obtain salvation only from the mercy of God, and that no one has grounds for complaint. It is certainly true that this mercy is set forth indiscriminately to all, but only those who seek it by faith obtain it.”

But what do the disciples of Arminius want from this verse? The word ut (so that) must either indicate God’s purpose, or the actual outcome of the matter.

If it refers to the outcome, then have all in fact obtained salvation? Will God at last have mercy on all without exception? Will none be condemned?

If it refers to God’s purpose, then since it is certain that not all will be saved, it would follow that God failed to achieve what He willed—He missed His goal. And this is what those so-called “distinguished” theologians, who boast of having abolished the idea of fate, are frequently heard to say.

But such a notion is deeply offensive to truly Christian ears: that God, with a definite and determined purpose and will, willed something that He could not accomplish. God, then, willed to have mercy on all—but only insofar as all seek that mercy through faith.

As for why some seek it and others stubbornly reject it, that belongs to another discussion.

Here, however, it is helpful to recall Beza’s golden observation on that passage in Luke: “But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the counsel of God for themselves.” He says that the very thing which was intended to call them to repentance and salvation—the counsel of God declared to them—turned, in the event, into an instrument of their destruction.

Elsewhere, Paul testifies that the word of the Lord cannot fail. Far be it from us to speak of God as Homer does of his Zeus, when he has him say: “For my word cannot be recalled, nor is it deceitful, nor shall it be unfulfilled, if once I nod with my head.”

Therefore, although only man is to blame whenever he leaves no room for God’s kindness, I deny that God’s counsel can be frustrated. Their own stubbornness is not a thwarting of His plan, but the execution of His just judgment upon them.

The revealed counsel, that is, that God wills men to be saved if they believe, they have rejected. The secret counsel—whereby God decreed not to give them faith—they themselves have made plain by their rebellion and brought into the open.

But the disputant did not understand the Apostle’s intent in this passage.

If the Jews had believed, nothing would have been easier than to imagine—such is the ignorance and pride of man—that the credit should go to their free will. For they appeared, at least outwardly, to live lives far less defiled than those of the Gentiles. One could easily conclude that the nature of the Jews was less corrupt than that of the Gentiles.

God, therefore, wisely ordered things so that the Jews, in their obstinate and stubborn rejection, stumbled over Christ—while the Gentiles were brought to a better life. Thus, when God chooses to convert the Jews to a knowledge of the truth, it will be manifest that they owe this not to the freedom of their own will, but solely to God's pure mercy.

For it will be evident that their natural corruption and stubbornness in evil was no less plain than in the most wicked and depraved of the Gentiles.

So then, the phrase that He might have mercy means that it might be clear that all who obtain salvation owe it to God's mercy alone. What both peoples believed, they are to attribute only to divine mercy.

For, just as many things are said to "be" only when they come into the light, so it is in Scripture a common way of speaking. And Calvin saw this and expressed it clearly—both in his Commentary on this passage and in his Treatise on Predestination, where he answers similar objections.

Anonymus continues the thread of the argument with John 3:16: "For God so loved the world," etc., "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

And he adds: "No one should say here that 'the world' refers to the number of the elect. For what kind of sense would that be if we read: 'God so loved the elect, that whoever believes in Him should not perish,' etc.? From which it would plainly follow (and nothing could be more absurd) that there are two kinds of elect: some who believe and obtain salvation, and others who do not believe and are to be damned."

Calvin would confidently assert that none of these things contradict him in the least. We have already cited his commentary on this passage above. These are likewise his words on the next verse: "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world…"—"This," he says, "is a confirmation of the previous statement: that God did not send His Son to us in vain. And since He did not come to destroy, it follows that it is properly Christ's office to bring salvation to all who believe in Him. There is now no cause for anyone to hesitate or anxiously labor about how he might escape death, when we know that this is God's very purpose: that Christ might rescue us from it. The word 'world' is repeated again, lest anyone think himself excluded—provided he hold fast to the path of faith."

But right after this, our most excellent author adds what is typical of him: that these words declare what shall happen to all men if they believe—not what causes some, in fact, to believe.

The disputant then proceeds with the text: 1 Timothy 2:5: "Who wills all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." He objects that when some interpret "all men" here to mean merely "all kinds or classes of men," it seems contrary to the Apostle's intent. For, he says, it is evident that Paul refers to individual persons, not merely to groups or classes. In verse one of this chapter, a command is given that prayers be made for "all men," that is, for individuals; and then this reason is added in the following words: because God wills all—that is, each individual—to be saved. He adds that the alternative interpretation (that God wills all to be

saved only in His revealed will, not in His secret will) seems even worse—since it would imply that God's word, which reveals His will, contradicts His mind or secret will. In that case, His word would not be truthful. And what is speech that fails to express the speaker's true intent but a lie?

Furthermore, it would follow that there are two contrary wills in God: one secret will whereby He wills that many be damned, and another revealed will whereby He wills that all be saved. And of any two contraries, if one is good, the other must be evil.

Calvin is among those who interpret this passage not as referring to every single individual, but to all sorts or classes of men. This is clear from his Commentaries, his Institutes, and his Treatise on Predestination. Yet he did not adopt that interpretation because he believed the other reading—namely, that it refers to individuals—would overthrow the doctrine of absolute reprobation. Indeed, in similar passages (as we have already shown), he never hesitated to speak freely.

In fact, Calvin himself even included the broader language in the public prayer formulas still used in our churches today. For example, this clause appears: "Furthermore, we offer up our prayers to you, most merciful God and Father, for all men universally, that as you will to be recognized as the Savior of the whole human race through the redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ your Son, so those who are still estranged from the knowledge of Him and immersed in darkness may be brought back to the true path of salvation." This prayer most certainly has individuals in view.

So even though Calvin held firmly to the interpretation referring to "orders of men" when explaining this verse, yet he still speaks thus in his Treatise on Predestination: "Nor does that common distinction lack reason—that not individual members of each kind, but all kinds of individuals are indicated." However, he adds that no other will of God is to be understood here than that which is made known by the external preaching of the Gospel. The context shows this plainly: Paul's point is that God wills the salvation of all whom He kindly invites to Christ. And certainly, He invites individuals.

So Calvin will return, as usual, to his familiar distinction: in such texts, it is not the secret counsel of God that is being addressed, but only the will revealed in His word.

Anonymus, however, believes this distinction is gravely flawed, and presses it with three alleged absurdities.

First, he says it is absurd that God's revealed will should differ from His secret will. Granted. But what can Anonymus produce to force Calvin to admit any true contradiction between the two—if he speaks as he in fact does?

For by His revealed will, God has indicated only this: that He wills all men to be saved—if they believe.

This, in fact, accords fully with God's intention. For He truly wills—and wills it most earnestly—that if any of those who are termed reprobate were genuinely to believe, he would attain salvation. Who could deny this?

Even the Synod of Dort itself—which the Remonstrants lament as the rigid defender of a rigid decree—did it not confirm this very doctrine within the Church of God? That "as many as are called by the Gospel are called seriously"? For God does seriously and most truly show in His word what is pleasing to Him—namely, that those called should come to Him. He also seriously promises rest for their souls and eternal life to all who do come and believe.

And what is this other than saying that God wills all men to be saved—except that the invincible impenitence and utterly incurable malice of many stands in the way?

That is why some eminent theologians have called this will of God a εὐαρέστία (a will of good pleasure). For those things are said to be according to our εὐαρέστία which are pleasing to us, acceptable and delightful—those deeds which we rejoice in, whose absence grieves us, and which we view with sorrow and indignation when they are neglected.

So too, as the Apostle testifies, God is εὐαρεστεῖται with humility and acts of kindness (Hebrews 13:16), things that are in harmony with His own nature and disposition.

But by this will, God did not signify that He wills to give faith to all men, by exerting the most powerful operation of His Spirit in their hearts. That belongs rather to the will which some have called τῆς εὐδοκίας—a will rooted in a certain fixed and unchanging decree, whose rationale cannot be given apart from God's most free good pleasure.

For εὐδοκία generally encompasses those two attributes: that it is both immutable and incomprehensible in its resolve (ἀμετακίνητος and ἀκατάληπτος τῆς βουλῆς).

And to make this matter clearer still, we must now treat the will of God with a bit more precision.

There is, therefore, indeed one and the same will in God, and it is by far the most simple reality. Yet, according to the manner of our limited understanding, it ought to be considered in two ways.

For it is exercised either with reference to the prescription of the creature's duty—which happens through the promulgation of law, whether through the nature of things or through the revelation of the Word, and through the manifestation of mercy and the invitation to repentance—therefore, it is by some called preceptive. Or it is exercised with reference to the determination of what will come to pass in the event; and for that reason it is called decretive.

By that which is commonly called revealed, God testifies that pardon and reward are prepared with Him for all who do not refuse to perform their duty; and to that end, He frames His doctrine in such a way as to invite men to fulfill it. He places, as it were, a prize in the middle of the course to draw all runners—He urges them on with exhortations, entices them with promises, sharpens and stirs them up with threats of punishment—so that no one is excluded, but all are

indiscriminately roused to hope, and life is offered to all under the same conditions, so that nothing at all is wanting that pertains to producing confidence.

Hence those words of Calvin: “Certainly, if we consider the aim of heavenly doctrine, we will find that all are indiscriminately called to salvation. For the Law was the way to life, as Moses bears witness. ‘This is the way, walk in it.’ Also, ‘Whoever does these things shall live in them.’ Again, ‘This is your life.’ Then, moreover, God offered Himself freely to the people of old as merciful. Lastly, heavenly doctrine ought to be life-giving to all. But what of the Gospel? Paul says it is ‘the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.’ And surely what God represents Himself to be, He truly is. He does not mock miserable mortals with a false appearance of mercy.”

But of this will, which is also called secret, there are, as I have said, two acts: one, which certainly and affirmatively determines to give to some the grace that they may fulfill their duty; the other, which denies that He will give it to others. Not as though He altogether does not will that those to whom He denies it should repent—He does command it of them, and if they were to obey the command, it would be most pleasing to Him. But He has good reasons for not willing to provide in them that which He commands—and yet, if it were given, and the creature were to respond, it would greatly delight Him.

From this, I think, the first objection is fully answered—namely, that God’s word does not agree with His will. Nor is the second more difficult to resolve—that in God are posited two wills that are opposed to one another. For the former act of the secret or decretive will does not so conflict with the preceptive or revealed will, as if they opposed each other or worked at cross-purposes in bringing about what God has determined.

The preceptive will presents the object, with attached warnings and promises, and adds exhortations, all of which are fitted by nature to awaken the human soul, which by its very nature is deeply sluggish. The decretive will then liberates the mind from the native darkness with which it is surrounded, and it loosens the will, which had been held fast by disordered affections. In this way, from an object so prepared, applied to a faculty so enabled, there necessarily arises that which God has decreed—namely, faith.

The second act, however, does not contribute to the accomplishment of the revealed will for effecting the outcome; but it in no way hinders it either, since it consists only in the mere negation of action. Nor can God be said to be at odds with Himself if He does not Himself do what He commands the creature to do. Nor is He any less sincere or earnest in commanding if He does not effect obedience to the command. Nor is He any less faithful in promising by command—if only it does not follow that He has decreed to bring it about that the promise should be despised and fall to the ground without effect.

The third objection is too light to detain us as we hurry on to other matters. For what contradiction exists between these two statements: God wills all men to be saved, provided that they believe; but He does not will to give to all men that they believe? Are these two statements truly contradictory?

Suppose I leave Titius, a reckless and dissipated man, a legacy of a hundred gold coins, on the condition that he reforms—and I want this gesture of goodwill to be made known to him, so that he may all the more be stirred up to pursue virtue. But beyond that, I leave the matter to his own will and to the persuasion of his friends, and I do not intend to do anything further. Are these two things really contradictory?

Or suppose I resolve to marry Sempronia and make her a sharer in my estate and my throne, on the condition that she forsake the disgraceful and importunate suitors to whom she is currently devoted—and I want this to be made known to her by my heralds, so that she might not harbor any doubts about such an important matter. Yet I do nothing beyond that, nor do I intend to do more than let her be persuaded by entreaty. Surely no one skilled in law or endowed with common sense would claim that these intentions are mutually inconsistent.

Now, as to what the disciples of Arminius cry out here—that all of these things must be null and void, since the reprobate cannot accept the condition—this has already been refuted above, and will be more thoroughly refuted below.

Here it is enough to demonstrate that the diverse acts of the divine will agree beautifully with one another.

The disputant seeks refuge for his cause in these words: “[The Lord is] not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). And he adds: “Those who say that only the elect are meant here seem greatly mistaken; for of whom is the Apostle speaking here, if not of those with whom the Lord deals patiently? And who are they? Are they only the elect? Are they not also those who die in their sins, whose conversion God long and patiently awaits—as is evident in Romans 9:22: ‘He endured with much patience the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction’? Or, if this passage seems unclear, look at Romans 2:4–5: ‘Do you despise the riches of His goodness and patience…? Do you not know that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But according to your hardness and impenitent heart you are treasuring up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath.’ Therefore even the reprobate are among those toward whom God exercises patience and long-suffering. But in the cited verse, blessed Peter speaks of those on whom God exercises patience—among whom the reprobate cannot be excluded.”

Yet Calvin had such great confidence in his position, and such candor in his interpretation of Scripture, that he explained this passage from Peter as follows:

> “One is said to be slow when he lets the opportunity slip due to laziness. But there is nothing like that in God, who perfectly regulates the times for our salvation. Indeed, what must be said about the duration of the whole world is the same as what is said of each individual’s life: by prolonging the time given to each person, God sustains them until they repent. In the same way, the end of the world is not hastened, so that space for repentance may be given to all.

> ‘Not willing that any should perish.’ Here is a wondrous love of God toward the human race: He wants all to be saved and is ready to gather even those who are perishing unto salvation.
> But note the order here: God is ready to receive all who repent, so that no one should perish.”

And then Calvin adds this, lest any Arminian suppose he had not considered the doctrine of predestination:

> “But here the question arises: if God does not want anyone to perish, why do so many perish? I reply: the Apostle is not speaking here of the secret counsel of God, by which the reprobate are appointed to their destruction, but only of that will of God which is made known to us in the gospel. For there, God stretches forth His hand to all without distinction—but He only effectually draws and takes hold of those whom He chose before the foundation of the world. He willed all men to be saved, provided that they believe. Therefore, by His revealed will, He stretches forth His hand to all; but by His secret counsel, He determined to take hold of some and draw them to Himself. He did not will to do so with others—hence, the necessity of their perishing followed. For no one joined their hand to that hand so graciously extended to them, by which they might have been rescued from destruction.”

The disputant, however, presses especially the passage from Romans 2:4–5, and says that three things in that passage seem strongly to oppose the decree of absolute reprobation:

1. That it clearly shows what God’s aim and intent is in patiently delaying the judgment of sinners: namely, to lead them to repentance and salvation.

2. That it describes the kind of people toward whom God intends this good: namely, those who despise the riches of His goodness, and who are hard-hearted and impenitent.

3. That it shows what results from this contempt of divine patience: namely, that they are treasuring up wrath for themselves.

From the conjunction of these points, he concludes that by sparing the wicked and the reprobate—those of hard hearts—God truly wills and intends their salvation; yet they, by abusing divine patience, store up wrath for themselves. And he says he does not see how this can be consistent with the absolute decree, according to which God does not intend their salvation, but their damnation.

What if Calvin were to grant those three things outright, and yet firmly deny the conclusion that the Adversary draws from them? Would he not seem, then, to have spent his effort in exegeting the Apostle’s words to no purpose? Let us hear him, then. On the phrase “Do you despise the riches…?” Calvin writes:

> “This is not, in my judgment, a dilemma—as some suppose—but a prolepsis. For since hypocrites are often inflated by prosperous outward circumstances, and imagine that they

> have earned the Lord's kindness by their own merits, they thereby become more hardened in their contempt for God. The Apostle counters their arrogance by an argument drawn from the opposite cause, showing that they ought not to regard outward prosperity as proof that God is propitious to them, since God has an entirely different intent in bestowing such blessings—namely, to draw sinners to Himself."

Therefore, where the fear of God does not reign, security in the midst of prosperity is nothing but a contempt for and a mockery of His immeasurable goodness. From this it follows that those whom God spares in this life will rightly incur greater punishments—since to their other wickedness is added the fact that they spurned the invitation of God as a Father.

He continues:

> "When transgressors of the law are met with the same forbearance, God indeed wills by His kindness to soften their obstinacy, yet this does not testify that He is already propitious toward them. Rather, He is calling them to repentance."

Do you see now, disputant, that there is nothing in this passage that escaped Calvin's attention, nothing that you have noticed which he had not already carefully observed? But what follows from this? That no one is passed over in the decree to bestow faith? Is this how one is to reason? Because God burns with the highest kindness, patience, and forbearance toward the obstinate and rebellious (which the Apostle calls riches), and because His intention is that they repent—and because, indeed, if they were to repent, they would be made partakers of salvation—therefore, this proves He intended to give them saving grace?

No, rather: such is His disposition, such is the character of His nature—His goodness and His inexpressible philanthrōpia. But His mercy does not go so far as to apply that most powerful grace which alone is able to prevent men from despising His kindness. Is that the reason, then, why they can rightly attribute their destruction to themselves?

Calvin, certainly, when writing this commentary, was not careless. Nor was he unaware that this passage is often not so much cited as twisted by the defenders of free will in order to prop up their errors. He adds:

> "If someone objects that the Lord is preaching to the deaf, so long as He does not affect their hearts inwardly, the answer is that the only thing to be blamed is our own perversity."

But that answer pertains more to the verses that follow. Let us proceed to the rest.

Thus Anonymus continues: "To these testimonies others can be added," he says—Hebrews 2:9, 'That He might taste death for everyone', and 2 Corinthians 5:15, 'He died for all'. Also 1 Chronicles 28:9, 'If you seek Him, you will find Him; if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever'. And Hebrews 10:38, 'The just shall live by faith; but if he draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him'. And Genesis 4:7, 'If you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, sin lies at the door'.

From these, he concludes that God forsakes no one unless He is first forsaken. But what does it mean for God to forsake someone, except to fail to supply sufficient means of salvation? And those whom God has reprobated by an absolute decree, He does not supply with sufficient grace, since He does not inwardly operate in them so as to make His grace effectual—which, even according to the defenders of the absolute decree, cannot be effectual unless accompanied by such inward working, whether by illumination of the understanding, or by inclination and warming of the heart. Without this inward operation, God's grace is not, and cannot be, effectual, no matter what else is present.

Therefore, if God rejects no one except those who reject Him, it follows without doubt that He reprobated no one by an eternal decree except those whom He foresaw would reject Him.

But if that opinion of an absolute decree is so plainly opposed by so many testimonies of Holy Scripture, then it cannot be true—even if certain obscure sayings in the sacred Scriptures may seem to support it in some way. For there is that excellent rule handed down by blessed Augustine: "Are we to deny what is clear, because we cannot understand what is obscure?" And Tertullian likewise says rightly: "The fewer things must be interpreted according to the many; and no single passage should subvert the rest, but must rather be interpreted in harmony with them all."

From which it follows that those few passages, obscurely stated, which seem to lend some appearance of support to the doctrine of reprobation, must not be interpreted in any way except that which agrees with the many clearer passages.

We certainly need not labor much in our reply. First, Calvin himself grants that Christ died for all—conditional upon their believing—for he has affirmed this a hundred times. Secondly, if anyone truly seeks God, he shall surely find Him—for this is a truth Calvin constantly presses. Third, that "the just shall live by faith", and that if all were to believe, all would also become partakers of both justification and life—who would ever deny this? Or who has ever, at least anyone acquainted with the name of Christ, supposed this hypothetical proposition to be false: If all men without exception were sincerely to turn to God and receive Christ as He is offered in the preaching of the gospel, God would admit them all to the enjoyment of His mercy through that same Christ?

Finally, neither has Calvin denied that he who does good shall be received, and he who does evil shall be treated accordingly. Who could deny what the Scriptures assert in six hundred places? But from this to conclude that God forsakes no one unless He is first forsaken, Calvin would not easily concede—except with interpretation.

The first point that must be established is this: Man fell of his own accord, and went into ruin through his own fault. He forsook God before he was forsaken by God. So even if the Lord had given him no hope of mercy, he could not rightly be said to have been forsaken unless he had first forsaken God.

Next, we have established that there are two absolutely necessary means to attain salvation: first, that someone should satisfy divine justice on our behalf; second, that we should embrace that satisfaction offered by a surety. The satisfaction itself, God provided. Therefore, although in this sense He could have forsaken man, yet He did not—for such was His infinite mercy—that He so loved the world that He gave His Son, etc. Moved by love for the human race, says Calvin, because He did not will it to perish.

And finally, we've also explained that God gave this command to the Apostles and the rest of the heralds of the gospel: that, the hope of redemption having been declared, they should call all men to faith and repentance. In what matter, then, do the reprobate complain that they were forsaken? Clearly, in this: that the internal operation—whether it be in the illumination of the understanding or the inclination and warming of the heart—is a necessary means to faith, and therefore also to the obtaining of salvation.

Indeed, it is necessary. But that necessity must be explained. A necessary means is not of one kind only. One is such that you can in no way perform it by yourself, even if you most earnestly will to do so. Another is such that, if you fail to do it, you can blame no one but yourself. If you would will, nothing is lacking. If you neither will nor can will, the fault lies entirely with yourself—and with the invincible obstinacy of your own heart.

Satisfaction for sin was a necessary means in the first sense. Even had we willed it most ardently, and striven with all our power, we still could not have substituted ourselves to satisfy divine justice. Internal illumination was a necessary means in the second sense. For it pertains merely to rendering our minds capable of the object offered outwardly—and we ourselves ought to have so prepared our minds as to be capable of that object. And we could have done so, had not the malice implanted by nature and confirmed by habit stood in the way.

Shall God therefore be said to have forsaken us because He does not bring about in us what we both ought and could have done—unless we were to hate Him with an inexpiable hatred?

So then, what the disputant adds—that those Scripture passages which seem to favor the absolute decree of reprobation ought to be drawn in a different direction, lest there be contradiction among various passages of Scripture—this is, in our judgment, of no weight. We readily accept both Augustine's rule and Tertullian's principle: What is clear must not be denied on account of what is obscure. For when there is no true conflict between those passages which magnificently proclaim God's ineffable goodness toward the human race, and those which necessarily establish the doctrine of reprobation, there is no reason for us to labor to reinterpret the latter to match the former.

That would only be necessary if the interpretation compatible with Calvin's doctrine—explained as we have done—took anything away from it. But it plainly does not. And if it did, it would be distorted and contrary to Scripture itself.

CHAPTER VI

That Calvin's doctrine does not oppose the divine nature, and first, that it is not opposed to God's holiness

That doctrine of the absolute decree of God, says the Anonymous writer, seems to be contrary to certain attributes of God, and thus to the divine nature itself. For the will of God always follows His nature. The reason is because, as the Apostle says in 2 Timothy 2:13, God cannot deny Himself. But the opinion concerning the absolute decree is said to conflict with God's holiness, mercy, justice, or truth. Let us see on what grounds.

First, that it is opposed to God's holiness is evident—so it is claimed—because it follows from it that God is the author of the sins in the reprobate. They say, first, that God, by His good pleasure or absolute will, brought men into a state in which they cannot avoid sinning. Second, that He left the reprobate in that state.

As to the first—that God brought men into such a state in which they cannot avoid sin, namely, the state of original sin, which includes both Adam's guilt and the corruption of nature—they assert that men were brought into this state not by the force of natural generation (that is, by the fact that we derive our nature from Adam as from a first principle), but solely by the mere will of God and imputation alone.

For thus Calvin says in Institutes, Book 3, chapter 23, paragraph 7:

> "It did not happen naturally that all men should fall by the guilt of one parent and be cut off from salvation."
> And:
> "Scripture proclaims that all mortals were made subject to eternal death in the person of one man. Since this cannot be attributed to nature, it is clear that it proceeded from the wonderful counsel of God."
> And again:
> "How did it happen that so many nations, together with their infant children, were hopelessly involved in the fall of Adam unless it seemed good to God?"

This is also acknowledged by our Tuvisse (a not undistinguished defender of Calvin's doctrine), in Vindiciae Gratiae, Part 1, Digression 4, chapter 3:

> "The guilt of original sin," he says, "is derived only by imputation, and the corruption only by propagation—both of which proceed from the free constitution of God."

And a little earlier:

> "For the corruption of nature is not something that anyone contracts by their own will, but is derived only by imputation or propagation; and both happen by the will of God: for God imputes the sin of Adam to us not by necessity, but by His mere will."

What Calvin and Tuvisse say on this matter is entirely in accordance with reason. For if we say that we naturally contracted the guilt of Adam's sin and the corruption of nature solely because we were in his loins, it would follow that we are also guilty of the other sins which Adam committed long after that first transgression—for we were in his loins both before and after the Fall. But Scripture teaches that we are held guilty only for Adam's first sin—Romans 5:15–17.

It would also follow that children would be guilty of all the sins of their forefathers, since they were in their loins. But Scripture shows otherwise, as in Ezekiel 18:14–21. And how great a mass of sins would press upon us in these latter days if we were guilty of all the sins committed by our ancestors?

It is not surprising, then, that defenders of the absolute decree say that God, by His mere will, placed men in such a state that they cannot avoid sin.

As to the second point—that God left men in that state—they affirm that God, by His immutable decree, willed to leave a great portion of the human race in this miserable condition and state, and that to those thus left, He does not give sufficient strength to pass from this miserable state to a better one; and that those thus abandoned He has condemned to eternal punishment.

From this follows for them a necessity and inevitability of sin.

Thus the theologians of Geneva, in the Acts of the Synod, in their Suffrage on Reprobation, say:

> "The same persons, in time, God either does not call by the same good pleasure of His will, or, if they are called into the Church, He does not regenerate them inwardly by the Spirit, does not unite them mystically to Christ, does not justify them," etc.

But not only do they say this—they also confirm it by this reasoning: that if God had regard only to sin in reprobating men, then all men would have been reprobated. Therefore, according to them, the reprobate are reprobated by the will of God alone.

From what has already been established—namely, that God cast the reprobate into the state of sin, and left them there—it seems to follow that God is the author of their sins.

For the cause of a cause is the cause of the thing caused. But what is the cause of sin in the reprobate, except their impotence and lack of supernatural grace?

And what can be more repugnant to divine goodness than that God should be called the author and cause of sin?

Thus far the Anonymous author.

The aim of this entire disputation, then, is to show that Calvin's doctrine makes God the author of sin. If this accusation is true, then indeed Calvin's opinion must be rejected. But if it is not, what remains except that this charge must be regarded as an unfair slander? Certainly Calvin always held it to be such. "Should I," he says (in his Reply to a Calumniator),

> “I, who so reverently declare everywhere that, whenever sin is mentioned, the name of God must be entirely removed from it—have I ever said that evil deeds are not only done by His will but also by His authorship? I am willing to bear whatever may be said against such a monstrous blasphemy, provided only that my name not be mixed with it.”

Therefore, if something of the kind follows from his doctrine, then he did not see it; and if he had seen it, he would have judged his doctrine worthy of hatred and abomination.

Let us examine the two things proposed by the Disputator. As to the first, the “necessity of sinning”—whatever that necessity might be—it must be considered either in reference to actual sins, those committed daily by adults; or to original sin, from which the actual ones flow; or to the sin of Adam himself, from which the original came.

So far as actual sins are concerned, that great man—whom they try to stain with so foul a blot—speaks clearly and elsewhere at length, particularly in his Commentary on James 1:13. There he discusses internal temptations, which are nothing other than disordered appetites that incite us to sin. The Apostle rightly denies that God is the author of these, since they arise from the corruption of our flesh.

This admonition is especially necessary because nothing is more common among men than to shift the blame for their sins elsewhere; and especially do they seem to themselves to be acquitted when they can transfer it to God Himself. We are imitating here the deceit of the first man, which he eagerly handed down. For this reason, James calls us to acknowledge our own guilt, lest we put God in our place, as though He were the one urging us to sin.

It follows, therefore, that neither is the origin of sin in God, nor can guilt be imputed to Him, as if He takes pleasure in evil. The summary is this: it is utterly useless for a man to try to shift the blame for his vices onto God, since everything evil proceeds from the perverse desire of man himself. And so it truly is—no one is driven by another, but each person is led and impelled by his own depraved will.

In this part, then, Calvin is completely free from blame.

Let us, for a moment, set aside the idea of original sin. Suppose instead that the necessity of sinning in the reprobate arises from no other cause than a long-standing and deeply ingrained habit of sinning, which so binds the mind by its vicious habits that they necessarily act evilly—and yet, according to Aristotle himself, that necessity would still be blameworthy.

They necessarily act evilly, I say. For someone who has once contracted the habit of injustice or any other vice, and has grown hardened in it, cannot help but be unjust, not even if he wishes otherwise. The habit so possesses his mind and will that either he does not want to throw it off, or if he happens to want it, the act of his will is too weak to free him from the chains of the vicious habit.

He may try, according to Aristotle, to move himself in the opposite direction—but he tries weakly, and accomplishes nothing. “No more,” says Aristotle, “than someone who is paralyzed tries to

move limbs that collapse again under their own weight and weakness." Yet this still counts as a fault for him, because he brought this necessity upon himself. "He could have abstained at the beginning," says the Philosopher, "from those actions by which the habit was acquired, and could have trained his mind otherwise." Just as someone who gets himself drunk could have abstained from wine—through poor choices he makes himself necessarily act rashly and confusedly. For both have corrupted their own minds—one in the short term, the other over a long time.

In the latter case, wickedness gave birth to a kind of madness that twists the mind and prevents it from rightly judging in the end. Yet neither ought to accuse anyone but himself.

But let us return to our subject. Beyond the power of habit, we Christians, who are better instructed, also acknowledge a deeper fault: a corruption infused in us by nature, original sin. In that, two things are involved: the corruption itself, which is transmitted by generation, and the guilt.

Let us begin with the corruption. No one will deny—unless he wishes to be an open Pelagian—that by Adam's transgression, original sin invaded the whole human race. For David confesses he was conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), and Paul declares we are by nature "children of wrath" (Ephesians 2:3). The spread of death even to infants leaves no room for doubt that men are sinners from birth. For "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Further, everyone who examines the matter with sound judgment will admit that original sin is so powerful that, unless God's grace intervenes, actual sin becomes inevitable for all. For what is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6); and the flesh does not submit to the law of God, nor, says Paul, can it do so (Romans 8:7). And apart from Christ we can do nothing (John 15:5). Yet we are all born outside of Christ.

And whoever is not born of God must sin necessarily. But no one is born of God except through His Spirit, which no one possesses by nature—it is a free gift of God, outside the reach of nature. And never has any person to whom God has not granted the Spirit of sanctification freed himself from the bondage of sin into true liberty.

As I have often said already, things which always and everywhere occur in the same way must have some necessary cause that cannot be otherwise. For instance, the thoughts of the human heart are inclined to evil at all times (Gen. 6:5), which can come from no other source than some principle so powerful and so deeply rooted that it has penetrated to the inmost parts of the soul. Thus, a necessity of sinning lies upon all men by nature.

But this necessity—whatever it may be—cannot be attributed to reprobation as its proper cause, as we have shown from Calvin's own words. For when he defines reprobation as mere desertion or passing over (præteritio), and præteritio entails no action but only the negation of action, how could a mere negation of action be the proper cause of human actions?

Calvin has taught this explicitly, both elsewhere and especially in this passage. When Pighius argued that the impious will be damned because they provoked God's wrath by their own wicked deeds, Calvin replied,

> "I say that they have heaped one sin upon another, because being wicked, they could do nothing but sin. And though they sinned not by outward compulsion, but of their own spontaneous affection of heart, knowingly and willingly, yet it must not be denied that the source and origin of all evil is the corruption and depravity of nature—unless we are prepared to tear up the very rudiments of piety."

So then, the cause of sin lies not in any external impulse, but in the spontaneous affection of the heart and in the free—though corrupted—will of the mind. Thus, the cause of the necessary determination toward evil is found in the sinfulness and natural depravity of man. Hence, according to Calvin, the holiness of the divine nature remains entirely unstained by sin.

Let us now proceed further. This inborn corruption necessarily and inevitably clings to all men. But to what, according to Calvin, shall we attribute this necessity? Surely to two things: Adam's sin, and the providence of God—each in its own way.

Regarding Adam's sin, Calvin says two things. First, that it injected this stain into all men through natural generation: for since Adam made himself a sinner, he also begat sinners. Thus he writes in Institutes 2.1.7:

> "From a rotten root came forth rotten branches, who transmitted their own corruption to others springing forth from them. In this way the children were corrupted in their parent, that they might be defiled in turn for their own children. Thus, the beginning of corruption in Adam was such that it would, by perpetual descent, pass from those who came before to those who come after."

As for the Pelagians' claim that it is improbable for children to inherit corruption from pious parents—since, by their piety, they ought rather to sanctify them—this is easily refuted. For children descend from their parents not by spiritual regeneration, but by carnal generation.

In his commentary on Psalm 51:7, after saying three times that original sin naturally clings to us, Calvin concludes:

> "It should suffice to understand that Adam, after his fall, was stripped of all the gifts with which he had previously been adorned. Thus, once the reason that formerly shone in him (that is, right reason) was extinguished, and his will—which had been previously formed to obedience to God—became stubborn, he was corrupted in both mind and heart, and thereafter begat sons like himself."

The second point Calvin makes is that the first sin—by which Adam dragged the whole human race into destruction—was committed by his own free will, and not by any compulsion from God. His words, found in the Treatise on Predestination, are worthy of immortality:

> “When we speak of predestination, Christians should always remember that all who died and were condemned in Adam are justly left in their condemnation: those who are by nature children of wrath perish by their own rightful merit. Thus no one has any reason to complain against God, as though He were excessively severe, since all bring guilt and condemnation upon themselves.”

He also warns:

> “If we trace things back to the first man, we will find that he fell of his own free will, though he was created pure and upright—and from that fall, he dragged both himself and all his descendants into ruin. And though he did not fall apart from God’s foreknowledge and decree, yet that does not absolve him from guilt, nor does it implicate God in his sin.”

For we must always keep this before our eyes: that man, of his own accord, deprived himself of that uprightness and integrity with which he was endowed by God; that he freely subjected himself to the servitude of Satan; and, in a word, that his destruction happened by his own will.

He has thus said two things which ought not to be passed over in silence. The first is that God certainly foresaw that Adam would sin. The second is that this was not only foreseen, but also decreed with the most certain will. Yet neither this foreknowledge of the event nor this definite decree can be said to be the cause of the sin, nor can any part of the blame be transferred to God.

“It should not seem absurd,” says Calvin, “that I say God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in it the ruin of his descendants, but also disposed it by His own will. For just as it belongs to His wisdom to foresee all things that will happen, so it belongs to His power to govern and direct all things by His own hand.”

He also says, “People are accustomed to excuse sin on the grounds that what was decreed by God could not be avoided. But since the transgression was voluntary, that is more than enough to establish man’s guilt. For, properly speaking, the true and natural cause of sin is not the hidden counsel of God, but the will of man, which in this matter is manifest.”

As for foreknowledge, if it is considered simply as foreknowledge, the matter is clear—and even admitted by the adversaries themselves. For the Arminian school, which wishes to be furthest removed from the blasphemy of making God the author of sin, cannot deny—unless it strips God of all foreknowledge—that He foresaw from eternity that man would sin. But the decree is extracted from that foreknowledge. On what grounds, and with what justification, must briefly be explained.

In God’s providence regarding evil (such as the first sin of the first man), there are two principal acts: one can be called permissive, because it consists in the negation of an action which could have prevented the sin; the other is effective, because it consists in some sort of efficiency, whatever that may be. For God does not remain idle or cease entirely to act in the perpetration of evil by His creatures, but applies some action—though not one that effectively impels the will

of man toward sin. That would be utterly foreign to the divine nature, and Calvin consistently affirms this.

Rather, God acts in administering those circumstances around sin, such as the granting of physical strength to act, the presentation of an object apt to move the mind, and the ordaining of circumstances which frame the sin. These we will not now explain in more detail.

It is certain, however, that Calvin denied God's providence in Adam's sin was merely permissive, and he acknowledged some efficiency in it. This is clear in many places, especially Institutes III.23.8. Which no one can reproach, unless he would claim that God was indifferent or careless—with arms folded and eyes closed—in a matter of the utmost weight, involving the salvation or ruin of the whole world.

What kind of "efficiency" that was, Calvin does not seem to have defined. But if anyone criticizes his modesty in this, he will be criticizing Scripture itself. For Holy Scripture is very careful and emphatic in speaking of divine providence in other memorable sins. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it declares that:

- Joseph was not handed over and sold by his brothers without God (Gen. 45:5–7).
- David did not number the people unless God, in a certain way, impelled him (2 Sam. 24:1).
- The many crimes of Absalom against his father were perpetrated under God's just providence.
- The sons of Eli hardened their hearts against their father's warnings because it was decreed by God that they should perish (1 Sam. 2:25).
- The Jews crucified Christ in an inexpiable crime only because the hand and counsel of God had determined it beforehand (Acts 2:23; 4:28).

Yet in the history of Adam's fall, there is profound silence about the counsel of God—almost as if Scripture wanted to teach us that this is one of those secrets into which no one should recklessly intrude.

Whatever the nature of divine will's involvement in that event, Calvin always firmly maintained that the blame for that dreadful fall rests entirely on man, and that God was as far removed from the sin as possible. We have already seen above how he confirms this point, that Adam sinned of his own will, not compelled by any external force, nor driven by any internal impulse from God—so that he cannot even be absolved by the judgment of his own conscience.

Truly, what need is there for us to pry into and try to uncover what God willed to remain hidden, when the history of Adam's fall most plainly clears God not only of participation in guilt, but even of all suspicion?

Yes, God created the tree. That is certain. And He adorned it with a fruit that could attract by its appearance. But He immediately pointed it out to man, lest he should touch it in ignorance. And He diligently warned him and sternly forbade him to eat of its fruit, threatening a horrible death, so that he would not think the violation of the command would go unpunished.

What more could or should have been done to deter him? It is likewise certain that God allowed him to be tempted by the Devil. But what prevented Adam from turning away his eyes from the fruit, from rejecting the Devil's temptation, or from silencing all the arguments of the tempter with a single sentence: "God has forbidden it—therefore it is forbidden to us"?

It is also certain that he was deceived by the Devil's trickery; for the Apostle says that the first man sinned through deception and was led astray by the cunning of that wily seducer (1 Tim. 2:14).

But what were those arguments that Adam could not resist, if only he had resolved in his heart to obey God's single command? The tempter approached him with arguments calculated to stir the senses and ignite the desire for knowledge. Why then did Adam not fix his mind on God's command and direct his thoughts so as to bring his appetites into order and keep them in obedience to right reason?

Surely, those are worthy of excuse who are either overcome by a force they cannot resist, or who are ensnared by fraud so subtle that it cannot be detected even by the most attentive and alert mind. But what in that temptation was difficult to resist, unless Adam had first allowed his mind to be corrupted? Had he firmly held onto the truth that God is truthful, he could easily have scattered all of the Devil's schemes and efforts like a great rock repelling crashing waves.

When therefore, whatever the strength of the temptation may have been—whether he was enticed by the pleasantness of the fruit, or stirred by an excessive desire for knowledge, or puffed up and inflamed with the hope of raising his condition to a higher degree of dignity—he first allowed his mind to be weakened, and then permitted his will to be driven toward the forbidden action, he sinned of his own accord and deliberately, whatever indeed may have been the providence of God that governed the movements and causes of so great a fall.

Nor, truly, do I see what Arminius could find fault with in this. What more could he possibly require than that man sinned by his own free will? And why, then, do his disciples raise such a storm about the doctrine of the fall of the first man, except to establish this very point—that man fell of his own free will, no one impelling him but the Devil alone, whom he both ought to have resisted and truly could have resisted, had he willed it?

This being granted by Calvin, and none of us opposing, let them have it—only let them not write that the greatest of theologians ever thought otherwise. We too, moved by the same reasons, agree that the certainty of the event—which they cannot bear—is perfectly consistent with the liberty of the sinner. Calvin judged this to be more true; we judge it more fitting for the wisdom of God, that He most certainly foresaw and most wisely ordered what was to happen in so great a

matter, on which the counsel of sending the Son into the world and of redeeming the human race in part depended, than that He hung in suspense between uncertain outcomes.

Nor indeed can I help but wonder what those men mean. For either God foresaw Adam's sin long before it happened, or He did not. If He did not foresee it, why does He claim in Scripture to possess foreknowledge of future events? Why does He distinguish Himself thereby, especially, from fictitious deities?

And if the counsel of sending our Lord into the world was most certainly determined in God from eternity—so that it could not possibly have turned out otherwise—did God not know whether Adam would sin or not? If He foresaw it, then He certainly foresaw it. By what logic could He have foreseen it certainly, if it was not likewise certain to come to pass?

For what some say—that God, by the infinity of His mind, embraces all future things, even those which, in themselves and with respect to the divine decree, are contingent and uncertain in either direction, yet sees them as if they were certain and necessary—is a fantasy.

For the truth of vision or knowledge (for what is "seeing" in God except knowing?) consists in the agreement of His knowledge with the nature of the thing. But if a thing is entirely contingent, it cannot truly be known except as it is—contingent. Therefore, if God certainly foresaw it, it was altogether necessary.

For whatever is known as future—if it is not known as contingent and wavering between two doubtful and uncertain possibilities—is obviously known as necessary and determined. It was therefore necessary that man should fall. So either Adam did not sin freely and voluntarily, or, if he sinned freely, liberty is not incompatible with every kind of necessity.

Nor should we listen to the Schoolmen, who, in their customary license and boldness in making up anything they like, have invented a certain "presentness" of future things, as they call it, by which things not yet existing in themselves are said to exist for God. But this "presentness," whether it is itself the divine knowledge by which the future is foreseen, or something distinct from God's knowledge, must be clarified.

If the latter, then what is this "thing"? Is it a creature or something uncreated? For if it is uncreated, it is of the same nature as those eternal ideas of things that were attributed to Plato and which Aristotle everywhere solidly refuted.

Nor is it fitting that such figments and monstrous opinions should be introduced into the Christian religion. But that anything created could be such a "presentness" is certainly impossible. For since all things are present to God from eternity, it would follow that God from eternity created another world in which He saw, as present, all those things which, not yet actualized in themselves, were to be future in time by virtue of the creation and preservation of this universe, in which each thing eventually attained its actual existence. But such an idea would hardly occur even to a madman.

Wherefore, this “presentness” differs in no respect from the very knowledge of God, to whom all things are said to be present and “laid bare” [τεταχηλισμένα] from eternity—since He beholds those future things with far greater certainty than we contemplate things currently present and visible before our eyes. But He could not behold them certainly, as we have said, unless they were also certainly to come to pass; and they could not be certainly to come to pass unless He had decreed them with unchangeable purpose. Therefore, either nothing whatsoever is done freely by any creature, or nothing prevents things from being done freely which nevertheless are brought about by the certain and unmovable will of God.

Indeed, I do not believe there is anyone among the Remonstrants so stubborn and obstinate that he dares to deny what I mentioned above—that it was most certainly decreed by God that Christ should die for us: since the matter itself proves it, and Sacred Scripture does not merely say it but cries it aloud. Therefore, it was necessary—by that necessity which consists in the infallibility of the event—that Christ should die. But does it follow, then, that Christ offered Himself to death less freely? Or that those who nailed Him to the cross committed that heinous crime less freely?

Now let us say something about the imputation of that sin, which the disputant agitates with such hostility. I have said that in original sin there are two parts: the stain itself and the guilt. The question is, according to Calvin’s judgment, which of the two came first? And I see many strongly suspect Calvin on this point, thinking that he held the imputation of guilt—by the divine will punishing Adam’s sin—to have preceded the propagation of the corruption itself. And our disputant here appears to charge him with the same.

Because in that case, it seems that God punished Adam’s descendants while they were still innocent, which is as contrary to divine justice and holiness as anything could be. For that reason, the man—otherwise outstanding in piety and knowledge of divine things—has been poorly spoken of by many. But even if he had taught this, he would have said nothing that even the disciples of Arminius should find greatly abhorrent.

For the preaching of the Gospel has long been denied to many nations, and the cause of this is often attributed to the sins of their fathers and ancestors—and that over long stretches of time. And if anyone seeks to refute this argument by claiming that it is improbable for children to suffer punishment for their parents’ sins—especially when so much time separates them—since God Himself has clearly declared in Ezekiel that He does not will the son to be punished for the sin of the father, then our opponents cry out that this is playing into the hands of Socinus, who condemned the transfer of punishment from one person to another, under any form of imputation, as unjust and contrary to the nature of punishment.

Yet the distinguished Hugo Grotius, in his book On the Satisfaction (chapter 4), wrote against that most pestilential man as follows: “Crossing over to the other side, I affirm that it is not simply unjust or contrary to the nature of punishment for someone to be punished on account of another’s sin.” When I say “unjust,” it is clear I mean injustice that arises from the nature of things, not that which arises from positive law, by which the divine liberty cannot be limited.

This I prove by the words of Exodus 20 and 34:7—God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. “Our fathers sinned, and we bear their punishment,” says Lamentations 5:7. Because of the deed of Ham, Canaan is subjected to a curse (Genesis 9:25). Because of the deed of Saul, his sons and grandsons are hanged, with God’s approval (2 Samuel 21:8, 14). Because of the deed of David, seventy thousand perish—and David cries out, “I have sinned and done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done?” (2 Samuel 24:15, 17). Similarly, the sons of Achan are punished for his deed (Joshua 7:24). And because of the deed of Jeroboam, his entire posterity is cut off (2 Kings 14). And to this effect Chrysostom in Homily 19 on Genesis, and Tertullian Against Marcion, are cited.

Should what is not only tolerated in others—but even praised—be hated in Calvin alone? Yet Calvin is so far from teaching such a thing in his doctrine of original sin that he refuted the opinion of those who imagine anything of the sort. Let him speak for himself, disputing on those words of Paul, “Sin entered into the world, and through sin, death” (Romans 5:12). Observe the order he posits: he says that sin came first, and from it followed death. For there are those who maintain that we are lost through Adam’s sin, as if we ourselves perished without any fault of our own—as though he alone sinned for us. But Paul plainly affirms that sin was propagated to all, and so they bear the punishment. And this he presses further when he assigns the reason a little later why all Adam’s posterity is subject to death: “Because,” he says, “all sinned.” Now to sin is to be corrupt and depraved. And so also follows what is written thereafter.

By what right, therefore, do these harsher critics attribute to Calvin a doctrine from which he was most distant? Why do they construct monsters to fight against? Why do they strive to bring hatred upon a man so holy and morally upright, by such accusations? According to Calvin, Adam’s guilt was communicated to us in the same way as his sin. Adam’s sin became ours because the vice he contracted by sinning was transferred to us by natural propagation. We are implicated in the same guilt, because just as he by sinning incurred guilt for himself, so the guilt of our nature necessarily follows the corruption of nature.

It is true, the disputant says, that Calvin said it did not happen naturally that all men fell from salvation through the guilt of one parent. He did indeed say that. And in that point, at least, the disciples of Arminius ought to observe that Calvin taught that all men were created by God for salvation, and would have attained life if they had not fallen. Otherwise, how could they have fallen, if nothing at all in God’s counsel pertained to them? And this he taught more clearly elsewhere, as in his book on Predestination, where he says:

> “What Pighius objects, that there is a conflict between two opinions, is absolutely false. We say man was created in such a condition that he has no cause to complain against his Maker. God foresaw Adam’s fall, and surely permitted it willingly: why delay in admitting that? Pighius denies it, because he says a plan for saving all had been conceived beforehand, which must remain unshaken. As though there were no ready solution: namely, that salvation was destined for all no otherwise than if they had continued in their original state.”

For surely no one in his right mind would concede that God's decree was simple and absolute—that all should attain salvation. And likewise elsewhere. But how far removed is that from what they are accustomed to reproach that most excellent theologian with—namely, that according to his opinion, God created men with this one purpose, that the vast majority of them, without any regard to sin, should be handed over to eternal torments to be cruelly tortured?

If, therefore, he has said anything elsewhere that was harsher or more obscure, what could be easier—or more fitting for Christian men—than to interpret and soften it with a kind and charitable explanation? Yet there is nothing here either harsh or obscure, unless we insist on being unfair and excessively captious, and—as the saying goes—look for a knot in a bulrush.

For when men are accustomed to posit three universal causes of things—Chance or Fortune, Nature, and Providence—he denies that chance rules, since divine providence excludes it altogether; and he denies that nature ruled in the commission and propagation of the first sin. He teaches rather that the entire matter was administered under the government of Providence, which no one can find fault with who desires that God's glory should remain unblemished. But this Providence, along with Calvin, we have separated entirely from any involvement in sin. Therefore, we have shown that God is in no way to blame for man's necessity to sin.

As for the second point which the Anonymous author seeks to prove, a few words will suffice. What should be said in reply is already sufficiently evident from what preceded.

First, we have shown that there would have been no reason for men to complain against God—however mildly—if He had excluded them along with the devils from all hope of salvation. It was, therefore, the height of mercy that He gave Christ as Mediator, from whom He wished to repel no one who would but come in faith and repentance.

Next, we made clear that in the dispensation of faith, it was free to God to bestow that benefit on whomever He willed, while passing over others.

Third, we taught that, according to Calvin, the reprobate must be considered in a twofold way: absolutely in themselves, and comparatively with the elect. We added that, considered absolutely in themselves, they were worthy to be passed over, being stained with sin; and that in comparison, the matter must be referred to the sole and free will of God, since no cause of distinction can be found in the equal condition of men.

Finally, we sufficiently demonstrated that the unyielding necessity of sinning, which follows from abandonment or preterition, cannot and ought not to be attributed to the divine will in such a way that we suppose it to be the cause of sin. For the will of God in that respect acts purely in a negative manner and does nothing other than fail to remove, by the powerful force of His Spirit, the wickedness innate to men's hearts and deeply rooted by long-standing habit.

Otherwise, God would have to be considered the cause of the sins which devils commit daily, since He decreed never to call them back to a better life.

Nor can the followers of Arminius deny that the greater part of mankind are so left in sin by God that they remain in it forever. For surely, if He willed, He would convert them all—and that supposed indifference which they imagine within human will, He could bend toward the good with such efficacy as to overcome and conquer all resistance and stubbornness.

For I ask, what obstacle in the human soul could be so great that God's power could not easily break through it—if it pleased Him not merely to strive, but with a single nod to declare His will? Therefore, that which they claim God does out of some reverence for human free will, Calvin believes must be referred solely to His most free—though supremely wise—counsel. Not because His dispensation lacks reason in itself, but because He has not willed to reveal it to us. And how much wiser is that?

For what, after all, would be the point of having such regard for our liberty, that God would rather let us perish freely than in any way determine our will toward salvation—especially when that excellent liberty, which is so highly esteemed and even envied of God (were He capable of envy), is itself—as we have seen—the most foul servitude, subject to a most miserable condition unto eternity? But that force which men so greatly fear would deliver us from the bondage of sin and of Satan, and bring us by a generous hand into the liberty of the sons of God.

But of this matter perhaps we shall speak more fully elsewhere. For now, I cannot help but join Calvin in marveling at the upside-down diligence of some men—or rather at their profane spirit against God.

For they certainly feel the cause of their ruin within themselves. For who among us is not condemned by his conscience for countless evil deeds? Who is not a hundred times convicted by the sense of his native corruption as deserving of eternal death? Yet they resort to speculations about the propagation of sin, and whether the imputation of Adam's fall was just—disputing sharply and almost in a gladiatorial spirit—probing into heaven itself and meticulously investigating what lies hidden in the secret counsel of God, refusing to rest until either they drag God Himself into fellowship with their sin, or by asserting some imaginary and arrogant freedom of human invention, withdraw themselves from the rule and government of the sovereign Deity.

Whatever may be said about the divine will—which undoubtedly lies in recesses utterly inaccessible and impenetrable to our minds, and whose authority over creatures ought always to be held supreme and ἀνυπεύθῑτος [not to be called into question]—the blame for our sin rests with us. The cause of our ruin lies in our sin. In vain do we flee to remote causes, some of which are not even properly called causes, all the while overlooking the true and proximate causes that force themselves upon our awareness.

"Man fell," says Calvin, "because the Lord had so judged it expedient." Why He judged it so is hidden from us. But it is certain that He would not have so judged unless He had seen that His own glory would be rightly displayed thereby. Whenever you hear mention of the glory of God, think at once of His justice. For it must be something just if it is to be worthy of praise.

Therefore, man fell by the ordering of divine providence, but he fell by his own fault. The malice was his own, by which he corrupted the pure nature he had received from the Lord and dragged all his posterity down into ruin.

Let us therefore contemplate the corruption of human nature—something clearly close at hand—as the evident cause of our condemnation, rather than searching into the hidden and utterly incomprehensible depths of God's predestination.

Elsewhere Calvin says that those who trace the cause of their ruin so far back as to the eternal providence of God act just as foolishly as Medea's nurse in the tragedy, who cries out at the wrong moment: "Would that the pine beam had never fallen to earth in the forest of Pelion," and so on.

CHAPTER VII

Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Contradict the Mercy of God

Though everything in the anonymous writer's little book is rather bitter, nothing is more atrocious than what he says when he begins to compare Calvin's doctrine with the mercy of God. He argues as follows:

"This doctrine of the absolute decree also appears to be contrary to the divine mercy. For if that opinion were true, would not God be called rather the father of cruelties than of mercies? How then would the love of God surpass paternal and maternal love? What father, indeed, is so cruel that he would beget and raise children solely so that, by his mere will, or even for some offense not committed by them, he might deliver them over to unspeakable torments? Has anyone even heard tell of such cruelty? Anyone who carefully considers the following four things:

1. That the sin of Adam became human nature's sin—not the personal fault of his children, but a fault contracted by Adam alone;

2. That we are held guilty of that sin not by natural generation, but by the mere will of God, as they say;

3. That God forgave that very sin to Adam, who committed it voluntarily and freely;

4. That Christ came into the world to take away the sin of the world, and that God either accepted or could have accepted his death as satisfaction for the whole human race—

Whoever, I say, rightly considers these four things will either deny the decree of absolute reprobation altogether, or he will confess that God's mercy is small, and that He shows Himself less kind to men than to brute beasts, even to devils. For would it not have been far better never

to have existed at all than to be born only to perish in such misery? Who would not grow weary of his immortality? Who would not prefer annihilation to restoration unto punishment? Who, if he knew such a miserable fate awaited him, would not wish rather to have been a beast or a snake than a man? Indeed, if the decree of reprobation were absolute, then God would be acting more harshly toward men than toward the devils themselves. For they fell not by another's fault, but by their own will. But men, not so. And besides, devils do not rejoice in a false hope of salvation as do the reprobate, who, hearing the promises of salvation, may wrongly believe themselves to be among the elect. Moreover, the devils are not commanded to believe, nor is their punishment increased by their unbelief—as it is with the reprobate. How inconsistent with divine mercy, then, to bestow on men such great and excellent gifts—both natural and spiritual—and to heap upon them so many blessings, only that by abusing them they might incur greater judgment! For even the reprobate receive spiritual illumination, knowledge of the truth, and certain other gifts (cf. Hebrews 6:4 and 10:26). But to what end are they given these gifts? Only that, by abusing them, they might sin more grievously and thus be punished more severely? For it is a greater crime to abuse grace, and abusing divine grace does nothing but fail to bring about salvation. And if they must abuse it, as they must if they are predetermined by some absolute decree to damnation, then how violently this conflicts with divine goodness!

How harsh, then, are Calvin's words in Institutes, book 3, chapter 24, section 13: 'Behold, he addresses them so that they might grow more deaf; he lights a lamp that they might become blinder; he applies a remedy, but that they might not be healed.' And Beza, in his lectures on Romans 9, says: 'It ought not to seem absurd that God should offer grace to certain reprobates dwelling in the Church, through the word or even the sacraments—not that they might be saved through it, but rather that they might have less excuse and be punished more heavily.' And Maccovius in Disputation 14 writes: 'Christ knocks at the doors of reprobates whom he knows neither can nor will open to him—not that he might enter, but partly to expose their impotence (contracted by their own fault), partly to increase their condemnation.' And Christ himself, says Maccovius, said that he spoke to them in order that the contempt and hatred of the only-begotten Son might make their condemnation more severe. Away, then, with this diabolical doctrine, which nevertheless seems to follow necessarily from the absolute decree!

Why not then conclude with the words of Prosper (Sententiae ex Augustino, on Gal. 3:8): 'Whoever says that God does not will all men to be saved, but only a certain number of the predestined, speaks more harshly than one ought to speak about the incomprehensible height of the grace of God.'"

These are the three main things the anonymous writer seeks to demonstrate:

1. That God ought rather to be called cruel than merciful, if it is true that he reprobated some by an absolute decree;

2. That He has dealt more kindly with the devils than with men;

3. That it would be preferable to be a devil than a man among the reprobate, since men are commanded to believe and therefore increase their condemnation by their unbelief, while devils are not.

In the rest of the chapter, the disputant indulges in rhetorical flourishes and imaginative charges. But we must address these three points clearly and directly.

Now we understand what the Prophet means in this verse. He first considers that mortals were created for this end—that they might enjoy the beneficence of God in the world. From this he concludes that it is vain to be born unless God shows Himself a Father to them. But how a Father? Merely to have someone to torment eternally?

Hear him in Romans 3:29. Paul does not simply ask whether God is the Creator of the Gentiles, for that was well known and beyond controversy. Rather, he asks whether God wishes to show Himself their Savior as well. For after equating all mankind and subjecting them to the same condition, if any distinction arises between them, it comes from God—not from themselves, who are altogether equal. If it is true that God wills to make all the peoples of the earth partakers of His mercy, then salvation—and the righteousness necessary to obtain salvation—is extended to all.

Therefore, the name of God here indicates not only His essence but also a mutual relation, often found in Scripture: “I will be your God, and you shall be my people.” For the fact that God chose for Himself a particular people for a time does not nullify the principle of nature—that all are formed in the image of God and are raised in this world in the hope of blessed eternity.

How completely do these things repel and drive back the accusation hurled at Calvin! Are the disciples of Arminius not sufficiently answered?

But if someone presses the matter and insists that God not only did not prevent Adam’s fall, but decreed with certain purpose that it should happen, the response will be this: whoever thinks reverently and piously about God’s power must admit that this occurred by permission. First, one must concede that God certainly foresaw what the outcome would be, and that He could have prevented it if it had pleased Him to do so. Yet when I speak of permission, I mean that it was determined by God what should come to pass.

Here, indeed, arises the dispute: those who imagine that Adam was left so freely to himself that God did not will his fall, suppose it already proven (which I admit to them) that nothing is less probable than that God should be reckoned the cause of sin, since He has avenged it with such dreadful punishments. But when I say that Adam fell not apart from God’s ordaining and sovereign hand, I do not mean that sin was ever pleasing to God, or that He simply willed the command He had given to be violated. The things that follow on this point ought to be sufficient to acquit Calvin even before the most unjust judges.

Let us now come to the second point.

Of the four things that the disputant wants us to consider carefully, Calvin will deny the first: that he ever wrote, said, or even thought such a thing—that Adam's sin became the sin of human nature in such a way that it was not by propagation, through the children of Adam, but otherwise. The stain of original sin has spread over the whole human race. We have already seen that from his words.

As for the second, he may not deny that he said something resembling it in words—although the words appear to have been somewhat twisted by the disputant. But Calvin would certainly complain that they are being forced into a meaning he never approved. We have explained this above, so the reader might understand.

The third point Calvin will most freely concede—he would never begrudge Adam the salvation of which he himself is a partaker.

The fourth he has proclaimed countless times: that Christ came into the world to take away the sin of the world.

But from these premises, the disputant draws conclusions that Calvin will never admit: either that there is no such thing as an absolute decree of reprobation, or that God's mercy is small, and that He showed Himself less kind to men than to devils. Calvin will call such conclusions not only false but astonishing—that anyone could think them at all.

As to the devils, God once and for all took from them every hope of restoration and pardon, and He has never granted them the smallest declaration of His mercy to ease their misery.

But with the human race, He has acted quite differently. Calvin says, "In the curse pronounced upon the serpent, regard was had to mankind: first, that they might be struck with greater horror at sin, seeing how grievous it is to God; then, that they might find consolation in their misery by perceiving that God was still gracious to them."

As soon as the devils sinned, they were most severely punished—without delay, and without any interval in which they might be called to repentance. But toward men, He showed the utmost gentleness and patience, in the hope (if it were possible) that they might be brought to repentance. And most importantly: He denied the devils a Redeemer, but to mankind He offered one—moved by extraordinary mercy—and placed His placability in plain view upon the cross of Christ, provided only that men would not scorn it.

Indeed, Calvin attributes Christ's mission to this very cause: that God did not will the human race to perish.

Now, it is true that God did not give faith to all. So what then? Did He also take away from them the understanding and will, the faculties given them in creation by which men could rightly use themselves to attain salvation? Is their resistance to the Gospel such that God's mercy no longer deserves the name mercy, but instead should be called cruelty?

Surely, just as the Apostle says that man's unbelief does not nullify the faithfulness of God, so Calvin may rightly say that the iron-hard hearts of men, and their unimaginable ingratitude, do not invalidate the immense mercy which God showed in opening the path of life through Christ—if only men were not too proud to walk in it.

But truly, would it be better for a man to be born a toad or a snake than for God not to grant him faith?

Let Calvin respond in his own words—for he heard such objections and did not think them even worth the least regard. "When men," he says, "consider how many and what great evils they are subject to, they cannot help but grumble and murmur against God, to whom they wrongly attribute the just punishments of sin. The complaints are well known—how God has acted more kindly toward pigs and dogs. But where does this come from, except that they do not trace this miserable and ruined state under which we groan to Adam's sin, as they ought? But worse than this is that the inward vices of the soul—such as horrible blindness, defiance toward God, corrupt desires, and violent impulses toward evil—they throw back at God."

What about the fact that our Lord Jesus said of Judas that it would have been better for him not to have been born? Is it then better to have been a snake than nothing at all? Did God then wrong Judas by bringing him into existence?

Let them imagine whatever they want—that Judas's mind was enlightened by the Holy Spirit, that his will was held in a state of balance so he could turn to either side, and that he was placed in a perfect state of moral neutrality with life and death clearly set before his eyes. Suppose also that he freely chose the worse part, yet was not deterred from his unpardonable crime. Will he therefore rage against God forever and accuse His goodness because God did not allow him to remain forever in the void of non-existence?

They argue that Judas has no reason to be angry with God because what he suffers is justly inflicted—since he sinned willingly, without coercion or any external necessity. But this has already been refuted many times. What could be clearer or more evident, even from Calvin's own teaching, than that the reprobate sin voluntarily? Who forces them to sin against their will? And if they sin willingly and voluntarily, why should they not be judged as justly punished as Judas the traitor of Christ?

Or will they be less justly punished simply because we don't imagine them to have stood on a perfectly level scale of motives for and against sin, weighing both sides carefully for a time before choosing to sin? Are they not, according to the hypothesis, so lost and given over to corruption that they didn't even pause to deliberate, but instantly deemed Christ worthy of rejection?

And let us leave aside that—even if, by some invented notion of neutrality (ἀδιαφορία), all other mortals had no necessity to sin—it could still not have happened that Judas would not sin, since it was foretold that he would betray Christ and be driven to despair by the horrors of a terrified conscience.

But why say more? Such is the unbelievable perversity of men, such is their intolerable arrogance, that after having been created by God, adorned with such excellent faculties of soul surpassing all visible creatures, so sweetly invited to faith and repentance, enticed by so many magnificent promises, and persistently urged by countless demonstrations and appeals of divine mercy—after spurning all these blessings with the deepest ingratitude—they now complain against God that He did not make them to be toads or serpents.

They detest their own immortality, which—by the remarkable kindness of God—they could have made similar to the condition of the blessed angels, had not that dreadful hardness of heart stood in the way. Instead, they have chosen to corrupt themselves in misery and to cast in their lot with the demons.

The third point is dissolved without much difficulty. The Disputant claims that the condition of the devils is preferable to that of men rejected by God, because the devils perished through their own fault while men perish through another's guilt. But this, as it relates to Calvin's view, is not stated truthfully. For since men are burdened with a twofold sin—original and actual—Calvin considered original sin to be alien in origin, yet he judged it to be properly one's own as well.

It is alien if one considers its origin, which is derived from Adam. But it is proper to each person if one considers the formal reason of sin (as they say), which alone is regarded in judgment. For the Lawgiver does not inquire from where the sin has flowed, but only whether it adheres in the one who is to be judged. And that original sin adheres in each and every person has been denied by no one except Pelagius, and those who openly take his side. As for actual sin, to deny that guilt belongs to the one who commits it would be to go beyond Pelagianism into sheer insanity.

And it is even less accurate to claim, as if Calvin had taught it, that the condition of the devils is preferable because they are not enticed by a vain hope of salvation, whereas the reprobate are, who—having heard the promises of salvation—might falsely believe themselves to be among the saved. Where, after all, did Calvin ever write that the reprobate are lured and deceived by a false hope of salvation? Or where has he said anything from which that could rightly be inferred?

In truth, Christ did come into the world; He truly made atonement for sinners; He was truly offered to all through the preaching of the Gospel. If all had received Him, they would have been truly made partakers of salvation. So where is this supposed deceit—this illusion of salvation, this mockery of the wretched unworthy of God? If any perish, they have themselves to blame, according to that word: "Your destruction is from yourself, O Israel." That is, as Calvin interprets in Hosea 13:9, "You are the cause of your own ruin; by your fault you perish. If your own wickedness and ingratitude had not stood in the way, God would have undoubtedly remained always the same, and His goodness toward you would have proceeded in a steady and unchanging course."

"There is, therefore," he adds, "no reason to complain, as if God were disappointing your expectation or scorning your prayers and cries. I certainly would never have failed you, had you

been able to receive Me; but your own malice shuts the door against Me and repels My grace, so that it cannot reach you. Your destruction, then, is your own fault."

This passage clearly teaches that men rage against God in their misery to no avail, since—unless they had rejected the grace offered to them—God would always have been ready to help. He does not grow weary in showing kindness, nor can His bounty ever be exhausted. So the blame rests with us.

Therefore, the reprobate could be persuaded that they belong to the number of the elect—if they believed. And they could believe, if only their minds were not entirely imbued with twisted habits. But since they are by nature utterly corrupt and hopelessly wicked, they cannot believe.

"But," says the Disputant, "they increase their punishment through their unbelief, whereas the devils do not." That much is certainly true. But our Lord also said that "that servant who knew his master's will" will be beaten with many stripes. So then, was the master unjust or cruel for revealing his will to his servant? Or did he lose his right to command simply because he knew with certainty that his servant would refuse to obey?

Christ likewise declared that the final judgment would fall more severely upon the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida than upon Tyre and Sidon. Should Christ, therefore, have abstained from preaching the Gospel in those cities and forbidden Himself from performing miracles in their midst?

Shall we argue that the sun, that bright and life-giving source which rises upon the earth every day, ought to be extinguished because men use its light for feasting, drunkenness, and every kind of lust? Or that the entire order of nature should be overturned, because nearly everything God richly supplies from heaven—air, light, food, and the abundance of every good thing—is abused by men to provoke His wrath, as Paul says in Romans 2:5, "You are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath"?

So, then, is that a good reason to extinguish the sun and undo the natural order?

Let me say it plainly: can the Arminians deny that a far heavier curse hangs over all unbelievers after the revelation of salvation through Christ's cross than would hang over them had that salvation never been revealed? If they deny it, what do they make of Christ's words: "If I had not come, they would not have had sin"? If they affirm it, then they must also either affirm—what they claim to abhor—that God is harsh and cruel because He increased the guilt of sinners by the preaching of grace, or they must cease from attacking Calvin's doctrine at this point.

What can they say in response, since Calvin could equally reply the same? That these things happen per accidens? Calvin has said so a hundred times, as we will see below. That unbelievers have hardened themselves against Christ freely? Calvin has asserted this repeatedly, more clearly and more vehemently than any. That it was not due to any lack of divine mercy that they were not saved? Calvin has, in fact, removed that very obstacle in his doctrine. That all the means necessary for obtaining salvation were supplied to them? And Calvin wishes to emphasize that such means were truly offered, so that nothing would be

lacking for them to embrace. The only thing remaining is malice—something Calvin plainly teaches was not removed. And the Arminians themselves, as we've already said—and it must be said again and again—ought to admit that it was not removed in the unbelievers, since they did not believe. For what, I ask, could have prevented them from believing, except malice?

Let us ask: is the will in all adults—both by nature and by corrupt habit—hindered, bound by vicious inclinations, before the grace of Christ is offered to them? Certainly, they cannot deny this, if they wish to be called Christians.

Now, I ask further: if the will is to be brought to that state of "balance" (ἰσορροπία) in which all men supposedly are, so that they can incline themselves freely in either direction, does it not first need to be freed from those corrupt affections by which it is hindered? For if that is not necessary, what kind of "balance" is it when the will is entangled in vicious habits, obstructed by lusts, and fundamentally overrun by incurable vice? If that state is called "balanced," then what remains of the notion of being determined to evil?

But if liberation from these corrupt habits is indeed necessary—and since such liberation is sanctification—and since one must tend toward ἰσορροπία in order to reach a state of being "balanced," and since, accordingly, the one who is "balanced" has not yet believed, then these esteemed theologians must necessarily conclude that all men are sanctified before they believe in Christ. I would truly be astonished if such a thing could be said by anyone who is not outright insane.

Moreover, this liberation from vicious habits—which comes by the grace of the evangelical Spirit—was brought about either by some determination of the will or not. If not, then how could it be that the will was freed from sin without some act of the will itself? Can the will be freed from sin without willing it?

And since the determination of the will is itself an act of willing, could one will without at the same time being determined?

If the will was determined in order to be freed from sin, then either it determined itself, or it was determined by the Spirit of God. But it certainly could not have determined itself—because it could not determine itself to the good before it had been freed from sin. And we are speaking here of a liberation that took place through a determination of the will to the good. Now, the effect cannot precede its own cause, nor can the cause follow the effect.

Therefore, it must have been determined by the Spirit of God. And if the Spirit of God was able to determine the will in that act by which it was freed and set loose from its depraved habits—without violating its liberty—then what prevents Him from determining it likewise in that act by which one believes the Gospel, without overturning that blessed liberty which belongs to human nature, and without robbing man of his humanity?

And if the Spirit of God was not hesitant to exercise His efficacy upon the human will in that act which preceded faith, why—when the moment came for faith itself—was He suddenly restrained

by some new “piety,” such that He would refrain from bending the will, out of some high regard for the majesty of free will?

There would be nothing easier now than to mock this silly doctrine and harass its defenders with bombastic ridicule. But it is enough for us to defend Calvin. We do not wish to stray from the point, nor are we inclined to imitate the Disputant in staging a theological tragedy.

But, says the Anonymous author, whatever Calvin may have said or thought, it is certain that he issued that “horrible decree”: “Behold, he addresses them with a voice so that they may become more hardened,” etc. Beza and Maccovius, he claims, have written in agreement. Let Maccovius respond for himself. What Beza may have written is not in question here; it is Calvin’s opinion under discussion.

Calvin first insisted that we must carefully distinguish between the proper end of the preaching of the gospel, and that which accidentally results from it. The gospel, in itself, pertains to the salvation of men; it is only per accidens that it increases the punishment of the unbelieving, by being rejected through their unbelief. He taught this most consistently. That is the first point.

Secondly, he believed it no less necessary to distinguish between the end that God, in His mercy, proposes for Himself in this matter, and that which He determines from His justice. The former is consistent with the natural and proper end of the gospel: namely, that God wills an object to be proposed that is fit to generate faith, so that anyone might obtain salvation—unless he scorns what is offered. The latter is only considered from the hypothesis that God most certainly foresaw the reprobate would, through unbelief, reject the salvation offered to them. In this case, He turns mercy into judgment, so that what by nature is the aroma of life—and what He had first arranged to be offered as a means to confer life—becomes death to the unbelieving.

So: primarily and essentially, the voice is directed to unbelievers so that they may hear; accidentally and secondarily, that they may be further hardened. Primarily, the light is kindled that they may see; by consequence, that they may become blinder. Primarily and by itself, the remedy is applied that they might be healed; in event, that they are not healed.

Lest anyone think we are making this up or assigning this view to Calvin unfairly, let us hear him himself—not repeating what we already cited from his commentary on Ezekiel 18 (“He wounds that he might heal; he kills that he might revive”)—but let us offer something even clearer.

Nowhere has he spoken more plainly or more frequently to this effect than when he says, “The power of the gospel is such that by its very taste—or even by its scent—it either brings life or brings death.” In any case, it is never preached in vain: it always works, either unto life or unto death.

But someone may ask how this agrees with the nature of the gospel, which he elsewhere calls the ministry of life. The answer is easy: the gospel is preached unto salvation, and that is its proper end; but only believers become partakers of that salvation. Meanwhile, it becomes an occasion of condemnation to unbelievers, and this results from their own fault.

Christ, then, did not come into the world to condemn. Why would He need to?—since we are already condemned apart from Him. He is the light of the world, but to unbelievers He brings blindness. He is the foundation-stone, but to many, also a stone of stumbling. So it must always be distinguished: the proper office of the gospel versus the accidental effect, which arises from human wickedness, by which life is turned into death.

Likewise Calvin writes in his commentary on John: “In His immense goodness, God willed to help us, so that the lost might be saved. And whenever our sins rise up, and Satan tempts us to despair, we ought to lift up this shield: that God does not will us to be crushed under eternal ruin, for He appointed His Son for the salvation of the world.”

But that Christ is said elsewhere to have “come for judgment,” or that He is called “a stone of stumbling,” or that He is said to have been “appointed for the fall of many”—these are accidental and, so to speak, incidental effects. For those who reject the grace offered in Him deserve to be judged, and such people are unworthy of the Savior, whom they have so disgracefully despised.

In the gospel, we have a most clear demonstration of this: for though it is properly the power of God to salvation for every believer, the ingratitude of many turns it into death. And similar things follow.

Likewise, in his commentary on Matthew 23:37, Calvin writes: “This passage teaches that God does not always confer salvation on men when He directs His word to them, but that He sometimes wills it to be preached to the reprobate, whom He knows will remain obstinate, so that it might become to them the aroma of death unto death.”

The Word of God is, in itself and by its nature, saving; it promiscuously invites all to the hope of eternal life. But since not all are inwardly drawn, and not all have their ears opened by God, all who reject His Word turn it into something deadly to themselves through their own unbelief. And because God foreknows this, He purposefully sends His prophets to the reprobate, so that their damnation may be made the heavier.

And because this is a matter of the greatest importance—and the one that is especially liable to be dragged into suspicion and slander—I will not hesitate to reproduce here a most illustrious passage, though somewhat lengthy, from Calvin’s Commentary on Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 9.

> “It is certainly harsh to say that a prophet is sent by God in order to stop up ears, blind eyes, and harden the heart of the people, for these things seem scarcely to be fitting to the nature of God, and therefore seem foreign to His Word. But we ought not to think it absurd if God avenges the wickedness of the people with final blindness. Meanwhile, the prophet had just previously shown that the guilt of this blindness lies with the people themselves. For when he commands them to hear, he testifies that the doctrine was suitable for instructing the people, if only they had chosen to be teachable. Light is offered to direct them, if only they would open their eyes. Therefore, the whole cause of evil is transferred to the people, who repudiate God’s notable beneficence.”

From this, the solution to the passage we are now considering becomes more clearly understood. At first glance, it might appear absurd that prophets should make the minds of men more obstinate—since they carry the Word of the Lord in their mouths, which ought to serve as a lamp to direct the steps of men, as David praises it. Therefore, it is not the office of the prophets to obscure eyes, but to open them. Further, perfect wisdom is being invoked here. So who then renders men mad and stupid? It is the same power which is capable of softening hearts that were once like bronze or iron. How then can it be that men are hardened by that very power?

Such hardening and blinding does not proceed from the nature of the Word, but is accidental and must be entirely attributed to the wickedness of men. Just as the weak-sighted cannot blame the sun for dazzling their eyes with its brightness, nor can delicate ears fault a loud and resonant voice just because their ears are defective, nor can a man of weak intellect accuse a difficult subject he cannot understand—so also impious men cannot accuse the Word because hearing it makes them worse. The blame lies entirely with them, for they have shut up all access within themselves.

And it is no wonder that what ought to have been a source of salvation becomes to them an occasion of destruction. For it is just that the perfidy and unbelief of men be punished in such a way, that they find death where they could have found life, darkness where there might have been light, and in the very abundance of saving blessings, they meet as many occasions for ruin.

This must be carefully noted, because there is nothing more common among men than to abuse the gifts of God, and then not only to pretend innocence but even to boast in borrowed feathers. But they are all the more wicked in that they not only fail to rightly use the things God has deposited with them, but even corrupt and profane them perversely.

The Evangelist John brings forward this very passage to demonstrate more clearly the obstinacy of the Jews. This prophecy was not the cause of their unbelief; rather, the Lord foretold it because He foresaw they would be such.

In those words, the Anonymous author could find Calvin's opinion stated far more clearly and explicitly than anywhere else. That God destines the preaching of His Word for hardening—it is only to avenge the contempt of His mercy. And that He does so with such intensity—it is only because it is done justly. That He exercises His justice in such a severe way—this He does most wisely.

For this takes away from the unbelievers every excuse, so that if they themselves sat upon the tribunal, they would be forced to pronounce themselves worthy of destruction, having rejected with stubborn defiance such great grace, so often offered.

Let us not even mention those iron-hearted men who can be bent or softened by nothing—once God foresees that they will become increasingly hardened, He, by a wise and just counsel,

employs them for certain purposes: from which the Church sometimes reaps benefit, and God's own glory shines forth all the more brightly.

There is a notable example in Pharaoh, whom God Himself declares to have raised up for this very purpose: that He might show in him His mighty power, and give to all an occasion to magnify His name.

Let those devilish slanders be cast far away—slanders which impute to Calvin things he never so much as conceived, not even in his dreams.

CHAPTER VIII

That Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Contradict the Justice of God

The Anonymous Author resumes his attempt to refute Calvin's doctrine of absolute reprobation by appealing to divine justice. For, he argues, if that doctrine were true, it would follow that God punishes the just along with the unjust—something Abraham emphatically declares to be far from God. And indeed, some who affirm the absolute decree of God say that He destined many men to eternal death without any consideration of sin at all, and thus while they were yet innocent. Others, however, assert that God decreed to damn no one apart from consideration of Adam's sin, of which He willed all men to be guilty. But this ultimately amounts to the same thing. For both sides admit that God imposed upon mankind the necessity of being born in original sin, and that on account of that sin alone—without regard to actual sins—He assigned the vast majority of the human race to eternal punishment.

Calvin certainly affirms that God can damn men either with or without consideration of sin (Institutes, III.24.12 [should be III.23.7]). The same is also taught by our own Twisse (Vindiciae Gratiae, Book 2, Digression 1). But the matter comes to the same point, whether one says that God punishes the innocent, or that He compels them to sin so that He might punish them as if they were guilty. What, then, is this other than to condemn the just with the unjust? But this contradicts divine justice. Indeed, what Augustine says is true (Against Julian, Book 3, Chapter 8): "God is good; God is just. He can liberate someone without merits because He is good. He cannot damn anyone without demerits because He is just."

Moreover, according to these doctrines, God appears unjust because He demands faith from those to whom He denies the power to believe. For even the reprobate are obliged to believe, as is shown in John 16:9: "He will convict the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me." But to obligate those who are unable to believe to do so appears to contradict divine justice for three reasons:

First, because by right no one is obligated to impossibilities. Therefore, if—according to these views—it is impossible for the reprobate to have saving faith, then God cannot justly require them to believe, no more than He could command a man to fly like a bird.

Second, because in truth, according to this doctrine, God does not will the reprobate to believe—indeed, He seems to will that they not believe, since He does not will to equip them with the strength necessary to do so. But he who wills the cause must also will the effect that follows from that cause. If God wills that the reprobate not believe, then He cannot justly require them to believe.

Third, because in this view God commands faith while setting forth no object of faith. Christ did not die for the devils, and therefore they are not commanded to believe. But the reprobate—who according to this opinion have no share in Christ, and for whom Christ did not die—are nonetheless commanded to believe that He died for them, and are more severely punished because they do not believe it. What could be imagined more unjust than this?

What kind of justice would that be if a master commanded a servant to eat, but ensured that he had nothing to eat, and then punished him for not eating? Yet this is precisely the kind of justice that follows from their doctrine when applied to the reprobate.

From all these things it is evident that the absolute decree of reprobation contradicts divine justice. As for the claim made by the defenders of the absolute decree—that such a decree is established by Scripture and is therefore an expression of the divine will which cannot be unjust—it is answered that this is nothing but begging the question. The will of God cannot truly be such, since truth cannot produce absurdities, nor can it be contrary to sound reason.

They also say that God is not obligated to restore powers which man lost by his own fault. The response is that although God, being supremely free, is under no absolute or simple obligation to any creature, yet He can become conditionally obligated in three ways:

First, by decree. For unless God were, in a sense, bound to His own decrees, He would be mutable. Therefore, whatever He has decreed to give to men, by virtue of that decree and His unchanging nature, He is bound to bestow.

Second, by promise. For divine justice itself requires that God fulfill what He has promised.

Third, by establishing a law for men which cannot be observed without supernatural grace. In giving such a law, God obligates Himself to give the creature sufficient strength to fulfill it; otherwise, it could rightly be said of Him what the servant in the parable said: “I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter.”

It would have been in vain for God to say to the creatures, “Be fruitful and multiply,” unless He had implanted in them the power of generation. It would have been in vain for Christ to say to the paralytic, “Take up your bed and walk,” unless He had restored strength to his limbs. Likewise, it would be in vain for God to command faith unless He removed the incapacity to believe.

And what shall we say when, in the new covenant which He graciously established with all people, He requires obedience from all, promises eternal life to those who obey, and threatens death to those who disobey? Shall we suppose that divine justice permits Him to deny, by mere arbitrary will, the sufficient strength to obey to some? If He did so, then He could no more justly punish the disobedient than a judge could sentence to death a man whom he had previously blinded, and then ordered to read a book.

Here the Disputant attempts three things.

First, he wishes to show that God would be unjust if He were to damn the innocent together with the guilty, whether without any regard for sin at all, or at least with regard only to Adam's sin, which He has willed to be imputed to all men.

Second, he argues that God would be unjust if He were to demand faith from someone to whom He has denied the gift of faith—such as the reprobate.

Third, by a kind of prolepsis, he seeks to demonstrate that God is obligated to grant the gift of faith to all men.

As for the first, who precisely are those who teach that God damns innocent men along with the guilty, or without any consideration of sin? I confess I do not know. So far, I have encountered no one bearing the name of Christian who has imported such monstrous opinions into theology. Nor has anyone ever been so rigid in asserting the doctrine of predestination as to deny that the true, proper, and sole cause of damnation lies in sin alone.

For Beza—though a great man in other respects, yet whose method in explaining this point none of us has ever considered beyond question—did indeed hold that God, from the remotest eternity, set apart certain men to be the objects of His love, and others, separate from the former by a just counsel (though the reason of it escapes us), to be destined to His hatred. Yet he also taught that God hates no one in act except on account of sin, and damns none except those whom He already hates on account of sin. Therefore, he assigns no cause for that antecedent separation unto hatred but the will of God alone—which, he rightly asserts, cannot be unjust. He regards sin as the cause of hatred, and hatred as the proximate and immediate cause of damnation.

Hence his words in the book On the Eternal Predestination of God against Castellio:

"Although the cause of that decree by which God from eternity determined to create some men, in whose just destruction He would reveal the glory of His justice, is inscrutable, and although for that reason all who are appointed to destruction cannot but perish in due time, yet since God damns none but those who are corrupt and guilty, He is thereby altogether free from the guilt of injustice—seeing that He justly decrees even those things which men unjustly do, and therefore punishes justly."

But let us return to Calvin. I affirm, then, that whatever it is the Anonymous writer condemns, it in no way pertains to Calvin's doctrine. For first, Calvin has said a hundred times that no one is

punished or damned by God except for sin; and he has most strenuously rejected the opinion of any who might think otherwise.

His words, among others, in his Commentary on the passage cited by the Disputant from Genesis—“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25)—are particularly noteworthy.

“Abraham does not remind God of His duty, but reasons from the very nature of God: that it is impossible for Him to decree anything unjust. This argument would not always hold for human judges, who may be misled by error, partiality, weariness, bribery, or other influences that turn them from justice. But since none of these things can befall God—who by nature is the Judge of the world—it follows that He can no more depart from equity than He can deny Himself and cease to be God.”

Furthermore, when Calvin teaches that original sin is a sufficient cause for damnation, he does so in such a way that he considers this stain in itself, and insofar as it inheres in each person—not merely insofar as Adam’s sin is imputed to others. If anyone denies that this stain—whatever its origin—deserves death, he must necessarily accuse God of injustice, who punishes so many infants with death, though guilty of no other sin. The Apostle, too, must be accused of gross ignorance and imprudence, since he deemed death to be referable to sin as its meritorious cause.

Third, Calvin teaches that the damnation of adults must not be attributed only to original sin as its meritorious cause, but also to actual sins, which bind them even more strictly to the guilt of punishment. And not only that, but also to impenitence and unbelief—since, if these were absent, he clearly teaches that the guilt of all other sins would be removed.

As for what is here said—that Calvin, in Institutes III.23.7, wrote that God can damn men without any consideration of sin—this is not found in the cited place, and even if it were, it would not be without an answer.

Indeed, there are two kinds of supreme authority such as belongs to God. One is what is called ἀνυπύθωνος—that is, so transcendent that whatever God does cannot be called into question or judged by any. The other is the kind of authority tempered by justice and the rest of the moral virtues. It is beyond doubt that Calvin did not say that God can damn a creature without any consideration of sin—for that implies a contradiction, since damnation is nothing other than either a declaration of guilt or the imposition of punishment because of sin.

But nothing prevents one from saying that God could assign a guiltless creature to eternal punishment, in view of the highest right (summum ius) He possesses by the nature of His supreme majesty. What Calvin meant was likely this: that if God were to do such a thing, His majesty and authority would be so great that no one could rightly reproach Him.

But even if Calvin stated that God could do such a thing by His indefinite right, he did not thereby assert that God has actually done so. The infinite majesty of God requires us to say that

He could do this by right; but His incomparable justice and equity compel us to believe that He never would do so. As Calvin himself says, “He cannot deny Himself.”

And indeed, that which God never does, because He ought not to do it, has a definite and certain cause. And no other cause can be given than the justice of God and those other attributes which in Him appear to operate according to the mode of moral virtues.

Nor is it reasonable to revoke that supreme right from God which the most excellent jurists even attribute to kings over their subjects—as Hugo Grotius affirms in De Jure Belli ac Pacis, Book 1, Chapter 3—especially since kings may sometimes abuse that right, while God never does.

Indeed, Calvin was so far from believing that it could ever happen that God would abuse His sovereign power to commit injustice, that he often sharply rebuked some scholastic opinions which appeared to tend in that direction. His words in Institutes III.23.9 (cited by Beza) are as follows:

“Let us learn that the providence of God ought to be considered by us in such a way that we always ascribe to it the praise and glory of His omnipotence. For the wisdom and justice of God must always be joined with His power. As the Scriptures teach that the Lord does this or that in His justice and wisdom, so they teach that He always has a definite end in view for which He does these things.”

For that doctrine concerning the absolute power of God which the Scholastics have introduced is nothing short of execrable blasphemy. For it is the same as if one were to say that God is a tyrant, who establishes things according to caprice rather than equity. To such blasphemies must the schools of those men be relegated; nor are they unlike the pagans, who claimed that the gods sported with human affairs. But we, in the school of Christ, are taught that the justice of God shines forth in all His works, of whatever kind they may be, so that every mouth may be stopped and all glory ascribed to Him alone.

To this very effect are the words found in his Treatise on Predestination: what the school of Arminius lays to his charge, he regards as nothing less than execrable blasphemy; so that it is a marvel that among men, otherwise so keen and diligent, such great negligence should be found.

But since this is no trivial matter, and since it may shed considerable light upon the question presently under discussion, I deem it worthwhile to elucidate it a little more fully and carefully. And I do so all the more willingly because a certain other Anonymous writer, affected by Arminian sympathies, in a pamphlet published three years ago against the illustrious Moulin and myself, accused my doctrine on this point of being tainted with some sort of unspeakable heresy. However, since such a response would require a longer digression, and I do not wish to interrupt the flow of this disputation, I will defer a particular treatment of that matter to the end of this work. Let us now proceed with what remains.

We now come to the second point. The Anonymous writer lays down as his foundation a statement that is most true: that the reprobate, according to those who defend the absolute

decree, are nonetheless obligated to believe. He then says that this contradicts divine justice for three reasons.

As to the first, I am astonished that a learned man, whoever he may be, should liken the inability to believe—found in the reprobate—to the inability to fly in those to whom nature has not given wings. For indeed, the Romanists often attempt not so much to refute our doctrine as to calumniate it, as if we held that fulfilling the law of God, or believing in Christ, is just as impossible to man as if someone attempted to halt the motion of the heavens or remove the earth from its place.

Hence the words of a recent writer against the man of immense erudition, Salmasius:

“If someone were to say that a man is damned because he does not fly through the air like a bird, or because he does not carry the Alps or Pyrenees on his shoulders from one place to another—would not such a one plainly declare that there was no cause at all for his damnation, and that he was therefore condemned in the most unjust judgment?”

Such things are not surprising among that sort of people who either do not read our writings, or, if they read them, do not understand them—or, if they do understand, then (as is the custom of these evil times and the bent of those eager to calumniate) they go out of their way to pervert them and to render us odious to all.

But it was to be expected that the disciples of Arminius—professing the Reformed religion—would either be more ingenuous or better acquainted with our doctrine. For the man who lacks wings, no matter how greatly he may desire to fly, nevertheless cannot do so. And in the same way, if someone were burdened with the Alps or the Pyrenees, no amount of effort or will to the contrary would suffice to remove the burden.

But if the reprobate most earnestly desired to believe the Gospel, they would certainly be able to do so. Indeed, by the very fact that they most earnestly desired to believe, they would thereby already testify that they had believed. For no will could be so compelled except by the intellect’s having already acknowledged and esteemed the incomparable excellence of the Gospel—which is nothing other than faith itself.

Therefore, to be unable to fly in the case of those to whom nature has denied wings is due to a deficiency in natural faculties and the absence of the necessary instruments for such an action. But the inability to believe, in the case of the reprobate, arises not from a like cause, but rather because they are unwilling to use the faculties granted to them by nature for that purpose. And they are unwilling because they are wicked—and so it is that they always will to be so.

Let us hear Calvin on Ezekiel 12:2. He writes:

“This is to be noted carefully, for hypocrites, when they are convicted, usually take refuge in this pretense—that they have erred through ignorance or unawareness.”

But God, on the contrary, here declares that the Israelites were blind and deaf, and yet shows that their blindness was voluntary. Thus, when unbelievers allege that they were not enlightened by the Lord, it may indeed be conceded to them that they were blind and deaf; nevertheless, we must go further: the root of their blindness and deafness lies in their own stubbornness, and God blinds them because they will not receive the light offered to them, and they stop their own ears.

Christ Himself makes this plainly visible when, having compared the mercy of the Father offered in Himself and through the preaching of the Gospel to a wedding banquet, He then enumerates the excuses of those invited who refused to come. One says, “I have bought a field and must go see it”; another, “I have purchased five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them”; a third, “I have married a wife”; and others, seizing the king’s servants in a fit of rage, mistreat and kill them.

Here it is worth hearing Calvin’s commentary. After first raising the difficulty of how the Jews—whom God had chosen before others as His familiar friends—could be said to be invited to the banquet, when so many of them had already died before Christ’s coming, he resolves the question with these words: “We know that the common salvation was set before all, from which they were deprived by their own ingratitude and wickedness. For from the beginning that people impiously despised God’s invitation.” He then explains the matter more fully.

“Although they had previously raged against the prophets,” he says, “yet their fury grew with time, until it burst forth in full force upon Christ and His apostles. Therefore, he accuses that ancient people chiefly of contempt and pride. The last servants, who were sent at the hour of the supper, he says were shamefully abused or even killed. So, in the end, that people exploded into such wickedness that to their arrogant rejection of grace they added frenzied cruelty.”

Yet he does not impute this guilt equally to all, for even in the final calling, which was made through the Gospel, divine grace was partly mocked by indifferent scorners and partly violently rejected by hypocrites. And so it often happens, that the more zealously God solicits men unto salvation, the more violently the ungodly rise up against Him.

Christ’s words also signify that the Jews were so given over to the world and earthly things, that none of them had the leisure to turn to God—just as when we ourselves are entangled in worldly cares, we are drawn away from the kingdom of God by just as many distractions.

It is, indeed, shameful and disgraceful that men created for heavenly life are carried away entirely with brutish stupor toward perishable things. Yet this disease is widespread. Scarcely one in a hundred prefers the kingdom of God to perishable riches or other temporal comforts. Although not all suffer from the same affliction, each man is swept along by his own lust, so that all are diverted one way or another. And these observations are confirmed by daily experience.

For though the Gospel shines forth on every side with such evident truth, though such a noble and honest form appears in it, though it offers such great and incomparable benefit, it must be that the minds of men are entirely occupied by thick darkness, entangled with the most perverse

affections, and bound by utterly corrupt desires—that they not only do not accept the salvation offered to them, but are even inflamed with impotent rage against Christ Himself.

They cannot, therefore, because they will not. But, you may say, they also cannot will. That is true. But since they are endowed with intellect and will, what, apart from sheer malice, prevents them from being able to will? If nothing hinders but malice alone, let them surely blame themselves for their unbelief. It rested with them alone.

Hence, the inability that arises from a lack of natural faculties provides a legitimate excuse—and the greater that inability, the more legitimate the excuse. But in the case of an inability arising from moral vice, the reverse is true. The greater that inability, the less excusable the man. For the more wicked a man is, the less he deserves to be excused; and the more deeply he is enslaved to that kind of inability, the more wicked he must be.

Now, vicious habits in us are not of one kind. Some are innate from birth and are thus called original; others are acquired through custom. The latter, once ingrained, affect the faculties so as to render them altogether incurable—as both sound philosophy has taught and experience has confirmed. I say incurable, not by God—if He should will to apply His infinite power—but by those usual and ordinary means which are commonly employed to move the human mind and will one way or another.

Those natural or innate from birth are no less incurable—and indeed, perhaps even more so. For, as the philosopher excellently observed, if that habit is deemed the most firmly rooted which comes closest to nature, then nature itself must be considered even more firmly rooted. From both these types together arises the inability in question, which is in some sense rightly called natural insofar as we have received it from our parents. But it is not natural in a physical sense, because it neither consists in nor depends upon things that lack moral good or evil.

For one thing is termed “natural” or “physical” when opposed to what is acquired through imitation or custom; another, when it is opposed to virtue or moral vice. Therefore, even if either component of our inability, considered separately, is by itself invincible and incurable, yet the inability formed from both together is altogether invincible, as the Anonymous writer rightly says. And this, Calvin affirms, was also observed and held as certain by him, as shown in the passage from his commentary on Jeremiah cited earlier.

Yet neither type of vicious habit—if truly vicious—is worthy of excuse. Not those that are natural, unless we wish to make original sin a trivial matter unworthy of divine punishment, and so openly join the camp of Pelagius. And certainly not those that are acquired. For if what is natural in this regard is not excusable, much less will that be excusable which is acquired by custom—since it appears to have originated more immediately within our own power.

The second argument cannot be twisted against Calvin. For he never said that God does not will the reprobate to believe. On the contrary, he has said a hundred times, with Ezekiel and Peter, that God wills them to repent, and with Paul, that they come to the knowledge of the truth, and so be led unto salvation. Now here, indeed, the will that prescribes duty must not be

confused with the will that determines what shall come to pass in the event. The former, as we have already said, both prescribes duty to the creature and attests that it would be exceedingly pleasing to God if that duty were performed. For the Hebrew and Greek words for “willing” denote this very thing. God is so disposed by nature that, if the creature performs its duty, He is greatly delighted by the deed—both because He loves the creature as such, and because the duty pertains to a matter that agrees with the divine nature and reflects His image.

Yet, for suitable and wise reasons—most of which are hidden from us—He has determined not to cause that duty to be performed in certain individuals. These two things, however, are not in conflict, as I have shown above. If He were to hinder the deed by some positive efficacy, they would indeed appear to conflict. But from that former will nothing arises in itself except the mere negation of action, which, being itself inert, does not hinder the performance of duty in any way, no matter the source—and such performance remains greatly pleasing to God.

The third argument touches Calvin not at all. For who can say that the man who teaches that Christ died for all, and that Christ, having died for all, is to be offered promiscuously and without distinction to all men—removes from the sight of the reprobate that very object necessary for the generation of faith? If they did not will to come—if, having been invited to the banquet, they refused to come—is God, then, to be said to have mocked them or to have set empty dishes upon His table?

Now let us briefly examine the prolepsis, in which he endeavors in the third place to prove that God was bound, by some obligation, to grant faith equally to all men. This matter is straightforward and does not require lengthy effort. He says, then, that the defenders of the absolute decree are accustomed to say that God is not obligated to restore to men the powers which they lost by their own fault. To which he responds that, although God is a most free agent, and absolutely and simply is bound to no one, yet He may be bound conditionally, and this in three ways: by decree, by promise, and by legislation.

We do not intend here to dispute concerning God’s right, or the obligation that might arise from His decree, promise, or legislation. What the Anonymous author seeks, we willingly grant. What follows from it?

The first mode does not pertain to our case. For God has not decreed to give faith to all. This we hold plainly, and by God’s grace we defend carefully. Nor does the second apply. For nowhere has God promised to give faith to all. That passage in Jeremiah, “I will write My laws on their hearts,” indeed shows a very great difference between the legal covenant and the evangelical covenant: the former was fulfilled by no one, the latter was to be fulfilled in many. The former was written on tablets of stone, unaccompanied by the power of the regenerating Spirit; the latter was written on fleshly tablets of the heart and did have the power of the Spirit accompanying it, and was inscribed upon the hearts of those whom God effectually called, lest, as with the former, it be enacted in vain.

Yet no one who understands such matters will say that this applies to all men without exception. For how few there are above others whose minds are even lightly inscribed with the divine laws!

To refer this to that grace which the disciples of Arminius wish to be common to all would be most absurd. For if it is rejected by far the greatest number, is this what it means to inscribe His law upon men's hearts? Is this what it means to write His commands upon the very bowels and inner being of men—if He merely entices the mind and will with some faint and fleeting persuasion, with success that is doubtful and for the most part ineffective?

Is this, then, the fulfillment of what is foretold in that place: "No longer shall each man teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest"?

As for the third case, that of legislation, we have already responded. The powers whose deficiency makes it so that the reprobate cannot believe are not of the same kind as the power of flying, or of begetting a like offspring, or of carrying one's bed—powers that are wholly physical and thus altogether separated from the nature of moral good or evil. That lack of power lies in malice, in obstinate stubbornness, and in affected ignorance. If God is obliged to remove this from the reprobate, then surely He was obliged to remove it also from the devils, and is equally bound to remove it from the hardened and impenitent, whom yet the disciples of Arminius do not suppose to have such a right against their Creator as to sue Him at law for not having prevented or taken away the hardening that was either present already or had been acquired.

What will they answer to this? That no law is given to devils to believe? But that law arising from nature itself—by which all creatures are bound to seek the glory of their Creator in all things with their whole heart—remains forever in force.

And that law of believing which has been given to men binds them just as much after, by the judgment of God, they have been hardened, as before they were hardened—according to the Arminian hypothesis. Were not the devils at the beginning constituted in such a state that they could have refrained from sinning, had they willed it? And were not the hardened, before their hardening, in a state such that they could have believed, had they willed? What then? According to Calvin's judgment, are not the reprobate brought into such a state that they cannot believe, solely by reason of their own perverse will? Did God deter them from believing, or did He not in every way invite them to faith?

But, they say, it profits them nothing to be able to believe, if they cannot also will to believe. It is the same, therefore, as if they could not believe at all—even if they wished to. Thus do these subtle men usually reason against us. It is astonishing how much trouble another Anonymous (whether Courcelles or not, I do not know for certain) caused in this matter, though he promised to debate it more fully with me. But their acuteness fails them in such reasoning.

For first, if they could not believe even if they most vehemently willed it—if they could not perform the act despite willing—then they would be judged worthy of excuse. For they could not do so either because the object was lacking, or because the apprehension of the object depended upon some faculty distinct from will and mind, which even the most unwilling might lack. But now the object is offered to them, and they are equipped by nature with those faculties

suitable to apprehend the object—if they willed. Therefore, all legitimate excuse is cut off from them.

Then too, the distinction must be made between to be able to will and to will. If “to be able” merely signifies the faculty distinct from the act itself (just as “to be able to understand” is different from the act of understanding), then certainly the reprobate can will. For he who has a will—why can he not will? Since to be able to will, to have the faculty of willing, and to be endowed with a will, differ in word, but not in reality. Thus, what they say—that it profits the reprobate nothing to have been able to believe if they also were not given the power to will—is the same as saying it would have profited them nothing to be able to believe unless they had also been made men. But such a complaint would be absurd and irrelevant. Are they not men? Has any one of us ever supposed that sin has stripped them of their humanity?

But if to be able denotes the contingency of the event—that it is possible they might will—then certainly they cannot. And when the μὴ ἀδέχεθαι ἀτιοὺς οὕτω βούλεσθαι (“they could not will thus”) arises from nothing but that the will is immovably determined to not will, then of course it profits them nothing to say, “they could believe if they would,” when it is not granted that they could will.

But in return I ask: Let us imagine—though it is pure delusion—let us imagine that in the case of unbelievers the willing or not willing were left ἐνδεχόμενον, that is, contingent. Since they did not believe, what did it profit them to have been able to will to believe? For a thing is said to profit not because it could have been used, but because it actually was used. And those who neither believed nor willed to believe did not make use of their power either to believe or to will. Therefore, it profited them nothing to have been able to will. And if they reply that it was by their own unbelief that it failed to profit them—can we not, by equal right, reply that it was by their own fault that their ability to believe, had they willed, did not profit them, even if they were not granted that imaginary ability to will?

Lastly, if we are wise, there should be no controversy between us about whether the dispensation of the divine will concerning the things pertaining to their salvation was profitable to the reprobate and unbelievers. For what could be clearer than that it did not profit them at all? I will go further—what could be more certain than that, considered in terms of the outcome, it was exceedingly harmful to them? For besides the guilt which original sin brought forth, and the guilt which arose from transgressing the moral law, they added to themselves the crime of unbelief and of contempt for the covenant of the Gospel—a crime which cannot be described without acknowledging how greatly it increased the weight of their destruction.

The Apostle’s words are well known: “If the word spoken through angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?” (Heb. 2:2–3). The question to be asked is only this: What did God do in the matter of salvation, and with what intention did He do it? Likewise, how did the unbelievers conduct themselves in this matter, and whether the blame for not attaining salvation ought to be referred to them alone.

As for the former, the matter is clear. God sent into the world His most beloved Son, the most innocent, endowed with infinite majesty—in a word, God Himself. He brought such a One to the most bloody, shameful death, full of a certain dreadful curse, so that He might redeem them from the curse of death. He willed that satisfaction to be displayed before the eyes of all, and that no one should be repelled from it, and that no one should fail to be invited. And this He did with the intention that, if they would not refuse to believe, they might enjoy so great a salvation.

This He promised in good faith, being ready to fulfill His promise—provided only that they not refuse to believe—being moved by an incredible and indeed admirable philanthropy, a wondrous love for the human race. As Christ Himself said: “God so loved the world…” (John 3:16).

As for the latter point, the matter is no less clear. For the unbelievers, being endowed with understanding and will—and being, unless utterly corrupted by sin, naturally equipped with faculties suitable for apprehending and embracing that object—yet deliberately shut off every access to their own souls, because they indulged in sin so sweetly that they could not be drawn away or turned from it by any means.

What, then, do the Arminians want? What are they seeking? Why do they accuse God of cruelty?

Why, then, do they everywhere fetch colors which they smear over the obstinacy of these men? The cause of the reprobate, contending with God their Judge, cannot be rightly deemed victorious unless they enthrone that queen and virtually goddess of mankind—the human will—upon a certain tribunal, a will which, being mistress of her own actions and poised equally between both sides, consults within herself (though she has no capacity for counsel or reasoning), deliberates whether to admit the persuasions of the intellect, whether to follow the Holy Spirit drawing her, whether to receive Christ—almost as one supplicating before her and seeking, if only in some part, her friendship—or proudly to reject and disdain Him. Until at length that wise arbiter weighs the arguments on both sides and does not, indeed, say with Medea, “I see the better course and approve it,” (for what could she see who has no eyes?), but rather, “Begone, Christ! Trouble me not with your cause. There is no reason: thus I will, thus I command; let will take the place of reason.”

Nevertheless, our disputant adds that it is futile for God to command the reprobate to believe unless He removes their inability to believe. This is ambiguously stated. For if futile means that the intended effect is not accomplished—which is the sense Aristotle has in mind when he calls it a μάτην action—then it is indeed true: they did not believe. But from that it cannot be concluded that God ought not to have required faith from them. If, however, it is meant that God acted neither mercifully, nor justly, nor wisely, then this we strenuously deny. And nothing yet has been produced by him that could turn us from our position.

As to what he says about sufficient powers to obey, it is entirely free from difficulty. Sufficient is used in two ways: either it denotes that which actually effects the matter, or that which could effect it if one willed—and unless it be prevented solely by one’s own will, however that will be

disposed. In the former sense, God was not bound to give sufficient powers. Nor can the disciples of Arminius affirm this without rejecting the doctrine of God's grace in calling, which we defend with the utmost care—that it is not efficacious so that the result necessarily follows, but they wish the event to depend upon the free will of man.

In the latter sense, however, God certainly gave sufficient power, since He both presented the external object and preserved the mind and will, insofar as they are natural faculties, to such a degree that—what I have said a hundred times—if they did not believe, they can blame only the stubborn and inflexible obstinacy of their own will.

Calvin expresses the matter with remarkable clarity in his commentary on Isaiah 5:3: "Judge, then, between me and my vineyard. The meaning will be more simple: seeing I have performed all the duties of my office, and have gone beyond all expectation in cultivating my vineyard, how does it happen that it repays me with unworthy recompense, and, instead of the expected fruit, brings forth only bitterness? If anyone objects that the remedy was in God's power, had He inclined the heart of the people, that is a frivolous evasion on the part of men, because their own conscience binds them, so that by shifting blame they cannot escape."

And even if God does not by the effective power of His Spirit penetrate the hearts of men to make them obedient, yet they vainly object that this was not granted to them, since the external calling sufficiently removes every excuse of ignorance.

Finally, the example of the magistrate does not hold. First, the blind man—though the act may be just—was made blind by the magistrate when he deprived him of sight. But God did not implant the inability that is in the reprobate; they brought it upon themselves of their own accord and through their own fault. Moreover, the blindness which comes from the gouging out of the eyes is the privation of a physical faculty, which opposes a completely insurmountable obstacle to the act of seeing, even if the blind man should most eagerly wish to overcome it. But the inability with which we are now disputing, though natural—inasmuch as it has been drawn from the womb—is nevertheless moral, and therefore not insurmountable if one were willing.

But if it is so deeply rooted that it cannot even happen that they should be willing, this too we have shown does not avail as an excuse.

CHAPTER IX

That Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Conflict with the Truth and Sincerity of God

And now the anonymous disputant strives to show that the doctrine of absolute reprobation contradicts the sincerity and truth of God, and that it renders Him plainly guilty of falsehood and hypocrisy—whether one considers His precepts, His promises, His conditions, His desires, His expostulations, or His compassions. He sets forth his charge as follows:

“If we consider His commands,” he says, “then according to the doctrine of its defenders, God commands those to repent and believe to whom, in secret, He does not permit to believe.” As Piscator writes in his book against the Schismatics: “Although God commands the reprobate to believe the Gospel, yet He does not will that they should believe.” But those whom God commands to believe, He also, by His outward and manifest will, wills that they believe—for His precepts are signs of His will. And unless He wills the same thing internally, then He acts deceitfully. Again, as Piscator in the same work affirms: “God does not will that the reprobate should believe, even though He professes with His mouth that He does.” But is not this to deal with men in fraud and evil deceit? If His words lack truth, and if they are most mendacious, can they not rightly be called mere simulations and deceptions?

A great crime indeed it is—and one that no severity of language can adequately castigate—if anyone even intends to charge God with deceit, or teaches things that provide legitimate cause for such a charge. But neither did Calvin ever do this, nor has anyone furnished a just reason why he should be thought to have done it.

Yes, God commands the reprobate to believe. That is true. But does He secretly not permit them to believe? What does that mean, “to not permit secretly”? For there are two kinds of permission: one which grants power and a right to do something, as when God permitted Noah and his descendants to eat the flesh of animals—that kind of permission is legislative, and laws are not secret, but public, lest they remain unknown. The other kind of permission does not hinder the act itself by any effective restraint—as when God permits sin, though He has most sternly forbidden it by law, yet does not suppress it through the efficacious restraint of His Spirit or providence in many instances.

By the former kind, God not only permits the unbelievers to believe, but also commands them to do so—not merely giving them the liberty to do it, but binding them by imperative command, from which they cannot abstain without guilt. He offers them the object of faith together with the command, so that nothing may be lacking for them to embrace by faith.

But in the latter sense—who among our people has ever allowed such blasphemy into his thoughts as to think that God, by some secret efficacy operating inwardly, has restrained and suppressed the impulse of the reprobate so that they might not believe in Christ? And what need is there to restrain an impulse which does not even exist? “Why,” says Sophocles, “restrain that which is already lifeless?” For indeed they lie dead in sin. And what need is there to forbid a dead man from rising? His very death will be restraint enough.

But—he insists—“God does not will that they believe,” as Piscator dared to write. Let Piscator find his own defenders—we speak of Calvin. Therefore, let us distinguish: “He does not will”—in the sense that “it would not please Him if they believed”—that is denied. For it would be most pleasing to Him if they did. “He does not will”—in the sense that “He did not decree to do in them what He commands”—this is conceded.

But what blemish does this cast upon the sincerity or truth of God?

Let the anonymous writer then understand, according to Calvin's doctrine—and indeed according to the truth itself—that there is a twofold will in God regarding this matter: one, as Lawgiver; the other, as Father.

As Father, He not only commands the elect to believe, but supplies them with the power of the Spirit, by which they will certainly obey His command. For He has chosen them, and decreed to adopt them in His Son. Therefore, that He may accomplish His purpose, He furnishes the most efficacious grace of the Spirit—absolutely necessary for that end.

As Lawgiver, He commands, and that most seriously. But within that relation only. For the Lawgiver, as such, is not bound to supply the powers by which obedience to the laws may be rendered. To command seriously and without deceit, it is enough that He commands those things which He has the right to command. And, as is fitting, that He not command anything which His subjects are unable to perform—if only they are willing. But they ought to be willing, if they are rightly disposed.

Likewise, if what is commanded is performed, He both accepts the deed and counts it for the justification of the doer, if judgment be rendered according to works—and to the acquisition of the reward promised for the deed, according to the law. And finally, if the duty is not fulfilled, He wills that the disobedience be justly punished.

All of these things are found in the will of God as Lawgiver.

I will now cite Calvin's words in which he clearly explained this distinction—and at the same time, refuted that tired objection. Concerning the promises (and the same is to be said of the commandments), which all invite to salvation, he says:

> "They do not simply and precisely declare what God has decreed in His secret counsel, but rather what He shows Himself prepared to do for all who are brought to faith and repentance. Hence, in this way a twofold will is ascribed to God, who is yet not so variable that the least shadow of turning falls upon Him. What then," says Pighius, "is this but to mock men, if God professes to will what He truly does not will?" Let these two statements be read together: 'I will that the sinner turn and live,' and, 'I do not will.' The calumny vanishes entirely. God requires conversion from us; wherever He finds it, He does not frustrate the promise of life. Therefore, God is said to will life and repentance in the same way. And He wills it because by His Word He invites all to it."

Moreover, this does not conflict with His secret counsel, by which He has decreed to convert only His elect. Nor ought He therefore to be judged variable, because as Lawgiver, He enlightens all with the outward doctrine of life, calls all in this former mode to life, but in the latter mode leads only whom He wills, as a Father regenerating His own sons by the Spirit.

I know well that this analogy has been attacked by some, as though it transformed the covenant of the Gospel into a law like that of Moses.

As though it were not easy to understand that God assumes a different relation when acting as Legislator—especially when the Law is opposed to the Gospel—and another when the Gospel is considered absolutely, or when its parts are compared with one another. The Gospel is opposed to the Law, not to another law. For in the Law, God by sovereign authority prescribes and promulgates what is just and equitable, without bestowing the power of the regenerating Spirit, by which men might be bent into obedience. But in the Gospel, He both requires faith and mercifully bestows the Spirit, who creates faith. This indeed draws closer to the character of a Father than to that of a Legislator. Yet, since faith is demanded from all, while the Spirit is granted only to some, in that comparison of unequal things, what can be said—such as accords with human apprehension of divine matters—more fittingly than that with respect to the former, God acts as a Legislator, but with respect to the latter, as a Father, if one were to grant that a father could so mold his children, to form and shape them into every virtue and restrain them from every vice?

Here, then, we need not repeat what we have already stated above: namely, that God is the author of faith in the faithful, but not the cause of unbelief in the unbelieving. For in the faithful, He effects faith; in the unbelieving, He merely withholds. He withholds, I say, not as a cause who fails to perform what it was His duty to perform, such that blame would belong to the deficiency—but He merely abstains from effecting what, by no law or right, was He obliged to effect. That sort of withholding—a simple negation of efficiency—not only does not constitute a fault, but may even be attributed to divine wisdom and counted praiseworthy.

Now concerning the promises, the anonymous disputant continues:

> “As to the promises, even those who perish are presented with them. Those who did not come were nonetheless invited to the wedding feast. With the command, the promise was also set before them. Acts 2:38: ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized…’ and verse 39: ‘For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.’ In these words, the command and the promise are of equal extent. For the Apostle used the promise as the strongest possible inducement for embracing the command. And that inducement would have had no weight unless the promise extended equally to all to whom the command was addressed.”

But, according to the doctrine of the absolute decree, God offers grace and glory to many to whom He has decreed to give neither.

So writes Piscator in his Book on Predestination against Schafmann:

> “Grace is not offered by God to each individual, even if called, with the intent to communicate it, but only to the elect.”

What then? Does God deal with us as the gods of the poets were said to deal with Tantalus—placing food before him only to snatch it away?

So it is, precisely, according to their position. For although God offers grace and glory to all, yet the grace offered—according to them—is withdrawn, either at the first step, so that they cannot

believe at all, or at least the grace by which they might persevere unto the end. And what is this, if not to mock miserable men with a vain hope of salvation?

Even Zanchius, unmindful of himself, admits as much in his Book on the Nature of God, chapter 11. He says:

> "Every man who is called ought to believe himself to be elect. And if he does not, he greatly wrongs God, and accuses Him of lying—for God, in His Word, declares that He wills his salvation, and that He has called him to Christ for this very end."

And Bucer, on Romans chapter 8, likewise says:

> "The first thing you owe to God is to believe that you have been predestined by Him. For if you do not believe this, you make Him out to be mocking you when He calls you to salvation through the Gospel."

Indeed, if it were certain that a creditor never intended to remit any portion of the debt—and yet, he were to offer the debtor a release upon certain conditions, confirming all this with solemn oaths—would he not plainly be deceiving the debtor?

And what, then, are the oaths of God? What are His promises concerning the forgiveness of sins upon the condition of faith and repentance, if He has never decreed to forgive them? What kind of Gospel is it that preaches remission, but only to deceive?

In vain, then, does the Anonymous writer exhaust himself with the line of reasoning by which he opens this dispute about the divine promises. Not only does Calvin not deny that the promise of salvation, together with the command to believe, extends equally widely—but he affirms it more clearly and emphatically than any disciple of Arminius ever could.

Thus he writes in his commentary on the very passage which the Anonymous author cited:

> "For the promise pertains to you."
> This was necessarily added, so that the Jews might be fully persuaded that they shared the grace of Christ with the Apostles. Then Peter confirms that the promise of God was destined for them. For to this always must the eyes be directed—because the will of God is known to us only by His Word. But it is not enough to have the Word in general, unless we know that it is destined for us. Therefore Peter tells the Jews that the blessings of God which they saw in him and his companions were formerly promised, and that the promise pertains to them—because this is necessarily required for the certainty of faith: that each individual be inwardly persuaded he is included among those to whom God speaks. "Indeed," he continues, "this is the true rule of believing: that I am so persuaded that salvation belongs to me, because the promise which offers it pertains to me."

Thus Calvin wills that the promise, together with the command, be extended to all; that a sure hope of salvation be presented to all by means of that promise; and that each individual be most fully persuaded that the salvation offered pertains to himself.

What more could be demanded of him?

But, they object: according to this doctrine of the absolute decree, God offers to many both the remission of sins and the inheritance of heaven, to whom He has decreed to give neither.

Where does Calvin ever say such a thing? Where has he ever taught the contrary, when the context and occasion required it?

God truly promised to all, in good faith, that He would grant eternal salvation if they believe; and if they do believe, what He promised in good faith, He will in fact fulfill. But since He has foreseen that they will not believe, He therefore decreed that they will not obtain the salvation which they would obstinately reject.

Let no one doubt that Calvin held this view, for he speaks thus on those words in Psalm 81:

> "Oh that my people would listen…"
> "Because the Hebrew construction is optative, not conditional, I do not doubt that God is here crying out in deep lamentation that this people has, of its own accord, rejected what would have been for their greatest good. This is a tacit reproach, that the Jews may know it was only their own malice that prevented them from enjoying so great a benefit."

If anyone objects that it is absurd and without reason for God to complain, when it was in His power to bend the stubborn necks of the people—and since He did not will to do so, He should not now appear as one who laments—I reply: God does this justly for our sake, so that we do not seek the cause of our misery anywhere but in ourselves.

But here we must be cautious not to confuse matters vastly different and as far apart as heaven is from earth. For God, descending to us through His Word and inviting all without exception, deceives no one. Whoever comes, finds that he was not called in vain. Yet from the secret fountain of election flows this difference: that the Word penetrates the hearts of some, while it merely strikes the ears of others.

This fits well with what we previously showed: that when God invites all to salvation, He reveals what He is prepared to do for all who are brought to faith and repentance.

Therefore, Calvin's doctrine is needlessly troubled in this matter. According to him, God both promised and determined to give what He promised; but He determined to give it in the same way that He promised it—namely, if we believe. Unless we believe, He neither intends the promise to apply to us, nor has He determined to fulfill it.

So he speaks in Institutes 3.24.15:

> "They seem to press more forcefully with that passage in 2 Peter 3:9: 'God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' But the solution immediately follows in the very next word: the will to receive unto repentance cannot be understood otherwise than in the sense taught everywhere in Scripture. For it is indeed true that if He

> were not prepared to receive those who implore His mercy, that sentence—'Return to Me, and I will return to you'—would fall. But I say that no mortal man comes to God unless he is first drawn by divine grace."

But you will say, "If this is so, there will be little confidence left in the Gospel promises, which, since they testify concerning God's will, affirm that He wills something contrary to His unchangeable decree."

I reply: Not in the least. For although the promises of salvation are universal, they in no way contradict the predestination of the reprobate—provided we rightly consider their effect.

Only then do we know the promises to be efficacious when we receive them by faith; but when faith is lacking, the promise is at once rendered void. Such is the very nature of the promises themselves.

Let us now consider whether there is any true discrepancy between these two propositions: that God, from eternity, ordained whom He would embrace in love and upon whom He would exercise wrath—and that He proclaims salvation indiscriminately to all. I say there is no contradiction at all. For by making the promise, God wills nothing other than that His mercy should be made manifest to all, in such a way that those who seek it and implore it may find it. But such seeking is undertaken only by those whom He has enlightened; and He enlightens those whom He has predestined unto salvation.

In these, I say, the truth of the promises is firmly and immovably established, so that it cannot be said there is any disagreement between God's eternal election and the testimony of His grace offered to believers.

But why are all addressed? Surely, so that the consciences of the godly might rest more fully, understanding that there is no distinction among sinners—as long as there is faith; and so that the ungodly may not claim that there was no refuge open to them by which they might be received from their bondage to sin, when in fact they rejected in pride the grace offered to them. Therefore, since the mercy of God is offered to both through the Gospel, it is faith—that is, God's illumination—that distinguishes the godly from the ungodly, such that the former experience the power of the Gospel, while the latter derive no benefit from it.

What could be said better or more clearly? I, for one, see nothing. So I wonder how the Anonymous author could have written so carelessly as to claim that, according to Calvin, God deals with us as the gods were once imagined to have dealt with Tantalus.

Tantalus, according to Homer (if he is to be believed), nearly perished of thirst in the underworld, and though he was surrounded by water, he could never reach it, no matter how often he bent his head to drink:

> "Longing to drink, the water would vanish just before his lips."
> And though fruit of every kind hovered above him to relieve his hunger:

> “The old man stretched his hands, but the wind would sweep them into the shadowy clouds.”

He longed to partake, and did all he could to reach them, but the wrath of the gods frustrated his desire. But in our case, the situation is quite the opposite. Christ offers to all the most health-giving water to quench the soul’s thirst. The reprobate flee from it, and like madmen (δρῶτες), refuse to drink. He graciously holds out the fruit of life, with the tree planted in the midst of Paradise, but they would rather waste away with hunger, or feed themselves on refuse and poisoned scraps.

What then in this is similar? What is not in complete and utter disagreement?

Likewise, in the example of the creditor, the error is twofold. For God offers us, the debtors, a new covenant and remission with this very intent—that, as the Disputant himself says, if we fulfill the condition of faith and repentance which He Himself has appointed, He will cancel our debts in good faith. Never has there been, is there now, or ever will be, any mortal who, having truly believed, could claim that he was not in fact released from obligation. Therefore, it is the height of absurdity to accuse God, according to Calvin’s teaching, of mocking or deceiving us.

When the matter turns again to conditions, the Anonymous writer reverts to the alleged impossibility of the event and the inability to believe.

> “For,” he says, “according to that doctrine of the absolute decree, the conditions which God sets before us for obtaining the promises are either sheer illusions or, though appearing sincere, are in fact null. A true and sincere condition is nothing other than an offer of the ability to choose something; where there is no power to choose, there is no real condition. To promise something under an impossible condition is the same as not promising at all. The jurists say: a contract made on an impossible condition is counted as void; and the logicians affirm that a conditional proposition with an impossible condition has the same force as a simple negation.”

He continues:

> “It is like denying a blind man alms but offering him a coin on the condition that he open his eyes and say whose image is stamped on it. Indeed, the rejection seems all the harsher because it is joined with mockery. So, God would be dealing neither candidly nor sincerely with men if He were to offer them life under an impossible condition.”

But the condition of faith and repentance is, he claims, utterly impossible for those whom God, by absolute decree, has reprobated.

I marvel that so learned a man could err so childishly, and so often. A “condition,” unless I am mistaken, is defined by jurists as a mode or cause that suspends the effect of a legal act until it is confirmed by something following. Or, it is a law added to an agreement, which suspends the result until it is fulfilled. Paulus, in law 60 of the Digest on Conditions and Demonstrations, divides conditions as follows: “Conditions that depend on facts,” he says, “are of various kinds

and receive, as it were, a threefold division: that something be given, that something be done, or that something happen; or, in the contrary, that something not be given, not be done, or not happen." And he adds: "From these arise conditions of giving and doing, which are imposed upon persons—either those to whom something is left, or others. The third kind concerns events."

From this arises the familiar division of conditions into: potestative (dependent on a person's power or will), as Paulus first discusses; casual, such as "if it rains tomorrow," "if lightning strikes," "if the ship arrives from Asia"; and mixed, or common, as in "if Titius returns from the enemy, he shall receive X," "if Titius, as consul, ascends the Capitol," "if Titius is made consul," and so on.

Therefore, the definition of a condition provided by the disputant only truly applies to potestative conditions—those imposed on a person, such as an heir or legatee, who is given the choice to do something and thereby obtain what is left to them in a will. Or, if he does not wish to do or provide what is required, he refrains from receiving what was left by the testament. What is said here about wills also applies to all contracts based on conditions.

Grotius, that most skilled jurist, rightly said in his Rights of War and Peace, book 3, chapter 19, "When a condition fails, the promisor is not truly freed from obligation; rather, the event shows that there was never an obligation, since it was made under a condition." This includes the case when one party does not fulfill what he was required to do. For in one and the same contract, each clause depends on another as if it were said: "I will do this, if the other does what he promised." This even applies to obligations that a party must fulfill, even if he did not expressly promise to.

Now potestative conditions themselves admit of distinctions. Some are placed entirely within one's own will and power—those acts which absolutely depend on the will of the one from whom they are required. Others, though they depend on will, may nonetheless be hindered by something outside of that will and prevent the performance of the act. Hence, potestative conditions are sometimes called "mixed" (promiscuæ) by Cujacius, under law XI, Digest on Conditions and Demonstrations, because hardly any potestative condition exists which could not be made non-potestative under certain circumstances.

As Ulpian says in law 4, Digest on Instituting Heirs: a condition such as "if he arrives in Alexandria" may not be in the person's control if winter weather impedes him. But it may be, if the person is only a mile away from Alexandria. Likewise, "if Titius gives a pledge to the legatee" may be easy if they live together, difficult if he is traveling abroad. For difficult conditions, great care must be taken in judgment—though that does not pertain to our present argument.

The condition God has annexed to the promise of salvation is one of those that are entirely potestative—that is, in the power of those to whom it is given. As noted above, power is twofold. One kind lies in the presence of faculties granted by nature, by which something may be accomplished by us. The other lies in the use of those faculties, which is not natural like the faculties themselves, but voluntary and deliberate, as Aristotle says. Deliberate choice

(προαίρεσις) is such as to involve habits (ἕξεις), with which the faculties themselves are deeply imbued: bad, if the habits are vicious; good, if virtuous.

If that first kind of power is lacking—those natural faculties upon which the fulfillment of the condition depends—then the thing left under that condition is absolutely impossible and therefore illusory. For example, “Titius leaves to Mevius 100 gold coins, on condition that he cross the Adriatic Sea in a single leap, or touch the sky with his finger.” Jurists count that condition as plainly impossible, and therefore null.

The matter is different in the second case. Great care must be taken to consider who was responsible for the condition not being fulfilled. Whenever the one who seeks the fulfillment of the condition is the one who failed to see it done, it is deemed fulfilled—so say both the jurists and reason itself, especially under law 161, Digest on Rules of Law. But if the failure lies with the one on whom the condition was imposed, it is clearly held to be unfulfilled, and so the agreement becomes void.

For instance, if something is left by will on condition that the heir marry a wife, but he refuses to marry even though he is able to, then since the option was given to him, and he rejected the condition, he is said to have rejected what was left in the will. And certainly, what counts as an “impossible condition” may be inferred from what counts as a “difficult” one.

An example of a difficult condition, according to Cujacius, is in law 4, §1, book 2, Digest on the Status of Freedmen: “Let the slave be free, if he gives 100,000 sesterces.” Now, 100,000 sesterces make up 10,000 myriads—that is, 100 million, a sum that far exceeds a slave’s ability to pay, and whose payment does not depend on his will. If that condition is deemed difficult, what would count as impossible, unless it be something that exceeds nature itself (like stopping the motion of the heavens), or is frivolous (as “if Fulvia, my daughter, bears a vine,” though the testator never had a daughter), or is so convoluted as to imply a contradiction (as “if Titius is heir, then Seius shall be heir,” and “if Seius is heir, then Titius shall be”), or what is contrary to good morals (as “if he does not support his parents”), or contrary to the decrees of the Emperor, or against laws, or against the equivalent of laws?

In short, those are impossible which no one can accomplish, no matter how much he may wish to, or which he has no grounds or motive to accomplish.

Just as some things are physically impossible, so there are others that are morally impossible, being contrary to right and law—and it is for each person to judge which is which. As the Apostle says, “It is impossible for God to lie,” or to violate an oath He has sworn.

Returning to our matter: no one can deny that the condition affixed to the gospel is not in the class of impossibilities. Therefore, if it is not fulfilled, because it failed through the will of the reprobate, who refused to fulfill it, then they are justly judged unworthy of what is promised in the gospel. Thus, the absurdity of the example of a blind beggar being offered a coin on the condition that he open his eyes and name the image on it becomes clear. For to open his eyes is not within him. He may desire it desperately, but he cannot do it.

But the unbeliever, as has been said so often, cannot believe because he will not believe. Therefore, the condition of faith is not unfulfillable in itself. In itself—says the Apostle—it is very easy. As he says in Romans 10:6ff., “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who shall ascend into heaven?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or, ‘Who shall descend into the deep?’ (that is, to bring Christ again from the dead). But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart,’ etc.”

But it is unfulfillable according to them, because the reprobate, by their invincible stubbornness and hardened hearts, refuse to direct their mind to fulfilling it.

Here is a translation of the passage:

The Anonymous Writer proceeds to speak as follows. “Finally,” he says, “as for the desires, laments, and compassions by which God seems to express a wish even for the salvation of those who perish—are these not also deceptive, according to that strict doctrine of the absolute decree? Consider Isaiah 48:18, ‘O that you had paid attention to my commandments.’ And Isaiah 5:3–4, ‘Judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it?’ And Ezekiel 33:11, ‘Turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?’ And Luke 13:34, ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets… how often I would have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood… and you would not.’ How deceitful indeed all this would be, if God, while appearing to long for the salvation of men and to grieve over their destruction, had by His sheer will—without any regard to their deeds—assigned them to eternal damnation. Why all these exhortations, all but prayers, urging men to accept offered grace? Why so many longings and signs of sympathy? Why does He grieve over the foolishness of those who resist grace? Why so many beautiful displays of goodwill, if God, by an eternal decree, has destined so many to death, simply because He so willed?”

We have already removed the suspicion of deceit from God according to Calvin’s doctrine by citing his commentary on Psalm 81. Let us now see whether Calvin agrees with himself in the remaining places.

On Isaiah 48:18, Calvin writes: “Since the people might complain that they were led into exile, the Prophet, anticipating their murmurs, points to the true cause: that is, they gave no room to saving doctrine and were unwilling to receive any fruit from it. And there is no doubt he is alluding to the Song of Moses, where a similar form of expression appears: ‘O that they were wise and would understand.’ The language here—‘O that,’ or ‘if only’—is not merely a rebuke for having neglected the benefit offered them; it is also a fatherly lament for the misery of His children. For God takes no delight in our destruction, and is not severe unless our wickedness compels Him to be. So this is an instance of anthropopathism, by which God expresses grief over the ruin of those who chose to perish rather than be saved. For He was ready to bestow every kind of blessing, had He not been repelled by their obstinacy.”

To try, then, to penetrate into His secret counsel and ask why He did not add to the external word the efficacy of the Spirit would be a foolish inversion of order. For this is not about God's power but about the hardness of man's heart, to render them inexcusable. Certainly, whenever God invites us to Himself, there is in His word the fullness of blessedness—maliciously rejected by us.

As for the words of the commentary on Isaiah 5:3 (already quoted), and on Ezekiel 33, we have also seen Calvin's explanation. But now concerning Luke 13:34, Calvin says: "Note here the force of the words. If God's grace had simply been rejected by Jerusalem, their ingratitude would have been inexcusable. But when God tried gently and kindly to draw the Jews to Himself and even that gained nothing, their arrogant rejection was far more criminal. Add to this their wild obstinacy: for God did not merely once or twice try to gather them, but sent prophets again and again in successive generations—almost all of whom were repelled. We now understand why Christ, in the person of God, compares Himself to a hen: to heap greater disgrace upon that wicked people who spurned His invitations, sweeter and more tender than even a mother's."

Indeed, it was a marvelous and incomparable display of love that He condescended to such gracious entreaties, to tame the rebellious into obedience. So too in John 12:46–47, "I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness." The universal term "whoever" was intentionally added, both so that all believers without exception might enjoy this good as something shared, and also to show that the unbelieving perish precisely because they willingly flee the light.

But then, when He shifts from His gracious offer, He begins to prick the rebellious with, "If anyone hears my words…" Though here also He tempers the severity, since it is suited to the impiety of those who, as if on purpose, reject God. He refrains from judgment on them, because He came for the salvation of men.

We must hold that He is not speaking here about just any unbelievers, but those who knowingly and willingly reject the gospel doctrine shown to them. Why, then, does Christ say He does not wish to condemn them? Because here He lays aside the role of judge for a time, so that all might more readily come to repentance. In this role of Savior, He offers salvation to all without distinction, stretching out His arms to embrace all. And yet He also intensifies their guilt for rejecting such gracious and gentle invitations.

It is as if He said, "See, I stand ready to call all men, and forgetting My role as judge, I set before Myself this one goal—that I might win all, even those who seem already twice lost." No one, then, is condemned for despising the gospel, unless he has rejected the lovely message of salvation and thus willingly brought destruction upon himself.

As for verse 48, "He who rejects me…": let not the wicked flatter themselves—He adds a dreadful threat. The sense is this: "Although I, full of desire for your salvation, rightfully refrain from condemning you, and instead labor to save what is lost, still do not think you have escaped the hand of God."

Similarly in many other places (too many to transcribe here). It is enough if the Anonymous writer sees—indeed, he surely must see—that Calvin consistently held two things: first, that God not only sincerely, but even with a certain memorable affection, willed the salvation of all and, insofar as external preaching is concerned, truly sought it without deceit; and second, that this affection in no way conflicts with His secret will, by which He decreed not to bestow the power of the Spirit to some. And finally, let us add a third point: those vehement expostulations, lamentations, longings, and suchlike expressions—marked by a sorrowful affection—are common and customary in Scripture "Anthropopathism," by which God accommodates Himself to our understanding, and by an admirable synkatabasis [condescension], as it were, descends to us. In every instance of anthropopathism, there are two things. First, the matter is not empty or a mere game, but rather very serious and represents something that truly exists in God, which is analogous to and corresponds with the faculties and motions of our souls, while still preserving the infinite excellence of the divine nature. Second, that which is represented in anthropopathic language is expressed in a way more fitting to the capacities and passions of the human mind than to God's own nature. Therefore, it is certain that no grief, sorrow, or any movement of the divine mind has ever truly occurred. Yet it is equally certain that what God testifies He wills anthropopathically, He truly and sincerely wills in reality—as has so often been said—seriously and without deceiving the minds of miserable men with empty words or a feigned display of mercy.

What, then, our opponent has added—'To what end are so many exhortations?' etc.—is in vain. For indeed they are directed properly and primarily so that men may be converted, which is the most certain and undoubted way to salvation. Secondarily and incidentally, so that if they are not converted (and only those whom God enlightens by His Spirit are converted), they may blame no one but themselves. For they would certainly not be condemned unless they had contemptuously and with incredible obstinacy spurned such great kindness from God.

And here I would end the dispute concerning the sincerity of God and move on to other matters, were I not detained by that other Anonymous writer, who now halts my course. For in that venomous little pamphlet of his, which I've already mentioned, he chiefly tries to demonstrate by this argument that the doctrine of Calvin we defend is untenable (asystaton), namely: whoever desires the end must also necessarily desire the means. To will is to desire. Therefore, if God willed the salvation of all men, He must also have willed the means. He therefore willed that all should have faith, since that is the one means by which we attain salvation. Moreover, just as faith is a means with respect to salvation, so the things necessary to obtain faith—and which are connected to it—are the end. Therefore, it logically follows that God willed to grant all the things necessary for having faith. These are twofold: namely, the external preaching of the word and the internal efficacy of the illuminating Spirit.

Therefore, either God does not will the salvation of all (which Calvin freely grants), or He does not will it seriously but only feignedly—which is unworthy of the divine character—or He gave that internal efficacy of the Spirit to all—which is precisely the doctrine of the Arminian school.

This is an argument he deems so strong that he believes he triumphs with certainty by it.

For my part, I wish that this principle—that one who seriously desires an end must also seriously desire the means—would be stated by them seriously and sincerely, and not feignedly. For since, as we saw above, the highest good is a final end which all men certainly and necessarily desire, and since the reception of the gospel is the one means to attain that end, it follows beyond doubt that all those to whom the supreme good has been revealed through the gospel and deeply known by the illumination of the Spirit must necessarily receive the gospel. And so the whole controversy concerning the resistibility or irresistibility of the Spirit's influence (which in fact is the central point in the dispute over predestination) would be settled and resolved.

But now, since they say that all minds are illuminated by the Spirit, yet few receive the gospel in faith, either they teach that the supreme good is not revealed in the gospel (which is false and even impious), or they assert that it is revealed but not recognized by those whose minds are illuminated by the Spirit (which is absurd and utterly unreasonable), or they say it is recognized but not desired (which conflicts with true philosophy and common sense), or they say it is indeed desired but that the only means to attain it is neglected—which is utterly inconsistent with their own stated premise, and undermines the force of their argument that one who truly and seriously desires the end must also desire the means.

Moreover, they contradict themselves in asserting that God most seriously desires the salvation of all, yet they deny that He gives faith—not just to all, but to anyone at all in actuality. For although they say all can believe if they so choose, yet the fact that most people do not actually come to faith shows that their salvation was not intensely or seriously desired by God. Otherwise, He would not only have granted the ability to believe if they were willing, but also the actual willingness itself—that is, He would have granted the faith—since the end cannot otherwise be attained.

Indeed, even in those who do believe, if the efficacy of the Spirit has gone no further than to place their will in a state of equilibrium, this would be strong evidence that their salvation was not ardently desired by God. For if that equilibrium, as Arminius himself admits, is only meant to render the salvation of men a contingent thing, suspended in a precarious balance, then is He to be said to have greatly desired something which He chose to place on such unstable ground, hanging as it were by a slender thread and liable to be swayed by the slightest impulse toward destruction?

To use one of their own examples: would a father who dearly loves his son and deeply wishes him to survive allow his son's life to depend on the child's own feeble judgment or foolish decision, and to be constantly exposed to mortal dangers—if he had the power to secure it and rescue him from all harm? Could it really be reverence for the son's free will if the father preferred to let him wander among the rocks rather than guide and incline him toward what is safest? Wouldn't he—even if there were no other way—apply some force to his will?

But if it is lawful for them to respond that God has sufficiently shown how seriously He desired the salvation of all men, because He supplied all the means by which they could obtain eternal life if only they used them rightly, and they could use them if they willed—why should it not be equally lawful for us to respond that God has sufficiently shown that He was not alien in heart

from the salvation of the reprobate, in that He did not block their way to mercy so long as they were not unwilling to approach it? And not only that—but also to assert that He demonstrated this was dear to Him, because He invited them so sweetly, so kindly, so persistently to faith and repentance?

Let subtle disputants therefore know: whatever God wills, He wills freely indeed, but not all in the same way.

Indeed, there are some things that God wills so freely that He also wills them necessarily—those things which, with respect to Him, bear the character of a supreme and ultimate end. Thus, He loves Himself. For the ultimate end certainly can have nothing outside itself. In this way, He loves His own holiness and happiness, which is nothing other than loving Himself. For by His very essence He is holy, and He is so abundantly full of all good that He has no need of anything outside Himself to enjoy perfect blessedness in His own immortal being.

But there are also other things that He wills freely—indeed, to speak plainly, at His own discretion—so that He sets the measure of His will and the intensity of His desire according to what, in His infinite wisdom, He sees fit and judges expedient.

Now, the will (or rather volition) has, as it were, two kinds of movements. One, as we have already said above, is confined within such limits that the object or end is not only not repulsive, but rather inclined toward and pleasing to Him, so that, if it were to exist, it would not merely be tolerated or accepted, but would be welcomed, delighted in, and affect Him with a kind of gracious pleasure. But this mode of willing does not go so far as to imply that the one who so wills has determined within Himself to strive with all His power, by whatever means necessary, to bring about the thing toward which He feels this inclination or tendency of will.

The other movement, however, goes further—it pushes the willer to act, to exert Himself, and to work in such a way that, by every means, He finally accomplishes and obtains what He wills. This is no longer a mere delight or pleasure of the soul, but a judgment, a decree, a fixed intention. Surely, one who wills in this second mode also wills the means, and omits nothing which appears necessary for attaining the end. And the mark of such volition is effort, striving, impulse, and the movement or undertaking of all things which are judged to have some bearing on attaining the desired end.

But one who wills in the first mode does not necessarily apply equal care or exert equal effort to obtain the end—indeed, no one ever thought that one who so wills would need to construct such elaborate machinery or stir up such great effort to accomplish the task. Both certainly rejoice if the thing succeeds. If not, both grieve—yet the one who willed more intensely grieves deeply; the other, who willed more mildly, would have preferred things to turn out otherwise, and finds it a burden that they did not, but whatever the outcome, he bears it with much greater calm and does not allow his peace of mind to be greatly disturbed.

Therefore, if we apply these things to our subject: God willed the salvation of His elect by that absolute and, as it were, decretive will. And for its accomplishment, He provided everything that

was necessary. And since He is most powerful, it could not fail to happen that they were brought to the goal of blessed immortality.

As for the salvation of the rest, He willed it indeed, but only insofar that, if they were not saved, they could not complain that the door to eternal life had not been opened to them. Hence, He is not concerned with the outcome—how could there be any anxiety in Him? But He expresses, as an anthropopathism, that concern which we earlier acknowledged with Calvin in the words of the prophets.

So far be it from us to imagine that God either failed of His purpose or felt any sorrow or disturbance of mind because things did not succeed according to His will. And yet we should not doubt that the concern He showed for human salvation was truly serious and free from all falsehood and pretense.

If anyone is astonished that in God there should be any kind of will that only slightly moves Him, and not so much that He applies His infinite power to bring about what would greatly please Him (even if He has not decreed to bring it about), let him take this threefold reply.

First, wherever the Arminians turn, this argument can be turned back against them. For what could be easier than for God to incline the will to believe, after He has enlightened the mind with a light that cannot be rejected, without violating our human nature? Did He not, who illumined the understanding with a light that could not be resisted, also have the power to incline the will with a force that could not be resisted, without any harm to humanity? Especially since man is called “rational” from that part in which resides the faculty of understanding, and not from the faculty of choosing?

Second, although the excellence of the divine nature infinitely surpasses ours, and it is not right to measure His incomprehensible way of willing or acting by the standard of our weakness, yet since God condescends so far as to draw from what in us is subject to defect some likenesses by which to shadow forth His actions, we ought not be greatly troubled if something is ascribed to God in proportion to those movements of our own soul that no one has ever deemed blameworthy. Not that we should think God to be like us—far be such an impious thought!—but that we should not be overly fearful to ascribe to Him something analogous to what in us is not a fault, or even worthy of praise, so long as Scripture leads us to do so and it is understood in a way appropriate to the divine nature.

And now, what could be more manifest than that the human will is affected by objects in various ways, so that we desire some things with utmost intensity, and others only moderately?

In striving after certain ends, we are prepared to exhaust all the zeal, industry, strength, and faculties we possess. But with regard to other matters, are we to restrain the force of our desires, content to show a mere inclination of will by certain faint and minor signs? Shall we throw ourselves wholly and eagerly into one pursuit, giving no thought to anything else so long as we may attain it—rushing toward it with all our might? But in another matter, shall we move slowly and gently, regulating our desire by certain considerations?

Shall we, in one case, rejoice intensely and triumph and exult when we obtain it, but in the other, rejoice moderately? If our hope is disappointed in the first case, shall we grieve excessively and waste away in sorrow? Yet in the second case, if the thing turns out contrary to our wish, shall we be displeased indeed, and feel some pain, but only such as the mind can easily dismiss without letting it descend more deeply, or bite longer, or gain strength?

Remove, therefore, from the nature of God anything which, in those various movements of our own minds, would be unworthy of Him—any weakness which causes us often to fall short of what we desire or hope for, any grief or sorrow, or joy mixed with emotional turmoil. Retain only that one variety of willing—whether more intense or more relaxed. What is there in that which should offend, especially when we are dealing with matters in which it was entirely within God's right not only to set the degree of His love, but even to abstain from love altogether?

In short, this thought should always abide in our minds: that God is God—that is, a mind infinite in itself, whose wisdom is πολυποίκιλος (manifold), inexhaustible; whose will is unsearchable; and whose majesty must be adored with the highest reverence and awe. Therefore, let us receive, embrace, and strive with utmost diligence to apply to the practice of piety and holiness whatever things have been revealed to us by Him. But let us not pry too curiously into those things He has willed to keep hidden from us (and what things they are—and how many and how great!—by the infinite and immortal God Himself!).

Whatever position we take on these matters, there will always remain a great abyss, the breadth, length, depth, and height of which will far surpass our understanding. And we poor little mortals ought not to be ashamed to confess our ignorance.

"As the eyes of bats are to the blaze of day, so is the mind of our soul to the most manifest truths of nature." (Aristotle, Metaphysics)

Let the learned man who has chosen to conceal his name here only remember this quote from Augustine cited earlier: "We ought not to deny what is plain because we cannot comprehend what is hidden."

Chapter X

That Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Conflict with the Practice of Piety

The Anonymous author says: "This doctrine concerning the absolute decree of God appears to be in conflict even with the practice of piety. For by its very nature it removes from the world both hope and fear—those pillars and main supports upon which the practice of piety typically rests. Hope, indeed, is the reward that stirs men to obedience, both active and passive. Fear likewise contributes greatly to working out salvation, as Paul says in Philippians 2:12: 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Now the object of hope is a good thing that can

possibly be obtained, and the object of fear is an evil that can possibly be avoided. For fear is a flight from evil. But no one will flee from that which he knows cannot be avoided; rather, he will prepare himself to endure it, just as Caesar did in the Senate, when he realized he could not escape the fury of his assassins.

But according to that absolute decree, the objects of hope and fear are no longer things that are merely possible, but entirely necessary. For according to Calvin, the elect will infallibly attain salvation, and the reprobate will inevitably be cast into hell. All are determined by this decree, either to eternal life or to eternal damnation. The law of fate stands fixed and immovable. For what is so firmly fixed cannot be undone. And who can resist His will? (Romans 9). A man might as well attempt to block the rising of the sun, or reverse the course of a river, or overturn the entire order of nature, as to seek to change the decrees of God.

Therefore, that doctrine takes away both hope and fear. For when the end is certain and predetermined, human actions are in vain. The devils, whose damnation is fixed and sealed, would cry and pray in vain if they hoped to overturn that decree. And likewise men labor in vain to attain eternal life and avoid hell if it is not given to them to choose life or death—even if they have been appointed to one or the other by the divine decree. What does all their effort accomplish if their damnation is already decreed? What use is there in reading, hearing, praying, giving alms, and spending time and energy, if they are already predestined to death and cannot thereby attain salvation?

On the other hand, if they are absolutely ordained to salvation, then no negligence in good works, no ignorance, no love of the world, no lust of the flesh, nor anything else at all can prevent their salvation. The pastor then preaches in vain, and the people hear in vain—for not even one soul appointed to hell can be snatched from its jaws by all their efforts and labor.

Indeed, if this fatal persuasion infected the minds of men—that all things in heaven are fixed in the way the defenders of absolute decree assert—there would be very few who would put any effort into piety, and most would become like those characters whom the poet described:

“Mortals, be free from care, lift your hearts,

Lay aside useless complaints…

Fate governs the world, and all stands firm by fixed law.”

Does this not clearly show that such doctrine strongly opposes the practice of piety?

And to this we may add the confession of Calvin himself in Institutes, book 3, chapter 23, section 14. “If,” he says, “someone should address the people in this way: ‘If you do not believe, it is because you are already divinely predestined to destruction,’ he would not only foster laziness but also give license to wickedness.” Which is the same as saying: if someone were to depict my doctrine of reprobation before the people in that way, he would open the door to all iniquity and impiety.

An example of this is found in the Landgrave mentioned by Heisterbach in Book of Memorable Histories, book 1, chapter 27. When he was urged by his friends to change his life and repent, he replied, “If I am predestined, then no sins will be able to take heaven from me. But if I am reprobated, then no works will be able to confer it upon me.”

But to the objection that many defenders of this doctrine—and many of its followers—are upright men and outstanding in piety, the reply is similar to what may be said about the Epicureans, who could also appeal to reputable individuals to support their position. Many from among their number were counted as good men. Cicero, though he ultimately condemns their doctrine, nevertheless readily admits this. For in Book II of De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum, speaking about Epicurus, he says: “He found favor with many—and perhaps deservedly. And I myself believe that he was a good man, and that many Epicureans were and are faithful in friendship, consistent in life, etc. It seems to me that their lives show more strength of virtue than of pleasure. For some live in such a way that their lives commend them, while their doctrine refutes them. Just as others are thought to speak better than they live, so these seem to me to live better than they speak.”

So then, we may concede that many who stubbornly hold to the doctrine of God’s absolute decree are upright and pious men—but this is by no means to be credited to their doctrine. For if they were to apply this doctrine to their daily life and conform their morals to it, who would not see that they would become very different men indeed? Tilenus observed this acutely in his book titled La doctrine des Synodes de Dordrecht & d’Alez, mise à l’épreuve de la pratique.

Nor does it carry more weight when defenders of this doctrine say that they do not teach who are the elect and who the reprobate, and that it is by good works that the elect obtain assurance of their election—by which piety is supposedly encouraged rather than extinguished. But who does not see how easily someone could use this as an excuse to live more freely? For he may reason within himself: If I am absolutely elect, or absolutely reprobate, then there is no need for so much effort in piety.

Hence, that Tiberius (as Suetonius says in chapter 69), was rather careless about the gods and religion, because he was devoted to astrological determinism and full of the persuasion that all things are governed by fate. Moreover, according to these theologians, if one must give up all the vices that most men are held by due to their pleasures in order to gain some knowledge of election—and even that knowledge is extremely uncertain and obscure, and easily lost unless preserved by continual exercise of piety—and if this knowledge, once attained, still cannot change the fact that one has been predestined either to life or death, then how few, if they were to reflect on this a little more deeply, would not prefer to abandon the worthless pursuit of this knowledge, indulge their pleasures instead, and avoid torturing themselves with fruitless labor for a knowledge that does them no good?

Nor, finally, is it a strong defense when supporters of the absolute decree say they exhort all to good works and impress upon their hearers that salvation cannot be attained by anyone who does not live piously. For Epicurus himself denied that anyone could live pleasantly who did not also live honorably. But what Cicero said of Epicurus applies just as well to these rigid defenders

of the absolute decree: “As if I cared what he affirms or denies; I ask rather what someone who considers pleasure the highest good ought consistently to affirm.” So too, from De Officiis III. It truly matters little what else the defenders of the absolute decree might teach; what matters is what they must teach, if they are to be fully consistent with themselves.”

This Anonymous author aims to do two things. First, he tries to show as clearly as he can, by argument, the contradiction he perceives between Calvin’s doctrine and the practice of piety. Second, he attempts to answer the objections of his opponents by way of κτὰ ἀπόληψιν (inference from the admitted). Whether he succeeds or not is now to be examined.

As to the first aim: he places the strength of his case in the claim that hope and fear are the chief supports on which the practice of piety rests, and that Calvin’s doctrine undermines both. Then, since it is determined and decreed what shall happen to each individual, he says it is in vain for anyone to strive after piety, since God’s fixed decree cannot be undone. Also in vain, he says, are the exhortations of pastors, which cannot alter God’s eternal counsel. The entire force of his argument reduces to this; in the rest, the opponent seems to have wandered.

So let us begin with that. If the opponent acknowledges no other motive to piety than hope and fear, he would make men mercenaries and would strip piety of its true power. The very appearance of to kalon—the beautiful—in the love of virtue, as even the pagans judged, ought so to move our minds with its wonder that, even apart from hope and fear, we would judge virtue worthy to be pursued for its own sake. If there are some whose piety rests only on those two pillars, then they are far from being accounted true Christians; indeed, they should not even be counted among the good men of philosophy.

As Horace has famously said

“Good men hate to sin out of love for virtue.”

These are well-known marks of the Stoic school concerning virtue, who argued that it should be pursued for its own sake, that it is fully sufficient for living well and happily, and that all misfortunes—even torments—should be despised and counted as nothing. For my part, if all piety is contained in hope and fear, then with both removed, piety itself would immediately perish completely. From this it follows that piety is a bare and empty name, and that God is not to be loved for his own sake. Why then was there any need, since he is neither to be loved in himself, nor does he derive any benefit from our piety, for him to lay down such severe laws concerning piety, with threats of dreadful denunciations?

Could he not have permitted us to be free from that yoke? But this is not what the Anonymous author wants. He does not call hope and fear the only supports of piety, but only its principal ones. Yet even so, this is insufficient. We will not here dwell on his misapplication of Philippians 2, as if that phrase “with fear and trembling” referred to the kind of fear under discussion—when in fact it denotes humility and lowliness of heart, as in 1 Corinthians 2:3, Ephesians 6:5, and Psalm 2:11.

Let us merely say this: in the matter of piety, two things appear to reign—love of God and love of ourselves. The former regards God in himself; the latter does not look to God in himself or absolutely, but rather insofar as he is the rewarder of virtue or the avenger of sin. Now, just as God does not forbid us to be moved in that matter by a certain love of ourselves—which expresses itself in hope and fear—so too he wants love for his own majesty to hold the chief place in religion. For he is the supreme good, and therefore must be supremely loved in himself.

We, however, are not the supreme good, nor do we approach its excellence, except across an infinite distance.

Finally, the claim that Calvin's doctrine abolishes hope and fear is false. For there are two things which produce hope and fear: (1) the presentation of an object that has the character of a future good or evil; and (2) the truth of the statement by which that good or evil is promised or threatened under a condition. That such an object is proposed even to the reprobate is something both Calvin teaches and experience confirms. For these words of Christ are preached indiscriminately to all: "He who believes shall not come into judgment; but he who does not believe, the wrath of God remains upon him."

And that both propositions are true, such that the event necessarily follows when the condition is fulfilled—Calvin everywhere affirms. Certainly, both are seen to be true. For the reprobate perish because they did not believe, and the elect are saved because they believed. And just as on the last day Christ will pronounce condemnation by saying, "Because you did not believe, and did not repent of your sin," and not, "Because you were reprobate, you are assigned to eternal punishment,"—so too, absolution and justification will be declared in this way: "Because you believed and showed your faith by your works," and not, "Because you were elect, you are saved."

This is what Christ himself taught in Matthew 25, and the whole of Sacred Scripture agrees with it.

Therefore, since the true and proper ground for conferring salvation is placed in faith by which we embrace Christ the Redeemer, and the true and proper cause of destruction lies in unbelief—let us suppose (what indeed cannot be, but may be supposed for the sake of teaching, since it does not involve contradiction), that an elect person did not believe, and a reprobate did believe—then the reprobate would be capable of receiving salvation, and the elect would fall away.

This is exactly what the Apostle taught in Romans 8, in the clearest words: "If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live." If he is addressing the elect, then he threatens them with death if they live according to the flesh. If he is addressing the reprobate, he promises them life, provided they earnestly pursue the mortification of the flesh. If he is addressing everyone indiscriminately, without regard to election or reprobation, then he is teaching that this universal proposition is true: "Whoever truly strives after piety in Christ will live, and whoever indulges the flesh will die," even apart from the distinction which God's secret will establishes between men.

If that universal proposition is true, then it may be applied to all and each individual person with unblemished truth.

Therefore, since God's secret will—by which he distinguishes men—is made known only by the event, so that those perceive themselves to be elect who truly believe, and those are convicted of being reprobate whose consciences accuse them of unbelief and unrepented sin—what prevents each person from both hoping and fearing?

What, I ask, could compel anyone to cast aside hope or lay down fear, when God himself declares in his Word that he will make no distinction, whether Trojan or Rutulian, between those who will or will not earnestly pursue faith and piety?

Let us use a comparison here, which that excellent servant of God, Wolfgang Musculus, applied to this very topic. A physician enters a hospital, endowed with such great skill in his art that no one fails to regain health—provided only that they obey his prescriptions. He is also so wise and discerning that, even among such a great number of sick persons, no one escapes his notice: he knows with certainty whether each one follows his prescriptions or not. He therefore foresees that some will be stubborn and insolent, treating the physician as some brazen and ignorant charlatan, and some even becoming so deranged as to revile him as a poisoner. But he also foresees that others will be more obedient and teachable.

Yet this physician suppresses his admirable, divine-like knowledge of outcomes: he does not declare ahead of time which patient will be docile and which disobedient. Instead, he presents his skill to all without distinction—modestly, yet confidently. He offers certain hope of restored health, threatens death to the obstinate, exhorts, warns, invites, and omits nothing that might move the hearts of men, if by any means they might be turned from stubbornness.

I ask you, does he not place both hope and fear equally before their eyes?

The fact that he already foresaw the outcome—did that in any way prevent them from being either drawn by hope or deterred by fear, or from being able or even obligated to be moved by it?

Clearly, the matter stands thus: except that God not only foresaw that the elect would believe, but also decreed that he would powerfully bring it about in them—which he would not have foreseen unless he had decreed to do it. But this decree to soften the hearts of some by a special benefit adds nothing to, and detracts nothing from, the public dispensation regarding the reprobate. They are no less to be raised to hope, or struck with fear.

Calvin himself does not speak otherwise. For example, on Deuteronomy 30:15, "I have set before you today life and death", he comments:

> "He says that he has set before them life—truly connected with genuine and complete happiness—and similarly death with its consequences. There is no one who, by nature, does not desire life and avoid death. Moses, therefore, reproves them as more than mad if they cast themselves voluntarily into every misery. Meanwhile, he signifies that he is not

> hurling about empty and idle words, but that his doctrine is armed with Divine power, so that whoever embraces it will find salvation in it, while no one will scorn it with impunity. Therefore, he did not call the promises and threats of the law ‘sanctions’ for nothing, because for the authority of the law to be firmly established among us, it is necessary that both the reward of obedience and the penalty of transgression be set before us.”

How unjust and unreasonable, then, is the accusation against Calvin’s doctrine—that it teaches faith and repentance to be of no benefit for salvation, and unbelief and impenitence to pose no danger to it? Does he not, on the contrary, teach everywhere that faith is the only path to salvation, and that the way to that same salvation is closed by unbelief alone? Does he not repeatedly proclaim—not just say, but shout—that some are saved because they have believed, and that others perish because of their unbelief?

Indeed, according to Calvin, God permitted some to remain in the corruption of their nature, from which it necessarily followed that they would harden themselves. Others he effectually called, from which faith necessarily followed.

But this in no way contradicts the just and merciful administration revealed in the Word. And since, as I’ve said, that secret decree of God becomes known only by its outcome, just as in the case of the elect it added nothing to the power of exhortations and admonitions by which they were converted in the beginning, so also in the case of the reprobate it should not diminish the weight of the promises and warnings.

Think of it this way: At a feast, no one worries about whether it has been secretly decreed by God whether he will eat or not. If he has any sense, he consults his stomach—whether he is hungry; he looks at the food—whether it is pleasant; he listens to the gracious invitations of the host and reflects within himself whether or not he should respond accordingly. And only after weighing and considering these things does he finally act as seems best.

So too in the preaching of the Gospel and in the acceptance or rejection of faith in Christ: no one is troubled about God’s secret will. Each person is moved in the direction to which he is either drawn by a hunger for righteousness and salvation, or turned away by a soul corrupted by perverse desires, just as a sick stomach recoils from food.

In the same way is refuted what the Anonymous writer adds about the sermons of pastors—namely, that they are heard by the people entirely without fruit. We have already earlier rejected the slander concerning fate. Calvin certainly judged both the thing itself and the name to be cast out of the Christian religion. Thus he speaks, besides the things we’ve already cited, concerning the matter itself in Institutes, Book 1, chapter 16:

> “The doctrine of fate, falsely and maliciously attributed to us, is not one we devise with the Stoics, arising from a perpetual chain of causes and a certain entangled series contained within nature. Instead, we declare that God is the arbiter and ruler of all things, who, by His wisdom, decreed from eternity what He would do, and now by His power brings to execution what He has decreed. From this, we affirm that His providence governs not only

> the heavens, the earth, and inanimate creatures, but even the plans and wills of men, so that they are led to the goal ordained by His providence. It is astonishing that Christian men have tried to tear down this doctrine as if by a conspiracy."

And concerning the term "fate," he says:

> "They slanderously call our doctrine one of Stoic fate, in order to make it odious. This was once objected even to Augustine. Though we are reluctant to quarrel over words, we reject the term fate, both because it belongs to that class of profane novelties which Paul teaches us to shun, and because by its very offensiveness it is used to burden and discredit the truth of God."

We don't believe it necessary to add anything to what has already been said above concerning "fate." But let the Anonymous writer consider this: when he says that according to Calvin's opinion things are "fixed in heaven," he refers either (1) to salvation and damnation themselves, or (2) to the giving or withholding of faith—upon which election and reprobation depend. If he means the former (as he seems to, from these words: "not even one soul, having been marked for hell, can by all the effort and labor of the pastor be snatched from its jaws"), he is slow to grasp what we've often reiterated: that no one's salvation or destruction is fixed in heaven except on this condition: because he will believe, or because he will not believe.

But for clearer understanding, let us draw a distinction and consider first the thing itself in its own nature, and then with respect to God's infallible foreknowledge. From this a great light may be shed on the question at hand. So, if we look at the thing itself, there is nothing so determined that it could not easily be changed, if only the disposition of the reprobate were changed. Make them believe, and you will see them snatched at once from the jaws of hell. Drive them from their stubbornness with persuasion, prayers, exhortations, and threats—bring them at last to embrace Christ sincerely, and you will see them lifted into heaven and secured in the sure hope of immortality.

For it has been established—not by fate, but by the most certain and immovable will of God—that whoever believes shall escape death and obtain eternal life. But if we turn our thoughts to God Himself—who is ignorant of nothing that is to come—then it is indeed fixed and unchangeable what will happen concerning each person. Yet it is fixed upon the same hypothesis: this one will be saved because he will believe; that one will perish eternally because, with absolute certainty, he will obstinately reject My grace.

But when something is decreed on this hypothesis, it introduces no necessity upon the unbeliever to be hardened. The reprobates will not certainly reject the grace of God because God foresaw it—they were not hardened because He foresaw it—but He foresaw it because it would certainly happen. Just as the prognosis of an experienced doctor does not produce a fatal illness, but declares it to be fatal because it is inherently so by nature. And if therefore a thing is to be called fated merely because it cannot happen otherwise—since the foreknowledge of God cannot err—then, however the disciples of Arminius may wish to deny it, they too have introduced fate into Christian doctrine.

They cannot deny that it was going to happen that many would not believe—experience itself proves it. Nor can they, if they are Christians, deny that God certainly foreknew from eternity what would happen. Nor will they deny that His foreknowledge is infallible. So either, according to their own position, it was fated from eternity that many should perish, or they must say that something may be infallibly and certainly future, yet not be called fated in the Stoic or Manichean sense.

If he meant the latter—that the success of preaching is “fixed”—what does that have to do with fate? As the healthy and properly functioning eye, if open and directed toward the object suitably presented, sees it—not by fate, but in accordance with its nature—so also the mind illuminated by the Holy Spirit, when the Gospel is appropriately presented in preaching, perceives and embraces its truth, excellence, and incomparable benefit not by fate, but most fittingly by divine wisdom. And just as no one would blame fate if he deliberately shuts his eyes and thus fails to perceive the light that freely enters, but would blame himself—so too, the person who mocks the cross of Christ and rejects the salvation offered in it out of deliberate malice, ought to blame his unbelief on himself, not on fate. Or if his unbelief must be called fated because it is inevitable—well, let him complain if he wishes, but he himself has made his fate.

As for the words of Calvin that are cited from Institutes Book 3, chapter 23, they are twisted by the disputant into a meaning other than what they actually intend. Calvin does not concede that his doctrine of reprobation, if someone were to depict it vividly before the people, opens a door to impiety and wickedness. These are the flowery slanders of Arminian rhetoric, by which they do not hesitate to malign holy men—and those who, if any have ever since the time of the apostles, have deserved well of the Church of God—with a shameless self-confidence unbecoming to them, to say the least.

Calvin is only warning—using Augustine’s own words—that the doctrine of election and reprobation ought not to be poured out rashly and without discretion. For after confirming his opinion with many testimonies from Augustine, Calvin says:

> “Nevertheless, since the holy man [i.e., Augustine] had a singular concern for edification, he likewise moderated his teaching of the truth with due care to avoid giving offense where possible. For he reminds us that what is truly said should also be fittingly said. If someone were to address the people like this: If you do not believe, it is because you have already been divinely appointed for destruction, such a one would not only encourage sloth but also indulge wickedness. If someone were to extend this statement to the future—saying, You will not believe because you are reprobate—this would be more of a curse than a doctrine.”

What could be said more wisely than this? Since faith must be stirred up in the minds of people, what could be more perverse than to attempt that by means of a doctrine which chiefly serves to diminish the scandal arising from the unbelief of many? But we’ve already discussed that at length above.

As for the story about some Landgrave (I know not whom) that the Anonymous author relates—it is a light and trifling thing. Perhaps it was fabricated by those who, unjustly bearing

us ill-will, desire that we should be cursed by all. But even if it is true, what more common in religion than that twisted minds should abuse the best doctrine, especially when they misunderstand it? Did not the Apostle Peter record that this happened in his own time? Did not Paul, after teaching that a person's justification is placed in the remission of sins alone, warn that the Jews and others of such crooked minds had seized the opportunity either to slander the Gospel or to loosen the reins for every kind of sin and lust?

Let us now come to the κτάληψις (refutation by reply).

First, the disputant charges that defenders of the absolute decree—and many of their followers—are good and devout men. To which he responds that the same thing happened with Epicurus and certain Epicureans, as Cicero said: their lives were at odds with their doctrine. But that comparison is exceedingly poor.

First of all, we have already shown that Calvin's doctrine in no way harms the pursuit of piety. And if there is anything noble in the human spirit, Epicureanism certainly undermines it. For if there are, as Cicero says, any sparks of virtue implanted in nature, that philosophy—which is entirely devoted to seeking and enjoying bodily pleasures—will surely extinguish them.

Second, those whom the Anonymous writer calls good and pious men not only firmly adhere to Calvin's doctrine but actively apply it to their lives, and they both feel and profess that it especially motivates them toward piety. So much so that if you were to take away from them this conviction—that their salvation is not due to some common, universal grace but rather to a peculiar prerogative; that they see and sense for themselves a decisive distinction between themselves and the rest of humanity; that this distinction arose not from their own free will but from a singular efficacy of God's grace toward them; that the most certain hope of obtaining salvation is fixed in their minds together with incredible joy, and that this hope is the irrevocable and indubitable seal of eternal election—they would feel as if a great weight had been taken away from the arguments that incline them toward true piety and holiness.

Not to mention how miserable and unsure they would find their comfort if they were left to themselves and their own free will, unable to ground the perseverance of their faith in the immovable purpose of God. And when that comfort is damaged, holiness itself inevitably falls into ruin.

So if Epicurus lived modestly but philosophized immodestly, it should not surprise us. He did not apply his doctrine to his way of life. But as for those to whom the Anonymous writer does not deny the praise of true piety, if their doctrine were truly a doctrine of contempt for piety, how incredible it would be that it is precisely from that doctrine that they draw those very arguments and reflections that most inflame them toward the pursuit of religion and the love of virtue.

As for Tilenus and his infamous little book, I will say nothing. The Christian world knows who he was and with what lack of restraint in mind and tongue he approached any matter he set out to attack. It is not my place to wrestle with ghosts. But he found, while he lived, someone who suppressed and crushed his unrestrained hostility against the doctrine of our

churches—especially regarding the Spirit's efficacious grace in the calling of the elect—so thoroughly by the force and weight of reason that, unable to yield to the truth and yet unable to respond, he only gnashed his teeth and all but burst with frustration.

The Anonymous writer brings forward a second objection: that the defenders of the absolute decree claim they do not teach who the elect or the reprobate are; and that the elect are to attain knowledge of their election through good works—whence, he says, piety is more likely to be nourished than extinguished. But he responds to this objection by asserting two things: first, that there is no one who would not rather take occasion from this doctrine to live more freely; and second, that the inquiry into election and the inference drawn from good works produces neither certain nor reliable knowledge, and does nothing to change the unalterable outcome of the absolute decree.

The former of these claims has already been refuted. For who, understanding Calvin's doctrine as we explained above, would reason thus within himself: Whether I am absolutely elected or absolutely reprobated, I have no need to pursue piety? Where has Calvin ever taught that anyone—either elect and predestined to eternal life—may therefore neglect faith and repentance? Or that anyone reprobated is in such a condition that neither faith nor repentance can in any way benefit him unto salvation?

On the contrary, Calvin repeatedly insists that all mortals to whom the gospel is announced must firmly hold that there is in God a mercy so great, and in the cross of Christ such power to propitiate, that no one who seeks refuge there will try in vain or suffer rejection. This he has inculcated in the ears of all, many thousands of times. He likewise teaches that God's justice is so rigid and unyielding that no mortal, whoever he may be, will escape eternal punishment unless he has truly embraced Christ by faith, and has shown the sincerity of that faith by a hatred of sin.

Whoever calls this doctrine hostile to piety either sees what is not there because of emotional bias or is deliberately trying to cast suspicion on the truth.

The second claim—that defenders of the absolute decree unanimously teach that no one can know their own election except through its effects, especially in the holiness of their soul—is quite accurate. For he who counts inward sanctity as one of the principal fruits of election does not, for that reason, exclude faith, or peace and consolation, or the other Christian virtues.

But the claim that this knowledge must be very obscure and uncertain, and easily lost, is more questionable. I do not know who the author of this pamphlet is, nor—if I did—would I wish to judge him unfairly. Yet I must express some surprise that, even while we place the marks of election in faith and holiness, he would assert that the knowledge arising from the inspection of those marks is necessarily very obscure and uncertain.

For if he denies that we can demonstrate any absolute decree of election or reprobation based on the fact that some believe and strive earnestly to do good works, while others are not at all turned back from sin, he reasons backwards. For we firmly believe that, in light of the common

condition and corruption shared by all humankind, such a clear distinction cannot possibly arise from anyone's free will—much less from random chance.

From this it is easily understood that the cause of the distinction lies in God alone. Hence those words of the Apostle, which appeal to men's consciences: Who makes you to differ? (1 Corinthians 4:7)

However, in those points which the Anonymous author attributes to our doctrine of the absolute decree, we do not claim to offer formal proof or demonstration of the decree itself.

We are only responding and refuting the arguments by which those like him [the Anonymous author] are accustomed to attack us. If what he meant is that no one can have certain knowledge of their own faith and holiness—could such a statement come from someone who knows what it means to be a Christian?

Some Roman Catholics argue in this way, asserting that no one can be sure of their faith being genuine. And this is perhaps less surprising among those in whom Christian religion is nearly buried. But for those who profess to have embraced the Reformed faith, and who want to be believed to have introduced a purer and more refined doctrine into the Church, and to have vindicated piety from error in a most singular way—who would expect such things to be said by them?

So then—can the one who recognizes and admires the truth of the Gospel, who flees to God's mercy with confidence, who burns with love for Christ, who has said farewell to the world and wages constant war with the remnants of sin, who has been sprinkled with the Redeemer's blood and whose conscience, once tormented by dreadful fears, is now pacified by the sense of the forgiveness of sins—can such a one not know for certain that he has believed in Christ?

Why then would the Apostle so often command us to examine ourselves and diligently search whether we are in the faith, if he thought all such labor would be in vain?

If anyone, therefore, conducts such a self-examination in accordance with the Apostle's instruction, he will discover either:

- A great and memorable faith united with an equal measure of holiness of life;
- Or a moderate faith with corresponding sanctity in due proportion;
- Or neither trace of these virtues at all.

If great faith is found, he will undoubtedly have in it a correspondingly great proof of his election. But I ask—could it really happen that, knowing he has great faith, someone would take this as an opportunity to live more licentiously?

The Apostle certainly thought otherwise, who declares that "the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died" (2 Cor. 5:14); and who affirms that

nothing can separate him from the love of Christ, because he is persuaded that he has been foreknown by God and predestined from eternity (Rom. 8).

The more clearly we see Christ first hanging on the cross and then rising from the tomb, the more certainly we know that we see him, and the more deeply we are affected by that immense and incomprehensible love which led him to offer himself for us, to suffer such dreadful punishment.

Likewise, the more and clearer signs we have that God has had mercy on us in a singular way—though he was pleased to pass over and harden many others—the more powerfully the sense of that incredible benevolence stirs us to piety and inflames us toward virtue.

What if someone finds in himself only a weak faith? What should he then expect? We certainly admit that, if the signs of our faith are weaker, then the consolation derived from it will likewise be weaker—for that consolation arises from faith. But wouldn't the man who, being in such a state, draws from Calvin's doctrine reasons for living sinfully, have to be mad?

My faith is not yet fully developed, he might say; it has not yet sunk deeply and sincerely into my heart; sin has not yet received in me either deadly or truly memorable wounds. Nevertheless, God has pronounced terrible vengeance on those who despise his grace and who sleep sweetly and indulgently in sin. On the other hand, he has promised to be merciful to the one who mourns his own weakness, and by his infinite placability and compassion, he has declared that he will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax, but rather will run to meet with open arms those who, led by repentance, strive to turn to a better life.

So then—should I rather cast off all reverence for God, and eject all concern for righteousness and goodness from my heart? Do you think such a man, so perversely reasoning, should be corrected with arguments, or with fists, or with hellebore?

But Calvin himself interprets his own doctrine otherwise. For thus he speaks in his commentary on Matthew 11:28: "Come unto me, all who labor."

> "We must take note of the universal expression: Christ, therefore, embraces without exception all who labor and are burdened, lest anyone, through perverse doubt, should shut the way to himself."

And on Matthew 12:20:

> "If anyone among us is aware of his frailty, let him reflect how beneficial it is to all to be gently comforted by Christ. I am not speaking of unbelievers who are still utterly void of all grace of the Spirit. Rather, I speak of those who have been called by the Lord, until such time as he kindles in them a fuller light and supplies solid strength. Are they not all like bruised reeds and smoking wicks? Therefore, since Christ has so adapted himself to our weakness, let us learn to embrace his immense goodness with reverence. In the meantime, let no one flatter himself in his vices, but rather let each one strive to make real progress for himself."

And so he speaks throughout Matthew 7:8 and elsewhere.

But if finally someone finds no faith at all in himself upon examining his heart (though one who has never truly felt any power of Christ's Spirit would hardly be inclined to examine whether he has believed), we have already discussed this above, and the matter is clear in itself.

As for what concerns Tiberius, and the mathematical arts, and the belief that everything happens by fate, I have refuted that claim so often that it hardly deserves further examination or refutation now.

Lastly, the disputant objects for a third time that the defenders of the absolute decree say they still exhort all to good works, etc. To this he replies in the same way he did before about Epicurus. But we think the reader will remember how we dismissed that petty quibble earlier.

This one thing we now add: those same individuals whose doctrine the Anonymous author attacks are also those who most earnestly defend and have deeply imbibed this doctrine, that God, in His supreme wisdom, has not only foreseen but wisely ordained all human events—not only in religion but in all other matters—and has willed that all things be subject to His secret will.

And yet, because they know that there is an order established in things—that food sustains life, medicine dispels disease, prudence avoids danger, and labor and industry are the means by which knowledge and wealth are rightly acquired—if any such means are presented as necessary, they by no means neglect any of them, nor are they overly concerned about what God has decreed in His hidden counsel from eternity.

Not because they forget their doctrine of divine providence—as Epicurus ought to have, if ever he had sincerely resolved to pursue virtue—but rather, once they have embraced that doctrine with their heart, they never lose it, and even when they are most occupied in their labors, they are fully certain that nothing will happen which has not been determined by God from all eternity.

But what God has secretly decreed in His most hidden counsel, they do not think pertains to the rule by which human actions ought to be governed.

If their endeavors succeed according to their heart's intent, then they attribute it to God with thanksgiving: that He implanted such a desire in them, that He stirred and directed them, that He provided the means to carry out their thoughts, and that He brought about a favorable outcome by His blessing. And so they gratefully attribute everything well done and well undertaken to God's glory, as is right.

But if things go otherwise, they accept it as sufficient to submit to the will of God, seeing that the outcome occurred after they had done their duty, and they console and ease the pain of failure by reflecting that the event did not occur rashly, absurdly, or without counsel, but according to God's wise and deliberate plan.

And not one of them has ever been found whose belief in God's providence has kept him from handling and managing other matters wisely. Why then should they act differently in the matter of religion?

Especially when they clearly recognize that, however great the diligence, vigilance, and carefulness one may apply in managing human affairs, it often happens that our hopes are disappointed by the intervention of divine providence.

But in religion, this has never happened, nor can it happen: that anyone who believes in Christ should fail to obtain salvation. And as the Apostle says, he shall not be "put to shame by his hope." And because this makes the hope much more certain, so also it more strongly and steadily inclines and drives the heart to persevere in the path of salvation.

We are not ignorant that there are some in whose minds this thought sometimes arises: What if God does not will to show me mercy or grant me faith? What if He has decreed from eternity to withhold from me that grace which alone can bend my will to believe? What good will it do me to want or to try, since it is not in my power? Or how shall I will or try, when the very willing and trying cannot occur except by the Spirit of God?

This is indeed a thought unworthy of wise minds, and yet it can be resolved in many ways, and quite easily. First of all, no position can be taken on this matter that does not suffer from the same difficulty—if indeed it is a difficulty. Imagine, as Arminius posited, that all wills are once placed in a state of equilibrium by enlightenment of the intellect, but that someone stubbornly resists that grace and is therefore abandoned and hardened by God (for this is how he explains hardening). From that point forward, the enlightenment ceases. The will is no longer in equilibrium but determined toward unbelief. Now suppose a hardened person is exhorted to believe and repent, which happens daily (since preaching is directed indiscriminately to all, and does not distinguish between hardened and non-hardened persons). Why should not such a person also say to himself: Why does this preacher address me, since God no longer wills to enlighten me? Why try to soften a will that God Himself has hardened? What good is it for me to strive or struggle? And indeed, how can I strive or struggle, unless first illuminated—which God has decreed to deny me? Who can resist God's will?

Let me add something more. Suppose the mind remains enlightened and the will hangs in equilibrium—still, the process of believing and repenting would be no easier. Arminians, if they are Christians, must at least admit that God has foreseen of every enlightened person whether he will make good or evil use of the grace offered. Nor dare they say that God's foreknowledge can be mistaken. So why should not the enlightened person reason this way: How can I believe, if God has foreseen that I will not believe—and His foreknowledge cannot fail? What use is it to try to believe, if God has foreseen that I will not, and I cannot change what is certain to come?

This difficulty applies not only to this argument but to all human action. For all events are so governed by divine providence that nothing can succeed unless God assists it. Hence those words of James: If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. Shall we then prevent our minds from acting on any thought by saying, What if God does not will it? What if He does not

grant me life or strength? What is the point of trying to act at all? Will there be anything at all which such a scruple does not deter you from doing?

Indeed, will we even allow ourselves to think at all? For just as we live, move, and have our being in God (Acts 17:28), so also we think, perceive, and reflect in Him. Suppose you begin to think, and suddenly that foolish and untimely thought intrudes: How do I know if God has decreed that I shall think or not? What if He withholds my ability to reason? What utter confusion and paralysis of mind, what torpor and inactivity, would arise from such thinking!

I would ask those who raise these objections: Do you wish to believe the gospel or not? For if they care nothing about believing, they are not worthy to engage in such a discussion. For one who does not love the Father, nor even wants to, and hardens himself in that refusal because it is not within his power and depends entirely on God's arbitrary grace—such a one does not need a theologian but a torturer, one who can force his twisted and defiant mind toward what is better.

But if they do wish to believe, then either (as noted above) they have already believed, or they are on the verge of believing and have already felt the beginnings of the Spirit's power, and are no longer in doubt because they are already being drawn.

Thus, they only trouble themselves needlessly. And if this is indeed the beginning and first spark of grace, then it is a sign of God's peculiar love, and it ought to serve as an encouragement toward fuller faith.

So, the conclusion of the matter is this: these two aspects of the divine will—the one that commands duty, and the other that determines what shall occur—serve different roles in the life of piety. The will that commands draws us into action by being the object, while the other impels action by changing the faculty itself, which is otherwise blind and insensible to the object.

The nature of the object is to move the faculty and draw it to act, using arguments drawn from honor, usefulness, delight, and whatever else carries the appearance of the good (τὸ ἀγαθόν). But the action of that which corrects the faculty is altogether different—not moral, for it does not merely apply arguments; nor physical, for the Spirit is beyond all natural scope—but is utterly incomprehensible and all-powerful, freeing the mind from those impediments that kept it from admitting the object.

Thus the faculty (i.e. the soul's own power) has two operations: one directed outward toward the object, the other reflexive, turning back upon itself to examine the strength by which it was made able to grasp the object.

Since these two actions differ in nature, they also operate at different times and moments. In the first stage, just as in the presenting of the object there is no mention of the power that prepares the faculty, so one should not be thinking about it. That is, no one invites another to faith by saying, Believe, because God decreed from eternity that you would believe or not believe. Rather, one says, Believe in Christ, because He is the Savior of the world.

So when the faculty is engaged in grasping the object, it should not think about whether God decreed from eternity that it would believe or not. One must look to Christ alone, direct all the soul's powers toward Him, carefully observe the object of faith from every angle: how true it is, how useful, how necessary, how delightful and full of joy and wonder, how divine in every respect—until you recognize and embrace the immense mercy revealed in Him.

Let not your thoughts of your own powerlessness deter you. If a preacher were urging you to divert the path of the sun, or still the tides, or restrain the winds, you might rightly protest, I can't do that—why try the impossible?

But when all that is asked is that you attend to the gospel, assent to something extremely credible, and not despise salvation and eternal life, can you plead impotence without also displaying immense malice and irrationality?

After you have believed in Christ, then indeed you may reflect inwardly, and think upon God's power and eternal counsel: that He alone could turn your heart from evil and apply it to Christ, and from this take an infallible argument for your eternal election, since nothing that God does in time is not also decreed from eternity.

Indeed, just as in all other affairs you do not first inquire whether God will give you strength, but instead consider what is useful, and then after success give thanks to God who gave you ability and strength—so it should be in the matter of faith.

Chapter XI

That Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Lead to Despair

This is the disputant's final and most excessive assault—this is the blow he imagined would be fatal to the Calvinist doctrine. That doctrine, he says, appears to drive men into despair.

I. For it casts men into the most grievous temptations. For one who believes in God's absolute decree can too easily be persuaded by the devil that he is among the number of the reprobate—since, according to that doctrine, the reprobate are much more numerous than the elect. Calvin himself says: "No temptations strike the faithful more grievously or dangerously than this one. It is a rare person," he says, "whose mind is not, at times, struck by this thought: 'Whence is your salvation, if not from God's election?'" And of election, what revelation is there to you? If once this thought gains a foothold in anyone's mind, it either tortures the miserable soul perpetually with dreadful torment or renders it utterly stunned and paralyzed.

And shortly after, he writes: "Therefore, if we fear shipwreck, we must carefully avoid this rock—one on which no one ever strikes without being destroyed."

However dangerous this temptation may be, an example may be found in a certain Petrus Ilosuanus in Hungary, who, when he was about to hang himself, left behind a note in his study stating that he had shared Calvin's view on reprobation—namely, that God does not deal with men according to their good or evil works, but that there are certain hidden causes of human conditions; and that he himself was a vessel formed for dishonor, and therefore, even if he had not lived so wickedly, he nevertheless could not have been saved. And that these dreadful divine apprehensions had become unbearable for him—so he ended his life by voluntary hanging. "I depart," he said (as Georgius Major records in his commentary on 2 Timothy 2), "to the infernal flames, an eternal disgrace to my homeland. I commend you to God, whose mercy has been denied to me."

It is thus established, they argue, that this doctrine is capable of leading men into perilous temptations.

"II. Those whom this doctrine leads into temptation, it also leaves there. For the one tempted is rendered incapable of receiving consolation, and the comforter incapable of administering it. This will easily become apparent if the doctrine is brought down into practice. For, as Tilenus teaches in the previously cited book, the foundation of all solid consolation is this: that Christ, by His death, has satisfied divine justice on behalf of the whole human race; and that by the power of this satisfaction it has been effected that whoever believes in Christ should not perish but have eternal life.

But what place can that consolation have for one who thinks that, by the absolute decree of God, the greater part of mankind has been rejected? For why should not the tempted soul object: "How do I know that I am among the small number of those who are to be saved?"

And as for the comforter, when he asks whether the afflicted person has ever felt some operation of faith within himself, and says that this faith may still remain—even if it seems absent—because faith can never be entirely lost: what will he say if the tempted person, instructed by Calvin in Institutes 3.11.10, replies, "We do not doubt that many are affected by some taste, and eagerly seize Christ and perceive His divine power, who, by the false simulation of faith, not only deceive the eyes of others but even their own hearts"? For the human heart has so many hiding places for vanity, is so entrenched in the dens of lies, and is so concealed by hypocritical self-deceit, that it often deceives even itself.

Now, what can the comforter say to this objection? I do not see. How much better to console the afflicted and tempted person with the satisfaction of Christ and with the love of God that stretches far and wide to all—even to the despairing—by pressing upon them the universal promise of grace and the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction!

In this combat of temptation, this is the only refuge to which we can flee with safety. This is the true and only method for overcoming temptation. But the opinion concerning the absolute decree utterly strips a man of this method of consolation—it tears away his armor, his shield, and leaves him entirely exposed, stripped of divine weaponry and laid bare before the devil.

What, then, remains for comforting those who have been raised under Calvin's doctrine of the decree? What methods of consolation are available to a comforter who subscribes to this doctrine? What remains to him except that miserable counsel: that the afflicted person should examine himself, whether he is grieved by the sense of his sins, whether he is burdened under their weight, whether he desires deliverance through Christ—and if he finds this in himself, then let him confidently believe he is among the elect?

But what a wretched consolation that is! Nor would a comforter, who sincerely professes that rigid doctrine, dare—if pressed to swear by oath—to affirm that this sense of sin and desire for deliverance is a certain and infallible sign of election, since he also knows that such things can belong even to the reprobate.

Therefore, that doctrine appears to serve not the comfort of the afflicted, but rather to promote despair.

Since, then, that doctrine of the absolute decree of reprobation contradicts the tradition of the Church, draws upon itself infamy and hatred for its defenders, introduces a kind of fatal necessity more severe than that of the Stoics or Manichees, contradicts the testimony of Holy Scripture and the attributes of the divine nature—namely, the holiness, mercy, justice, and truth of God—and is utterly foreign to the practice of Christian piety and readily produces despair in the afflicted: surely, the person who has not fully surrendered both faith and reason to the Synod of Dort may rightfully doubt the truth of this doctrine."

So then, let us see whether that massive effort truly falls flat. And as to the first matter—that quotation of Calvin, wherever it came from (for the disputant did not cite the place)—what it says is true. For it is indeed the case that Satan sometimes assails the minds of the faithful with this temptation, and thereby injects into their hearts the sharpest and most dangerous anxieties. Nor can we deny this, since it is confirmed by more than a few examples.

But the question must be asked: where does this really come from? Is it from the very nature of the doctrine itself, or rather from the weakness of the flesh and the cunning of the Devil?

In truth, that same Calvin, in his commentary on the words of the Apostle—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin?"—speaks this way: The Apostle presses further, objecting that it would seem grace gives room for people to remain in sin. For nothing is more prone than for the flesh to indulge itself under any pretext it can find. Moreover, Satan invents every possible slander by which he might bring discredit to the doctrine of grace; and that is not so difficult for him to do. For whatever is said about Christ sounds foolish to the human mind, and so it's no surprise that upon hearing of justification by faith, the flesh runs headlong into many errors.

So then, if—as it often happens—the Devil abuses the doctrine of grace in order to stir our hearts toward sin, is the doctrine therefore to be condemned?

For my part, I will never find it strange that Satan, the most cunning of deceivers, tries to twist the doctrine of election—which was especially designed to bring consolation to souls—into an

occasion for despair. Especially since he is not ashamed to use the doctrine of the grace of Christ—the only thing that delivers us from sin—in order to reinforce the dominion of sin.

But this cannot be blamed on the nature of the doctrine itself, as neither Calvin conceded, nor will truth itself allow.

And as for Calvin himself, the matter is plain. For he is often accustomed to place no small portion of our consolation in the doctrine of election. Nowhere does he do this more clearly or more richly than in his commentary on the final verses of Romans 8—a passage as divine as any in all Scripture.

And now as to the nature of the case itself, the truth stands thus: Satan does not usually torment with this kind of temptation those who have not yet felt any of the power of Christ's grace, nor any efficacy of the Spirit. He targets those whom he knows are not wholly devoid of the grace of God.

Therefore, when these souls are in the midst of that spiritual struggle, they either fix their eyes upon the revealed will of God—where the mercy of God is set forth in the cross of Christ—or else they turn their minds toward the secret decree that they suppose God has made concerning themselves.

Now suppose they do look toward the cross of Christ. What is it they see there that, according to Calvin's doctrine, should terrify them? Why are they anxious? Why are they troubled?

Do they fear that Christ's death is not sufficient to expiate sin? But this is the very Son of God—His only begotten—whose blood is powerful enough to blot out the guilt not only of one world, but of many.

Do they doubt whether that propitiation belongs to them? Yet Calvin himself says that it is set before all; and that no one who draws near to God is ever cast out, for God is supremely merciful and kind. But let us hear Calvin speak for himself.

Commenting on John 7:37, where Christ cries out: "If anyone thirsts…", Calvin writes:

This very fact is extremely useful for us: that the Evangelist portrays Christ crying out with a loud voice, so that all who thirst may come to Him. For from this we learn that this doctrine is not whispered in secrecy to a few, but publicly declared to all so that none may be ignorant of it—except those who willingly stop their ears and reject the clear and resounding call.

Christ invites all to partake of His blessings, provided only that they are conscious of their own need.

Now would Calvin teach that anyone—anyone who is pressed down by a sense of sin, and is seeking consolation in God—would find that their expectation will be in vain? Certainly not! For how often has Calvin said that even the rebellious and obstinate are continually called to repentance by God's daily invitations?

Thus, in his commentary on Isaiah 65:2, Calvin writes:

“I have stretched out My hands all day to a rebellious people. There, God accuses the Jews and complains of their ingratitude and obstinacy, rebuking them for making His invitations in vain.By the stretching out of His hands, God signifies His daily invitation. And He stretches out His hands to us in many ways.

For whether by action or by word, God draws us to Himself. But this passage refers especially to His word. God never speaks to us without at the same time stretching out His hand, that we may be joined to Him and, in turn, feel His nearness. He even embraces us and shows fatherly care, so that if we do not obey His invitation, the blame lies solely with us.

He even intensifies the charge against us by the very persistence of His calls—that God, through long ages, did not cease to send prophet after prophet, and (as He says elsewhere) rose early to pursue the same concern until evening. The Lord thus testifies that it was not He who failed to restrain the people and pursue them with His favor.”

There is a double witness to this: first from Isaiah, and then even more clearly in Romans 10:21, where Paul repeats the same words: “All day long I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people.” There, the Apostle confirms that God called Israel both by His word and by all kinds of kindness, by which He sought to draw them. He uses both means to call humans: by demonstrating His good will toward them.

Hence, when men reject the doctrine, their contempt is all the more detestable, because it is contempt of a God who has acted like a father with outstretched arms, as if ready to receive His son back into His bosom. That is the force of the phrase “stretching out hands”. And He does it “every day” so no one might think God is weary or begrudging in doing good—even though human persistence in rejection makes no headway.

You can find very similar statements in Calvin’s commentaries on Jeremiah 7:13; 11:7; and 35:14.

Now let the argument turn to the second half of the question: suppose the believer, while wrestling in spiritual agony, turns his thoughts toward the hidden decree of God. What, according to Calvin’s doctrine, will he find there that should terrify him?

Since the power of the Spirit by which we believe descends from God’s purpose of election, anyone who feels sorrow for sin, who sighs, who longs for God’s mercy and pardon, already begins to see—not obscurely—signs of his own election. For none of that comes from within himself; all of it arises from some movement of the Spirit’s power.

From that, it’s easy to reason this way: God must have loved me with a special love, when He was pleased to grant me communion with His Spirit, which He denied to so many others. And if He sought me out even when I was buried under sin, oblivious of Him altogether, why shouldn’t I hope that, being stirred by my prayers, He will pour out even more grace and make me feel more deeply His love?

That line of reasoning stirs up a powerful desire to pray.

If the opponent objects that the believer, when he looks inward to his own weakness, is struck with fear because of the risk of falling away, we reply: that's irrelevant. The doctrine of election and reprobation does not cause human weakness to exist, nor does it in itself make fear more intense or harder to bear.

What's more, Calvin's doctrine teaches that God's mercy is always open—so anyone who earnestly turns from sin, no matter how faintly or feebly, may find rest there.

For that condition which God requires in the gospel (faith and repentance) is both attainable and constantly available throughout life. As long as someone lives—wherever and whenever, even in the very jaws of death, he may still flee to God's mercy and embrace salvation in the cross of Christ.

Even those about whom the Apostle says those dreadful words in Hebrews 6—"it is impossible to renew them again to repentance"—even they would not be shut out from salvation if only they could bring themselves to believe in Christ. It is impossible, not because Christ's death is insufficient, but because God has justly and wisely resolved to punish their contempt, not only of Christ's sacrifice, but of the Holy Spirit, of whom they had tasted. That is, it is impossible not by nature, but because their own hellish pride and malice make it so, having trampled Christ and treated Him as an object of scorn. To this is added the fury of their own conscience, which sets their souls aflame with despair and hatred toward God.

That they do not repent is their own fault, and that they do not obtain pardon is because of their hardness of heart and impenitence. But if they did repent, they would surely find God's mercy and the power of Christ's sacrifice inexhaustible.

Finally, when that thought suddenly arises in the mind that disturbs the peace of conscience—what stronger remedy for comfort and strength than Calvin's doctrine itself? Which teaches that God's purpose of election not only brings about faith initially, but also nourishes, sustains, confirms, and brings it to full fruition in salvation?

Tell me then: do those who ground their assurance in man's free will—that weak and fluctuating thing, as mutable as wind and wave—offer greater consolation? When even Adam, with far fewer temptations and greater strength, fell?

As for the second claim made by the opponent—that those driven into temptation by Calvin's doctrine are also left there without help—this is equally false.

He [the opponent] asserts that there are only two sources from which, in such spiritual agony, a person may draw consolation: one, in the doctrine of Christ's death, if it is affirmed that He made satisfaction for all, provided they believe; the other, in the signs and evidences by which each person may discern that he has been elected by God.

He says the latter is confused and uncertain, but the former is clear, safe, and overflowing with consolation. Let us, then, take a closer look at both.

Regarding the first, two points must be made.

First, Calvin nowhere said that anyone is shut off from access to the mercy of God revealed in the cross of Christ, provided they believe. No one, who gives proper weight to Scripture and does not elevate their own intellect beyond due measure, has ever more broadly proclaimed the promise of grace, extended the satisfaction of Christ to more people, or more magnificently declared that God's mercy is open and available to all. Many such testimonies have already been produced above, and there is no need to repeat them here.

The most fitting words come from his commentary on John 1:16: "From his fullness we have all received." There, Calvin begins to teach about Christ's office, which contains the abundance of all good things, so that no part of salvation needs to be sought elsewhere. Yes, in God there is the fountain of life, righteousness, power, and wisdom, but this fountain is hidden and inaccessible to us—and therefore God has set before us the fullness of all these gifts in Christ, that we might draw from Him freely.

He is ready to flow into us, if we will only open the way through faith. And Calvin adds that we should have no fear that anything is lacking—as long as we draw from the fullness of Christ, which is so perfect in every way that we will truly feel it to be an inexhaustible fountain.

So also, on the words "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world", Calvin explains: By saying "the sin of the world," he shows that this grace is extended freely and indiscriminately to the whole human race. Now, since the benefit is offered to all, it is for us to embrace it. Let everyone conclude for himself that nothing hinders him from being reconciled in Christ, provided he approaches by faith.

So if anything can lift up a distressed conscience—and surely it can do much—then it's evident that Calvin's doctrine provides a most abundant source of consolation.

Second, not only did Calvin not block access to this fountain of comfort, he openly declared it to all, even pointed to it clearly as with an outstretched finger, and called everyone with a loud voice to drink from this wellspring of joy. He even strictly forbade anyone who desired solid joy to trouble themselves by anxiously and curiously searching into God's hidden will.

Thus, in his commentary on the Apostle's words ("In this the love of God was made manifest to us, that He sent His only Son into the world"), he writes:

> "From the pure goodness of God, as from a fountain, Christ with all His benefits has flowed out to us. And just as it is necessary for us to know that we have salvation in Christ because the heavenly Father freely loved us, so also, if we seek firm and full certainty of God's love toward us, we must look only to Christ. Therefore, they are rushing to their own ruin who, neglecting Christ, inquire into what may have been decreed about them in God's secret counsel."

And in his commentary on John 3:17, Calvin says:

> "That Christ did not come into the world to condemn the world, marks the true end of His coming. For what need was there for Him to come to destroy us, when we were already destroyed many times over? There is, then, nothing to see in Christ except this: that God, in His infinite goodness, willed to help us and to save us who were perishing. And whenever our sins press upon us, or Satan tempts us toward despair, we must set this shield before us: that God did not will for us to perish eternally, for He appointed His Son to be the salvation of the world."

Calvin explains this point even more clearly elsewhere: he never taught that no one can know of their election through faith. The one thing he did teach is this: for all those who are pressed by the sense of their sin, who are led into that grief which Paul calls "according to the world"—a grief which overwhelms and drowns the soul—there is still a most certain refuge prepared in the cross of Christ.

And concerning the knowledge of election, which may arise from the view of faith, he speaks especially beautifully in John 6:40, where Christ says:

> "This is the will of Him who sent me: that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life."

Calvin writes:

> "He now defines the method by which salvation is to be obtained. These are the parts of salvation entrusted to Him by the Father: and now He defines the way in which that salvation is to be had—if we obey the Gospel of Christ."

Calvin had touched on this earlier, but here he expresses more clearly what was previously said more obscurely.

So, if God wills to save by faith those whom He has elected, and executes His eternal decree in this way, then anyone who is not content with Christ and instead searches curiously into eternal predestination is, as far as it depends on him, desiring salvation outside of God's counsel.

God's election is in itself hidden and secret, but He makes it known through the calling with which He dignifies us. Therefore, those are mad who seek either their own or others' salvation in the labyrinth of predestination, and do not hold to the way of faith that has been set before them. Indeed, by this perverse speculation, they undermine both the force and the effect of predestination. For if God has elected us for this end—that we should believe—then take away faith, and election is mutilated.

But in God's counsel, it is not allowed to break the continuous and orderly chain of beginning and end. Just as divine election brings with it the calling of each individual, so when God effectually calls us to faith in Christ, that should have the same value in our minds as if He were

confirming His decree about our salvation with a stamped seal. For the testimony of the Spirit is nothing other than the seal of our adoption.

Therefore, each one's own faith is a trustworthy witness of God's eternal predestination, and to inquire further is practically a kind of sacrilege.

We said earlier that faith has two acts:

1. One by which the mind is directed outward to Christ, whom God testifies to be merciful and gracious to all who believe.

2. The other, by which the mind is turned back upon itself, and through self-reflection perceives that there is no natural power within that could have produced the first act of faith.

At the same time, one recalls what Scripture teaches: that no one can come to Christ unless drawn by God, and no one is drawn who has not been chosen for that end from eternity. From this springs the knowledge of election and incredible consolation.

So it's true, as the Anonymous opponent says, that the first source of Christian comfort (Christ's satisfaction) overflows with joy like a great stream. But he is quite wrong in thinking that the second (the marks of election in the believer) offers nothing from which a person, crushed by the sense of sin, may receive certain comfort.

He seems to think this simply because Calvin said that some people simulate faith in a way that deceives not only the eyes of others but even their own minds. From this, the opponent concludes that no one can have such clear knowledge of their own faith as to possess in it a certain and infallible evidence of their election.

Let us cite Calvin's actual words when discussing those whom Scripture calls "temporary believers" (πρόσκαιροι). He says:

> "This kind of faith—whether you call it a shadow or an image of true faith—has no real substance and does not deserve the name of faith at all. Though we will discuss this more fully later, it may be briefly mentioned here. Simon Magus is said to have believed, but shortly afterward revealed his unbelief. When faith is attributed to him, we do not think he merely pretended with words while having nothing in his heart. Rather, we believe that, conquered by the majesty of the Gospel, he gave some kind of assent, and in this way acknowledged Christ as the author of life and salvation, and was even glad to be numbered among His followers."

So also in Luke's Gospel, those are said to believe "for a time," in whom the seed of the Word, before it bears fruit, is choked—or, having no root, it withers and dies. Such people, Calvin says, we do not doubt were affected with some taste of the Word, and eagerly received it.

But Calvin clearly did not think that such a “faith” was true faith. The thing itself shows it. If it’s not true faith, then it has none of the marks of true faith.

Thus, the Anonymous opponent wrongly concludes that just because people with false faith can’t see evidence of their election, the same must be true for those with true faith.

Now then—does he suppose that the marks of counterfeit faith and genuine faith cannot be distinguished? Or that, even if they are distinct, the signs of true faith are not so clear that one may be convinced of their own genuine faith?

Either way, I say, both are absurd—and unworthy of a learned and wise man.

- The first is absurd, because as truth and falsehood differ, so necessarily must they differ in their properties. False faith may imitate true faith to some extent, but if you look just a bit more closely, the disguise vanishes. It can only deceive those whose senses are very untrained.

- Who with any skill fails to tell gold from brass?

- What experienced doctor fails to distinguish true health from a merely outward appearance of it in someone who is still diseased?

- A swelling caused by dropsy may, to the untrained, appear similar to robust health. A flushed face in someone with lung disease may look like a healthy color—but both will soon betray themselves. The disease cannot hide forever.

The second error is also false: because things that differ in nature and properties must also cause different perceptions of themselves. As Aristotle says, some people who don’t possess true knowledge but only hold false opinion may cling to that opinion just as stubbornly as if it were founded on clear and evident demonstration. He gives the example of Heraclitus in his Ethics.

He also noted that people often confuse cleverness (δεινότης) with prudence (φρόνησις)—especially in Book VII, Chapter 5. There’s nothing to prevent a man who is merely cunning, or even who leans toward a kind of wicked shrewdness (which lies at the heart of vice), from thinking himself truly prudent. Yet those habits are undoubtedly different in nature, and each has its own distinctive marks.

Nor does it follow that because a person stubbornly holds to his opinion, or because he sees clearly what is advantageous or conducive to a goal, that he therefore cannot be certain of his own knowledge, or that a truly prudent man cannot know his own prudence.

The man who merely holds an opinion can indeed cling to it fiercely, but he doesn’t possess that mental certainty born of truth itself, which shines with its own light and generates certainty in the mind.

The one who truly knows, who clearly sees the truth and feels the power of demonstration, knows with absolute assurance that he is not in error. Just as in each of the bodily senses there is a kind of infallible awareness of their proper object—so much so that nature has perfectly fitted the thing perceived (τὸ αἰσθητὸν) and the power of perception (τὸ αἰσθητήριον)—so too, between the intellect and the truth there exists a natural proportion, or as Aristotle calls it, a kind of rightness (δικαιότης). This not only produces knowledge, but also a sense of knowing—an awareness that does not allow one to doubt that he has knowledge.

Therefore, when truth is presented clearly and supported by obvious reasons, anyone who merely holds an opinion is either immediately dislodged from it, or else clings to it in a way that exposes his own irrational stubbornness. He persists through mental obstinacy or emotional disturbance, resenting defeat and fearing the loss of reputation if found mistaken.

By contrast, the one who truly knows cannot be shaken from his conviction, which is rooted as deeply in his soul as if planted by strong roots. For truth is not the opposite of truth, and falsehood cannot overcome truth once it penetrates deeply into the mind.

And that unshakeable confidence, that unwavering conviction in the truth, does not come from dullness or irrationality, but rather from the clarity of the truth itself, which so deeply imprints itself on the intellect that no argument can tear it away.

And so it is with prudence. The cunning man deceives himself, because he keenly perceives the means to attain a goal, makes subtle judgments, and cleverly organizes the path to success. If nothing interferes, he often brings things off cleverly and effectively. And he imagines that because he sees and acts well in those matters, he must be prudent.

But the truly prudent man also judges rightly about the goal itself, and always sets before himself an honorable end. He is shaped and governed by moral virtue, which is the inseparable companion of true prudence.

Who would doubt that the Apostle Paul both truly believed and was fully certain of his own faith? And the evidence for that certainty did not come from any extraordinary revelation, as some suppose, but from the very nature of his own faith, which revealed itself both inwardly and by its fruits.

He says that he both believed and knew whom he had believed. And everywhere he describes the remarkable virtues he drew from communion with Christ. So why should not every believer, after carefully examining himself, make the same judgment about himself? Our faith differs in kind from Paul's not at all—but only perhaps in degree.

Therefore, the signs and patterns of true faith are the same in all believers—like the same features of a face. If Paul's faith was fuller and stronger (as surely it was), then it manifested those signs more clearly, but not differently. If a faith is true, its signs may be fainter, but they are no less real.

Tell me—can a man really be unaware of his own faith, who perceives in himself:

- Hatred of past sin
- Sincere love of holiness
- Strong confidence in salvation, joined with a humble, even anxious watchfulness against danger
- Great joy and comfort, combined with modesty and honesty, free of pretense and deceit
- A heart that runs toward Christ, clings to His cross, burns with zeal for His glory and love for his neighbor
- And though not yet perfect, is filled with grief for remaining sin and longs for perfection and immortal blessedness?

If such a man does not claim Christ to dwell in him, and himself to dwell in Christ, then what would prevent it?

Even a weak pulse shows that life is present. Actions that mostly conform to reason, though not perfect, still show a sound mind. Even moral lapses that occasionally occur under great emotional pressure do not erase the habit of virtue.

Why then should not the signs of true faith likewise provide clear and certain evidence of its genuineness?

Therefore, it is clear that if that Hungarian man, Petrus Ilotus, whose case the disputant mentioned, resolved to end his life in that shameful and wicked way, it was not the fault of Calvin's doctrine, but rather due to either madness or a temptation of the devil.

And such examples—whether fabricated for slander, or repeated maliciously—should not affect us more than the horrifying death of Francis Spira, which has never led us to abandon the belief that some people are beyond repentance (ἀνακαινίζειν εἰς μετάνοιαν).

As Johannes Sleidanus reports, Spira, under the burden of apostasy, was driven into dreadful fear and plunged into the abyss of despair. But even if something similar happens, the true cause lies in the man's own unbelief and impenitence, which led him to believe that God's mercy was closed to him. Yet the doctrine of the apostles remained pure and untouched.

So having refuted the arguments of the adversary, let us proceed to demonstrate the truth of Calvin's doctrine.

CHAPTER XII

That Calvin's Doctrine Concerning the Dispensation of Evangelical Preaching Rests Upon Divine Scripture

We said at the beginning of this disputation that there are two main issues involved in this controversy.

The first is whether and how God willed the preaching of His Word to be common to all men.

The second is whether that power of the Spirit, which alone generates faith in hearts, has been divinely willed to be given to some among mankind and withheld from others.

Now regarding the first point, we have maintained this: that God gave a command to the apostles and the other ministers of the Gospel, that—so far as it is possible—they should announce the Gospel to all men and to each individual.

Nevertheless, by the secret counsel of His providence, it has come about that the knowledge of the Gospel has not yet reached all nations.

The reason for this, according to the mind of Calvin, can be given in two ways:

- First, if we consider the peoples to whom this benefit has not yet been granted absolutely in themselves, they were worthy to be deprived of it. And thus, God acted justly in doing so.

- But if we consider them in comparison with those nations to whom God has granted this grace, then, because all are equally unworthy, we must conclude that the reason for the difference is to be referred entirely to the good pleasure of God, who does what He wills with His own.

We now undertake to prove this proposition.

And so that this might be established more clearly and fittingly, we believe the matter ought to be briefly retraced from a higher principle.

When, after the Fall, God entrusted to Adam that most celebrated oracle—"the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head"—as a matter of faith, so that by those few words the hope of redemption might be spread to all his posterity, it happened—not perhaps by Adam's fault, but through the sluggishness and negligence of his descendants—that the memory of that promise nearly perished.

Certainly, the wide diffusion of contempt for divine things throughout the entire human race at that time is plainly demonstrated by the history of God's patience before the flood, until, because of the incredible wickedness of men and their hearts being impenitent, He devastated the earth

with a flood of waters, preserving only the family of Noah, in whom He maintained a remnant of piety and true religion.

When the covenant was renewed with Noah, the hope of mercy was renewed as well, and assigned to this second father of the human race, who was to pass it down by hand to his posterity.

This Calvin recognized, who judged that the promise made to that patriarch pertained to his descendants even to the end of the world, and considered that the admirable rainbow in the clouds was a sacrament destined to confirm faith. Thus he says in his commentary on Genesis 9:7:

> "There is no doubt that it was God's counsel—when He strengthened Noah's faith by this sign—to provide for all his posterity. Therefore the covenant was not made privately with one household alone, but was common to all peoples and intended to endure through all generations to the end of the world."

And again on verse 9:

> "From this we also gather that this has always been proper to sacraments from the beginning: that they serve for the confirmation of faith. For the covenant certainly includes a promise, to which faith ought to respond," etc.

There is no doubt that this great patriarch—whose faith and piety the Apostle commemorates with distinguished praise—faithfully fulfilled his duty to the best of his ability, and earnestly sought to train his posterity in the true worship of God.

However, two things must be noted in that dispensation:

First, whatever was contained in the covenant renewed with Noah regarding Christ the Redeemer, given the nature of the times and the condition of the Church then, was expressed in words so obscure that when Paul discusses the antiquity of the Gospel before the Law, he never ascends any higher than Abraham; and in the Apostolic epistles there is a continual silence about Noah and the covenant made with him.

Although Peter indeed observed that in the floodwaters there was a type of the Church's baptism, and that Christ Himself, through His Spirit, had called men at that time to repentance.

Second, however great the revelation may have been which God granted to Noah—whether its clarity or obscurity—it did not remain incorrupt for long; for it is clear that most men quickly fell away from divine worship into idolatry, and that even in the family from which Abraham was descended, religion did not remain pure.

Joshua testifies to this when he recounts among the singular benefits granted to the people of Israel, that Abraham, by the greatest mercy of God, was separated and led out from the midst of idolaters.

Therefore, Abraham alone was called out, with whom God, by a certain special manner, renewed the covenants formerly made with Adam and later with Noah.

And in this renewal, two things again ought to be carefully considered:

First, that—contrary to what had been done with Noah—the promise concerning the future Messiah was delivered to Abraham far more fully and clearly. Whence it is not only, as I have already said, that the Apostle Paul regularly traces the origin of the Gospel back to Abraham, but also that our Lord Himself declared that Abraham saw His day and rejoiced greatly. He would not have said this unless that great father of all the faithful had a greater knowledge concerning the salvation of the human race than all others who lived before him.

Indeed, this is not something to be read inattentively or lightly passed over—that saying, “In your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed,” along with that other, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness”, which are always weighed most carefully and studied with particular attention by the Apostle.

Second, that whereas God had previously committed His Word to Adam and then to Noah, and had commanded them to communicate it indifferently to all their descendants, giving no indication of any distinction among men so far—He acted differently with Abraham.

For He openly declared that, neglecting the other families of the earth—and indeed passing over even the rest of Abraham’s own children—He had fixed His gracious will most clearly upon Isaac alone, so that he alone would be the heir, not merely of his father’s earthly goods, but also of the prerogative of a pure and uncorrupted religion.

This is not to say that He forbade other men from being invited to the true worship of God—far be it from us to think such a thing of Him—but rather that He wished to signify what the future administration of His goodness and mercy toward mankind would be.

Namely, He had decreed not to call back those wandering and each pursuing his own crooked way, by any word of His, either by public herald or oracle.

Nor was that all. For when Isaac, from the same wife, conceived two sons in a single act of union, He restricted that grace to Jacob alone, rejecting Esau, the firstborn—upon whom, even in the judgment of both parents, the entire hope of the family appeared to rest.

Thus, the knowledge of the true God was confined to the family of Jacob, from which Moses at length arose, by whose ministry God established religion among the Israelite people.

The other nations, not dignified by any preaching of the Word, nor recalled from their error into the way of truth by any audible voice, worshiped each their own false deities in place of the true God.

And this is precisely what the Psalmist praises so highly—especially in Psalm 147, where he says:

“He declared His statutes to Jacob and His ordinances to Israel: He has not done so with any other nation.”

This administration, moreover, endured until the time of the Gospel. For although God did not forbid proselytes to be admitted to the same hope as the Jews, and although He did not so entirely forsake the surrounding Gentile nations of Palestine that He never attempted to stir them through various prophetic admonitions from above, yet all this pertained only to a few individuals.

Even then, such prophetic dealings were generally undertaken and carried out only insofar as the affairs of the Jews were somehow interwoven with those of their neighbors, and they served as mere preludes to the calling of the nations, which God deferred until the time of Christ.

Hence, it was entirely fitting that the Apostle should say—without regard to those earlier exceptions—that in the ages preceding the preaching of the Gospel, all nations except the Jewish one were permitted to walk in their own ways (Acts 14:16).

And this corresponds to what he says elsewhere: that those nations were “strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope, and alienated from the knowledge of God and from true life” (Ephesians 2:12).

After Christ was manifested and received into heaven following His glorious resurrection, two especially memorable events occurred:

First, that people whom God had once adorned with so many privileges was rejected and cast off.

Second, those peoples whom God had appeared to neglect entirely for so many ages were called and drawn to the knowledge of Christ.

And it is quite clear that this did not happen by mere chance, but rather in accordance with the testimonies of the Prophets, who predicted what would occur, and by the arguments of the Apostles, who demonstrated that what had been foretold was now fulfilled.

For it had been foretold, because it had been ordained in the counsel of God, so wise, firm, constant, and enduring that even now, the falling away of the Jews from the worship of the true God persists, and the calling of the Gentiles continues under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this matter—if it were considered with a little more attention—would indeed appear to possess a certain greatness and wonder.

Two considerations remain, however, which should by no means seem less remarkable. The first is that, in the administration of the preaching of the Gospel, there has always been a most noteworthy diversity. For though the Gospel, having gone forth from Jerusalem as the prophets had long before foretold, spread widely into Asia, Africa, and Europe, it nevertheless left many

places untouched by the Apostles and Evangelists. In some regions, that light was never kindled at all, or if it was at some point, they long remained buried in the densest darkness, while the first heralds of Christ's name and their successors were busy gathering churches elsewhere.

That this happened by divine counsel, no one will doubt—at least no one who knows that all things are governed by providence, and especially that affairs as weighty as the preaching of the Gospel are conducted by a special direction of the divine mind. Especially since it is evident from the history of the Apostles that they were at times prevented by the Spirit of God from preaching the cross of Christ in certain places.

Thus, the name of Christ reached the East—not only to Babylon, as is clear from the first epistle of Peter—but even, if we may trust certain historians, as far as India, through the preaching of Thomas.

Toward the South, it spread into Egypt and the whole of Cyrenaica.

And finally, through the West, it reached Greece, then Rome, and gradually progressed northward, extending widely through Gaul, Britain, and Germany.

But so far was it from spreading throughout the whole globe that those who have applied themselves a little more carefully to this subject, having calculated it with care, have dared to assert that if the world be divided into thirty parts, only five are held by Christians, six by those who embrace the impiety of Mohammed, and the remaining nineteen by those who either once knew Christ and have cast Him out, or by those to whom the news of Christ has never yet penetrated.

And the number of these people is indeed immense. If, in maps of the world, one marks with a special color those regions inhabited by Christians, they will appear quite small and confined within narrow limits, especially in comparison with those areas stained by Mohammedanism and Paganism.

The second consideration is that the Apostle Paul openly affirmed that before the world reaches its final day, the Jewish nation—having been rejected—will be brought back to the knowledge of the Messiah, so that Jews and Gentiles, reconciled into one body, may be joined together and glorify the Redeemer with equal mercy.

But from the time Paul foretold this until our own age, sixteen centuries have passed, and yet we see nothing of the sort having come to pass. And during that time, good God, how many myriads of Jews, how many myriads upon myriads of Gentiles have passed from life into death!

Now the significance of this matter can be hidden from no one. For the Apostle testifies that God, from the beginning of the world, has made His eternal power and divine nature manifest to all men, so that they are without excuse for their ignorance (Romans 1:19).

He does not deny that in all ages God has borne witness to Himself by the fruitfulness of the earth, the fertility of seasons, and by every kind of goodness, so that no one might doubt His kindness or, so to speak, His readiness to show mercy (Acts 14:17).

He adds that through the preservation and daily administration of all things, especially by His care for human society, and by the sustaining, nourishing, moving, and enlivening of each individual man, He has made it so that, unless obstructed by unbelievable dullness of mind and the callus that habitual sin lays upon the soul, people could—by groping, touching, and diligent inquiry—come to some knowledge of Him (Acts 17; Romans 2).

Finally, He says that by His goodness, forbearance, and patience, all are not so much invited as led to repentance, unless they willfully turn their minds away from the right path, and wander thoughtlessly wherever their desires carry them.

But whatever is presented externally to the eyes and minds of men is devoid of that power of the Spirit, which alone can truly turn men from sin and effectively bring them back to the hope of life.

The Word, indeed, is the sole ministry of the Spirit, the one effective instrument for driving out wickedness from the heart, and the single divine engine for breaking down hardness of heart and moving the soul to faith and repentance.

Therefore, all those to whom that Gospel light has not yet shone, or who have already perished without it, must necessarily perish eternally unless they are rescued by that one remedy before death, if we believe the Word of God.

Thus, the most crucial points in this disputed matter are brought back to these:

First, what was the cause why God preferred the people of Israel above all other nations when making His covenant?

Secondly, why, after the manifestation of Christ, did God repudiate that very people and prefer the Gentiles—who had previously been abandoned—to the Jews?

Third, why, among the nations, has He offered the Gospel to some, while He has passed over others even to this day?

Finally, why has God granted this benefit—of being called—to those Jews whom the Apostle foretold would be converted at the end of days, rather than to those who perished in earlier times?

We propose to examine these briefly, and to refer them back to the reasons commonly employed by the disciples of Arminius in these matters—not as they are scattered and dispersed throughout their writings, but as each can be more conveniently addressed according to the structure we've laid out above.

And so, to the first question, if there were nothing else besides the words of David, which I cited above from Psalm 147, they would be sufficient to refer the cause of this distinction solely to the will of God:

“He declares his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He has not dealt so with any nation, nor has he revealed his judgments to them.”

For the Prophet recounts this as a singular privilege, a particular benefit, on account of which the people of Israel ought to proclaim the praises of God more than any other.

To others He displayed His marvelous works to be admired; but the one remedy for the blindness under which they labored, He denied them. Hence the phrase “He has not done so” is emphatic, and carries with it a unique commendation of divine favor toward the Jews.

For if there had been any inequality between them and other men—so that He had turned wholly to Israel because of their good conduct, and been provoked against others for their sins—then certainly they would have had a cause to recognize His justice, which rendered to each according to their works. But they would not have had reason to elevate God’s particular kindness toward themselves with such solemn praises.

For what is so remarkable if each one receives according to his own merit?

But God Himself cuts off all occasion for doubt. Thus He speaks through Moses in Deuteronomy 7:6–8:

> “You are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
> It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set His love on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples—
> but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that He swore to your fathers.”

And a little more clearly and emphatically in Deuteronomy 9:4–6:

> “Do not say in your heart, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,’
> for it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you.
> Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land…”

So then, how does the school of Arminius respond to these things?

They pile up many arguments, to be sure—but still fail to satisfy themselves.

Some attempt to evade that passage from Psalm 147 with a sophism, arguing that the Psalmist does not mean that God had not dealt at all with other nations, but only that He had dealt with

them differently—that is, through the works of nature, He had revealed His statutes to them. So the difference is not in substance but in mode only.

But this is a frivolous evasion, as many learned men have long since demonstrated.

For that phrase—"He has not done so"—absolutely denies the thing itself, not merely the manner in which it was done. Consider similar phrasing in Luke 22:26, Psalm 1:4, and 1 Samuel 30:23, among others.

Then again, as we said above, what could be clearer than that this passage celebrates a benefit singular to the Jews, not one shared in any way with other peoples?

For if that natural revelation had truly accomplished the same as the revelation through the Word, why would the Psalmist extol this prerogative so highly, as if it were something surpassing?

Moreover, the phrase "they have not known them"—which some rightly render as "they have therefore not known them"—clearly indicates that the cause for the different result lies in the difference of the means. That is, one instrument—the preaching of the Word—was effective among the Jews; the other, whatever it was that God used among the Gentiles, accomplished nothing.

Others thus flee to a different refuge and say: first, that God punished the children of other peoples for the sins of their fathers and ancestors, whom He had long since found guilty.

Second, that God Himself testified that He was casting out the Canaanites and other nations because of their own impieties.

Thus, they say there is no need to seek any other cause for God's punishment than the sins of those very nations whom He abandoned. They add that the nations were not so forsaken, that they did not always have, in the work of creation and in the governance of providence, means by which—if they wished—they could derive some knowledge of God, which either in itself could be salvific, or at least a most certain step toward salvation. Moreover, they assert that there are some exceedingly hidden merits in men, which, although hidden from us, are fully visible to God and rewarded in due time. Lastly, they say that the Jews were preferred because they descended from Abraham, with whom God had made His covenant, as He Himself testifies in the passages previously cited.

Let us now examine these claims one by one.

First, the initial argument is worthless. For let us leave aside the inconsistency of those who rail so fiercely against the doctrine of Adam's imputed guilt, and yet here employ an answer that derives the punishment of children from the sins of their parents. Let us ask instead: were not the ancestors of the Jews, if you ascend beyond the time of Abraham, just as guilty before God as those of other nations?

Did not Joshua accuse them all of idolatry, as I mentioned above?

If then the iniquity of their ancestors was the same, what accounts for such a disparity in the condition of their descendants? For if, as these same opponents claim, the sins of fathers are punished in their children to the third and fourth generation, then since the parents of Abraham were themselves polluted with idolatry, the impartial justice of God would have required that Abraham be forsaken, and that his descendants follow in the footsteps of their forefathers.

There must therefore have been some divine good pleasure, for which no external reason can be given, that determined this change in God's gracious dispensation in favor of the Jewish people.

The second argument likewise fails. For we certainly do not deny that the Canaanites and the other nations whom God cast out suffered the penalty of their sins. As we have seen above, Calvin himself acknowledges that no one is denied the preaching of the Word who is not most worthy of that denial. Our only question is how it came to pass that the Jews were granted this privilege, while in no way being more worthy than the others.

Yet in that very passage where God declares that He would exterminate the Canaanites because of their wickedness, He also strongly rebukes the Israelites—for their stubbornness, their shameful lack of righteousness, and their repeated sins in the wilderness, which were provocations to His divine justice—and lists other such things that remove from them any conceivable merit and eliminate every claim to prerogative.

Thus, both peoples are plainly equally deserving, so there is no doubt that all things were equal between them—except that God hated the one and was pleased to love the other.

The third argument is likewise pointless. No one will deny that there is no condition of abandonment so complete that the person, while he still lives, is not continually presented with tokens of divine goodness, which could invite him to repentance and stir up some hope, unless he willfully blinds himself to them.

Nor was this unknown to Calvin or something he sought to conceal, as he speaks thus in his Preface to the Sacred Scriptures:

> "Then (that is, after the first sin was committed), God began to hate man and to reject him as he deserved, so that man might no longer be counted among the works of God—for the image of the Creator had been erased in him, and the graces with which he had been adorned had vanished from his soul. Just as God had once taken delight in him, as a father delights in his most beloved son, now He despised and abhorred him. Everything that once pleased now displeased; what used to be viewed with benevolent and fatherly favor, He began to detest and regard with reluctant eyes."
> "Yet the Lord of mercy (who not only loves, but is Love itself) still willed to love that which was unworthy to be loved. He did not altogether destroy, ruin, or utterly cast off mankind, as their iniquity demanded, but by His kindness and patience He supported and endured them, freely granting time for them to turn to Him and submit again to the obedience from which

> they had originally fallen. And although He dissimulated and was silent (just as though He had willed to remove Himself from their sight), and did not restrain them from following the desires of their heart and the cravings of their concupiscence, without any law or correction and reproof by His Word, He nonetheless gave sufficient evidences, by which they ought to have been stirred to seek, grope after, and find Him, that they might know Him and duly worship and revere Him.

For He lifted up, as it were, the banners and ensigns of His dominion everywhere, and set them forth in the open, and laid them before the understanding of all, so that no one could rightly plead ignorance of such a great and glorious Lord, who had so splendidly set forth His own majesty. Indeed, in all parts of the world, in heaven and earth, He did not only inscribe but almost engraved the glory of His power, goodness, wisdom, and eternity."

So it is most true what Paul said: that the Lord was never without a witness, not even among those to whom He willed that no knowledge of His Word should come, since all creation—from the firmament above to the depths of the earth—could have declared His glory to all mankind and led them to seek after Him.

To this end, he cites the following notable texts: 1 John 4:16, Genesis 6:3, Acts 17:30, Acts 14:16, Acts 17:27, Romans 1:20, Acts 14:17, Psalm 19:1.

The remarks he adds to Romans 1:21 are certainly brief, but they demonstrate all the more clearly what people should have drawn from this natural revelation.

> "For they did not glorify God."

Now, God cannot be conceived apart from His eternity, power, wisdom, goodness, truth, justice, and mercy.

- His eternity is evident in that He is the author of all things.
- His power, in that He holds all things in His hand and causes them to remain in existence.
- His wisdom, in the most orderly arrangement of all things.
- His goodness, because there was no cause compelling Him to create anything, nor any motive for preserving it except for its own sake.
- His justice, in the administration of the world: He punishes the guilty, defends the innocent.
- His mercy, in the great patience by which He bears with man's perversion.
- His truth, in that He is unchangeable.

Unless people had willfully blinded themselves, they could, in Calvin's judgment, have attained a notable knowledge of God.

But that is not what is being disputed. The Arminians waste their labor in proving something that no one denies.

The real question is this: since the Word alone is the effective instrument, as we have said, which dispels blindness and converts human minds to repentance, why did God grant the help of that Word to the Jews, but refused it to the Gentiles—especially when both groups were equally undeserving, and God seemed content to give the Gentiles only a revelation which accomplishes nothing in the matter of salvation?

For if both were truly equal in worth, then why was such unequal treatment shown, so that, when compared side by side, one received what seems to be a punishment, while the other received what is evidently a supreme benefit?

Certainly, it is no punishment that God made Himself known to the Gentiles so clearly in His works. But it becomes something like a terrible judgment, when the perversity of their minds is so great that His self-disclosure in those works produced nothing, and nothing else was added to correct or amend that perversity by overcoming their blindness.

What they assert in the fourth place is not only off-topic but also abhorrent to religion, indeed most of all. For, in the first place, since God Himself has so expressly denied that the Jews were chosen by Him on account of their own righteousness, what then can these hidden merits be which either God was unaware of, or—if He was not ignorant of them—He so cleverly concealed that He openly affirmed none of them were taken into account in the matter?

Would He thus mock mortals by rewarding their merits, yet, because they are hidden—even to those from whom they proceeded—he disguises them so artfully as to make it seem that what He repays by debt is actually a benefit granted purely out of mercy? Then it would no longer be true, as the comic poet says is fitting for every honest man, that one should by no means count a service done as worthy of reward if he deserved nothing and merely expected it to be credited to grace.

Furthermore, from where then did these merits come? Were they produced from the natural powers of free will? Or rather from the grace of the Spirit of God which had first gone before and enabled free will? For if they say these merits came from natural free will, what else could Pelagius himself say, if he were to boil down his Pelagianism to its purest essence, making it even purer than it ever was?

But if they originated from the Spirit of God, then we're brought right back to the same question—why did they attain the grace of the Spirit which others did not receive? For by nature, they are equal. And since God does not grant the Spirit, from whom any truly good thing could arise, except through the intervention of the Word (as we have previously established and will later demonstrate more clearly), how could it be that God granted the peculiar grace of His

Word for the very reason that He wished to reward merits which already presupposed that grace?

But what they reply lastly resolves the knot of this difficulty so little that it instead tightens and entangles it more, making it utterly inexplicable. For first, we must again ask that recurring question in this matter: whence came it that Abraham—the one from whom the Jews are descended—was chosen by God out of all the rest of mankind, that He should enter into covenant with him in a singular manner?

For if the Jews were chosen because they descended from Abraham, but Abraham himself was chosen simply because it so pleased God's free mercy—he who by nature was no different from the most lost and hopeless—then surely the Jews owe their election to the free mercy of God alone, not to any merit of their own by which they surpassed the rest of mankind.

And those who were passed over in that election were indeed justly passed over when considered in themselves; but if compared to the Jews, there was no reason why either they or their ancestors should be considered inferior to Abraham. Next, we must ask: why did God will that these, rather than those, should be born from Abraham—those whom He would make partakers of His covenant?

Surely God could have caused one of those whom He excluded from participation in His covenants—say, Argo or Abimelech—to be the ancestor of someone like Manasseh or Ephraim, whom Abraham begot through Jacob. Conversely, why could not someone born of Abimelech have had Abraham as his forefather?

What then moved God to distribute the generations of men into salvation or destruction in this way?

Finally, since Abraham fathered many children—one by Sarah, another by Hagar, others by Keturah—and Isaac in turn fathered two sons, Esau and Jacob, and yet God appointed that blessing to belong to Jacob's family alone, what led God to choose Abraham's descendants through Isaac and Jacob rather than those who came through Ishmael or Esau?

Or, if He so loved Isaac and Jacob that He decreed to prefer their children above others, why did He ordain that they, rather than others, should beget Judah, Levi, Simeon, and the other patriarchs, from whom the Israelites descended, rather than Eliphaz or Reuel or the others begotten by Esau?

Here surely they must get stuck, and must admit that at least one decree was so absolute that no account of the reason for its determination can be given apart from the most free and incomprehensible will of God.

Let this, then, be the conclusion of the first point: the people of Israel were indeed chosen, with whom God made His saving covenants, because He loved them more than all the other nations. But as for why He loved them more than others, the only cause was His most free will.

Now let us come to the second point.

The question, then, is why, after the manifestation of Christ, the Jews were cast off from participation in the Gospel, while the Gentiles were admitted to communion with it.

Certainly, at this point, the disciples of Arminius can no longer take refuge in the sins of the ancestors. For if ancestral sin had any weight in this matter, most of the ancestors of the Jews who rejected Christ were pious, whereas all the Gentiles without exception were among the most corrupt and wicked. So, if any regard at all is to be given to the consideration of forefathers and ancestors, the Jewish nation ought to have retained that benefit forever. But the Gentiles, who were themselves extremely wicked and begotten from the most wicked of parents—raising children like themselves, and from those children grandchildren even worse than the parents—should have remained without the Gospel eternally.

Therefore, they flee to that famous passage found in Acts 13:47: “When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. Then Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly, saying, ‘It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.’” From these words, they think it manifest that the unbelief and obstinacy of the Jews was the cause for which the Apostles withdrew from them, and that their rejection has justly continued to this day by God’s judgment.

But who denies that the Jews, considered absolutely and in themselves, deserved, because of their unbelief, to be struck with that dreadful judgment? Did Calvin—whose opinion is here being defended, which is in fact the very truth itself—ever doubt this?

His words in his commentary on this passage are most worthy to be read: “Luke shows that the servants of Christ were not so overcome by the obstinacy of their enemies that they ceased to act with boldness. For though they had already stung them with a sharp rebuke, they still spared them to some extent. But now, when they saw that Christ was being obstinately rejected by them, they in turn excommunicate them and cast them out from the kingdom of God. We are taught by this example that extreme severity is not to be used except against those who are beyond hope.”

From these words, it is plain to anyone that the Jews were not only rejected because they first rejected the Gospel, but that they would not have been rejected at all had they not persisted obstinately in their contumacy.

But since the Gentiles by nature were no less corrupt than the Jews, and therefore necessarily no less opposed to the Gospel, and since, as experience shows, they have even more fiercely persecuted the Gospel of Christ than the Jews, what was the reason why the Apostles gave way before the obstinacy of the Jews, but were not deterred by the savagery of the Gentiles, and even went forward through stones and flames (as the saying goes), constantly fulfilling their ministry among them?

Nor let any disciple of Arminius answer me here with Paul's words, "They were broken off because of unbelief, but you stand by faith" (Rom. 11:20). For the question is not whether God is driven by the contumacy of men to deprive them of the benefit of Gospel preaching (which we grant), or whether He is moved by faith and obedience to make that grace their own and lasting possession, provided they do not prove stubborn and do not abuse the Gospel unto pride and license. If He so gently calls those who did not even think of Him, what shall we suppose He will do to those who cling to Christ with constant faith and repentance?

Or, to use the words of the Apostle, if He mercifully grafted wild olive branches—full of natural bitterness—into a tree He so carefully cultivated, could He not then retain the natural branches, already grafted and bearing fruit, rather than breaking them off and removing them?

The only question here is this: since such grafting happens only through effectual calling, and that calling consists in two things—namely, the preaching of the word and the inward operation of the Spirit—what moved God to exercise the power of the Spirit among the Gentiles, a power that had ceased in the souls of the Jews? And what prompted Him to bestow the preaching of the word on the Gentiles, when (if considered according to their nature) they ought to have rejected the Gospel just as obstinately as the Jews—whom, for their unbelief, He so decisively cast off?

For if all share equally in the same natural condition, why did they receive such unequal allotments? What reason for this distinction in dispensation can be derived from the people themselves?

Certainly, the Apostle offers some explanation in Romans, which we saw earlier: "God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all." But far from assigning the Gentiles any superiority over the Jews for which they should be preferred by God, this teaches rather that all men—both Jews and Gentiles—share the same condition: subject to sin, clinging inseparably to vice, and not merely inclined to unbelief but determined toward it with the greatest vehemence and obstinacy.

So God would have treated them all the same had He not determined to show mercy to some. Therefore, the difference between them clearly comes from God alone, who gives unequal things to equals according to His own will.

Driven from this position, they resort to another line of defense. Some of them—and Jesuits who agree with them—say that God foresaw the Gentiles would embrace Christ, whom the Jews rejected, and for that reason He called the Gentiles and abandoned the Jews.

But not even this defense will succeed. For I ask: what was the reason for that foreknowledge? Was it because God Himself willed that the preaching of the Gospel would be effectual among the Gentiles, but did not will the same for the Jews? Or rather, did He exercise one and the same, fully equal power among both Jews and Gentiles—in external preaching and in the inward efficiency of the Spirit—so that the difference which so greatly separated them (that the one believed and the other spurned Christ) arose from the men themselves?

One or the other must be true, and there is no third option. If the first is said, then the same question recurs: why did God will to exercise that effectual power among the Gentiles which He did not likewise grant to the Jews, since they were equal in condition?

And so, we must either rest, without doubt, in the sole will of God—which is exactly what we affirm, and which destroys the Arminian cause—or else the matter must drift off into an infinite regress of questions and answers, with no end, in a manner no sane disputant would ever adopt. For if, as Aerius says, the reason the Gentiles believed is something they have from themselves—that is, the thing which distinguishes them from the Jews (and, good God, what a great thing it is to have believed in Christ!) came from within them and not from God's grace—then there is no reason they should thank God for it.

And I don't know if anyone could possibly be so hard-hearted or brazen as to plainly declare such a thing. Nor should anyone here reply with the common objection that Arminians are wrongly accused of attributing the praise for their faith to something other than God, since they teach that humans can do nothing without divine grace. Let it be granted that they teach this—though, if they do, they do not see that their doctrines are internally inconsistent.

For if nothing good can be done without divine grace, then without that grace, sinning would have been inevitable. But the Arminian hypothesis says that an unavoidable necessity to sin excuses the sinner, as we have already seen repeatedly asserted by their disputant. For if necessity removes liberty, and sin not committed freely is no sin at all, then either they could have done something good without grace—which even Pelagius never asserted—or else if God had not granted them grace, they would not have sinned at all.

Now, whoever does not sin ought not to be damned. Therefore, either God acted extremely foolishly, or (as they confidently say in other arguments) tyrannically and with excessive cruelty in dealing with us by offering grace—for if He had not offered it, there would have been no danger of sin, since either no sin would have happened, or it would have been excusable. But once grace is offered, we fall into danger—first, so great that if the grace is rejected, it provides just and severe grounds for condemnation and the terrible destruction that follows. Second, so uncertain and slippery that scarcely one in a thousand avoids it. Would it not have been far better for us if that ruinous grace had never been offered at all?

Yet, again, let it be granted that they say sincerely that nothing could have been done without God's grace. Still, that grace—whatever it is—did not accomplish anything in them that it did not also do in the unbelieving and obstinate Jews. For what is common and equally distributed has equal power. Therefore, the difference in result must come from something other than that shared cause.

Thus, by their opinion, all had the power to believe, if they wished; and the actual willing to believe—which alone constitutes faith—is attributed to themselves and to the voluntary decision of their free will.

But now, in the fact that one can believe if he wills, there is almost no reason for praise; for the praise is placed not in the ability to believe, but in the act of believing. And we are not saved because we could believe, but because we actually did believe. Therefore, the credit for both the faith exercised and the salvation obtained through that faith belongs to humans themselves.

If there were just one doctrine in the Arminian school worthy of reproach, this would be it—so hostile to the glory of God, so contrary to the very sense of the conscience, that any mind even slightly inclined toward true piety ought to recoil from it and shrink back with horror.

I will not repeat what I've already observed elsewhere: that it cannot even be conceived how God could have foreseen that the Gentiles would believe and that the Jews would reject the Gospel, since, according to the Arminian hypotheses, this is a matter of contingency and uncertainty, and therefore could not truly have been known—except contingently and uncertainly.

I will only add this point, which must not be lightly passed over: at the time when Christ came into the world, those Gentiles who were called and admitted into communion with Him were not better prepared to receive the word of God than their ancestors had been, who lived many ages before.

For what, indeed, was ever more base and corrupt than that age? What was more given over to every kind of vice and more morally debauched? And yet God could have foreseen that they would receive and embrace His word, and thus might have ensured that it was announced to them. What, then, was the reason why He allowed them to stray from the mark for so many centuries? And what is this strange variety in God—that He willed Christ to be offered with such diligence, persistence, and urgency to the Jews, from whom He certainly foresaw that He would be rejected, while the minds of the Gentiles, which He foresaw would undoubtedly bear fruit, He willed to be left destitute of that call? As if He commanded His sun to rise upon the blind, but those who had at least some natural sight He let grow old in hidden and subterranean places where no light shines, except that which, having barely slipped through small cracks, cannot dispel the darkness.

Now if someone among them says here, as Arminius sometimes did—and after him Arnoldus is compelled to say—that not every reason for God's counsel can be known, and that many things lie hidden in the secret plan of God which it is not permitted to unravel or look into; and that Christ Himself testified that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon—whom, however, God never addressed other than through the voice of nature—would have believed if they had seen the miracles which were performed before the eyes of the Capernaumites, yet had no effect on them: then such a defense of the cause is utterly poor.

First, if many things are hidden and unknown in the divine counsel, and no reason can be given or inquiry permitted into them—then why do they reproach Calvin for teaching that the reason for this variety in divine dispensation must be sought in the will of God alone? When no cause of the difference appears among men, and when Holy Scripture so openly proclaims that no other cause is to be sought than the free mercy of God?

But more on this later.

Secondly, whoever speaks in this way has not understood Christ's intention—He did not intend to assign anything to the Tyrians and Sidonians in this matter, but rather, by way of familiar hyperbole, to exaggerate the more-than-stony hardness of the Jews. For this is how we typically speak when we want to rebuke someone's unrelenting spirit that refuses to be moved by mercy: "With so many prayers, with so many tears, I could have softened the cruelty and savagery of the Scythians—yet you remain unmoved."

"How harder than flint or the Marpesian rock!" This is how they are accustomed to rebuke the disciples' negligence and slowness. "Not a horse, not a mule, not a donkey, not a log, not even a wall is as unteachable and unfit to receive instruction." If anyone thinks that these words attribute some docility to horses or logs, then surely he himself is a log, and duller than any block of wood.

Calvin has elegantly expressed the same point in his Disputation on Free Will: "Away," he says, "with those foolish quibbles, since it is perfectly clear that Christ meant nothing else by this manner of speaking than what one would mean today if he were to say, 'There is no Turk so hardened or rebellious against God, nor so far from godliness, who would not have long ago been softened if he had read, heard, and seen what was presented to those who nonetheless were not corrected.'" Pighius was one of these.

In the same spirit, Chrysostom comments: 'Sodom is not simply brought up for comparison, but rather for the sake of accusation; for the greatest proof of wickedness is when someone appears worse than those who were once considered the most wicked.' And to this purpose, he cites among other examples the words of Ezekiel: "You have justified your sisters by your own sins."

But what need is there for so many words, when the Apostle so plainly settles the matter? He calls all the Gentiles "wild olive branches," and the Jewish Church, with whom God had made covenants, "the cultivated olive tree." He compares the Jews, who were cast out of the covenant for their unbelief, to branches broken off from that olive tree; the Gentiles, who were called to the knowledge of Christ, he likens to branches of the wild olive grafted into the cultivated olive tree. The breaking off and cutting away of the former he attributes to the severity of God; the grafting in of the latter to His kindness. He insists that the former have cause to blame themselves—for they deserved to be cut off—while he denies that the latter have any ground for boasting. Could he have spoken more clearly? The Jews were indeed rejected by a just decision; but the Gentiles must acknowledge no other cause for their calling than the pure kindness of God.

For if it had happened because of some hidden merit, or foreseen obedience of faith, or anything else of that kind, why should they not have boasted? And since that boasting which the Apostle so severely forbids is nothing other than the opinion that one possesses some kind of excellence for which God preferred them to the Jews—why does the Apostle prohibit boasting, if something good had truly been foreseen in them which excelled and stood above the Jews?

Would they not have had the right both to think and to say what was true—namely, that they had succeeded in place of those who were broken off, because they were better qualified either by some hidden causes or by a disposition to faith which God had foreseen, so that they immediately clung to the trunk and willingly drew the living sap from the cultivated olive?

We therefore conclude this second point likewise: that the cause of the distinction that existed between Jews and Gentiles must be placed in the free will of God alone.

Now let us examine the third point.

The question is asked about the Gentiles: since God decided to call them to communion with Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and it is certain that from the beginning many were passed over—and even now very many have never heard anything at all about Christ—what is the reason for this, and from where must the cause of this distinction be drawn?

Now that this happened by divine counsel needs no proof among Christians. For if not even a sparrow falls to the ground without His will, would He permit a matter of such importance to be left to blind chance? As the Psalmist says, “He turns rivers into desert, and springs of water into dry ground, and fruitful land into a salt waste,” etc.—would He not with particular care govern and administer the matters that pertain to the preaching of the gospel and the enlightenment of the nations?

Indeed, what Luke recounts in Acts 16—that Paul and Silas, after passing through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, were forbidden by the Spirit of God to preach the gospel in Asia, and that when they tried to go into Bithynia they were redirected by the Spirit to Mysia, then Troas, and finally descended into Macedonia—this has nothing to do with simply recording memorable facts in history.

This matter, however, had another aim: it signified that the preachers of the Gospel were indeed sent out with the command to invite all mortals to participation in Christ, as far as it lay in them. But the whole matter was still governed by divine counsel, by which all the movements and efforts of His servants are most wisely directed and moderated by God. Nor do the disciples of Arminius dare openly to deny this; they merely present certain arguments by which they try to prove that it contributes nothing to confirm the doctrine of an absolute decree.

Among these—besides those we have already refuted—two main claims are especially promoted.

First, they say that the fact not all peoples have yet heard the voice of Christ should be attributed not so much to God’s absolute will, but rather to the fault of men, especially the ministers of the Gospel, who, if they had burned with zeal for Christ’s glory as is proper, would not have allowed so many nations to remain so long buried in the darkness of ignorance and neglected.

Secondly, they add that—even though many people perish due to the laziness of Christians, who should have roused them by the saving proclamation of the divine Word and delivered

them from destruction as far as it was in their power to do so—God is still so abundantly good that He does not absolutely forsake anyone, but sets before them the wondrous book of the world, in which, if not in capital letters, at least in characters not so obscure, tangled, or fleeting, He has expressed His supreme goodness in such a way that no one can truly plead ignorance if he is willing to understand. And here they boast greatly, almost to the point of triumphing.

But there is no reason they should boast as if they had proven something well. For regarding the first point: I do not think anyone will blame Paul and Silas for not preaching the Gospel in Asia at a certain time. They did not refrain from doing so out of laziness or neglect of their office, but because the Spirit of God—whom they were bound to obey—had forbidden it. That, therefore, should be attributed to the will of God, not to human fault.

Moreover, even if the Holy Spirit had not explicitly forbidden them, and the apostles had not been held back or driven by some secret fear, but had been left to their own discretion in the matter, still twelve men, accompanied by only a few evangelists, could not have traversed the whole world with such speed as to avoid passing over countless places and entire nations and regions stretching far and wide, which they could not reach in a moment. Especially since they were also occupied with founding churches, hindered by various difficulties, frequently detained in chains, restrained by persecution, and distracted by divisions with which the Church, even in its cradle, was exercised—so that they could not spread the name of Christ throughout the world as broadly as they might have wished.

These impediments, since they were not sought by the apostles but placed upon them by divine providence—or were brought against them unwillingly by the enemies of Christ—cannot be blamed on those most holy men without great injustice.

To this we must add (and I think it well worth observing) the immense difference between the apostolic office and that of later pastors. The apostles, certainly, were not bound to any particular place, and their office extended as far as the entire world reaches. And to fulfill such a great mission effectively, they were equipped with extraordinary gifts: the power to perform miracles, the ability to speak all languages fluently, and other such gifts, by the wonder of which they were opening the way for themselves among all nations.

But we and the established order of the Church—of which Christ Himself is the author—are fixed to one place, and are called to cultivate that patch of earth assigned to us. Because of the smallness of our gifts compared to theirs, we have been ordered to be content with a small field, since we are not fit to handle those vast territories for the cause of Christ.

Indeed, I do not think it will be counted praiseworthy if I were to abandon my own Sparta—that is, the station I have received and ought to adorn with my utmost effort—and run off to the far reaches of the world, taking upon myself, according to my own whim, the roaming and undefined apostolic calling. Especially when I might be able to render some service to the Church here among my own people, while I could neither speak nor act meaningfully among the Indians or Garamantes.

Lastly, though we do not wish to excuse Christians entirely in this matter, nor do we deny that those who have given themselves to the special study of theology ought to have burned with greater zeal, and that princes—who possess civil authority—bear some blame for not using their power to open a path for theologians to reach barbarian nations, yet even the disciples of Arminius will not deny that God's providence is involved here.

For from where would that zeal come if not from God? And from where would the disposition of princes arise if not from His prompting? The same question, therefore, always returns: why has He not yet implanted such a disposition in men? Why will He ignite that zeal for propagating the truth and seeking the salvation of men in the hearts of princes and theologians at one time rather than another?

And since the Portuguese on one side, and the Dutch on the other, have in recent centuries undertaken long voyages to both the East and West Indies for the sake of commerce, and while the former either sowed no seed at all of the Christian religion among those peoples, or mingled it with much poisonous tares, the latter at least attempted to instill pure Christianity into the souls of men—what was the reason that the New World was not discovered much earlier? Or why did those who had a sincere desire to spread the name of Christ in those regions land on these shores and not those?

When therefore no reason for this can be found in those nations so entirely alienated from all true knowledge and worship of God and from human decency, what remains but that we must acknowledge in this the supreme liberty of God?

As for the second argument they present, we do not wish to refute it merely by ourselves; let us bring in Calvin himself to respond, just as we have done above. Thus, in addition to what we have already seen, he speaks in his commentary on Acts 14:17–18:

> "Nevertheless he did not leave himself without witness."
> Here Paul and Barnabas remove from the Gentiles the excuse of ignorance. However much men may delight in their own inventions, when they are finally convicted of error, they flee to this asylum—that no blame is to be imputed to them, but rather that God was cruel, who did not even deign to call back those whom He saw perishing.
> This frivolous objection Paul and Barnabas anticipate by reminding them that God, even while remaining hidden, bore witness to Himself and to His divinity.

But we must see how these two things agree: namely, that God gave testimony of Himself, and that He did not permit, as far as it lay in Him, the world to wander in error. I respond that the kind of testimony mentioned here is such that it strips men of excuse, but is not sufficient for salvation.

Truly, the Apostle says that "through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" [Hebrews 11:3]. But faith is not conceived from a bare view of heaven and earth, but from the hearing of the Word. Hence it follows that men cannot be brought to a saving knowledge of God except by the direction of the Word of God.

Yet this does not prevent men from being rendered inexcusable even without the Word—since, though deprived of the light of nature, they are blinded by their own wickedness, just as Paul teaches in the first chapter of Romans.

And again, in his commentary on Acts 17:27 (“That they should seek God, if perhaps they might feel after him and find him”):

There are two parts to this statement: namely, that it is man’s duty to seek God; and then, that God Himself comes forth to meet them and makes Himself evident by manifest signs, so that there is no excuse for our ignorance.

Let us therefore remember that men pervert their lives, and show themselves unworthy of inhabiting the earth, who do not apply their efforts to seeking God—as if every species of brute animals were to depart from the inclination naturally implanted in them, which would rightly be considered monstrous.

Indeed, nothing is more absurd than that those who have been endowed with understanding especially for this very purpose—namely, to know their Creator—should remain ignorant of Him.

And especially noteworthy is the goodness of God, in that He so familiarly makes Himself known that even the blind can, as it were, feel after Him.

The more shameful and less tolerable, then, is the blindness of men, who are not moved by any sense of God’s presence even in the midst of such clear and manifest revelation.

Wherever they turn their eyes, up or down, they must necessarily encounter living and indeed countless images of the divine power, wisdom, and goodness.

For God has not obscurely veiled His glory in the creation of the world; rather, He has engraved such clear marks of it everywhere that even the blind could recognize it by touch. From this we gather that men are not only blind but dull-witted, since, aided by such splendid proofs, they gain nothing. Yet here a question arises: can men naturally attain to a true and clear knowledge of God?

For Paul seems to suggest that nothing but their ignorance prevents them from perceiving God’s presence, since He is, as it were, palpable even if they close their eyes. I reply: such perversity is mingled with their ignorance and dullness that, lacking sound judgment, they pass over all the signs of God’s glory that shine forth plainly in heaven and earth. Indeed, since the true knowledge of God is a singular gift of His, and since faith—by which alone He is rightly known—comes only by the illumination of the Spirit, it follows that our minds cannot penetrate to that light by the guidance of nature alone.

Paul is not here discussing human ability, but only admonishing that men are inexcusable, since they grope about in such clear light, as he says in the first chapter of Romans. Although, then, the senses of men fail in searching out God, they still have no excuse for their guilt, since He offers Himself to be touched, yet they remain senseless.

And finally, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 1:21 (“For since in the wisdom of God…”), Calvin speaks thus:

> “He calls the whole workmanship of the world the wisdom of God, because it is a splendid specimen and brilliant demonstration of His wisdom. Therefore, in the creatures God presents to us a remarkable mirror of His wondrous wisdom, so that whoever looks upon the world and the rest of God’s works must, if he has even a spark of sound judgment, burst forth in admiration of Him.
> If men were led from contemplating God’s works to a true knowledge of Him, they would wisely acknowledge God, even by a natural and proper mode of understanding. But since the whole world has gained nothing in instruction from the fact that God has displayed His wisdom in His creatures, He then chose another way of teaching men.”

Thus it is to be imputed to our own fault that we do not attain to saving knowledge of God before we are stripped of our own sense. A most beautiful passage, from which it is clear how great is the blindness of the human mind, which sees nothing even in the midst of light.

For it is true that this world is like a theater in which the Lord displays a visible image of His glory before our eyes—yet even as such a spectacle lies open to us, we grope like the blind. Not because the revelation is obscure, but because we are alienated in mind. Not only the will but even the ability fails us in this matter. For although God appears openly, we can only behold Him with the eye of faith. We may perhaps conceive a faint taste of divinity, which renders us inexcusable.

Thus, in every place and to all men, according to Calvin’s opinion, God has given the clearest proofs of His goodness—especially that goodness which ought to have recalled fallen men to God, and which is therefore called mercy, as we saw above in the Preface to the Bible and in the commentary on the first chapter of Romans. This same goodness ought to have led them to the true worship and reverence of God, as is evident from the same source, and ought to have lifted them up to a confident expectation of mercy, as we previously saw in the commentary on Romans 2:4.

Yet that revelation cannot be saving unless, in addition to it, the teaching of the Word is also added—for this alone, by the power of the Spirit, can overcome and break through that invincible malice and obstinacy of the heart which resides in us by nature.

Although Calvin did not believe that men could be led to salvation by the school of nature if they were to use it—as the eminent Molinaeus says somewhere—“as far as they could,” that is, as far as right reason might reach if freed from the hindrances of inherent depravity.

Since, indeed, eternal life and salvation itself consist in this: to know the one true God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3), and since that knowledge necessarily follows upon this, there is no doubt it must be called salvific.

Wherefore, if there is anything lacking in that light of revelation—by which, were someone to use it well, he might be led directly and without detour to salvation—then surely, as Calvin says

somewhere concerning the eunuch of Queen Candace, an angel would have descended from heaven to impart to him a fuller light. For the most merciful and kind Father would not allow a man either to remain in condemnation unto death or even to be left lingering on the threshold of eternal life. If someone is eager for greater knowledge and earnestly striving for better things, He would graciously lift him up and—by His ineffable mercy—lead him in whatever way into the most certain path of truth and immortality.

For, as has been said more than once already, if He patiently endures the obstinate, and so persistently calls and presses them, would He frustrate the soul that longs for heavenly light, or fail to aid and stir up one who willingly runs toward salvation?

There have therefore always existed in God's works—and in that patience and gentleness by which He has borne with the human race from the beginning until now—very splendid evidences of divine goodness, which ought to have provoked men to repentance and raised them to some hope. And if the Gentiles of old had been moved by these arguments—or even if they are moved now—it is evident that those whom He has not yet deigned to visit with the preaching of His Word (as His manifold wisdom and unspeakable goodness ordain), He would in such a way deal kindly with them that they could have no just cause to complain that their piety had been in vain.

But that is not the point in dispute between us and the disciples of Arminius. The question is only this: since no mortal has ever been brought by these things to worship the true God with true and sincere worship, or to dedicate himself from the heart to genuine holiness—since no one has ever either been truly converted or, given the blindness and obstinacy of mankind, ever could be converted, whom God did not address through His Word (however that may have been done)—what was the reason why, from among men, God chose to bestow this benefit on some and not on others?

For salvation is by faith, and faith is by the Word of God, which alone the power and efficacy of the sanctifying Spirit accompany.

Let us then conclude this third point as follows: that the reason for this difference is by no means to be sought in any comparison of men with one another.

Now remains the fourth.

Since it will come to pass that Israel shall finally be converted to the knowledge of Christ through the preaching of the gospel, and yet this has not yet happened—and since sixteen centuries have passed since the time when Israel was rejected—what is the reason why God has delayed this grace until now, and reserved it for those who shall obtain it in time to come?

For if the sins of their ancestors are to be taken into account, that intolerable burden increases daily, and never have the Jews shown themselves more hostile to our Lord Jesus than in this very age. If men are to be punished for their own sins, there is absolutely no reason why we should hope that the children, grandchildren, or great-grandchildren of those now living will be any better or more virtuous.

Their nature is the same; their mental stubbornness is the same; their rebelliousness against God is the same; and that hatred and contempt with which that nation is held throughout the entire world only intensifies and aggravates it. Not one among them seems to have turned aside from the general disposition of the whole people.

The disciples of Arminius give two responses. The first is that it should not seem strange if God is avenging the obstinacy of the Jews by this delay.

For when they not only reject Christ, but also heap every kind of slander upon Him, and assault Him as far as they can with horrid blasphemies—what could be more just than that God should pour upon them a spirit of stupor? The second response they give is that neither this final reason nor all those previously presented and refuted are asserted by them as if they thought they could fully satisfy either themselves or others with them. They call them partial causes, they say. They do not deny that there may be other, more hidden reasons in God's counsel, which are unknown to us and will remain hidden forever.

They only want to affirm this: that no one has ever been so absolutely deserted by God through an absolute decree that he was not always supplied with the means of hope for salvation—means which, if rightly used, God would never have failed to assist with His grace.

But to begin with their first point: their reply always stumbles upon the same stone. Who denies that the Jews are justly punished? But what is the reason why their grandchildren or great-grandchildren should not be punished in the same way? For if God permits them to remain in their natural hardness of heart, who can doubt that they will reject the light of the gospel and be incited to hatred against Christ with equal malice?

But God will break their obstinacy. Otherwise, Paul's prophecy would be in vain, and those rebellious hearts will be subdued and drawn into obedience to Christ. There is no obstacle, no resistance—however great—that His goodness cannot overcome, and the efficacy of gospel preaching cannot penetrate.

Therefore, let them either produce some plausible or even probable explanation for this great difference, or let them confess that, apart from the one cause found in the utterly free will of God, there is no other.

The latter answer, which they do give, I cannot but marvel at. If they confess that there is always something in this matter which surpasses all human understanding, why do they wear themselves out with useless efforts, inventing arguments which satisfy neither their own minds nor ours, nor indeed the mind of any mortal whose heart is truly inclined to piety?

Why do they not prefer to adore the judgments of God with us rather than try to investigate what is unsearchable, or to grasp and handle what God has willed to keep hidden and far removed from the eyes of men?

For if they only ask this—that no one perishes except by his own fault, and that to all were presented arguments of divine goodness which ought to have recalled them to the right way and

which remove every pretext for excuse—then let them have it. Calvin freely grants this, and we gladly agree.

What they further ask—that there be no absolute decree—they certainly should not expect to be granted. For an absolute counsel is that which, relying on no condition—either fulfilled or able to be fulfilled by men—but depending solely on the will of God, is such that no account can be rendered of it, and it remains fixed and immovable until its outcome infallibly comes to pass.

That this is the nature of the counsel now in question is shown both by experience and by the very words of the Apostle Paul.

First, experience. For since God cast off His people and decreed not to recall them to repentance until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, nothing so far has been able to soften the hearts of the Jews. Always stiff-necked, always obstinate, always stony, they become more and more hardened with each passing age. There is no nation so barbarous, so uncivilized, so wild in its impiety, in which—if by chance the preaching of the gospel occurs—there is not more obedience and reverence than among those people, once adorned with so many of God's oracles, so many prophetic utterances, so many incomparable privileges, and yet still arrogantly hardened.

Let no one remain ignorant of what it means to be forsaken and hardened by God.

The Apostle's words also declare this. For he exclaims in Romans 11:33: "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord?" It would be in vain if such wisdom, whether in Arminius or in any other man, were sufficient to extract the reason for this dispensation from the secret counsel of God and to lay it open before the eyes of mortals.

Now let our discussion move on to the next matter.

CHAPTER XIII

Calvin's Doctrine That the Dispensation of the Spirit Depends Upon the Divine Word. And First, That the Grace of the Holy Spirit Has Not Been Granted to Those to Whom the Word Has Not Been Revealed, and Therefore Is Not Universal.

We now come to the second matter, which we stated is particularly central to the question—namely, whether that power of the Spirit which alone produces faith in the hearts of men has been willed by God to be granted to all in some measure, or whether it has been absolutely denied to some.

This question can itself be divided into two parts. For since, among the nations which God has scattered throughout the whole world, He has deemed some worthy of the preaching of His word and others— as we demonstrated above—He has willed, according to His most free good pleasure, to be content with the sole instruction of the natural world, there is dispute between us and the disciples of Arminius concerning both groups, whether and to what extent the grace of the Spirit has been either granted or withheld.

As for the rest, that will be treated elsewhere. For now, we must explain what is to be thought of the Gentiles, whom God deprived of the revelation of His word.

The Arminian opinion—although Arnold's treatment of the subject is a bit more tangled and obscure—is usually explained by his disciples in the following manner:

First, they say that even if perhaps God does not grant to the Gentiles that grace of the Spirit which by itself and immediately leads to faith in Christ (or could lead to it), yet He does not altogether deny to them some step or measure of that grace, which, if they were to use rightly, could not but lead to a fuller supply—according to the saying, "To him who has, more will be given."

Moreover, lest anyone think them too generous with what belongs to another, they temper their distribution of grace and do not dare to affirm that it is habitual in the souls of men. They only want to assert that God accompanies all mortals with the efficacy of His Spirit at that moment when they do or begin to do something, in such a way that their wills are freed from an invincible necessity of sinning—not so that they are able to believe if they wish, but at least so that if they wish, they may use that grace in such a way that, unless they abuse it, they may be carried further along and be enriched with a more abundant grace.

Here, however, they do not retain their modesty—for they write that God is bound, at least by this covenant, to affect the wills of men, unless He wishes to incur the charge either of some monstrous cruelty or of feigned and counterfeit mercy. Thus, they want that grace—not only externally inviting, but also internally enlightening and impelling toward salvation—to be universal.

Calvin, however, recognizes no such universal grace. And if his opinion is true, then no one can doubt that there exists some absolute decree of reprobation by God.

Before proceeding to a more detailed explanation of the matter itself, if the only reason for introducing this idea of universal internal grace into religion is that they fear lest God be accused of cruelty, or that the revelation of His goodness—as the Apostle says, by which God is not left "without witness" even among barbarous nations—should not appear serious, they undertake a useless task and, as is too often their habit, both tire themselves and others to no purpose.

For what of it? Was it not lawful for God not to redeem the human race, if He wished to escape the charge of cruelty? Would they have written him up as a brute and accused him of some kind of ferocity if He had not made it possible for men either to be saved or to perish at their own free will?

Why then does Christ so exalt the φιλανθρωπία [philanthropy] of His Father in that matter? Why does Paul recognize in it a certain supreme and incomparable love? Do we usually demand that we be praised for mercy and compassion in those matters which we could not have omitted without becoming barbarians?

If then it was lawful for God not to redeem the human race, He could also, beyond all doubt—as we argued above—deny to whomever He wished both that redemption itself, the manifestation of that redemption, and the power of the Spirit by which alone that redemption is applied.

We have, unless I am mistaken, already sufficiently acquitted God of the charges made against His sincerity. Whatever that invitation may be which appears to the eyes of men, it can be equally serious and sincere as that which reaches the ears of men through the preaching of the word, even if God grants nothing beyond that.

For the same human mind which ought to apprehend and judge intelligible realities conveyed by words sounding in bodily ears, is also capable—if only it were rightly addressed—of contemplating “the things unseen” in visible realities. And the same will, which ought freely to follow the guidance of the intellect in the pursuit of good, whatever the objects presented in which that good is represented—this same will must be held accountable if it does not.

How long then do those faculties remain in man, and why should it not be said that God seriously presents to him either things to be embraced, believed, or done?

If He were addressing trunks or blocks of wood, or if He exhibited to cattle the works of nature and providence to be contemplated—so that they might draw from them lessons in virtue and piety—He would not be acting seriously, unless, as Christ once did when He cursed the tree, He intended to teach rational creatures through brute animals. Indeed, we ourselves sometimes act this way. For example, when Tarquin struck off the heads of the tallest poppies, or when Periander plucked the tallest ears of grain, one advised Thrasybulus, the other his son, on how best to attain supremacy among the citizens.

In the same manner, Christ willed to teach His disciples that those who bear no fruit consistent with the Gospel will be cursed.

But when those to whom the marvelous workmanship of the world—governed by such wisdom, goodness, patience, and kindness—is presented for contemplation, are endowed by nature with faculties by which they both ought to and truly can make progress in such instruction (unless an evil mind and will hinder them), why should it not be said that they are seriously invited to such consideration and admiration of God?

Surely, just as stones cannot be seriously invited, so those who fail to respond to invitations cannot be guilty of disobedience. But men, even if entirely destitute of the Spirit’s power, gravely sin by not listening to the call of nature and providence, and incur most just condemnation. Therefore, no reason can be brought why what is offered to them—whatever it is—should not be said to be offered seriously.

Let us look more closely at the matter and examine, first, what the power and breadth of human corruption would be if it were not governed and moderated by divine providence; second, by what means divine providence either restrains, lessens, or prevents it from spreading more widely or bursting out more wildly; and third, whether that efficacy of divine providence, which sets limits to human corruption even apart from the revelation of the word, pertains to that grace of the Spirit which is bestowed through the Gospel, which either generates faith or produces something of the same kind, or—as the disciples of Arminius maintain—frees the will from the unavoidable necessity of sinning.

As for the first point: that original corruption which we have drawn from our first parent has spread to all men—this we have already demonstrated above, and those with whom we are contending do not dare to deny it openly.

What its power would be if God were to loosen the reins of His providence is sufficiently evident both from Scripture and from actual experience. For God Himself testifies in Genesis that man's wickedness is very great, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually, even from his youth, and thus at all times. In the book of Job, man is described as being thoroughly corrupt and defiled, so that nothing can be produced from him that is not likewise filthy and stained. Jeremiah says that the heart of man—of both Jews and any other people—is deceitful and wicked above all things.

Paul not only teaches that the flesh is unable to submit to the law of God, but also enumerates the works of the flesh: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, wrath, rivalry, dissensions, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like—so that no one can doubt that all the faculties of the soul have been infected. For idolatry and heresy belong to the rational part of the soul (λογικῷ τῆς ψυχῆς μέρει), while enmity, strife, and rivalry belong to the irascible part (τῷ θυμικῷ), and adultery, fornication, gluttony, and such like to the concupiscible part (τῷ ἐπιθυμητικῷ). All the affections of the soul are thus drawn into these three faculties.

Remove, therefore, the restraining reins of divine providence from the flesh's lasciviousness, and you will immediately see it raging and exulting in all those vices with unbridled fury.

Nor is there any passage more plainly teaching this than what the Apostle gives in Romans 1, where he states that God, offended by the idolatry of the Gentiles, gave them over to their own desires, which resulted in such unrestrained and almost unimaginable wickedness that even the mere reading of its description is enough to horrify and disturb the soul.

And who is unaware of how David describes the wicked men of his own time? Surely, those memorable verses that the Apostle collects and summarizes in Romans 3 are worth recalling:

"There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands, none who seeks after God. Their throat is an open grave; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood;

destruction and misery are in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes."

And if these things be read in the Psalms themselves, they will seem even more dreadful.

But what need is there of many words?

I will pass over those barbarous nations whom the utter neglect of all piety and civility has rendered more savage than the Cyclopes, yes, even more savage than the wild beasts that dwell in woods and horrid caves—nations who tear one another to pieces, foully stain their mouths with human blood, and gorge themselves on the limbs of still-living men. I will not speak of the Scythians, the Massagetae, or even the Cannibals themselves.

Even in the midst of Greece—the home of civilization—and in Italy, which wished to be regarded as the sanctuary of justice, and even in Judea itself, in which alone the true worship of God and true piety flourished—by the faith of God and man!—what monstrous crimes have appeared? So that it has been not less truly than cleverly and elegantly said by some poet: "If anyone were granted a glimpse into the hidden chambers of the mind, he would see monsters, various in wondrous forms—not stabled in some vast cave, but greater than those which the Nile and Ganges bear in their remote lands, or Libya in its savage wonders, or the dark dens of rugged Caucasus."

Indeed, Simonides was certainly unjust to women when he sang that some were formed from the sow, others from the fox, others from the dog, and others from the stormy sea. But his injustice lay in the opposite fault: in making peculiar to women what is common to all mortals. For there is nothing in all nature so foul that it cannot be reflected in human morals.

Nor should anyone flatter himself as if these monsters were rare in number, though horrifying in appearance, while the corruption in the rest of mankind were somehow milder and more easily corrected if one simply applied himself a little more diligently to a better path. For we know that the lives of many among the heathen were more excusable than to be numbered among such monsters. But whatever in their conduct seemed better or more tolerable was due to some efficacy of divine providence, which restrained the evil that would otherwise naturally arise equally in all. Had God left human nature entirely to itself, it would have produced evil universally and abundantly.

And although I have clearly demonstrated this elsewhere, the case is strong enough that it should again be confirmed here.

First, there is certainly weight in the fact that no reason can be given why there should be any disparity among men by nature in this matter. For if original sin is propagated to each person because the first sin of Adam is imputed to all his descendants—imputed because we were all in his loins when he sinned—then since all equally were in him, original sin must also have been propagated equally to all.

Equally, I say, not only in the sense that no one is exempt from it, but also in the sense that there is no greater share of it in one person than in another by nature. If the only way sin is propagated is what we described above from Calvin—that from a rotten root, only rotten branches can spring forth—then if we set aside the efficacy of divine providence, Adam could not have begotten children better than himself, nor could those born of them have been less corrupt, nor could grandchildren begotten from them have been more uncontaminated.

Now if someone says that it is fitting that those born of the faithful are somewhat purer than others—though I will not here repeat what Calvin above taught from Augustine against Pelagius, that the faithful do not beget children according to that part in which they are faithful, but according to that part in which they are descendants of Adam—I would still deny it. For our debate concerns what would happen naturally if no divine action intervened.

And yet the sanctification of the faithful is a singular and excellent work of divine providence.

But let us hear the Apostle Paul. In the place where he describes the Gentiles' dissolution and plunge into every kind of horrible crime, he says that this came about because God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts and handed them over to a reprobate mind.

That their lives were somewhat more tolerable before they were given over must be attributed to some efficacy of divine providence, because as soon as it withdrew, just as water rushes headlong down a slope when a dam is broken, so too, once the restraint is removed, innate wickedness is set free for every kind of evil. Therefore, separate in your mind the thought of that providence which restrains natural vice, and you will see no difference at all among humans in this regard.

The same Apostle, when speaking about the Jews—after he has compiled those passages from David which I cited earlier—pronounces these words: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped." [Romans 3:19] Certainly, many were pious among the Israelites, and many others, even if not truly godly, still seemed to live in a way to which that description did not wholly apply. Either then the Apostle appears to have spoken without due consideration, hurling these dreadful thunderbolts against the entire Jewish nation, or he wished his readers to understand that all are by nature inclined to all wickedness, and all would have become as those described in those passages, unless some force of divine providence had either restrained their nature's impulse or sanctified it.

And because Paul typically divides the whole human race into two classes—Jews and Gentiles—after describing both from their own virtues (or lack thereof), he leaves no doubt that the same must be thought of all people to that extent. But so that not even the shadow of a just objection remains, he says at the beginning of the second chapter of the same epistle: "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge; for in judging another, you condemn yourself, for you practice the very same things." [Romans 2:1] These words are understood in different ways; but however they are taken, it makes no difference to the strength of our argument.

For if by “everyone who judges” you understand those who hold supreme power, as Oecumenius, Chrysostom, and others did—not only the emperors, who at Paul’s time were certainly the most depraved of men—but also the most dignified and renowned Senate of Rome, and the Catos and Africanuses, and the Metelli and Nasicae, who were considered the very flower of virtue and nobility, then all these are here ranked by the Apostle along with the most vile scoundrels. For Paul did not only consider Rome as it was after the Republic had passed into the hands of one man, but also as it was when governed by public counsel.

But if you understand by these words the philosophers and those esteemed for virtue—both Greeks and Romans—as Beza and other interpreters did, then neither Plato nor Cicero, nor any who played the role of the virtuous Curii, could avoid being judged by the Apostle to have lived lives akin to Bacchanalia.

But if rather, with Luther, Toletus, and others, you think that in these words the Apostle transitions from speaking about the Gentiles to addressing the Jews, and seeks to show that whatever distinction was made by God between them through the revelation of His Word, yet their inclination to the sins previously described in chapter 1 was the same—then I have achieved my point: that the nature of all Jews, considered by itself, is equated with that of the Gentiles, which we have shown to be wholly infected and completely corrupted by sin.

And if, as Calvin holds, the κρίνοντες (“those who judge”) among both Gentiles and Jews are those who excelled in reputation for virtue—among the Gentiles, the philosophers and those who pursued philosophy; among the Jews, the Pharisees and those who sought justification by the law through works—then could the Apostle have more clearly said that there is no natural difference among humans? Whatever it is by which they differ from one another, either it is an empty mask of hypocrisy or it has sprung from the free grace or providence of God alone.

Indeed, there is no small emphasis in those words with which the Apostle begins his whole discourse on justification: “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.” [Romans 1:18] For in this phrase there is a hypallage, as many learned men have observed—so that what is written as “all ungodliness of men” should be taken as “against the ungodliness of all men”—and the context makes this clear.

Since the Apostle’s purpose was to establish this universal conclusion to his discourse—that all human beings, without exception, are subject to inevitable condemnation unless they flee to the salvation procured by Christ’s death, and that therefore the only open path to justification is through faith in Christ—he needed to establish as the foundation of this discourse that there is no mortal who has not deserved that condemnation.

When, therefore, Paul demonstrates that all are deserving of a curse by this argument—that wherever God did not restrain the impulse of human nature, it poured itself out into every kind of filthiness, madness, and wantonness—does he not plainly say that all have the same vice by nature, the same lust, boldness, and equally untamed and unrestrained desire? Jeremiah concluded the matter in a few but exceedingly significant words, which I quoted earlier: “The

heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick" [Jeremiah 17:9]. Either the prophet is speaking of the Jews, or he is describing the common nature of all men. But the latter confirms exactly what I intend; and the former proves it even more clearly. For if this was said of the Jews, among whom alone God had established true piety and virtue by incomparable institutions, what judgment ought we to think was made concerning the rest of mankind?

With this established, we must examine by what means God restrained and governed that bubbling and overflowing athumia (recklessness), lest it spread more licentiously. For unless the dam of divine providence had been set against it, it would have flooded the world like some deluge, so completely that even the face of hell would not have been more ghastly and horrible.

The efficacy of that providence depended on two kinds of things: external and internal. And the internal may be referred to two categories. Either they consist in those things which govern the very formation of humans in the womb and the constitution of their bodies, or in those things which arise in their minds as they grow and begin to develop the faculty of understanding that nature has placed within us.

And as for that first point—how much influence the mixture and temperament of bodily humors has on shaping human behavior—there is no one who does not know it. For those in whom the sanguine humor abounds tend to be more inclined to lust; bile makes people quick-tempered; phlegm leads to sluggishness, sleepiness, and greater tolerance of injuries; but the melancholic humor, if it does not flare up suddenly, retains the heat it has once acquired for a longer time, and when it does burn more intensely, it makes men stubborn and fierce in their enmities.

Galen, in his usual way, has treated this more fully and carefully in a book devoted specifically to the subject.

There are, then, two main points in this matter in which the efficacy of divine providence especially exerts itself. The first is that in the mixture and temperament of the humors, God applies His providential care so that in one person, blood predominates; in another, bile; and in a third, either phlegm or melancholy dominates over the rest. Thus it happens that each person more readily embraces those things that agree with their own temperament and adheres to them more firmly.

Virtues, indeed, have such a nature that they, as it were, assist each other mutually in being born, growing, and acting properly, according to each one's natural disposition. But vices, on the other hand, conflict with one another and often cannot coexist peacefully in the same subject. It is rare for one and the same man to be both overly prodigal and excessively frugal. Similarly, minds that are excessively stern and gloomy are not usually softened by pleasures and bodily indulgence.

It frequently happens that vices which are not naturally compatible with one another do not occupy and dominate the same man at once, as though demons colluded with each other, taking turns and yielding space to one another so that each may reign in its proper time without disturbance.

This was observed by the ancients in that Demetrius who was called Poliorcetes, than whom no one was more vigorous in warfare, nor more alert and watchful in adversity—as long as ambition spurred him. Yet when he experienced prosperity, he became utterly lost in luxury, surpassing all others in insolence, wantonness, and filthy lusts. And truly, neither the condition of our life nor the nature of human affairs allows one and the same man to be equally given and committed to all vices. Therefore, God—whose care it is to preserve human society—moderates that dreadful swamp of evils, so that each person devotes himself especially to those things toward which he is naturally inclined, either by natural bent or temperament.

The second point is this: not only has God, as a wise and skillful legislator, channeled the source of that corruption into various streams according to His wisdom, but He has also mixed in and tempered certain seeds of moral virtues, so that in some people the impulse of lust has been restrained, and the mind itself has been stirred and elevated to noble deeds. Hence that euphuiā pros ta arista (natural inclination toward excellence) mentioned by Aristotle, which Solon recognized as exceptional in Pisistratus, according to Plutarch. Hence, too, those sparks of virtue implanted by nature, as noted by Cicero. Hence that incredible propensity for gravity and steadfastness of soul which Cicero said nature had bestowed upon Cato. Hence that “better clay” from which, as the poet sang, the hearts of some men were molded by the hand of the Titan. And hence all those noble impulses and that certain ardor for the pursuit of what is most beautiful in that realm, which from birth shone forth in many pagans and grew to the point of near admiration.

And the same divine providence that was present in shaping men in such diverse ways also showed care in guiding, bending, and moderating them as they matured. For the power of the divine mind, under whose will all things are subject, was chiefly exercised in human minds—indeed through means hidden and beyond our understanding, yet by most certain influences—so that they would not move themselves in any direction other than that into which they were impelled by its motion.

The verses of Homer are well-worn and commonplace:

“Such is the mind of men as the day that the father of gods and men brings upon them.”

Nor could anything more fitting be said than what is found somewhere in Plutarch: that sudden and unexpected apparitions of Minerva or other gods—by which here Achilles, there Agamemnon, when inflamed with wrath and preparing something cruel or savage, were recalled to more reasonable plans—are like emblems of Providence, which casts nobler thoughts into the minds of men, better than those suggested by innate vice.

So then, although He permits the human mind at times to be swept along by violent passions, yet He always retains His dominion over men: this dominion either stirs the sluggish, tempers the impetuous, restrains the insolent, redirects those who are naturally inclined one way toward another path, or finally draws back the wild and recklessly wandering into the circle of reason and reflection.

To this must be added the most wise ordering of external things. For we are so constituted by nature that we are not driven to action by some brute and blind force, in the way that heavy bodies are drawn to the center by natural motion, or like beasts that act on their appetites without any rational account. The faculty of understanding—that most excellent gift given to us by Providence—by which we surpass all other natures, is moved by the useful, the pleasant, or the honorable. And once it is stirred by those things, it accordingly excites the other faculties and desires of the soul, as it itself is moved by the impact of those objects.

Therefore, God—whose power and wisdom are both infinite—has always so ordered things that, in some cases, arguments from usefulness, in others, objects appearing pleasurable, and in still others, things carrying some semblance of honor, have both restrained and subdued the desire to sin and have more and more inflamed the sparks by which certain people were naturally stirred to pursue virtue.

For it is quite true, as many have observed, that most of those who among the pagans appeared to dedicate themselves to virtue suppressed and smothered their other vices in order that they might more freely indulge in one. And there has been nothing more frequent—either in ancient times or even now—than that, under the guise of piety or virtue, men serve their own vanity and seek after the breath of popular approval.

If their person were taken away and the matter itself set plainly before the eyes, you would see that their desires were not truly tamed by virtue or piety, but were merely yielding to some dominant vice until an opportunity arose—once the yoke was removed or thrown off, they burst forth into the open and unrestrained field of sin.

This agrees as well with what Augustine says somewhere—that those noble virtues of the Gentiles, so magnificently praised in the writings of the ancients, were in fact sins, only coated over with a certain outward appearance of honor. If you strip that off and examine more deeply, you will easily see vice shining through rather than true virtue. For there is certainly no true virtue that does not arise from a true knowledge of God, or that does not aim entirely at the manifestation of His glory—and of such things, there is no trace in the lives of the Gentiles.

Yet I would hardly bring myself to believe that all pagans who pursued virtue had no regard whatsoever for right or for the good, and were driven purely by a desire for fame. However great—and it was indeed very great—the corruption of life and morals that swept over the nations destitute of the knowledge of God's Word, it is nevertheless evident that some light broke forth amidst their thickest darkness, especially in those matters which pertained to the formation and ordering of morals.

If, for example, only a single volume survived out of all the illustrious works of the ancients—Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, together with Cicero's three books On Duties—no one could reasonably deny that God had as it were taken some philosophers by the hand and led them to the very fountains of nature, from which they drew excellent lessons that ought to have stirred up even a natural love for virtue as such.

Since it was by divine providence that such an object (though surrounded with much obscurity) was set before men's minds from without, and since from within their minds were affected to some degree by it, what prevents us from believing that the very idea of virtue, thus a little more deeply admitted, may have kindled in them some sense of it?

Certainly, when Plato said that the form of virtue is so admirable that, if it could be seen in its naked essence, it would arouse wondrous affections in the souls of men, he plainly indicated that some ray at least of that great beauty had reached him—which, though it failed to consume him with due fervor, he nevertheless loved, as far as he was able to perceive it.

And the power of virtue cannot be sufficiently expressed in words when its image, impressed by divine operation, clings a little more firmly. Great also was the role of careful education and early habituation, which Aristotle valued so highly that he said it mattered not a little, but immensely whether one was accustomed to this or that way from youth (Ethics, Book 2, Chapter 1).

I say nothing of examples, of customs and familiarity with outstanding men, of praise, of rewards, and other such things, all of which could help nurture and strengthen a virtue that had already been implanted and was beginning to flourish.

So then, if (to borrow an analogy used by both Hippocrates and Aristotle), the soil, rightly conditioned by nature—that is, by divine providence—once having embraced such a seed and been cultivated by fit and diligent laborers, then watered by timely rains, and finally made fruitful by a healthy climate and a favorable constellation—that is, by some operation of divine power, which alone gives increase to all things—has brought forth fruit, it should not seem strange if among those fruits there appeared signs of moral virtue not altogether obscure.

This especially pertains to the illustration of the glory of God, since not only the praise of true piety and genuine holiness, but even that of the mutilated and imperfect virtue that existed among the Gentiles, ought to be wholly and solely referred back to Him. Why should that which was rightly done by Socrates not also be done by Christians? For so he speaks in Plato's Meno: "Virtue seems to come to us by divine allotment [θεία μοῖρα]." So much so that he appears to deny that study and labor contribute anything to the acquisition of virtue. He says: "If virtue is anything, it is neither by nature nor by teaching, but by divine allotment [θεία μοῖρα] bestowed without instruction or admonition."

This agrees with what is attributed to the same Socrates in another of Plato's early dialogues: "I suppose virtue to be most of all a divine possession, and that good men are such as the divinely inspired—like prophets and oracles." Not, perhaps, because he thought that effort in this area availed nothing, or that virtue was conferred upon men in the same way as the power to deliver oracles. For why would Socrates in Plato's dialogues exhort and encourage men—especially the young—with so many appeals to virtue, if he thought it pointless? No one, after all, exhorts anyone to become a prophet. But because he believed that all effort in the matter would be useless unless God breathed upon it, he concluded that such a matter must be attributed not to human reasoning but to divine inspiration [τῷ θεῷ ὑππνοίᾳ].

Indeed, I do not think there is anyone who considers with due care the range of human gifts and who looks upon Alexander the Great's astonishing greatness of soul—so ready and resolute to endure every danger; or upon Julius Caesar's unmatched vigor and exalted genius, capable of encompassing all things; or upon both Catos and their extraordinary love of country and incredible passion for true honor; or upon Regulus and Aristides for their incorruptible integrity and justice; or upon the same Socrates I mentioned above, with a life of unbroken virtue and a mind wonderfully composed even in the face of death; or upon Aristotle's immense intellectual resources and piercing judgment—and the inward, seemingly inborn direction each of these had toward some singular purpose—without at once confessing that none of these things happened apart from God, who suitably and wisely appointed great and unusual instruments for great and unusual tasks.

And I think it is most true, what is said by the author of the dialogue On Virtue that circulates under Plato's name: "When God wills to bless a city, He makes good men rise up in it; but when a city is destined to fall into ruin, He removes the good men from it."

Nor was there in Socrates any arrogance (ἀλαζονεία), from which he is described as quite free, but either a remarkable greatness of soul (μεγαλοψυχία), or rather a certain prompting of the divine mind and awareness of a heroic calling, when in Plato's Apology he declares that he was raised up by God in Athens to awaken, admonish, and rebuke each person—like a gadfly sent to rouse a great and noble horse that has grown sluggish from idleness and needs the spur of a goad.

These words have always struck me as extraordinary: "You may easily perceive," he says, "that this is of divine origin, namely, that I have been assigned as a gift to your city." For surely it does not seem human that, neglecting all my own affairs, and disregarding my personal estate for so many years, I am continually devoted to your good, and cease not, like a father or elder brother, to urge each one of you to care about virtue.

And these things that follow are even more amazing: "If you were to say to me, Anytus, 'We do not believe you, and we will release you under the condition that you cease in the future from this kind of philosophizing'—if I should obey, I must face death. Still I would reply to you, men of Athens: I honor and love you, but I will obey God rather than you." Those who suppose all this to be invented, or uttered for the sake of vain glory, surely do not grasp the strength of honor in a noble heart. I can hardly believe that even Plato could have written these things without being inwardly kindled by some of the same fire of virtue that burned in Socrates.

And if we consider how great is that plague of sin that we have inherited from our first father, and how unrestrained and brazen is the liberty of sinning among the majority of mankind, we will easily understand how great the chaos of all things among the Gentiles would have been, had not God Himself set forward these examples to steady and check the waywardness of human passions.

But be that as it may, it has not yet touched on true piety. Therefore, we must now say something about the religion of the Gentiles.

It is clear from their temples, shrines, auspices, sacrifices, supplications, mysteries, and every kind of sacred rite and ceremony, that all religious sentiment was not extinguished among them.

But by what movements of soul the Gentiles were impelled to worship religion is not altogether clear. Some have supposed that religion was devised among the Gentiles by the craft of certain cunning men, so that, by instilling reverence for the divine, they might render a populace otherwise fierce and ungovernable more submissive. But this fiction Calvin has thoroughly refuted in his Institutes (Bk 1, Ch. 3, §20), on the grounds that such a device would never have prevailed unless men's minds had already been imbued with the persuasion that there is a God, from which, as from a seed, the inclination toward religion naturally springs.

Indeed, since human minds, conscious of guilt, shrink as far as possible from the thought of God and would do nothing more gladly than to cast off all reverence and fear of the divine, there must be some great force that compels even the unwilling and resistant to seek after religion. Statius came nearer to the truth when he said that fear first made the gods in the world. For God has, in every age, shown immense goodness toward the human race, which ought to have invited men to repentance and lifted them into some hope. Yet two things have obliterated all sense of that goodness in them. First, that man is by nature ungrateful, scarcely acknowledging even the smallest part of God's beneficence—and what he is forced to acknowledge, he corrupts with vile opinions, as the Apostle mentions in Romans 1.

The second is that God has so tempered the administration of His goodness with various displays of His justice that the Apostle rightly says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Hence those profane yet perceptive lines of Lucretius, which express a common human sentiment:

> "Human life, foul before the eyes,
> Lay crushed beneath the heavy yoke of religion,
> Which showed her head from heavenly regions above,
> Looming horribly over mortals with her aspect."

Wherever men turned their gaze, there appeared certain tokens of divine wrath; for, supposing that God dwelt in the heavens, they were terrified no differently than if the heavens had split apart to reveal angry faces flashing with fire. Added to this was the consciousness of guilt, which always interprets everything in the worst possible light. For a mind conscious of evil perpetually imagines judges and executioners, and is frightened even by the slightest noise, thinking it accused, and believes the lash is ever falling upon it.

It would be astonishing, then, if horrible terrors did not torment men's hearts—especially when God's wrath showed itself more clearly and fearfully. And this, I think, is what the Apostle suggests when he says that the Gentiles show the work of the law written on their hearts. For since the law primarily serves two functions—first, to restore the knowledge of duty nearly obliterated from human minds, and second, to terrify the conscience with threats for neglected duties—the Gentiles could not show the law written on their hearts without bearing deeply the marks of both effects.

Hence the Apostle continues: “Their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts either accusing or excusing one another.” For this accusation of conscience could not exist without some fear of judgment, however and whenever it might be executed. Indeed, this was the very thing Epicurus labored most to extinguish from the human soul—to take away or at least diminish this fear.

As Lucretius said:

> “Cerberus and the Furies, and hideous Tartarus,
> With flames from gaping jaws, are nowhere found,
> And cannot exist in fact.
> But punishment for notorious crimes truly exists—
> Prisons, beatings, irons, tar, flame, and the rack.
> Even if these be absent, yet conscience,
> Fearing, applies the scourge and sears with invisible lashes.”

Yet Lucretius’s attempt was in vain. For that sense of divine justice had planted itself too deeply in the soul and stirred its stings too fiercely within the heart for that madman’s supposed wisdom—sophos pharmakon—to expel or even meaningfully soothe them. Perhaps it could briefly dull the conscience into stupor, muting the worm’s sting. But such stupor could not endure, nor prevent God’s providence from reawakening the worm, forcing it again and again to gnaw the heart with fresh torments.

Hence the terror of Caligula whenever it thundered, and other such examples with which the commentaries of the ancients abound. Fear, therefore, seems to have drawn men—almost unwillingly—either to preserve or establish some form of religion. And yet, there is something that prevents us from believing that fear alone was the whole cause of so great a result. For it is the character of wicked minds to pursue with the fiercest hatred the one whom they fear most. “He whom one fears, one wishes dead,” as the poet says.

So, if nothing but fear had taken possession of the minds of the Gentiles, they would have cast off all thoughts of divine worship. If someone offends you in ill will, remove from him all hope of pardon, and you will simultaneously remove all affection toward you. If someone honors you for the sake of benefit, cut off from him all expectation of reward, and you will immediately extinguish all his zeal and fervor in honoring you. So necessary is hope to religion that the Apostle judged no religion could exist at all without some expectation of reward—though the object of true religion transcends mere reward.

As he says in Hebrews 11:6: “He who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him.” And here we should note, as the learned Grotius rightly observed, that in the idiom of the Hebrews, “to draw near to God” signifies religion. Therefore, something must have softened that initial terror, lest it drive men into despair—for nothing more powerfully alienates from religion than despair—and also raised them up into some hope of reward for piety.

Now, as for fear, I know it can be said that all men are by nature inclined to despise the divine, and that when divine providence, by wise permission, allows this contempt to unfold unchecked, it has erupted into boundless audacity. And I do not deny that it is to the most wise governance of God that we owe the fact that, just as He revealed His wrath from heaven and struck terror into human hearts, so too He moderated that terror, lest the whole world, driven by the dread of conscience and, as it were, Furies armed with scourges and flames, should be swallowed up in dreadful abysses of despair.

But Calvin judged there to be something more. Thus he speaks in the passage I cited earlier from his Commentary on Ezekiel 18:23: “The Prophet confirms that God desires nothing more than that all who are perishing and rushing toward death should return to the way of salvation. And from this cause, not only is the gospel today preached in the world, but also in every age God has willed it to be attested how inclined He is to mercy. For although the heathen lacked the Law and the Prophets, they were nevertheless always endowed with some taste of this doctrine. It is true that it was stifled with many errors, but we shall find that by a secret impulse they were always moved to seek mercy. A certain sense, as it were, was innate in them, that God is gracious to all who seek Him.”

Truly excellent are those words—whether of the extraordinary young man Nicolas Vignier, or of the illustrious André Rivet who oversaw their publication—in his Disputation on the Satisfaction of Christ, Thesis IX: “This very fact (namely, that God is by His nature just and a vindicator of sin) is most plainly proved by that prolepsis—that anticipatory notion—which nature has immutably imprinted upon the minds of men: that God is just, and that His peace must be sought by satisfaction.”

Hence the multitude of hilastic (propitiatory) and apotropaic sacrifices among the Gentiles, the horrendous expiations of individuals and whole peoples, and the countless rites of atonement and religious ceremonies. They saw that the divine was offended by sin and concluded that it must somehow be reconciled and its wrath appeased by satisfaction.

Thus the very impulse to make satisfaction, which must be counted among those notions impressed by God upon the minds of men—who cannot lie—is a sign that they had, in some way, apprehended the truth; and the impiety that accompanied their practices bears witness against them that they held that truth in unrighteousness.

Certainly, God could not have brought them to ask for peace by satisfaction unless He had also instilled the persuasion that such peace would not be sought in vain, provided that the soul approached with a sincere desire to make satisfaction and with some worthy offering. And if, as Caesar reports, it was the opinion of the Druids that the life of a man must be given in exchange for a man’s life, since the divine wrath of the immortal gods could not otherwise be placated—then it necessarily follows that they believed the divine wrath could be placated by such an offering.

But in a matter so clear, and so confirmed by the testimony of many ages and nations, further arguments are hardly necessary.

For what religion was ever established among the nations—even the most barbarous—that did not rest on this fundamental principle: that God is indeed angered by the sins of men, but that His wrath is not implacable, and can be turned to mercy through repentance and some form of expiation?

Now, how those common and natural notions were imprinted upon the minds of men by nature is a matter open to inquiry. Either, first, no external object existed from which men could have inferred that there is forgiveness with God for sin, but rather some internal power of Providence engraved this awareness on the minds of men from the womb itself. Or, second, Providence did nothing internally at all, but only set forth externally such things from which the human mind, by its own power, drew and expressed this knowledge. Or finally, third, God both presented certain signs of His clemency and placability externally, and likewise operated something within, by which those signs, as they entered through the senses, might be received by the faculties of the soul.

I do not know whether anyone has claimed the first; I certainly do not. I readily assent to Aristotle, who judged that the soul comes forth from the womb like a blank slate (a tabula rasa) upon which nothing has yet been written. But once it has escaped the bonds of infancy and begun to be engaged with the contemplation of things, it draws from clear and self-evident objects those propositions which, because they are found to be the same in all men and cannot be conceived otherwise, are called common, natural, and immutable notions.

Thus, I do not think that men learned from Nature that two and two make four any differently than they learned, through frequent observation of singular things and their enumeration, that one and one make two, and that two repeated becomes four. And after they consider this attentively, they not only see that it is so, but also that it cannot be otherwise.

The second view I would not affirm so freely. For in those things which do not pertain either to the attainment of moral virtue or to the embracing of divine religion, the human mind can, of itself, achieve and contribute something, even without any special influence of divine Providence—apart from that common influence which is always present for the preservation and sustaining of all things.

But in matters which concern the knowledge of what is good and right, I hold nothing to be more true than that the effectiveness of God must be specially applied. The reason for this is readily apparent. When we deal with merely physical objects, since the operation of the intellect is also purely physical—consisting solely in the apprehension and judgment of the thing—then, provided that the organ is physically sound and there is no physical defect, there is nothing to prevent the mind from acting in accordance with nature.

But when we come to those objects which pertain to the moral good, moral impediments—namely, those rooted in impiety and wickedness—hold us bound by nature, and disturb, cloud, and disorder our faculties to such a degree that unless they are either purged or at least restrained and curbed to some extent, they entirely prevent the mind from accomplishing anything.

For what the Apostle says of the Gentiles, that they “by nature do the things of the law” (Rom. 2:14), is easy to misunderstand. By “nature” in that place he means the universal dispensation which lacked the revelation of the Word, and which stands in contrast to the dispensation whereby God lived among the Jews, to whom He revealed His statutes—not the internal nature of men, considered apart from the effective operation of divine Providence. This becomes evident to anyone who inspects the passage carefully.

Thus, we must hold to the third position: that in those things which are universally present to the eyes of all men, there exist certain signs of divine clemency, which ought to keep them from despairing of obtaining forgiveness for their offenses; and that, in those who notice and reflect on such signs, Providence works inwardly in some way—without which, either those signs would be altogether passed over as unknown, or, if slightly noticed, would be overwhelmed by the fear of judgment or choked out by innate impiety.

Concerning the hope of reward, I need say very little, except what is known to all from experience itself. It is well known what the poets have fabled concerning the Elysian Fields, and the philosophers’ opinions do not seem greatly to differ from these. Socrates—who was always held in the highest esteem in that field (πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄνηρ)—speaks thus when facing death, as reported by Plato and translated by Cicero:

“A great hope possesses me, judges, that it will turn out well for me that I am going to die. For it must be one of two things: either death utterly removes all sensation, or it transfers us from this life to some other place. Therefore, if all sensation is extinguished and death is like a sleep—one, perhaps, without dreams and visions, bringing the most tranquil rest—then by the gods, what gain is there in dying? And how many days could one find which might be preferred to such a night, to which the whole eternity of subsequent time will be similar? Who could be happier than I?

But if what is said is true—that death is a migration to those regions inhabited by those who have departed this life—then that is much more blessed still. For to go from those who claim to be judges to those who are truly to be called judges, to Minos, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, and Triptolemus, and to meet with those who lived justly and faithfully—does this journey seem a small matter to you?

And if it should be permitted to converse with Orpheus, Musaeus, Homer, and Hesiod, how highly would you estimate that? Indeed, I would gladly die many times over, if only I might find what I say to be true.

With what delight would I speak with Palamedes, with Ajax, and with others who were unjustly condemned by corrupt judgments! I would question also the wisdom of the great king who led such a vast host to Troy, and inquire into the prudence of Ulysses and Sisyphus. Nor would I, in seeking these things, as I now do here, be condemned to death.

Surely, judges, you who have acquitted me need not fear death, for no harm can befall a good man—neither in life nor after death. Nor are his affairs ever neglected by the immortal gods.

This that has happened to me has not occurred by chance. Nor have I anything to complain about against those who accused or condemned me—except that they thought they were harming me."

If anyone should say that Socrates speaks uncertainly here, and that he has no firm or settled conviction about the immortality of the soul, Cicero himself will answer in his defense—that he retained his usual mode of discussion, being unwilling to assert anything dogmatically. Yet there can be no doubt that this most praiseworthy man inclined toward that view which denies that the souls of men perish with their bodies.

Indeed, whatever Socrates' own judgment may have been in this matter, that same belief has prevailed among all peoples at all times: namely, that the human soul is immortal and eternal. And this belief, joined with some sense of religion, necessarily engenders a hope that in those places to which souls pass after death, some reward is laid up for those whose lives were better and holier.

But whence did they derive this hope? It is not at all difficult to explain—and no one could do so better than Calvin. For in Book I, Chapter V of his Institutes, where he teaches that the knowledge of God shines forth in the structure of the world and in its continual governance, he lays this down first as a foundation: that the Apostle has briefly and clearly stated the matter when he says that what may be known about God is manifest to men, for God has shown it to them—namely, that His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, are clearly perceived from the creation of the world, being understood through the things that have been made.

Then, as Calvin moves more closely into the consideration of divine providence, he writes the following: "In the administration of human society, God so tempers His providence that, while He is in many ways kind and beneficent to all, He nevertheless, by plain and daily evidences, shows His mercy to the pious and His severity to the wicked and depraved. The punishments He inflicts on acts of wickedness are not uncertain, just as He does not obscure the fact that He is both the guardian and the avenger of innocence, when He blesses the lives of the godly, provides help in their necessities, mitigates and comforts their sorrows, and lifts them up in the midst of calamity, everywhere bringing things to serve their well-being."

Nor should the perpetual justice of God be obscured in our minds by the fact that the wicked and profane often flourish for a time with apparent impunity, while the righteous and innocent are afflicted by many adversities and suffer under the malice and injustice of the ungodly. Rather, our thoughts should move in an entirely different direction: when God visibly punishes a particular sin with manifest tokens of wrath, this shows that He hates all sin; and when He passes over many things unpunished, it suggests that there is another judgment yet to come in which justice will be perfectly executed.

In like manner, God gives us ample matter for contemplating His mercy. For when He continues to pursue miserable sinners with unwavering kindness, even until their wickedness is at last

broken by His goodness, does He not, by more-than-fatherly indulgence, call them back to Himself?

At length, Calvin concludes:such knowledge ought not only to awaken us to the worship of God but also to rouse us to hope for the life to come and to lift us toward it. For when we take notice of the displays our Lord gives both of His clemency and of His severity, we must certainly conclude that they are only partial and preliminary—like preludes to greater things, the full and complete manifestation of which is deferred to the life to come.

On the other hand, when we see the godly burdened by the wicked, shaken by injuries, assaulted by insults and reproaches—while the ungodly flourish, prosper, enjoy peace and even honor without penalty—we must immediately infer that there is another life, in which vengeance shall be exacted for iniquity, and the reward of justice laid up.

We must therefore confess that in each of God's works—especially in their totality—His attributes are, as it were, painted upon tablets, by which all mankind is led and invited to the knowledge of God, and from that to true and full felicity.

Therefore, in Calvin's judgment, God has set before the eyes of all men such evidence by which right reason and a sound mind could with certainty conclude that there is some hope hidden with Him, by which He intends to reward those who have a fervent and sincere desire for true piety and virtue.

But since the blindness and perversity of the human heart is such that it either cannot observe these grounds of hope, or, having observed them, cannot grasp them, or, having grasped them, cannot retain them—but immediately lets them be torn away from its understanding—and since the experience of so many centuries has shown that these grounds have never been entirely eradicated but have always moved mankind toward some form of divine worship, it necessarily follows that some force of divine providence has been at work. It is by this operation that the minds of nearly all men, though darkened and confused, have yet tenaciously clung to some imperfect notion of grounds for hope.

Upon these foundations, as upon its own pillars, the whole of Gentile religion was built—if, indeed, the sense of religion with which nearly all people have always been imbued may rightly be called religion.

Now, as we proposed at the beginning, we must consider whether this influence of divine providence—by which the minds of men were thus affected—can rightly be considered and called universal grace, as Arminius maintained.

And first of all, whatever name you give to this dispensation—whether you call it grace or anything else (for we are not yet debating that point)—certainly it cannot be called universal. For although the providence of God does indeed universally govern the corruption of all men, there are very few in whom He exerts that particular efficacy which kindles a sincere zeal for virtue in their souls—so few, in fact, that they scarcely outnumber, as the phrase goes, the gates of Thebes or the mouths of the Nile. Many more there are whose sinful liberty is merely restrained

by the fear of punishment, or who are ruled by some dominant passion or disorder of the soul. And indeed, the number is great of those whose lives clearly demonstrate that the providence of God has effected nothing in their hearts to make them even slightly less evil than the natural corruption of their nature would produce—so thoroughly are they polluted with vice and abominable sins.

It follows, then, that this “grace” pertains to very few. But more than that: it ought not even to be called grace. Although, perhaps, everything that has any reference to good and is bestowed freely by God upon men could in some loose sense be called grace, yet the efficacy of providence that implants a love of virtue in a few souls—when compared with the shameful, base, and wicked lives of the rest—ought indeed to be counted among the good things of God. Still, the word grace, as it is used in Sacred Scripture, signifies something quite different.

To make this distinction clearer, let us more carefully compare that energy of providence with the grace of the Spirit which accompanies the preaching of the gospel. This comparison should be chiefly structured around four considerations:

1. Who is the author in each case?
2. What is the nature of the thing given?
3. What is the manner of working?
4. What is the effect produced?

As to the first point, it is clear from the outset: in the grace of the Spirit, which is given through the Word, the end that God intends is the salvation of those who receive it. The moving cause of this grace is a certain incomprehensible and ineffable mercy, which is not content merely to desire that men be saved, if only they do not reject the salvation offered, but proceeds even further: it wills that in the elect there be nothing at all left over by which they might refuse the salvation externally proposed to them.

And therefore this mercy is called in Greek ἔλεος and οἰκτιρμός, and in Hebrew חֶסֶד (chesed) and רַחֲמִים (rachamim). These terms do not denote some mild affection from which some modest favor proceeds; rather, they signify the deepest and most intense affection, in which the very inward parts burn and are stirred.

This grace is given for this purpose: that the outward invitations to salvation may not be rendered void. The Apostle declares this plainly in these words: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your understanding enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Ephesians 1:17–18). For although the hope proposed in the gospel is magnificent and glorious, it is nevertheless unknown to those whose eyes have not been opened by grace. Therefore they are opened by the power of the Spirit, that it may be known; and once it is known, it excites wonder and an incredible longing.

Now, what is given to the Gentiles who were destitute of the preaching of the Word did not proceed from the same principle, nor was it given for the same end. For if God had truly possessed the same zeal for the salvation of the Gentiles that He has for His elect—such that He would bestow upon them some measure of the illuminating and sanctifying Spirit—then He would likewise have granted them the preaching of the Word. And yet that gift of the Word, even considered by itself, cannot be compared in either dignity or utility with that other grace.

But if it had truly been given for the purpose of salvation, it would have accomplished something memorable among the Gentiles toward that end. As experience clearly shows, the opposite is the case. Yet it is absurd, as we have often said, to suppose that God would be moved by some vehement affection—one that entirely occupies His will—to pursue a particular end, and yet be unable to attain it.

This, then, is what God intended in that dispensation: unless He had in some way restrained the impetuous force of human wickedness (τῆς ἐπιθυμίας διὰ τῆς κακίας), human society itself would have utterly perished, and that society God had determined—on weighty grounds—to preserve.

We perceive the effect, by the highest benefit of God, but we do not grasp the method of its operation. But in that energy of Providence, the matter stands otherwise. Namely, as we said above, a notable part of it lies in the efficiency which tempers the body from birth in one way or another, so that desires display the greatest variety of movements—slower or swifter, more intense or more relaxed, more stubborn or more easily changed, inclined rather in one direction than another. But this has nothing to do with the illumination of the intellect; it pertains entirely to those parts of the soul which nature has implanted in the body, and which are separated from any participation in intellect and reason.

And whatever this is, it is scarcely more to be referred to the efficacy of the Holy Spirit than that lions are irascible and noble, foxes cunning and clever, deer timid, and other animals devoted to their respective instincts by their temperament and some composition of humors. A second—not insignificant—part of this influence, we said, lies in education and early habituation. And indeed, that has great power in forming human morals to some external appearance of decency—an appearance that strikes the eyes. But that has nothing at all to do with the power of the Spirit which transforms the mind itself for the better; for even fierce beasts are tamed by training and practice, and wild animals themselves are sometimes softened by use and custom. But these are so far from being illuminated by any light of truth that they are not even endowed by nature with intellect itself.

Finally, even those marvelous so-called virtues—or rather shadows and images of virtue—on account of which Socrates, Aristides, Epaminondas, and others of that sort have been extolled to the skies, did not arise from any true illumination of the intellect. For they either thought little or nothing at all about God in their pursuit of virtue. So much so that, in those books we earlier noted as deserving high regard—Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and Cicero's On Duties—nothing at all is laid down or set forth about religion or piety toward God, which indeed should strike us as remarkable.

Even if the appearance of virtue, as distinct from piety, shone before their minds' eyes (which we have already confessed must not be denied), yet this occurred by a certain divine inspiration—a fleeting breath—by which the power of perceiving truth and discerning the honorable was briefly kindled, and by which the fog which naturally envelops and burdens our minds was in part dispelled. But this is so far from being a true illumination of the mind, one which purifies native corruption and floods the intellect with divine light, that the clearer their perception of one aspect of the honorable became, the blinder they were in others where discernment was most needed. The darkness, then, which sin has cast upon our minds was not dispersed and expelled, but merely shifted from one part of the soul to another, which—already dark by its own nature—became yet darker.

I would not wish to place too much faith in those who report that Socrates enjoyed the company of young boys more for vice than for the teaching of virtue and philosophy. Yet the Symposium dialogue of Plato does not seem entirely fitting for someone so severe, so constant, and so temperate. And that foul doctrine of women's communal use which he wished to introduce into his Republic—does it not clearly show that the mind of that man, so divinely esteemed by the Greeks and singularly admired for his virtue, was in truth terribly corrupted and defiled?

Let us now consider the third point in its proper order. The object offered in the realm of nature is of such a kind that the human mind—however it may be constituted—could elicit from it nothing save by reasoning, speculation, and advancing from the better known to the less known: the usual way by which men proceed in the investigation and perception of the sciences. Wherefore, if the power of Providence at times acted directly on the mind itself among the Gentiles, it chiefly operated by strengthening the faculty of reasoning, so that it might better see the object presented, retain it more firmly, and embrace it more closely.

But the power of the Spirit, which bears the name of Grace, affects the mind in such a way that it perceives the truth of the divine promise. And once perceived, it rests upon that promise as upon a testimony, and in it, without further reasoning, it acquiesces with full certainty. Hence it happens that those who excel in the power of reasoning—who inquire and weigh what in objects presented to their contemplation is true or false—sometimes believe the gospel less. While others, in whom the reasoning faculty is weaker, retain and defend the faith of the gospel—once received by the Spirit's illumination—with greater constancy.

Perhaps this is why the Apostle called it faith, not wisdom, in that passage in which he says: "Since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:21). For indeed, knowledge of God through His works could only be obtained by the most diligent contemplation and constant meditation of the mind. But the act of the intellect by which we embrace the gospel is everywhere in Holy Scripture called faith, which mostly rests on the authority of the one who speaks.

I am aware, of course, that Paul sometimes also calls faith by the name wisdom, and that the knowledge which a sound mind ought to acquire through contemplation of the divine works is called faith by Calvin. Thus he speaks in Institutes, Book 1, Chapter 2, §2, when treating the knowledge of God the Creator—namely, as He has revealed Himself in His works.

Now what is pure and true religion, except faith joined with sincere fear of God—such that fear includes voluntary reverence and draws with it that legitimate worship which is prescribed in the law? For in faith there is a most certain perception of that truth—that it is God Himself who speaks in the gospel. And in this knowledge, if it existed through the contemplation of divine works, there would be such trust that the soul would rest in God with full assurance.

Indeed, the object of faith is frequently described as something knowable and intelligible; and so faith itself is sometimes called knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Yet the knowledge that should be drawn from the workmanship of the world is proposed rather as a kind of testimony. The Apostle says that God has never left Himself without witness [Acts 14:17]. The Psalmist even attributes a kind of voice to the heavens, which all men are bound to hear. And if they had heard it, that hearing—according to Calvin—would have amounted to something nearly equivalent to faith.

For he writes thus on the Apostle's words, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Indeed they have. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world" [Romans 10:17–18]. Since, by preaching, men's minds are imbued with the knowledge of God, which in turn gives rise to the invocation of that same God, it remained to inquire whether this knowledge of God had never been declared to the Gentiles. For Paul's sudden turn to the Gentiles raised no small offense. So he asks whether God had never before directed His voice to the Gentiles, or acted as a teacher to the whole world.

To show that He had universally opened the school in which He gathers disciples from all nations, Paul brings in the testimony of the Psalmist in Psalm 19: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth…" I therefore take this citation in the strict and proper sense of the prophet, so that it serves as a real argument: God from the very beginning of the world made His divinity known to the Gentiles—not by the preaching of men, but by the testimony of His own creatures. Even if the gospel itself was silent among them, nevertheless the whole workmanship of heaven and earth spoke aloud, and by its own proclamation exalted its Creator.

In his commentary on the Psalm from which that passage is drawn, Calvin says the heavens preach universally among all peoples without distinction, and that they are placed throughout the earth as witnesses for the celebration of God's glory. He further says they publish the glory of God far and wide, and he repeats the metaphor of the "school" which he says was open to the Gentiles, in which they might learn piety and the worship of God. He also adds that David's citation by Paul admits no ambiguity: for Paul meant, says Calvin, that in past ages God had already revealed His glory to the Gentiles, and that this was a prelude to a more abundant doctrine. Though for a time the condition of the elect people was distinct from that of the Gentiles, it should not seem strange that God should later reveal Himself promiscuously to both—since He had already invited them all to Himself from the beginning.

Therefore, the Gentiles had both their own preaching and their own testimony, which they were obligated to receive. But the witness of the creatures is called a witness only metaphorically, because it offers the mind an argument on which to assent. "Metaphorically," Calvin says in the

same place, “David introduces the splendor of the celestial machine as if it were a teacher preaching the glory of God.” The gospel, however, is properly a witness (martyria), to which, once the author is recognized, the mind—just as I said before—rests upon his authority.

This, then, properly generates faith. That other does not. This requires a certain disposition of the soul altogether different from the other. And fittingly, this demands the operation of the Spirit, wholly distinct from the simple efficacy of Providence.

The fourth point explains itself. For surely, if God had implanted in all men the same grace with the same efficacy and the same intention, then it would be consistent to expect the same fruits in all. But no one can say this has happened, with experience itself so clearly contradicting it.

The effects of the Spirit’s grace are chiefly two: piety toward God and true sanctity of morals. As to the latter, we have already seen what must be thought. For although there may seem to be three sorts of Gentiles—one consisting of those whose lives were abandoned to every crime; another, of those whose wickedness was somewhat restrained so that they did not burst forth into criminal acts, though they were untouched by any sincere love of virtue; and a third, of those in whom some spark of love for virtue shone forth—all of them were altogether ignorant of what true sanctity was.

And as for the rest, the matter is clear enough in itself. For there never was a person of that third sort whose life had not been stained with some disgrace—so that even among the most unlearned, the praise of sanctity must rightfully be denied him. One was defiled by shameful paiderastia, another was known for habitual adultery or fornication, another driven by a fierce and brutal spirit to acts of hubris—all of them held under the power of contempt and neglect of the glory of God, which is the ruin and poison of true virtue.

And how could there be any piety where there was such horrible idolatry and such foul errors, by which all the religions of the Gentiles—both Greek and Roman—were thoroughly corrupted and perverted? Indeed, whatever that may be which the divine working is said to have testified among men, it is remarkable how everywhere it has been buried and smothered under such things. And I am not speaking merely of the absurd opinions publicly received among the common people concerning divine worship. What of the philosophers themselves? What plague of error did not invade their doctrine? What impure teachings polluted their systems?

Let one read the first book of De Natura Deorum, where Cicero carefully collected the mess of philosophical opinions on this topic. Let one read Plutarch’s On the Opinions of the Philosophers, or the commentaries of Diogenes Laërtius and Eunapius on their lives, or even Plato himself—whom the Greeks used to call divine—in those things which he attributes to Socrates, the father of philosophy: good God, what a Lerna! What an Augean stable! What a monster made up of every kind of destructive error!

How, then, could it be that this hydra of heresies and idolatries had the Spirit as its companion—and that His ministry supplied these things to the minds of men? For surely it was either they themselves who introduced these monstrosities into the world, or they received them

already introduced by others. If they introduced them, who would dare to say that they were endowed with the Spirit of God—unless he were mad? If they received them, how could they have received the Spirit at the same time?

Would He be given to make us capable of Tartarean falsehoods but not of heavenly and divine truth? Would God have enlightened the eyes of the mind for this end—that men might see nothing but monstrous opinions, from which their souls would be transformed into monsters of error? Add this, too: that God has always followed such a method in the dispensation of His grace, that the more clearly the object of saving hope is set before men, the more abundantly He grants the Spirit in proportion.

And hence it came about that although from the very beginning of the Church God granted to His elect that grace which alone could produce faith and holiness in them, nevertheless the prophets foretold that the Spirit would be given more fully afterward, and the apostles declared that it had actually been granted—when the gospel, after Christ's ascension into heaven, was set forth in the clearest light. For just as the external revelation of earlier times was so obscure in comparison with the clarity of apostolic preaching that the gospel is said to have been "the mystery hidden from ages past" [Eph. 3:9], so also, in comparison with the abundant outpouring of the Spirit in the Christian Church, Scripture speaks as though it had been entirely withheld in former times.

Therefore, when the disciples of Arminius admit that the light shining in Providence is so weak that it cannot by itself and immediately lead to faith, and when the experience of all ages shows that this light has been contaminated and buried under the darkness of grievous errors, what sort of inner grace could be said to have accompanied that light? Surely, that light was so surrounded by the darkness of human sin that it was nothing but sheer night.

Why then would God have given eyes to the mind to see nothing but night? But if by some operation of grace He did give that light of the Spirit, then either He gave it in so small a measure—corresponding, as is His usual way of working, to the obscurity of the object—or He gave it in such great and powerful abundance that it could have dispelled the darkness and clearly distinguished truth from falsehood, the pure from the impure.

If the former is the case, what could such a weak and feeble thing accomplish? A dulled and blunted palate might sooner detect fresh water in the sea than such a mind, plunged in that depth of falsehood, could perceive the truth. But if the latter is claimed, where are the Gentiles whom God so wonderfully visited? Where are the prophets among them who brought wandering nations back to the right path and restored the true worship of God among them?

For such a task was of such great difficulty that it could not be accomplished by any but one who was endowed not with ordinary grace (with which God honors us), but with that which would nearly equate him with prophets, or even apostles, in the greatness and excellence of revelation.

But Arminius would not have this. He merely wanted some grace to have been granted to the Gentiles which would free them in their actions from the necessity of sinning.

Let us then briefly refute this.

First, it has already often been shown by us that there was no need for God to free men from the necessity of sinning, since that necessity does not conflict with the nature of sin. And if it did conflict, we have already shown that God would have dealt with us very harshly by giving us such a grace. For we were in a condition where we could not sin at all; but He transferred us into one where, the necessity having been removed, we can now sin—and incur punishment for it.

Once, someone in Cicero remarked that—just as with wine for the sick, which rarely helps but often harms—it would have been better had it never been administered at all, so also it would have been better had reason not been granted to anyone, since it brings more harm than good to mankind. But this complaint is surely unjust. For if reason had not been given to us, we would have been altogether like brute beasts. But if that grace, which so many abuse and so few turn to faith and salvation, had never been offered, nothing of our humanity would have been lost—only the liberty of sinning would have been absent, that liberty which has ruined the whole human race.

Then, too, we previously noted that, according to the view of Arminius, the necessity of sinning is not removed except by a balance of the will (ἰσορροπία), but that this very equilibrium is by nature evil and sinful. Therefore, it is contradictory to say that one is at once balanced and freed from the necessity of sinning. For whoever is balanced (i.e., has equal inclination toward good and evil) necessarily sins.

Moreover, we have demonstrated that the will, bound by necessary causes and reasons, cannot be brought into such equilibrium unless it is first freed from the perverse habits by which it is held bound by nature. But that deliverance cannot happen apart from sanctification. Therefore, it would be necessary to believe that all the Gentiles were sanctified by God—something that no sane person could believe.

We add also this point: the will is not brought into equilibrium unless the intellect is enlightened—something even Arminius himself admitted. But what is the enlightenment of the intellect? The word illuminare (to enlighten) is metaphorical and must, unless we are willing to err, be reduced to its proper sense.

Now either this enlightenment in the Gentiles is like the illumination of the eyes when light from without falls upon them and is actively received, or it is like the correction of eyesight when the eyes are freed from a congenital defect and are made fit to receive external objects whenever they are presented.

The former cannot be said. Either no object appears to them that is suitable to free the will from evil—or, if any does appear, it is not received; or if it is received, it is accompanied by so many corrupt and depraved objects that the will is bound more tightly still in the cords of sin, and thus

no efficacious action can be exercised by the intellect. For if, as both true theology and philosophy teach, the determination of the will necessarily follows the judgment of the intellect, what judgment can be formed by an intellect into which no true object flows except surrounded by six hundred false ones—objects indistinguishable, as it were, by their very likeness?

Can a single wholesome remedy be of any benefit when it is diluted and mixed together with so many sharp and immediately present poisons? But if—as these men claim—the intellect does nothing but show the will what it ought to follow, then what sort of showing is it that presents the truth wrapped in so many lies that it cannot be recognized at all? In such a multitude of species—no less chaotic than the indivisible corpuscles of Democritus, all colliding at random—should we expect that, by sheer accident, the will might happen to hit upon the true and the good?

And the second option (that illumination is like healing the eyes) is even less acceptable. For if such illumination is nothing more than a preparation of the faculty to receive the object, and that object is as we described it above—then this would mean that the Spirit of God bestowed His grace in order to make man fit to receive every kind of ruinous falsehood in religion. But this is so utterly false and absurd that it surpasses all folly. It would not bring the will into any true balance between good and evil.

“But,” someone might say, “such grace was given so that good objects could be discerned from worse ones—just as many of our faithful fathers, during the Babylonian captivity, even before liberty was restored, distinguished gospel doctrines from the corruptions that had crept into Christianity, being taught by that Spirit whose anointing makes eyes trained in the discernment of objects.”

But these two cases are enormously different. Those who lived under the Babylonian captivity before the Church’s liberty was restored had the Word of God in their hands—a definite, fixed rule, untouched or at least only slightly altered by corruptions, by which they could measure and test all the things done or preached in public. And so if the Spirit of God was given to any of them—and we do not deny that He was—it was not difficult, or at least not impossible, that by comparing those different and conflicting things, they could observe the discrepancy between them.

Indeed, it is beyond doubt that many things escaped them which God in His abundant mercy has graciously forgiven. But among the Gentiles, there was no such thing. All was confusion and disorder; and even those things that bore some appearance of truth appeared so uncertain, so tangled and mingled with falsehoods, that—having no certain rule of judgment—it was easier for them, as I said above, to love falsehood than to separate human inventions from the true evidences of nature.

In a word, if there truly was some grace universally granted to all men, which called their wills to equilibrium and delivered them from the necessity of sinning, then I ask: what, pray, was the difference between those to whom the Gospel was announced and those to whom no report of the divine Word ever came? For according to Arminians, the preaching of the Gospel

accomplishes nothing further than this: that the will of each person is enabled to believe or not to believe, according to his own choosing.

But this—according to those judges themselves—is nothing other than the equilibrium of the will (ἰσόρροπον). Indeed, there are two things that bring about our salvation: arguments offered from without that give reason for hope, and that internal power which enables us to grasp those arguments.

Now regarding the external arguments, the disciples of Arminius assert: although many nations are deprived of the ordinary preaching of the gospel, yet they are not precisely excluded from the grace of the gospel itself. Rather, the good things offered in the gospel remain equally exposed and available to them, just as to others who enjoy the privilege of its preaching—provided only that they fulfill the condition of the covenant.

But that condition of the covenant is, without doubt, faith. As for the internal things, they teach that all men experience within themselves a power which places the will in a state where it can either fulfill or not fulfill the condition.

Thus, there is allegedly no noteworthy distinction between the Gentiles and us Christians—except that we, by God's grace, use it well, and they use it less well.

What then did the Apostle mean by those words: "He let all the nations go their own ways"? What is that abandonment of the nations?

What also do we make of the passage: "The times of this ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent"? What is this overlooking, this divine neglect of those who were miserably wandering, if in truth there is no real difference between them and those to whom the Word of God has been preached?

No wonder the most distinguished Molinæus cried out against these monstrosities of a new wisdom and called upon the faith of God and men. For let us set aside, if we must, the fact that the proclamation of the gospel, compared to the faint light that shone among the Gentiles, is as the bright sun of the heavens compared to the thick gloom of night.

Yet even in that night, whatever glimmer of light might have been present was so dim and obscure that it would have troubled even the sharpest eyes.

There was, in truth, absolutely nothing that could relieve man's natural blindness.

But when the light of the gospel shines so brightly—even to the point that it ought to revive the very dead—then the Spirit exercises His power to drive away that native blindness from the eyes of the soul. As the Apostle says, "He shines in our hearts."

Therefore, if there is no reason why God should have granted to us rather than to the Gentiles this inestimable privilege, then we conclude that no such universal grace exists. And we hold it

sufficiently demonstrated that the Gentiles were, to that extent, reprobated by the absolute decree.

That this is clearly taught in Holy Scripture, and has in our own age been definitively declared by the Church of God, is certain. And by the benefit of Christ, this conviction has been deeply impressed upon our hearts.

As for the other points contained under this principal head, although we believe them to be in harmony with the truth, yet we do not affirm them so obstinately that we would refuse to yield to the Church, should she determine otherwise, or to any godly teacher offering something better.

CHAPTER XIV

That Calvin rightly taught the grace of the Spirit is not given to all those to whom the Gospel is announced.

That the grace of the Spirit, which efficaciously converts men, is not only denied to those who have heard nothing of the Gospel, but also not common to all who do hear it, was the most constant judgment of Calvin. Arminius, and those who followed him, thought otherwise. The words of Arnoldus against the most distinguished Molineaux are as follows:

“We say that both callings—namely internal and external—are conjoined in the first intention of God; we deny that one is ever separated from the other absolutely. Therefore, we say that no one is called by the external voice of God who is not also inwardly affected by the Spirit, and whom God does not wish to convert, unless that person’s own malice should stand in the way.”

To this first intention Arminius was referring when he said that the Word always has joined to it the operation of the Spirit. But when he also said in that same place that these two are almost always joined, it was not because he hesitated in the matter, but because he held that the inward help of the Spirit ordinarily and commonly comes to those who are first called—until by their own rebellion and stubbornness they render themselves unworthy of that help, or fail to deserve that the Spirit should continue working in them.

Therefore, on their hypothesis, no one is first called by the external preaching who is not also at that time affected by the inward operation of the Spirit. If there are any who resist the internal calling of the Spirit, they do not deny that this operation finally ceases in them, even if the external preaching of the Word continues.

This is the heart of the controversy. And since some years ago we dealt not without diligence with the judgment of this matter in a vernacular book written against D. Milletière, there is almost nothing we need do now except to translate what was written there into Latin—setting aside,

however, those things which pertain to the refutation of matters in which that man disagreed with the Arminians. For he devised many things according to his own preferences which, I know, the school of Arminius will never approve.

Thus we conducted our disputation in this way: we vindicated the arguments by which the most excellent Molineaux above all defended Calvin's doctrine—namely, that of our Churches—against the quibblings of Arnoldus. These arguments are of two kinds: some are supplied by experience itself, others are drawn from the Word of God.

Of those supplied by experience, three stand out above the rest:

1. That many hear and even understand the Gospel, yet are no more affected by it than if one were striking the ears of the deaf.

2. That some not only remain unaffected, but even mock and scoff at it as an absurdity and something contrary to common sense.

3. That in some there is such a stupor that, after hearing the preacher, they seriously profess that they could not discern whether he had spoken in French or Latin.

What does Arnoldus offer in reply to these? To the first, he says: if there are any whom the preaching of the Word in no way affects, that happens through their own fault, not through any deficiency or inefficacy in the Word.

What a strange response! For who denies this? And how does this pertain to weakening the force of the argument? Certainly, the operations of the Holy Spirit among the elect are primarily two and clearly distinct:

- One which first converts us and brings us into communion with Christ. Of this operation Christ himself speaks when he says, "No one comes to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."

- The other which comforts, sanctifies, and progressively advances believers toward the goal of perfection, and which we experience in our communion with Christ. Of this Christ also speaks in those words: "Whoever believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

Now regarding that second operation, it is certain that if anyone experiences it less efficaciously, it is due to their own fault. For if they had believed, Christ would in fact have performed what he promised in that passage. But it was through their own doing, as we have seen above, that they did not believe.

But if they did not experience the first operation, that is not equally due to their fault—for that grace God grants to the elect alone according to his most free will. Yet those others are not therefore less at fault for not being affected by the preaching of the Word. For such an object—so true, so beautiful, so inherently necessary and delightful—ought not only to have

moved men who are endowed with intellect and will, but to have moved them most powerfully and efficaciously.

Now the fact that it neither moved them efficaciously nor even slightly is a strong argument that the grace of the Spirit did not accompany it in their case. For if it had, they certainly would not have remained untouched and unmoved.

But Arnoldus then adds that the Word did indeed have the Spirit as its companion at that time, but its power was not sensed by men because of their stupor and lack of attentiveness.

This is a ridiculous and laughable reply.

Someone once affirmed, like a man claiming that the sun, as it travels westward during the day, retraces its steps eastward at night, but is not seen by men because it is night—so too, if the sun truly returned that way, it would dispel the darkness of night and produce day. In the same way, if the Spirit were truly present, He would dispel such stupor and render souls exceedingly attentive.

No less unworthy of a learned man is what Arnoldus adds: that it cannot be denied that there are many who, though affected by the sense of the Word and even so far as rightly to perceive and understand it, nevertheless do not assent to it. But they could not have understood it unless by the intervention of that efficacious operation of the Spirit of which we speak.

For in the matter of faith, there are two acts of the human intellect. One is merely natural and does not extend beyond a grasp of what is said—as they put it. In respect to this act, we do not call men believers or unbelievers, good or evil, but rather quick-witted and intelligent, or slow and dull. The other act, however, is entirely above the nature with which we are now furnished since the fall, and proceeds so far as to allow us to see in what is said that it is true and good, and to drink it in with the highest delight once it has been accurately discerned by the soul.

Opposed to this act is the aversion and the withholding of assent which arises when the image or appearance of the good and true does not shine forth to the understanding. This act, by which we apprehend the Gospel as true and good and rest in it with our whole soul, is from the Spirit of God. It can by no means arise from any other cause—certainly not from the perversity of the human intellect.

For He alone is the one who by the power of His might [Eph. 1:19] enlightens the eyes of the mind and draws the will into obedience to a mind so enlightened. The former act, of mere natural understanding, is not produced without the general concurrence of divine power by which all things are sustained—nor without the assistance of Providence, which, intent upon all things, administers and governs them. But beyond this, it has nothing further.

When Paul preached at Athens, the Athenians, by a certain power of natural intellect, grasped no less what he meant when he said that Christ had risen from the dead, than they would have understood someone who denied it. The human mind could just as easily incline toward either of those two contradictory claims. And just as the proposition “Christ did not rise” is

perceived—when assented to—without any regenerating power of the Spirit, so also the proposition “Christ did rise”, until it is believed to be true, is perceived by that same power of understanding which is innate to us all.

But that it was truly so as Paul preached, neither Damaris nor Dionysius could firmly believe or inwardly grasp unless they were aided, moved, and inwardly renewed by the grace of the Spirit.

To the second argument, Arnoldus responds in two ways. First, he repeats that nothing is ever mocked by anyone that has not first been understood by him. But the Gospel, he says, cannot be understood apart from the Spirit. He then supports his response by the argument that those who resist the Gospel are said to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51).

The former response we have already refuted. Those who mock the Gospel regard it as a fable. It is therefore heard and “understood” by them in the same way as we listen to the tales of old women or the verses of poets. Do we need the grace of the Holy Spirit to understand what Euripides says when he narrates that Alcestis was brought back from the underworld by the virtue of Hercules?

As for the passage from Acts, it is astonishing that men who think themselves clever could stumble so disgracefully in a matter so clear. For since the revelation of the Gospel is from the one Spirit of God, what could be more obvious than that they are resisting the Spirit who resist the Gospel?

And since the operation of the Spirit is visible either in the illumination of the mind or in the softening of the heart—or in both (for now we do not inquire more precisely)—why are those men, by Stephen’s speech, called “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears,” if there was any efficacious working of the Spirit in them? Yet this same Spirit, of whom we now speak, in the preceding chapter is said to be the one whom the Jews could not resist—namely, the Spirit of wisdom by whom Stephen spoke.

Surely this cannot be taken as referring to internal calling. For even putting aside that Arminius thought there was no internal operation of the Spirit so powerful that the human will could not resist it (a doctrine shockingly injurious to the infinite power of God), the matter itself cries out that what is being discussed is the clarity of truth which, in Stephen’s preaching, shone forth as in an external object. They resisted the Spirit, therefore, because they rejected the Word which was preached by Stephen from His revelation, and did not yield the assent of faith to it.

Yet they could not fully resist—for such was the evidence (ἐνάργεια) of heavenly wisdom and truth in that preaching, that even if they had deliberately resolved to resist with stubborn rebellion, it would have nevertheless forced itself upon them against their will and struck their eyes with its unwelcome brilliance.

And this is confirmed by what follows: “You always resist the Holy Spirit, as your fathers did. Which of the prophets did they not persecute?” For, as Peter says, the Spirit of God was in the prophets; and the apostles and evangelists, in that same Spirit sent down from heaven, proclaimed the gospel by the same author (1 Pet. 1:11–12).

To the third argument, they respond by means of a twofold distinction. First, they distinguish between preaching and the Word itself, and they say that it often happens—indeed very often—that preachers, seeking glory either for their cleverness or for their eloquence, consume their sermons on matters which they themselves do not understand, much less those to whom they preach. Or even if they do understand them, the sermons are nevertheless so alien to and far removed from the nature of the Gospel, that they have nothing in them of sound doctrine.

Next, they say that even if those things do not completely diverge from the Gospel, there is nevertheless a great difference between the Word as it was preached by the Apostles and the declamations of preachers as they are commonly delivered today. And regarding the former point, it is not unusual among the Papists that sermons are given to the people in which Christ Himself scarcely obtains so much as a single mention. In the Reformed churches, I do not know whether the disciples of Arminius have seen anyone so senseless as to permit such a thing. I, for my part, do not recall ever having seen it.

But if anyone is so foolish as to act in such a way, the argument drawn from such sermons is invalid. We contend only that even those sermons which are most wisely and fittingly composed in agreement with the very nature of the Gospel are not always accompanied by that efficacious power of the Spirit of which we speak.

They say nothing at all with respect to the latter distinction. We admit, indeed, that in the preaching of the Apostles, the power of the cross of Christ was more vivid—either because the representation of salvation was more evident, or because God was pleased to magnify their ministry in an extraordinary way. But what then? If the Arminian position were true, then to the extent that Christ is clearly displayed in present-day preaching, there should be attached a corresponding portion of the Holy Spirit's power.

Yet since experience shows that, under the very same preaching, one man is stirred most vehemently while another remains as unmoved and rigid as a block of wood, what remains but that we must judge the Spirit to have exercised His powerful operation in one and none at all in the other? According to the words of Christ, "The Spirit blows where He wills" [John 3:8], that we might understand neither the motion nor the rationale of His most free breathing.

The arguments taken from Scripture are more forceful and more fitting for theologians. Thus Christ speaks in John 6:45: "Everyone who has heard from the Father and learned comes to Me." Coming to Christ is to believe in Him. What, then, does it mean to "learn from the Father"? Surely it cannot mean merely to hear.

Arnoldus disturbs this passage with many obfuscations, as those who speak like the drunken sailor Nauis often do. His replies seem to reduce to these: first, that hearing and learning from the Father, which is the same in this context as being drawn, can signify some general call from God, to which all ought to respond. So "comes to Me" means only "ought to come to Me."

Second, that the drawing may denote that which occurs through the ministry of the Law.

Third, that this drawing may mean the generation of some sort of disposition in the one drawn—so that to be drawn is nothing more than to become understanding and obedient.

And finally, that however it may be understood, it follows indeed from this passage that no one comes unless he is drawn, but it does not follow that all are drawn—or, which amounts to the same thing, that all who are drawn actually come.

Nothing is more common with sophists than to throw out a multitude of incoherent claims in order to hinder the minds of their opponents, without holding to any clear or definite conclusion on which a more careful inquirer might press them toward the truth. Why does he not say plainly what he believes? Why does he lead us in circles with such evasions? Why does he offer so many varied and mutually inconsistent answers, when clearly either none of them is true or at most only one can be?

But let us examine them all. The first clearly shows that Arnoldus has no concern for what he says. Can there truly be such liberty among men to elude the Scriptures? Christ says, “No one can come to Me,” that is, believe in Me, “unless the Father draws him.” It is written in the Prophets, “They shall all be taught by God”—that is, all without distinction will be called by a common invitation. Therefore, “everyone who has heard from the Father and learned,” that is, who has been called and invited in a general way, “comes to Me,” that is, ought to come.

What could be more vapid? What more unworthy of Christ’s wisdom? What less suited to the purpose He is pursuing? For what is the point of saying, “Do not murmur among yourselves. No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him,” if what is meant by “drawing” is merely a common invitation that all receive?

And as for the phrase, “They shall all be taught by God”—does this promise nothing other than what is already said to be universally true?

The second interpretation is no less absurd. For, first of all, “drawing” signifies an efficacious action—that is, one that is joined with effect. Those who are said to be “drawn” are also said to “hear,” to “be taught,” and to “learn,” so that no one may doubt that the matter lies not in mere effort or invitation alone.

Indeed, one who learns nothing ought not even to be said to be taught, no matter how much effort is put into the teaching. How then could one be said to “learn” when the effort of instruction is entirely in vain?

Moreover, the discipline of the Law, strictly considered, does not of itself produce the necessary effect. And here we are dealing with that discipline which leads to salvation. But the Law, by itself, does not instruct unto salvation—on the contrary, it deters from salvation, since it holds out no hope except one based on perfect obedience and irrevocably and sternly pronounces death upon sinners. For this reason, Paul calls it “the ministry of condemnation.”

Lastly, those words—“Everyone who has heard and learned”—clearly have universal force. Therefore, it is universally true that all those who are truly taught do come, that is, believe.

But how many Jews, born and raised under the tutelage of the Law, hardened themselves against Christ? Surely the preaching of the Law ought to have stirred up some hunger and thirst for consolation, in line with Christ's word: "If anyone thirst, let him come to Me and drink"—and likewise, "Come to Me all who are weary"—words that in some sense were meant to awaken the soul under the burden of sin. Either all the Jews were afflicted and troubled under that severe pedagogue and, as it were, whip-bearing Orbilius, or they were not. If not, then this drawing was not common to all, as the disciples of Arminius would have it, and thus some were absolutely reprobated even in that sense. If all were indeed thus instructed, yet not all came, then Christ would have declared something to be universally true which in fact was not—and indeed, which rarely happened to be true at all.

But I ask you, reader, consider the words of the Prophet in which God comforts His Church: "This shall be to Me as the waters of Noah: as I swore that the waters of Noah should no more pass over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you nor rebuke you. The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall the covenant of My peace be removed," says the Lord who has mercy on you. And again: "O you afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with fair colors, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your windows of agate, your gates of carbuncles, and all your borders of precious stones. And all your children shall be taught of the Lord."

Are such splendid, magnificent words—so full of consolation—to be referred, as if plainly and directly, to the pedagogy of the Law, which was harsh, dreadful, and nothing but threats and terrors?

He toys with us again with another feeble reply. What does he mean by "being understanding and obedient"? Is this what it means to believe? Then Christ would have spoken thus: "Whoever believes in Me, he comes to Me," which is just to say, as we noted earlier, "he believes in Me." A mere tautology. But if it is not to believe, then what is it? Can one be obedient to Christ without submitting? Can one submit without believing? Then again, if "hearing" and "learning" mean to become understanding and obedient—and if that instruction and drawing is common to all—then all to whom the Gospel is announced are made intelligent and obedient, which is the "wisdom" of these men. But we, it seems, have been utterly mistaken who, with the Apostle, have believed that the cross of Christ is "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks," that some have "had their minds darkened," and that "the god of this world has blinded their eyes," and in a word, that the greater part of men stumble at Christ.

And finally, his claim that it does not follow that all who are thus instructed by God believe—if anything betrays a profound thoughtlessness. For just as the phrase "whoever believes shall be saved" leaves no doubt that all who believe shall be partakers of salvation, so also "everyone who hears comes" does not permit us to doubt that all who are so taught believe. When therefore not all believe, it plainly follows that not all are thus taught. But, according to the Arminians, all are taught by the external call and invitation. It must therefore follow that this passage speaks of the internal and most certainly not universal instruction of the Spirit.

And in fact, the nature of the case leads us by the hand to this conclusion. For after Christ had said many things which the men of Capernaum neither understood nor believed—and many were murmuring because His words seemed absurd to them—He said that there was nothing in this to be surprised at, and that those alone would understand unto salvation who were not only struck by the voice of external preaching, but also taught inwardly by the Spirit. For it was absolutely necessary, and the prophets had long before predicted it to be so. What could be clearer, more evident, more direct, more easily understood?

The Apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24 are: "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Who then are these who are called, and by what calling are they called? For if the internal calling is no less universal than the external, why, beyond His declaration that He preaches universally, does the Apostle go on to designate certain people as "the called," and that in a distinguishing and proper way?

And since he contrasts those to whom Christ is the power and wisdom of God with those to whom Christ is foolishness and a stumbling block, why does he so clearly assign the reason for the difference to the fact that some are called in this way and others are not—if, with respect to the calling, there is no difference between them? Therefore, there is a twofold calling: one external, of which even those participate to whom Christ is a stumbling block; the other internal, whereby those who are partakers of it recognize and admire the power and wisdom of God in Christ.

The same Apostle admits indeed that he persecuted the Church of God, but (so far as he could excuse it) he says he did it "ignorantly in unbelief." Peter likewise preached the same concerning the Jews who crucified Christ. But Paul had heard Stephen preaching, and the Jews had heard Christ Himself. If then the internal power of the Spirit always accompanies external preaching, either it was by mere ignorance that they persecuted Christ and the Church, or the internal power of the Spirit did not dispel that ignorance.

But if it did not dispel the ignorance, wherein did its efficacy lie? What did it accomplish in their souls? If it neither bent the will nor removed ignorance from the intellect, can it truly be said that the grace of God worked anything in those persons? Nor can the Arminian answer here that the grace which illuminated the mind was driven away from the intellect by repulse from the will, which thus became reoccupied by ignorance. For if we believe Arminius, such persons are justly hardened by the judgment of God. But those who are hardened are scarcely—if ever—called again by that internal calling. How then did it happen that many of those who crucified Christ were later converted, and that Paul himself was not only converted, but made an Apostle and endowed with incomparable gifts of the Spirit?

The same Apostle speaks this way in 2 Corinthians 4:3–4: "If our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whom the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine upon them." What is that illumination of the Gospel of Christ's glory? Is it the brightness of

Christian doctrine, insofar as it is offered externally to men, or also insofar as it is accompanied by some power of the illuminating Spirit?

If the former is said, our cause is won—for the Gospel was preached to them externally only. Therefore, its truth could not be known due to the blindness which the god of this world had inflicted. But if the latter is asserted, then either the phrase “so that the light should not shine upon them” expresses the actual result (which is not infrequent or uncommon), or it expresses the purpose and design. If it denotes the result—as it clearly does—then it is self-contradictory to claim that the external preaching of the Gospel was accompanied by the illuminating power of the Spirit in the case of those whom the Apostle is speaking of, and yet that the light of the Gospel did not shine upon their minds. For that illumination is not without the shining of Gospel light. If it signifies the divine intention, the result is the same: for the Apostle’s words make it plain that God achieved His intended end in them.

It was, then, that God prevented them from being irradiated by the splendor of the Gospel. How then can these two things possibly stand together: that they were inwardly illuminated by the Spirit of God, and yet could not recognize the truth of Christian doctrine, because the Devil had blinded them? Is not illumination the remedy for blindness? Or what kind of power is this of the illuminating Spirit of God, which either does not open eyes shut by the operation of the Devil, or, having once opened them by divine power, cannot prevent them from being darkened again by the superior effectiveness of the Devil? I would greatly wish that these magnificent words of the Apostle might be diligently weighed by the disciples of Arminius:

“The Father of glory may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation through the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power” (Eph. 1:17–19).

Certainly, these things must be referred to the internal calling. But according to the Arminian view, this operation is common to all. The disparity of outcomes arises from something other than the efficacy of the calling. So that one could truly say that in all those to whom the Gospel is announced externally, God exerts “the surpassing greatness of His power according to the working of His mighty strength.” Therefore, there are two operations competing within the intellect of man: one from the god of this world, attempting to blind the minds of men; the other from the immense and eternal God, striving to illuminate their minds. And in this contest, the latter operation—though it is said to be “according to the working of the might of His power in God”—is forced to yield, while the former prevails.

I ask you, is this becoming of Christians—to imagine God exerting all the strength of His infinite might, and yet not only sometimes but frequently, even for the most part, being repulsed and dishonorably driven back by the Devil? I know indeed of a disciple of Arminius, whose dissertation on the beginning of Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians was printed in Amsterdam last year, and who went out of his way to distort these words of the Apostle. For he wants the phrase “the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe” not to refer to the power by

which we are converted, but to that by which God will raise believers from the dead and clothe them with heavenly, immortal, and unchangeable glory. He likewise contends that the phrase “according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought…” refers to the same future glorification.

But these are the evasions of men who, rather than yield to the truth, will invent anything. For even if we pass over the earlier words, these latter ones—if they do not signify that believers came to believe by the most powerful operation of God Himself—how will they cohere with the phrase “the surpassing greatness of His power according to the working of the might of His strength”? How will the word “according to” function here? What force does it have—as it always ought to have—other than to signify some proportion or correspondence between two things? If it does not connect the effect (namely, faith) with its cause (namely, the infinite power of God), then it has no meaning at all.

But nothing is more evident in the Apostle’s intent. Although that power of God by which our salvation is accomplished is especially manifest in two things—namely, in our deliverance from the death which consists in sin, and in the resurrection and glorification of the body—and although salvation itself is comprised of these two things as its beginning and end or as its complete fulfillment, the Apostle sets both equally before our eyes, and he wants the infinite power of God to be acknowledged and adored by us believers in both.

This is made clear from the beginning of the following chapter. That saying of the same Apostle in 2 Thessalonians 3:2 is especially memorable: “Brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, just as it was among you; and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.”

What does this mean—“not all have faith”? That not all believe? But surely, there was no need to remind us of what experience has made all too well known. Then, to say “pray that the gospel may run and be glorified, and that we may be delivered from wicked men, for not all believe”—would be almost trifling and pointless if it only meant that.

The sense of these words is plain. The preaching of the gospel is indeed appointed for all men without distinction; but the power of the Spirit which generates faith is given only to some. Hence, the inborn perversity of men cannot but cause the progress of preaching to be hindered in many ways. Here Satan’s schemes and men’s wickedness place many obstacles, which can only be overcome by the special providence of God. Therefore, there must be no delay or pause in prayer, whereby divine help is invoked.

And this admonition could not seem irrelevant, for in all times and places there have been those who, by natural human pride, claimed that the cause of faith was common to all, so that they might attribute the reason for the difference among men and the glory of salvation to the human will. Added to this—as we have mentioned elsewhere—is the great perversity and stubbornness of mankind, and such a fervent zeal for disturbing gospel preaching, that it might raise a scruple in some minds, as though the offense lay in the nature of the gospel itself rather than in the malice of men. Therefore, it was necessary to forestall that offense with this timely reminder:

that there is nothing here which should trouble us, since the object of faith is indeed common to all, but the inward and effective cause is proper to some. Which is nothing else than to say that the internal calling is, for the most part, separated from the external preaching.

This is also clearly shown in that illustrious passage of Romans 11:7–8: “What then? Israel has not obtained that which he seeks; but the election has obtained it, and the rest were hardened, as it is written: God gave them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day.” In which words this must especially be observed: that there is a manifest opposition between the elect and the non-elect. The former are called the election, just as elsewhere circumcision designates the Jews; the latter are named the rest. So then, these “rest” were hardened, the elect were softened. And just as hardening arises from non-election, which is reprobation, so softening flows from election. Only this difference stands between the two: that softening is the result of the positive efficacy of election, while hardening results from the absence of that efficacy in the reprobate, because God, not choosing them, does not exert the same power in them. Therefore, God is properly the cause of softening, but by no means of hardening.

Consider, then, the reprobate in themselves: they have within them a natural cause of hardening. Compare them with the softened, and ask why the latter have obtained the Spirit’s power to soften their hearts, and the former have not. It will rightly be answered that some were elected by God, and others were reprobated.

But what is this hardening? The Apostle explains it in these words: “God gave them a spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear.” Where, then, is the illumination which the disciples of Arminius claim to be common? Could it have been said more clearly—since all the Jews heard the external preaching, as was plainly shown in the preceding chapter—that God made a distinction among Jews themselves, granting to some open eyes and the power of sight (that is, a mind enlightened by the internal call), while leaving others, though not taking from them their minds (which ought to function like eyes), still unfreed from their natural blindness and undefended against the Devil’s deceptions, which only increased their blindness?

But Arminius insists that some illumination must have preceded that hardening. And from what does he prove this? From the idea that otherwise the invitation given in external preaching would not be serious enough or worthy of God? But this is to assume in the premise what is under dispute—it is to take the thing in question as a principle (σ’ ἐν ἀρχῇ λαμβάνειν). Or does he prove it from the context itself? On the contrary, the Apostle’s argument and aim plainly refute that evasion.

For after he has shown from the testimonies of Isaiah and David that a great part of the Jews were hardened, he asks, “Have they stumbled so as to fall?” and answers, “God forbid! Rather, through their trespass, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy.” In these words he reveals the reason for God’s dispensation in this matter: namely, that He permitted—and wisely ordered—the unbelief of many Jews so that He might thus open the way for the calling of the Gentiles, as the prophets had long before foretold would happen. Then,

when the Gentiles had been called, the Jews would afterward be converted, stirred by the faith and calling of others to join the divine covenant out of holy jealousy.

So grant, as Arminius wishes, that both Jews and Gentiles were equally called and inwardly enlightened, with the same intention and in the same manner—and that the difference between them arose only from their free will. How then can Paul's argument stand? Or where would there be any room for that divine dispensation?

But the parable of Christ on this point is as clear as could be. "Behold," He says, "a sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside, and the birds came and devoured them." He Himself interprets it thus: "Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the one sown by the wayside." This is easily explained under our hypothesis: many hear the preaching of the word and, as we said before, they grasp τι ὸ λεγόμενον—that is, what is being said. But because the Spirit has not affected them inwardly, they do not understand the word—that is, they do not perceive how true and heavenly it is.

But who would believe, or even find it credible, that someone was illuminated by the Spirit of God and yet did not understand the word? Is not the Spirit granted for this very purpose—that the word might be understood?

Those testimonies which are customarily produced by our writers from Acts 16 are entirely memorable. "The Lord," says the sacred writer, "opened Lydia's heart to pay attention to what was spoken by Paul" (προσέχων τοῖς λαλουμένοις ὑπὸ τοῦ Παύλου). Now either προσέχειν denotes an attention which may be given without assent by an awakened intellect, or it denotes the assent of faith, firmly apprehending the truth and excellence of the object.

If the former is meant, then either this opening of Lydia's heart was a common operation shared by all who heard Paul preaching—or it was peculiar to Lydia and a few others. But certainly, it could not have been common. Why else would Lydia be mentioned so particularly? And why would this act of God in her alone have caused her to pay heed to Paul's words?

If, therefore, this operation of God that opened the heart was peculiar to Lydia, then Arminius argues in vain—since he refuses to admit that God does anything by the power of the Spirit in one person that He does not equally do in another. But certainly, not only attention is denoted here, but assent also.

This is clear from the history itself. For Lydia believed and was baptized, together with her household; and by her entreaties she compelled Paul and his companions to make use of her house for lodging, and did not shrink from, nor disdain, having a church gathered in her home—something which, in a hostile place, was a great indication of a soul wholly devoted and consecrated to Christ. Therefore προσέχειν, as is often found in good authors, means to give assent, to obey, to exhibit faith and obedience. Now either that was in Lydia the very first act of faith, or (since she is already called one who feared God [σεβομένη τὸν θεόν]) it was the increase of a faith already begun, and a maturing knowledge of the Messiah. Whichever you

say—though the latter is much more accurate—you will have overthrown Arminius. For the heart is the mind, as the disciples of Arminius themselves confess. Thus speaks the same man whose little dissertation I cited earlier on Ephesians 1. In those words πεφωτισμένος τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς τῆς καρδίας ὑμῶν ["having the eyes of your heart enlightened"], he gives an elegant explanation, describing the kind of knowledge that consists in the illumination of the mind. The word καρδία here is taken for the human soul, and mind is taken as the eye of the soul—just as Philo says in his treatise on the creation of the world, "The eye of the soul is the mind."

Therefore, Lydia's mind was then illuminated. But if all the women who heard Paul preaching along with Lydia received the same, it would have been absurd to single her out as having been especially cared for. And if Luke intended to say that this common illumination was rejected by the others and only admitted by Lydia, then it would not be the operation of God opening the heart that should be mentioned, but rather a correct and lawful use of free will.

That which I lightly touched on earlier, I now consider of chief importance: If all minds are enlightened by the Spirit of God, then there is no one who rejects the gospel out of ignorance. For illumination is the removal—either of ignorance itself or of that which causes ignorance—from the soul, so that ignorance and illumination cannot exist together. Therefore, all unbelievers reject Christ against their own conscience. For the intellect, enlightened by the knowledge of evangelical truth, resists and struggles against the will, which is drawn in the opposite direction.

And yet, not only does Paul say of himself that he acted in unbelief out of ignorance (δι' ἄγνοιαν), but also of the Jews, who had a zeal for God (ζῆλον θεοῦ ἔχοντες). I ask, then: how could zeal for God—which arose from a conviction that Christ ought to be rejected—coexist with an illumination that impressed upon the mind the knowledge that Christ is the Son of God and the only Savior?

In Acts 14, Paul and Barnabas preached the gospel to the Lycaonians and performed miracles in their presence. At first, overwhelmed by the novelty of the event, they shouted with loud voices that gods had descended in human form. They prepared to offer sacrifice—Barnabas being called Jupiter and Paul Mercury—and scarcely could they be restrained by the apostles from offering oxen adorned with garlands. Then, suddenly, having changed their minds, they were inflamed with fury and stoned Paul.

Now I would very much like the Arminian school to show me even the faintest trace of the Holy Spirit in this episode. For I suppose they would not affirm that the minds of those madmen, while they were stoning the apostles, were enlightened by the grace of God. Nor were they, I imagine, any more enlightened while they were burning with zeal to sacrifice. What then? Did the Spirit accomplish this in their minds: that not only did He fail to take from them their reverence and devotion toward false gods, but even introduced that shameful error, so that they thought mere men to be gods? What a noble work of God's grace that would be—if men, already mad of their own accord, were inflamed by a new kind of madness into idolatry!

Indeed, there is naturally implanted in all men a certain sense of religion; the human soul is able to be struck with awe by things that exceed the force of nature; and the mind, in the end, can judge—though not infallibly—whether a thing exceeds the bounds of nature or not.

All these things occurred among the Lycaonians without any efficacy of grace. And there was likewise a blindness of mind which that grace did not dispel; there was a violent and deep-rooted inclination toward idolatry which it did not correct; and finally, there was a most perverse judgment in the matter of religion which no supernatural power amended in them.

Here I cannot pass over a place most pertinent to our cause. The Apostle had attempted, by his preaching and exhortation, to lead the Jews dwelling in Rome to faith in Christ. And indeed he succeeded with some, but not with others. When, therefore, they disagreed among themselves, Paul—seeking the deeper cause of this division—spoke thus: "Well did the Holy Spirit speak through the prophet Isaiah to your fathers, saying, 'Go to this people and say, You shall indeed hear, but never understand; and you shall indeed see, but never perceive. For the heart of this people has grown dull, and with their ears they scarcely hear,'" and so forth. "Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen."

I ask you: if the grace that inwardly illumines the mind were truly common, how could it be said of those people that they hear but do not understand, that they see yet do not perceive? And since, as we said before, the heart denotes the mind, how could their heart be said to be dull if their minds had been filled with such light from the Spirit of God? But they will say that this light was stifled by their disordered affections and their obstinate rebellion of will—so that, by the just judgment of God, their minds became hardened.

Now, I do not press the point that it is either false or improbable that when the intellect is suffused with the great light which Arminius claims is universally granted, the will and affections could somehow refuse to yield. I only ask this: since the Apostle had this very thing ready at hand to upbraid the stubborn Jews with—not only that salvation had been set before them externally, but also inwardly revealed in the secret places of their hearts by the most powerful working of the Spirit—why does he not accuse them of it? Why does he not appeal to their conscience? Why does he not magnify their guilt by the fact that they knowingly rejected salvation fully recognized? Why does he not charge them with extinguishing the Spirit and thereby excluding themselves from all hope of renewal? This is what he does in Hebrews 6 and 10 when speaking to those whom the Spirit had in some degree enlightened.

Why then, when Christ was so many times rejected by the Jews and treated with such contempt, did Paul never once reproach them for extinguishing the Holy Spirit? Why, as I said, did he instead attribute to them a zeal for God? And finally, when he frequently compares Jews and Gentiles, and seeks the causes for why the one were rejected while the other were called, why does he never say—or even hint—that both received a common internal grace of the Spirit, which some accepted and others rejected out of intellectual stubbornness? Rather, he always returns to election, to the remnant according to the election of grace, to the unsearchable judgments of God, and to causes so far removed from those Arminius invents that it is clearer than daylight that one account was written by divine inspiration, the other by the impulsive

instability of human cleverness that, in seeking praise for subtlety, has cast darkness upon the truth.

As for the things Arminians bring forward to assert that internal calling is common, they are hardly worth mentioning, so weak and unworthy are they of a detailed refutation. They say Christ wanted to gather the children of Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37), and that God stretched out His hands all day long to a rebellious people (Isa. 65:2); that He greatly lamented when His people would not obey His commands (Ps. 81:14); that Christ desired the salvation of all (John 5:34); that God wills all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4); that He does not will that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9); and many other such passages. These indeed show that all are externally invited through preaching—and that they are seriously invited, so that if they come, they will be saved, as we explained earlier in more detail. But in none of these is there so much as a trace of internal calling.

They then add some arguments which they press as if an unassailable refuge for their position were found therein. First, they say that unless some kind of internal grace always accompanies the external preaching of the gospel, the gospel cannot rightly be called the Gospel of the Spirit. Second, they say that God promised through Jeremiah that under the gospel covenant He would write His laws on men's hearts. Third, they say that unless the cause of faith is common to all, it is in vain that Christ died for all under the condition of faith.

Fourth, unless the cause of faith be common to all, the grace which is offered outwardly cannot rightly be called sufficient. But it is absurd to say that God mocks miserable mortals by offering a grace which can accomplish nothing. To this, they add passages of Scripture in which some are said to have received the Spirit, although we confess they are not to be counted among the elect.

As for that first argument, that the gospel is called by the Apostle the ministry of the Spirit, this is so by way of contrast with the Law, which was not accompanied by any power of the Spirit that truly converts or truly sanctifies. This is clear from an inspection of the passage: 2 Corinthians 3:3–5. And why should not that designation fit the gospel, even if the Spirit is not granted to all? For the Spirit is certainly granted to many—whereas under the Law, it was granted to none.

It is also worth noting that although the gospel is not efficacious in all, it is never entirely ineffectual; nor is it ever preached without converting someone. But this cannot happen apart from the power of the Spirit. There are those words, not in the same context, but in one closely suited to our present argument: "My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." (1 Cor. 2:4) This is precisely why the preaching of the gospel is said to be in demonstration of the Spirit and is called the ministry of the Spirit. Is that demonstration common to all? And if it is, how is it that the gospel is rejected by so many? For one cannot resist demonstrations of the intellect—nor is it possible to do so.

To the second argument we have already responded. In Jeremiah, a comparison is made between the new covenant and the old, with respect to the outcome of each. The old was

nullified because none fulfilled the commandments of God; the new is said to be firm and lasting, because God Himself will cause some to believe. What has this to do with the claim that internal grace is common to all men? For if that promise—"I will write my laws on their hearts"—applies indiscriminately to all men, then so too must the other promises: "They shall all know Me," and, "I will be merciful to their iniquities, and will remember their sins no more." These are not only joined in the same context, but one depends necessarily upon the other. Do all, then, know God? Are all justified? As not all are justified because not all have known God, so not all have known God because God has not written His laws on all their hearts.

The refutation of the third argument is obvious from what has already been discussed. For if to say that not all are actually saved through Christ implies that His death is of no benefit to unbelievers, we are ready to concede that, in their regard, Christ died in vain. But if the claim is that God ordered all this without any purpose, without any counsel, and that in it He showed no mercy, no inclination to save men—this we utterly deny and contend to be utterly false. They could have been saved, had they willed it; that they were not saved must be imputed to their invincible stubbornness and obstinate wickedness.

As for the fourth argument, we untie that knot in this way: We suffer from two kinds of disease. The first is that we are under a curse on account of sin. The second is that we are blind to the things that could deliver us from that curse. Regarding the former, the satisfaction rendered by Christ is, in our judgment, a sufficient grace, which could deliver anyone, provided they believe. Suppose, then, someone under the curse on account of past sins makes proper use of their intellect and will to lay hold of Christ's satisfaction—they would obtain deliverance from the curse. For in order to obtain salvation, if the faith be true, sincere, and fervent, it matters not whence it arises. To this extent, therefore, the grace of Christ suffices; one single vice of man prevents its effect.

As for the latter point: two things are necessary for faith—(1) the true object proposed for belief, and (2) the faculties rightly disposed to apprehend that object. The object is clearly set forth in the gospel. Suppose a man is not evil: nothing will be lacking for him to have faith. Christ's outwardly offered grace is thus sufficient—even as the light of the sun is sufficient for sight, provided the eyes are sound. Therefore, the grace of Christ would fully suffice in every way, were it not for the evil of men. And if someone objects that the grace which cannot generate love for God in the heart cannot be sufficient—and that such love can be produced only by the Spirit of God—this is empty. For we love anything insofar as we know it to possess qualities worthy of love. Since Christ is revealed in the gospel as supremely worthy of love, if we used our natural faculties rightly, we would know Christ to be lovely and, consequently, love Him supremely.

I will say something further. There is a twofold operation of the Spirit of God in us. One creates faith; the other follows upon faith once it is given and pertains especially to the generation of holiness. In the former lies the fulfillment of the condition of the gospel covenant; in the latter, the promise of the covenant consists. For Christ promises to give His Spirit to all who believe (John 7:37–38). So, suppose someone rightly uses his intellectual faculties to apprehend

Christ—if he believes, he would receive the sanctifying Spirit who kindles love for Christ and for God in the soul.

Whichever way you turn, it depends solely on the wickedness of man that the grace of Christ, offered from without, is not sufficient—both to remove the curse, to generate faith, and to produce true holiness and the true love of God in all souls.

As for those whom Scripture says have received some portion of the Spirit, yet are not to be counted among the elect, the matter is easily resolved. They are few in number and therefore do nothing to confirm the doctrine of a universal internal grace. They are few, I say, and this is evident from the fact that after falling away from Christ, they are cast down from all hope of renewal or repentance, and are tormented by dreadful pangs of conscience under God's just judgment, which finally drives them into the pit of despair. But of those who reject Christ offered in outward preaching, some afterward are converted; and of those who are not converted and remain obstinate, very few are ever afflicted with such horrors of conscience.

Indeed, many who harshly persecute Christ's servants flatter themselves that they are doing a work pleasing to God, and believe—deludedly—that they ascend to heaven by such steps. In this they take pleasure and rest content. Because these objections are slight, we have lightly touched upon their refutation, so that we may proceed with the established demonstration of Calvin's doctrine.

CHAPTER XV

That Calvin's doctrine is founded upon Romans chapter 9

Since, therefore, the absolute decree—by which some are effectually called, and others are passed over, with the result that the necessity of perishing falls upon them—has nowhere been more clearly revealed by the Holy Spirit than in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and since human ingenuity has nowhere more laboriously striven to distort the meaning of a passage than in the interpretation of that chapter, something must be done here to vindicate it from the corruptions of the Arminians.

Not that we have any intention to chase down everything that has been said by them on this matter with meticulous diligence, or to weigh every word with scrupulous care—for in that school there is no end to wrangling, no limit to subtleties. We aim only to briefly demonstrate that neither the matter handled by the Apostle in that chapter, nor the words by which he explains it, can in any way cohere with or be made to support the purpose which Arminius and his followers have imposed upon it. Once this is established, the conclusion will follow easily: namely, that the interpretation we offer of this chapter must be accepted.

The disciples of Arminius thus explain their position. “The thesis,” they say, “which the Apostle defends against all the objections of the Jews is this: That God’s purpose, from ancient times, was not to justify those who seek righteousness by the law, but those who believe the promises revealed by God in the gospel—and, consequently, to adopt and bless them. For this purpose He is fully equipped and authorized.” This, they say, is what the Apostle has proposed to himself in this place; this is the scope of the chapter. Therefore, the question here is not about the giving of faith, but about justification; not how and to whom God wills to give faith, but how and whom He wills to justify and adopt.

We have cited these things from the writings published by them against the Synod of Dordt, since both Arnoldus’s and Arminius’s own words in establishing the Apostle’s purpose are either too prolix or too obscure.

They rest chiefly on two arguments. The first is that, since at the beginning of this chapter the Apostle uses two examples to treat his argument—one from Isaac and Ishmael, the other from Esau and Jacob—it seems reasonable that both should pertain to the same subject. For what reason would there be to refer those examples to two entirely different categories? But they think it beyond doubt that the example of Isaac and Ishmael must be referred to the doctrine of justification: first, because in this very place Isaac is both a parent and a type of those who are called children of the promise, and these are the faithful; second, because Paul himself, in chapter 4 of the Epistle to the Galatians, applied the same allegory to confirm and illustrate the doctrine of justification. Nor would it be fitting, they argue, for the Apostle to have used the same type to adumbrate two doctrines so different as justification and (as Calvin teaches it) election. Nor is it probable that, having presented a type concerning justification, he should suddenly leap to another in which the doctrine of election and reprobation is depicted.

Their second argument is taken from verse 30 of this chapter, where the Apostle says, “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith.” Who, they ask, could doubt that this passage concerns justification? And they judge it foreign to all reason and truth that the Apostle should argue about election and reprobation (as taught by Calvin), but then conclude so openly concerning justification.

We, for our part, do not now intend to examine the force of these arguments; that can be done more fittingly later.

Let us now concede to Arminius what he asks: that both in the conclusion of this chapter and in the proposition of the former type, the subject is justification. Let us only see whether the remaining parts are congruent with this. For if they are in conflict, and cannot manifestly be brought back to the doctrine of justification, what remains but either that those two arguments assume something false, or that everything contained between the initial proposition of the former type and the conclusion of the chapter, which begins at verse 30, must be included within a parenthesis—unless indeed the remaining parts can be connected with each other suitably and coherently?

Therefore, those twenty verses must be carefully considered and, for clarity of order, reduced to four principal heads. In the first, which includes verses 10, 11, 12, and 13, a second type is proposed. In the second, which comprises verses 14 through 18, the Apostle anticipates a suspicion—namely, that the doctrine stated at the beginning might cast upon God some blemish of injustice. In the third, which includes verses 19 to 23, the Apostle meets another suspicion or objection: that the same doctrine might attribute to God a will not only irresistible in itself but one that also offers men a legitimate excuse. From verse 23 onward, the fourth section unfolds, in which the Apostle confirms the foregoing doctrine by the testimony of Hosea. And because the small number of those to whom this dispensation pertains—whatever it may be—might have greatly offended the minds of men, he seeks to lessen that offense and remove the scandal by declaring that this very thing had long ago been foretold, producing testimonies from Isaiah which close the disputation in verse 29.

This arrangement we have chosen so that the indiscriminate multitude of matters might not cast a shadow over the truth. And concerning the first part: if those two types prefigure one and the same thing, it is absolutely necessary that they had everything—or at least nearly everything—similar and in common. For how can two images that are greatly diverse and dissimilar in themselves represent one and the same face? Certainly, the allegories proposed by the Apostle were supplied by the instinct of the Holy Spirit. Yet they were, and had to be, such that the histories from which they were drawn had some great resemblance and correspondence to the things to which the Apostle accommodated them. Otherwise, they would never have gained assent from the minds of men—men among whom, at the very beginnings of the gospel, apostolic authority was not as persuasive as the evident truth of things themselves. And since assent could not otherwise be secured than by men recognizing—though formerly hidden—an admirable correspondence between the types and the things signified by them, it must follow that if both types pointed to the same thing, that agreement would be observed both between each type and a third thing, and between the types themselves.

But certainly, these two types agree in that Abraham was the father of both pairs of children—of the former pair and of the latter. In all other respects, there is so great a difference that they agree nowhere else. Isaac and Ishmael were born of two mothers; Esau and Jacob of only one. Ishmael was born of a bondwoman, and was therefore by condition a slave (for the offspring follows the womb); Isaac was born of a freewoman and thus was free. Between Esau and Jacob, there was no such distinction. Ishmael was born without a miracle, Abraham still having physical strength due to his age; Isaac was born of parents who were barren and beyond the course of nature. Esau and Jacob were conceived by a single act of intercourse, without any miracle beyond what was necessary for Rebecca (otherwise barren) to conceive. Isaac was begotten by virtue of a preceding promise; no such promise preceded the generation of Ishmael. Whatever preceded the generation of Esau and Jacob applied equally to both.

What then is there in those two births that does not openly differ? In what way then can they have been designated by the Spirit of God from the beginning, or later applied and accommodated by the Apostle, to signify the same thing? This will become still more evident if we observe in what things the Apostle establishes the agreement between the former type and the doctrine of justification, so that one might bear the image of the other. For in Galatians 4, he

first notes that of the two sons of Abraham, one was born of a bondwoman, the other of a freewoman. Then he states that the one born of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh—that is, by the power of nature. For nothing is more common than for flesh to denote the order of nature without any supernatural influence. But the one born of the freewoman was born by promise.

He then says that the two mothers represented two covenants and two ways of obtaining justification: in Sarah, the image of the Gospel; in Hagar, the image of the Law. The Law, indeed, brings forth children—but slaves: that is, those who are justified by works. The Gospel begets free children, who obtain righteousness by faith. Through the Law, the grace of the Spirit is not supplied; the entire matter is committed to the powers of nature and the human will. Or if any influence does accompany the Law, it is nothing more than that spirit which is therefore called “of bondage,” because its efficacy arouses in the soul only those affections proper to slaves—namely, those driven by scourges and threats, and not those led by any sense of honor or reverence for duty. Through the Gospel, on the other hand, celestial grace is supplied—admirable and infinitely surpassing all human strength—which captivates every thought of man.

Come now, reader, examine the latter type: will you find anything that can be drawn or referred to that same meaning? Where are the two covenants? Where the two conditions of birth? Where the remaining elements in which the nature of a type consists?

The Arminian school investigates many things here and conjectures many things about those arguments which the Jews could or could not have brought against the apostolic doctrine. They attribute many replies to the Apostle, and they rummage through all the shelves of subtlety, adding things that—if the Apostle himself were raised again—he might not even understand. All this is in vain, unless they first show that it was fitting for so wise a writer to reduce and combine into one two things by nature so diverse and repugnant.

But let us now look more closely at the Apostle’s own words. He observes that Rebecca conceived two children by one act of intercourse. Surely this is not placed there without reason. But it certainly cannot pertain to the doctrine of justification. For one mother cannot represent two covenants, of which the one shows a way of justification by faith, and the other by works.

That Jacob and Esau were types of those whom one and the same covenant brought forth for God is not at all consistent with the Apostle’s intention. For he says that God made a distinction between Esau and Jacob such that He loved the one and hated the other. But God makes no such distinction between those embraced within the same covenant. All who are born under the legal covenant He rejects; all who are begotten through the gospel He equally receives and acknowledges as His own. And when a comparison is made here between the condition each had from their parents and the lot that came to each by the will of God, Rebecca bore them both—that is, the gospel covenant begat them both as sons. Yet God rejected one and admitted the other to the inheritance. These things are clearly contradictory and inconsistent.

But suppose Calvin's doctrine is the true one—as indeed it is—how aptly do all things align? Surely, he aims to show that God, according to His free good pleasure, gives unequal gifts to those who are by nature equal. For that purpose, the Apostle uses the example of those who were begotten by the same parents, from the same union, and in precisely the same condition, yet between whom God willed that a distinction should be made. What could be more fitting and to the point?

Next, the Apostle observes that before the children were born, and had done neither good nor evil, an oracle was given that distinguished them. The Apostle deemed this point to be of the highest significance. He did not consider it a trivial matter that in the administration of those events which he adapted to allegory, the providence of the Spirit ordained that the oracle should be delivered while the children were still in the womb, and that Moses structured his narrative so that this remarkable circumstance would not be omitted. The Apostle is accustomed to place great weight upon the words of Moses, believing that nothing is written by him carelessly, nothing mentioned or omitted by chance or without purpose—indeed, that nothing in his narration is without some hidden mystery.

But what does that contribute to the doctrine of justification? I, for one, do not see. For if Esau—or those whom Esau represented—were rejected because they did not believe, and Jacob—or those whom he typified—were adopted as sons because they believed the gospel, I ask you: would it not have been more fitting that the pronouncement of the oracle be deferred until such time as each had shown by their deeds the disposition of their soul toward belief? Certainly, if the cause of the distinction lies in their faith and unbelief, in repentance and impenitence, then it is absurd that to support that view, one would bring forward something that most clearly implies that no consideration at all was had—when making the distinction—of whether anything good or bad had yet proceeded from either of them, which might move or influence the will of God.

But grant Calvin's hypothesis, and nothing could be more fitting. For since in the dispensation of grace that creates faith, and in the comparison between those to whom it is either given or denied, God does not consider works, merits, or anything of the kind, but follows His own most free will, then nothing could be wiser than to note such an oracle with such a circumstance. For what the disciples of Arminius here observe—that the subject is not about faith being granted but about justification, because the Apostle says μηδέπω πραξάντων τι ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν ["before they had done anything good or evil"], by which words they say it is implied that justification is not by works—is shallow. For since the Jews believed themselves to surpass the rest of mankind in virtues and the merits of their works, it was natural that they would accuse God of injustice, seeing that He called the Gentiles—who were buried in every kind of vice—effectually to partake of salvation, while He rejected the Jews, many of whom appeared to be zealous for good works.

To forestall that charge, the Apostle anticipates the objection and shows that from the very origin of the Church—when it was still enclosed within the family of one Isaac—God's supreme liberty in such matters had been prefigured, so that no merit of works should be regarded in election.

The Apostle continues and says, ἵνα κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ θεοῦ μένῃ [“in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand”]. Arminius interprets this to mean that by this oracle, God wished to signify nothing else than that He had from eternity established the decree to communicate righteousness and salvation, not to all the descendants of Abraham without distinction, but according to an election whereby He would distinguish some from others—not simply as considered in their whole or corrupted nature, but with reference to the condition under which righteousness and salvation would be applied.

But such interpretations distort the Apostle’s mind. First, it is absurd that the phrase before the children were born and had done nothing good or evil would merely signify that the decree of salvation by faith was established from eternity. Who has ever heard such an expression used for that purpose? When Scripture intends to denote eternity, it says ἀπ᾽ αἰῶνος [“from eternity”], ἀπὸ τῆς καταβολῆς κόσμου [“from the foundation of the world”], and similar phrases. If the phrase not yet born denotes eternity, then what purpose is there in adding having done nothing good or evil, which was clearly added as an explanatory clause? For these words certainly add nothing to the idea of eternity.

Nor is it likely that the Apostle wanted to stress that the oracle was given μηπω γεννηθέντων [“before they were born”] simply so we would know that God’s purpose was eternal—for who denies that? Rather, his intention was to show that in the establishing of that purpose, no account at all was taken of actions, whether good or evil.

But in justification, faith is considered; in damnation, unbelief. And this is clear from the following words: ἵνα μένῃ [“that it might stand”], etc.

But what, I ask, does it significantly contribute to the point that the purpose of salvation communicated through faith should remain firm, if we are told that the oracle was issued before the children had done anything good or evil? Does this not rather tend to overthrow that purpose—seeing that its execution would rest solely on the fact that some performed good deeds while others did not? That is, some believed, while others did not.

Furthermore, that phrase ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις τοῦ Θεοῦ [“the purpose of God according to election”] is emphatic, as learned men have observed. For if the Apostle had written, ἵνα ἡ πρόθεσις τοῦ Θεοῦ μένῃ κατὰ ἐκλογήν [“that the purpose of God might remain according to election”], perhaps Arminius would have found some support for his cause. For he wants the purpose of salvation to be communicated through faith, and to be executed by means of a memorable election—that is, believers being distinguished from unbelievers and adopted. But if one reads the Apostle’s words attentively, he will clearly see that the oracle, “the elder shall serve the younger,” was uttered before they were born, so that the purpose according to election—that is, the purpose by which God separated one from the other—might stand firm and established.

Moreover, the purpose of saving the faithful cannot properly be called “the purpose according to election.” For this phrase, ἡ κατ᾽ ἐκλογὴν πρόθεσις, refers to a purpose whose nature lies in election itself, or a purpose that performs the election and separation. It is the same as if the

Apostle had called it the electing purpose. Just as ἐκλεκτικὴ αἵρεσις [“elective sect”] in Diogenes Laërtius refers to a school of philosophy that chooses from among the doctrines of various schools those things which please it, so too the purpose of saving the faithful—as Arminius himself teaches—selects or separates nothing properly. For if all believed, all would be admitted to eternal life. And if there is any separation in the execution of that purpose, it happens not by virtue of the purpose itself, but only accidentally. It happens because, as it turns out, not all believe, but only a few—and that accidental outcome cannot be attributed to the purpose itself in any sense.

As for the Apostle’s next words, “not of works, but of Him who calls,” Arminius chose to interpret them as, “not of works, but of faith by which one responds to God calling.” But this is a remarkable license. Faith comes from calling; calling is from the one who calls; therefore “from Him who calls” means from faith? What then? Would Arminius tolerate a Papist arguing in the same way—works are from faith; the Apostle says we are justified by faith; therefore we are justified by works?

And yet, faith and works are directly connected, while faith and the one who calls are not immediately connected without the mediation of calling. Suppose some Papist dared to attribute to the effect what more rightly belongs to the immediate cause, while Arminius ascends all the way to the remote cause. I know with certainty that any dullness or sluggishness would be preferable to such subtlety.

Even Socinus—who I freely admit to be impure in doctrine—claimed that Scripture attributes our justification to the death of Christ only because His death preceded His resurrection, and the resurrection produces hope of reward to those who live rightly; such hope leads to repentance; repentance invites forgiveness, and forgiveness is justification. These roundabout reasonings—even Arminius himself rejected when advanced in that context. The learned Grotius demonstrated quite forcefully that they are utterly unconvincing.

What if someone were to say that the Apostle is merely playing with words when he says “not of works but of Him who calls”, since that could be interpreted to mean by works—because works come from faith, and faith from the one who calls? What would Arminius reply? Would he admit that such an interpretation could be admitted into the text? If so, then the Apostle would be saying, “not of works, but of works”—which is sheer nonsense.

Would he then object? He must do so. But could he offer any reason for objecting to this interpretation that does not equally refute and reject his own?

Add this also: If the Apostle had said ἀλλ᾽ ἐκ τῆς κλήσεως [“but from the calling”], then he would have contrasted one thing with another—works with calling, not works with the person who calls. But what kind of opposition is it for the Apostle to say justification is not of works but of God, when he clearly means to say it is of faith? Who has ever spoken this way?

And let us say nothing here of the fact that in the Apostle’s many discussions of justification, he almost never mentions that faith arises from the efficacy of divine calling. Although he certainly

does teach it elsewhere, he very rarely does so in these particular discussions. And the reason for this is obvious: it was not relevant to the point he was trying to make. For in order to be justified, it makes no difference where your faith comes from—so long as it is real. God will not ask you at the judgment whether you believed by the power of His Spirit; He will ask whether you truly believed.

That no one believes—or can believe—except by the Spirit's efficacy pertains to the subject of predestination, which is a matter very far removed from the doctrine of justification. So to bring in τὸ καλεῖν ["the calling"] here is inappropriate and out of place.

But if Calvin's hypothesis is affirmed here, then the Apostle's words cannot be more divine. For when the question is asked, "Why has God given unequal gifts to those who are equal by nature—calling some effectually to communion with Christ, and not others?"—and when the Jews, in their pride, believe that because of their merits and good works they ought to be preferred in the distribution of divine gifts—then it was entirely fitting, even necessary, for the Apostle's purpose to deny that the cause of this distinction is works, and to affirm that it comes only from the One who calls. For nothing intervened in the decision except this: that it so pleased the God who calls.

The Apostle follows with these words: "The elder shall serve the younger," as it is written: "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." On this the Arminian school makes three principal observations. First, they say that Esau and Jacob are not considered as individuals here, and that there is no adequate reason why we should regard one as elect and the other as reprobate. It is evident, they say, that the statement in Malachi—which functions here as a commentary on the earlier oracle—refers to two peoples, namely the Jews and the Edomites.

Second, they claim that the servitude by which the Edomites are said to be subjected to the Jews refers to temporal things, not eternal ones, so that it can hardly be brought into connection with the doctrine of election and reprobation.

Third, they argue that Esau should be considered as a type of legalists, and Jacob as a type of those who are justified by faith.

As to the first point: whether Esau himself was elect or reprobate in the sense we are now discussing makes no difference to our argument. There is no need for the nature of the type and the nature of the thing signified to coincide in all respects. Although, to be sure, Esau is described as one who despised future blessings and preferred things that were present, however trifling or worthless they might be.

Furthermore, Esau appears to have had a savage nature toward his brother and a stubborn disposition toward his parents. And finally, the Holy Spirit calls him profane, a title which He does not usually assign unless someone is to be handed down to posterity as infamous and accursed. But we do not insist on that here.

What we cannot concede, however, is that neither Jacob nor Esau are considered in any personal capacity in this passage. For granted—even if the words "the elder shall serve the

younger" are understood of the nations mentioned in the oracle as struggling within Rebekah's womb—still, no one can deny that Jacob himself was granted some singular prerogative. For God, as Malachi testifies, determined that Esau's descendants would dwell in solitary mountains, in a land laid waste and infested with dragons and wild beasts, while He placed the children of Jacob in a pleasant region, fertile in every blessing.

Now, the fate of the children belongs in some way to the parents themselves—a fact attested not only by the Word of God, but by the natural instinct of mankind. And who would deny that the transfer of the birthright, which by right of natural order belonged to Esau, and which God gave to Jacob, the younger, was itself a direct effect of that oracle? So how can it be denied that it pertained also to their persons?

But consider carefully the words of Malachi: "I have loved you," says the Lord. "Yet you say, 'How have You loved us?' Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau, and I laid his mountains waste," etc. Who does not see that God Himself bears witness that He distinguished between these two brothers by love and hatred—and that the evidence of this distinction is the inequality of the lands in which their descendants were made to dwell?

Therefore, since they were equal in the condition of their birth, and since Esau had the advantage in birth order, what reason could there be that would lead God to prefer Jacob so greatly? Surely God attributes that preference solely to His own love or hatred. Why He loved one and hated the other is not explained in that passage. What is certain is that He gives no reason drawn from anything in either of them. Rather, He clearly implies that the entire distinction rests upon the liberty of His own will.

Those emphatic words, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?", signify the same. As if He said, "There was no reason in either of them why I should love one above the other. Moved by nothing outside of Myself, I divided My affection unequally between them." This fully agrees with what the Apostle had so wisely observed: "before they were born," etc.

The second point made by the Arminian school is equally beside the point. Granted—even if that advantage which the Jews had over the Edomites, and which Malachi records, pertained only to this present life and not to the life to come—still, it is beyond question that that whole dispensation was mystical and pointed far beyond the present. For not only does the Apostle teach that "all things happened to them in figure", but it is also well known that spiritual and eternal realities were foreshadowed in earthly and temporal ones. And the Arminians do not deny this either.

It remains, then, to ask what precisely the subjection of Esau's posterity typifies. For just as the land of Canaan signified heaven, it seems reasonable that the barren land of Seir—which, besides its natural infertility, was laid waste by great calamities—would represent the lot of those who are exiled from the blessed heavenly dwelling, and are instead assigned to the dark places prepared for the habitation of the great red dragon.

The nature of the type also appears in this: before Israel was introduced into Canaan, a covenant was made with him in the wilderness, in which he promised to stand fast, and to which God committed Himself forever. So likewise, with the spiritual Israel—who is Israel according to the Spirit—God enters into the covenant of the gospel while they are still in the wilderness of this world, and both promises and truly grants the grace to fulfill the covenant, before they come into possession of heavenly blessedness. To that extent, then, the Israel descended from Jacob can indeed be a type of those who are to be justified.

But since this act of justification is preceded by another divine act—namely, the decision by which God called Jacob's posterity into covenant fellowship and adopted them—and since this adoption is followed by their possession of the land of Canaan, while Esau's descendants are excluded from both, we ask: of what thing is Esau's rejection a type? Surely not justification—for justification follows covenant and the fulfillment of its condition. But that rejection came before both. Therefore, we must necessarily refer it to election and reprobation, as taught by Calvin.

And that Malachi is speaking of an act of divine will is clear from the context. For when God either reminded or reproached Israel (for this reminder is really a rebuke of forgotten mercy), saying that He had loved them above all other nations, and when Israel responded that they did not understand how they had been so greatly loved, God points them all the way back to the very origin of their nation. He shows that the distinction made between the two brothers while still in Rebekah's womb was an undeniable sign that from the beginning, Israel was dear to Him and Edom was hated. And this distinction came long before any covenant was made or any condition of the covenant was fulfilled.

As for the third point, we have already refuted it above. Jacob could not have been a type of those justified by faith, nor Esau a type of legalists, in that original oracle. And an additional reason for this conclusion is the way in which God so strongly proclaims His love for Jacob.

For if the subject in this passage were justification, then the reason for God's love toward Jacob must have been his obedience and piety, and for His hatred of Esau, the latter's rebellious and contumacious character. Otherwise, the type would not correspond with the thing it signifies.

Now, the love of God which reigns in justification—what Calvin elsewhere calls a consequent love—rests upon the obedience we show through faith to the gospel; and the hatred which corresponds to it arises from unbelief. But that love, considered in itself, though indeed great, would not seem all that astonishing if one compares the reasons for both affections. For what is so remarkable if God loves the faithful and hates the unbelieving?

Rather, it is that antecedent love, which precedes any merit or foreseen obedience in the creature, that is truly great and worthy of marvelous praise. For what surpassing kindness and compassion is this—to embrace with such favor and shower with such benefits a creature who is worthy of nothing but hatred and curse?

Hence, that word of Christ: "God so loved the world," etc.—in which, as we saw above, Calvin rightly recognizes a marvelous display of God's love toward the human race. Likewise, Paul in

Romans 5 says, “God commends His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That love becomes more remarkable when compared to what is opposite. In the case of a consequent love, if God had despised both Jacob and Esau, He would have acted justly, but there would be nothing to admire. If He had favored both, it would have been a gracious and praiseworthy kindness, but not one that provokes such astonishment.

But when both were equally unworthy to be loved, equally worthy of being hated, and yet God loved the one and hated the other—that is what ought to strike us as astonishing. The very thought—He loved me, who was worthy of hate—pierces the heart. But then this: He loved me, while He hated others who were my equals, or perhaps even better than I, and preferred me with no merit on my part—this does not merely pierce the soul; it shakes it to the core and overwhelms it with awe.

Therefore, since the purpose of that sharp reproach from God in Malachi is to aggravate the ingratitude of the Israelite people so that they might be more effectively moved to repentance, is it consistent with that aim to recall a kind of love whose mention would in fact diminish their guilt? For if Arminius is right, the people of Israel could have defended themselves this way: “You indeed loved our father Jacob. But what virtue was so great in him? Did he not first show himself obedient to You before You loved him? You preferred him to Esau. But if You had not done so, how could You have claimed equity and justice? Since their conduct in life was so vastly different, could You have held them in equal esteem without distinction? Or even worse—could You have loved the impious and hated the devout?”

But since the love which God declares He showed to Jacob is of the same nature as the love He showed to the people descended from him—either both were consequent, or both antecedent—then the people could have made this same argument against God’s complaint. “Either You never truly loved us, or if You did, it was because You found in us a sufficient reason for loving us, something we provided by fulfilling what You required in Your covenant. And as soon as we deviated from that, You cast off Your affection, and anger and hatred replaced benevolence.”

But such objections are so contrary to the prophet’s purpose and to the very mind of God that it is astonishing that men who esteem themselves eminent teachers of theology are not equally repulsed by them.

Let this first section, then, be considered complete.

The second will yield us arguments no less compelling. The Apostle says: “What shall we say then? Is there injustice with God? God forbid.” In interpreting these words, Arminius concedes that if Isaac and Jacob are considered personally, then the objection arises naturally—because there seems to be a kind of injustice in granting unequal treatment to equals. And that, he admits, is exactly Calvin’s view. But he insists they are to be viewed only as types—and types of those who are to be justified.

We have already shown that both Esau and Jacob are here regarded personally, and that no place exists in this passage for types of the justified. Therefore, the matter must be understood differently.

But let us see how Arminius imagines that this objection might arise from the doctrine of justification. He says that the ground of accusing God of injustice lies in this: that He determined to love the children of promise and to hate the children of the flesh, purely by His own good pleasure and without regard to merit. But I ask: to whom does this seem a sufficient basis for the charge? To Jews or to Christians?

To the Jews, Arminius replies, Paul is responding. Very well. For it is hardly likely that Christians would regard it as unjust for God to decree to reject the unbelieving and adopt the faithful as His children, without any consideration of their own merits. What? Are we incapable of being content with salvation unless we can think it was not freely given, but rather owed to us because of our works?

But not even to the Jews would that [Arminian] response seem sufficient. For the children of the flesh and the children of the promise are either considered separately and absolutely in themselves, or compared to one another. If considered separately and absolutely, who could even imagine it to be unjust to exclude the unbelieving from salvation, and to take no account of their supposed merits?

What merits could unbelievers claim? Or if there are any such, should they outweigh the sheer obstinacy and audacity by which they dared accuse God Himself of lying when He bore witness to His Son? And would God be unjust if He chose to grant salvation by faith rather than by works? To charge God with injustice—if, once the new covenant has been established, He were to grant salvation neither for faith nor for works—would be understandable both to Jews and to Christians.

But since God was free to establish a new covenant or not to establish it, how insolent must the Jew be who judges that injustice has been done to him, if salvation is obtained through faith rather than through works?

Now, if we compare the two groups—either we compare a Jew pursuing justification by the law but still unbelieving, with a believing man who lacks good works; or we compare a faithful man who also possesses works with a law-keeping Jew. The latter comparison reveals no appearance of injustice. For when both are equal in works but unequal in faith, it is just to bestow salvation upon him who exceeds in faith.

The former case is no stronger. For even though the Jew may glory in his works and suppose himself righteous by them, he will not so far delude himself as to think it unjust for salvation to be given to one who receives and embraces it eagerly, and denied to one who despises and rejects it. To deny salvation to one who seeks and embraces it might be harsh, though not necessarily unjust. But to grant it to one who obstinately and stubbornly rejects it—far from earning praise for justice, such a decision would not even escape the charge of folly.

But this, to me, seems especially worth observing: that although the Apostle in this Epistle to the Romans discusses the doctrine of justification so carefully, from the beginning through to the end of chapter five, and treats it almost as thoroughly in the Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians, nowhere else does he ever suggest that anyone might take occasion from this doctrine to accuse God of injustice. He anticipates many other objections, he refutes many suspicions, he repels many blasphemies—but never once does he consider such a charge necessary to address.

Indeed, the defense of God's justice found at the beginning of Romans chapter 3 pertains to a different matter. Why then does Paul reserve this defense until now, after he has already addressed not only justification but also sanctification? Why does he introduce it in a passage that, according to the Arminian interpretation, deals with a different subject altogether?

How much more fitting and in harmony with the mind of the Holy Spirit is Calvin's view, which sees Paul—as was consistent with his incomparable wisdom—anticipating that not only Jews but all human minds might in some way be offended that God, to persons equal in nature, granted unequal outcomes; that He preferred those who boasted not in their merits, but who recognized that they had no worth in themselves, to others who were full of confidence in their supposed good works.

For there is a kind of injustice which consists in partiality (προσωπολημψία), and in this dispensation of divine grace, there appears to be something that resembles it. For right must be distributed equally to equals, and to unequals in proportion to their inequality.

Thus it is no wonder that this doctrine offends human reason—nor is it strange that the Synod of Dort could not persuade the disciples of Arminius to abandon this scruple, nor could Calvin satisfy his opponents in this respect, nor Augustine win over the Pelagians to this doctrine.

And this is hardly surprising, since even Paul himself—whose wisdom and authority no one has surpassed since the time of the Apostles—did not succeed in extinguishing that impulse or audacity to contend with God. Let us then see how he attempted to address it.

He says: "God forbid. For He says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'" (Rom. 9:15)

Arminius interprets these words as follows: "It lies in the freedom and arbitrariness of my will to show mercy to whom I will"—as the conclusion indicates: "So then He has mercy on whom He will." Up to this point, all is well.

But then Arminius adds: the only adequate reason for imputing injustice to God on account of this decree is that, having at first established the covenant of life and death based on the performance or omission of works, God was not at liberty to introduce a second decree—or new covenant—which, by establishing a new condition, would invalidate the previous one.

He seeks an answer to this charge in the word mercy, which necessarily presupposes sin. That is, granted sin as a condition, it was still in God's liberty either to punish it according to the

strictness of justice and the prior decree, or to forgive it mercifully by means of some new decree—one which depended on the fulfillment of faith. Therefore, Paul brings in the text, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy,” etc.

I would not have wished that Arminius—a man otherwise learned—should have spent the subtlety of his intellect in corrupting the word of God. But since that has happened, I nevertheless rejoice greatly and give thanks to God from the heart that his attempt succeeded so poorly. For, first of all, it is scarcely credible that the Jews were so arrogant as to think that God was not permitted either to punish sinners or to pardon them mercifully if He so willed, without being unjust.

Nowhere, when the Apostle so often disputes the causes of the abrogation of the legal covenant in order that the gospel might succeed in its place, does he ever think it necessary to defend the justice of God. And even if I granted to Arminius that Paul had proposed such an objection here (which he then proceeds to answer), the response he attributes to Paul does not fit the issue. It would have been better to repel the charge of injustice by an explicit reminder of sin—of which Paul had already convicted all mankind so clearly in the opening chapters of this very epistle.

And if he wished to mention mercy, he ought to have extolled its immense greatness—not merely emphasized the liberty God exercises in its dispensation, so that one receives it, and another is left out, as He wills. For certainly, in establishing the evangelical covenant and the forgiveness offered to the faithful, God did not exercise any such discretionary liberty. He offered the same mercy promiscuously and indiscriminately to all—so long as they believe.

Paul himself says, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law… even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Rom. 3:21–22). And elsewhere: “As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Rom. 5:18). Therefore, the mercy that governs justification, which requires faith, is not discriminating among men—it is offered to all alike under the condition of faith.

But here, the Apostle clearly speaks of a mercy that does distinguish—placing one man over another. Thirdly, even if I were to grant that the mercy involved in justification distinguishes in this way (i.e., it adopts the believer as a child of promise and rejects the unbeliever), I still do not think the Apostle’s reply would be adequate. For in that case, the reason for this distinction lies in something clear and manifest, something within the men themselves: namely, faith and unbelief.

But here the Apostle speaks of a mercy which so separates men that no reason for this separation can be found except in the hidden and secret will of God. For as Calvin rightly observed, the very form of expression here excludes all external causes—just as when we assert our own liberty in action, we say: “I will do what I will do.”

And if someone were to ask Paul why one man was justified and not another, he would surely have appealed to the absolute will of God.

Moreover, the context from which Paul draws this oracle in support of his argument confirms Calvin's interpretation splendidly. When Moses asked God to let him see His glory, the Lord replied that no one could see His face and live—but that He would allow Moses to see His back parts. By this, God signified that in Himself there is a kind of majesty, and a height of purposes and reasons, to which it is impious for us even to aspire.

If we interpret the oracle "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy" in Arminius's sense—namely, about justification—it would not fit. For it is not difficult to understand why God justifies the faithful rather than the unfaithful. But what utterly surpasses all understanding is why, in the midst of the equal condition of all mankind, God would choose to draw this man and not that one to Himself by the most powerful efficacy of His Spirit.

Paul then adds the consequence: "So then it is not of him that wills, nor of him that runs, but of God who shows mercy." (Rom. 9:16)

To this, Arminius gives the following comment: Since God's mercy is here opposed to man's will and effort, it is clear that what is meant is the striving and effort whereby a man, apart from God's mercy, hopes to obtain righteousness and salvation. This, he says, is the effort and striving of those who seek righteousness and salvation through the works of the law. And since mercy is thus placed over against man's will and striving, the conclusion is that the true means ordained for attaining righteousness and life is something that belongs to mercy above all—namely, faith in Christ the Mediator.

Therefore, according to Arminius, the phrase "of God who shows mercy" means "of the man who believes in Christ the Mediator."

But who could have so much confidence in his own judgment as to dare invent such things—or to believe that he could persuade others of them? And yet, unfortunately, he has found many who embrace such ideas—too many, and all of them much too confident in their own intellect.

Surely, the license he takes here in interpreting "but of Him who calls" is even more intolerable. Faith comes from calling; calling comes from the One who calls; and the One who calls is moved to call by mercy. Therefore, faith is the mercy of God the Caller?

What, I ask, could be more absurd?

Or if the matter is not so direct, and the word "mercy" is brought in to denote faith—because faith embraces mercy and is the means to salvation ordained by mercy—then this is a kind of metonymy by which a man's faith is called the mercy of God, because by faith man apprehends God's mercy.

In the same way, then, God's mercy could be called man's faith. For just as the latter embraces mercy and can obtain salvation only through it, so the former necessarily looks to faith, and can communicate salvation only through it.

So then the father will be called the son, and the son the father, because they are so mutually related to each other that one cannot be without the other. Is there no shame in such absurdity?

Let us now examine the matter a little more carefully.

First, who told Arminius that the Jews, in their pursuit of salvation and justification, entirely excluded all thought of God's mercy? Did they not therefore acknowledge themselves to be sinners? Did they not, by daily sacrifices, public and private prayers, and all manner of religious observances, confess this very thing?

True, they desired to be justified by works and to stand upon the covenant which says, "Do this and you shall live." But so do the Papists today, who nonetheless do not wholly separate God's mercy from salvation. Rather, they wish to mix the two—what the Apostle everywhere teaches to be incongruous—justification by works and grace grounded in the remission of sins.

Next, it is not for nothing that the Apostle opposes not merely man's will and effort, but the God who shows mercy. This is extraordinarily emphatic. The Apostle clearly intended to show that the cause of the distinction—whatever it is that he is discussing—is not to be sought in man, but only in God. It is not man's striving or intention that matters here, but the will of the merciful God.

How much more fitting this is for the doctrine of election and reprobation than for the doctrine of justification—no one can fail to see. For in the matter of justification, the cause of the distinction lies within man himself, not in God. Even if it is God who provides the power of His Spirit so that we might believe, still it is not God who believes—it is we ourselves who give the assent of faith to the Gospel.

Finally, since the word "therefore" (οὖν) plainly denotes a conclusion drawn from what has gone before, and since (on the Arminian hypothesis) Paul is attempting to conclude that unbelieving legalists are to be rejected while believers are adopted, it is more than strange that no mention is made of unbelief (which is the reason the one is rejected), or of faith (which alone brings one into adoption).

Let us now move on to the example of Pharaoh (Rom. 9:17):

"For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, 'For this very purpose I raised you up, that I might show my power in you, and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.' So then He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills."

Arminius interprets Paul as reasoning this way: "If it is lawful for God, in order to display His just power and to magnify His name, to raise up Pharaoh, to harden him, and to punish him—then He cannot be accused of injustice if, according to His purpose of election, He decrees to illustrate His power by the just hardening and punishment of the children of the flesh." This, says Arminius, is evident from this passage. Therefore, also the latter conclusion must follow, and hence God cannot be accused of injustice for that either.

But Arminius makes his first mistake in supposing that this example is directly connected to the question, “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God?”—a question Paul already posed and answered in verse 14. That argument was executed in verse 15. In verse 16, Paul then drew a general conclusion from that refutation—namely, that the cause of the distinction God makes between men is not to be sought in man, but in God Himself who freely shows mercy.

The example of Pharaoh, then, is not brought forward as a proof of verse 14, but rather as a confirmation of the conclusion in verse 16. This is indicated especially by the connective particle “so then” (οὖν), which links the conclusion with the example.

Furthermore, the argument Arminius attributes to Paul is extremely strained, and almost ridiculous: “If God could justly raise up Pharaoh in order to harden and punish him, then He could also justly establish a new covenant, in which He justifies the faithful and punishes unbelievers and rebels.” Did Paul really have no more fitting and relevant example for his argument?

Was it not enough to say that God is permitted to punish rebellious legalists, because being justly exposed to divine condemnation, they refused to embrace Christ the Redeemer? Especially since in the earlier chapters of this same epistle, Paul had so thoroughly and unassailably shown that all—Jews and Gentiles, legalists and otherwise—are liable to death and eternal condemnation?

Why then would he resort to such an obscure and remote argument, when his point was already plain and accessible to all?

Moreover, we can best understand Paul’s reasoning from the conclusion he draws from this example: “So then, He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.” This shows that the example concerns hardening. Could anything be more unworthy of the Apostle’s wisdom than to use this example to prove that it is lawful for God to punish legalists for their stubbornness in refusing Christ, when the example makes no mention whatsoever of Pharaoh’s punishment—but only of his hardening?

Indeed, no one could read Paul’s words so carelessly as to fail to observe the great force in the opposition he sets forth: “He has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills.”

Now, hardening—by Arminius’s own admission—is God’s withholding of that action by which alone the heart of man can be softened. Therefore, the mercy which is opposed to hardening must be that by which hearts are effectually softened—not simply the remission of sins. Otherwise, the proper counterpart in the opposition would have been punishment, not hardening.

Further, the phrases “on whom He wills” and “whom He wills” carry their own emphasis. They plainly indicate that we are dealing with a divine will that dispenses things as it pleases—a divine freedom that has no place in the business of justification. There, God does not arbitrarily give or withhold mercy. But in election and reprobation, such freedom is essential.

But why am I laboring so long with arguments? Let Calvin's interpretation be set forth—and every other will immediately flee away.

As has been stated from the beginning, the question is: Why does God give faith to one man and not to another? The Apostle answers: It lies in the free will of God. Neither the one who wills, nor the one who runs, nor anyone else who boasts in any prerogative, can claim superiority in this matter. Here only God's mercy reigns—and its use is with Him most free.

To confirm this, Paul brings forward the example of Pharaoh, whom God not only did not soften, but even hardened greatly—that is, He abandoned him in a peculiar way, such that by resisting admonitions, exhortations, and commands with the utmost obstinacy, Pharaoh provided in himself a memorable and extraordinary display for the magnification of God's glory.

From this, Paul concludes that God softens whom He will, and abandons and hardens whom He will.

What could be more suitable than this interpretation? What more natural? What more coherent and plain?

The Arminian interpretation—what could be more twisted, forced, and unnatural?

Thus let the second main section be considered complete.

Let us now proceed to explain the third.

Thus the passage continues:

"You will say to me then, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?' But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Shall what is formed say to Him who formed it, 'Why have you made me like this?' Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, willing to show His wrath and make known His power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory upon the vessels of mercy, which He has prepared beforehand for glory?"

On these words, Arminius has commented with such anxious energy and fragmentation that everything is broken into pieces and, by excessive subtlety, almost escapes the grasp of the mind altogether. If we wished to engage in an equally detailed examination of every syllable, the debate would grow into something infinite.

Let me instead place the matter as Paul presents it plainly before the reader's eyes, and then from it deduce such arguments as may support Calvin's doctrine.

Paul, desiring to show that the hardening or softening of hearts depends upon God's most free will alone, had just brought forward the example of Pharaoh. It was said of him that he had been raised up so that God might display in him the greatness of His power, and that he had been

hardened for this purpose—meaning, God permitted his natural wickedness, which of itself never softens or reforms, but increasingly hardens, to operate unhindered.

This truth, because of our natural weakness, contains something that at first glance strikes the mind with fear. But when the godly consider the infinite majesty of God, they fall silent in reverence.

To the ungodly, however, it seems to present a picture of such cruelty that they immediately protest and rage, as though God were doing an intolerable injustice to the reprobate—creating them and bringing them into the light only in order to harden them arbitrarily, and then eventually to cast them into ruin, all for the sake of His own glory.

They cry out: “Then He should rather have softened and bent them to obedience! Or if He wanted to harden them arbitrarily, why does He still find fault? Who could frustrate God’s purpose when He has imposed such a necessity to sin?”—which is exactly the kind of complaint Arminians make today.

What does Paul answer?

First, he sharply rebukes the one who makes such a reply.

Second, he gives a reason for the rebuke by offering a simile.

Third, he extends and amplifies that simile so that no lingering objection remains.

The rebuke is this: “Who are you, O man, to answer back to God?” Paul crushes human arrogance by establishing a contrast between God and man—whose difference by nature is so vast that it is entirely inappropriate for a vile and lowly creature to dare litigate anything with infinite majesty.

Would we tolerate an ant, if it had even a flicker of intelligence, bringing a lawsuit against a supreme magistrate, or accusing him of injustice? Wouldn’t we be offended that something so insignificant would presume to compare itself with sovereign rule?

For certainly, to file a legal complaint implies some degree of equality—there must be a shared standard of justice by which both parties are measured. But Paul moves from that natural inequality to a legal analogy drawn from a more concrete relationship—between the work and its maker.

He compares God to a potter, the corrupted mass of humanity to clay, the most base and vile material, and individual human beings drawn from this common mass to vessels fashioned from that clay. He then asks: If the potter has power over the clay to form some vessels for honor and others for dishonor, why would we deny God the same authority over the mass of human corruption?

Just as the potter uses his clay as he pleases—assigning some vessels to noble use, others to base—so too may God make differing outcomes for different men, preparing some for glory and leaving others, already corrupt, to become hardened, that from their hardening, like light from darkness, His divine attributes might shine forth.

This, after all, is what happened with Pharaoh.

A modest mind can rest content in this reply from the Apostle. What injustice is there in this? For it is part of human nature that some men are begotten from others; and it is also part of the corruption of that nature that no one is born without being tainted by it.

And since God sees—because all things are eternally present to Him—the whole multitude of future men, even to the consummation of the ages, has He done any injustice by allowing one to be born whose innate wickedness He might justly and wisely employ for such remarkable works as He has decreed to manifest His virtues?

Will we not allow to God what we allow to ourselves—that we may use the weight of heavy objects, or the flight of lighter ones, or the instincts of beasts, or the natural inclinations of all things, for the purposes our minds have determined?

But Paul goes even further still, so that every last possible offense might be removed.

He says that God, though He uses the reprobate at His pleasure for works that reveal His glory—and who, for that reason, are justly hardened—nevertheless bears with them most patiently, giving them space and opportunity to recognize His mercy through His long-suffering, and so be moved to repentance.

Thus, while they are by their own nature fitted for destruction (κατηρτισμένα), and by continued sin they more and more prepare themselves for ruin, God still excites and preserves them for that end, that in them He might exhibit some brilliant and illustrious display of His attributes.

Yet they have no grounds to complain against God, or to think they are excusable, since they have scorned so obstinately God's great goodness and patience.

Still, there is an enormous difference between these and the elect—whom God prepares for eternal glory by calling them in holiness.

How clearly these things align with Paul's words and intent—and how far they are from the Arminian doctrine!

For the rebuke, which silences human audacity by appealing to God's infinite power and by denying that any common right exists by which God could be judged, completely overturns the Arminian arguments. For Arminianism imposes such narrow bounds on God's supreme authority that it refuses to let it extend beyond what seems proportionate to man's worthiness to receive His benefits.

The simile likewise shows plainly that God is not using His infinite power arbitrarily, as if He made vessels of dishonor out of pure, innocent material. No—it emphasizes that these vessels come from clay, vile and already corrupted. And yet, even so, God is still free—contrary to the denial of the Arminian school—to permit certain men from that common, corrupted mass to harden themselves more and more, in order that by their stubbornness, the brilliance of His glory might burst forth.

At last, the comparison which Paul establishes between the elect and the reprobate—that the one group is merely endured with great patience, while the other is truly prepared for glory—makes it clearer than the midday sun that there is indeed a kind of common external grace, which invites all through the objective presentation of the gospel. But there is also another grace, peculiar to the elect, upon whose efficacy their preparation depends.

All of these things so clearly remove the doctrine of justification from the Apostle's words, that the distance between them is as great as that between East and West.

Let us now briefly consider Chapter Four.

First, the Apostle says that those whom he called vessels prepared for glory (v. 24) were called not only from among the Jews but also from the Gentiles. This agrees entirely with what has preceded. For earlier the question had been raised: Why is it that, though the Jews in their own opinion (and likely in the opinion of others) seemed to surpass all others in the glory of their merits, they were not effectively called, but instead were rejected and hardened? Yet God had powerfully drawn the Gentiles—those who had previously been wholly alienated from Him.

Paul answers that some were indeed called from the Jews (so that no one might suppose the entire nation was rejected), but also that most of those called were from the Gentiles, in agreement with the prophetic oracles.

This has nothing at all to do with the doctrine of justification.

Next, Paul quotes the prophecy from Hosea chapter 2, adding a testimony from chapter 1. The first runs like this: "I will call those who were not my people, 'My people,' and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.'"

Now, I ask: What sort of calling is being spoken of here? Is it the calling that follows after the fulfillment of the condition of the covenant? Or is it the kind of calling that causes the condition to be fulfilled?

Let the place be read in Hosea, and it will be evident even to the blind that God promises to bring back, out of mercy, the Gentiles who had been rejected and cut off from all participation in His covenants. This must refer to the effectual calling by which God leads them into communion with the covenant—not to a dispensation by which, after being led and responding to the call, they receive a reward for fulfilling the condition.

The second prophecy (from Hosea 1) makes this even clearer: “And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called sons of the living God.” Here, even if the Arminian school wishes, “they will be called” could be interpreted as “they will be named”; but one thing is always certain and plain: God promises that He will cause Himself to be known by those who were previously entirely ignorant of Him. That pertains to the doctrine of vocation, not justification.

Then Paul cites two passages from Isaiah that confront the scandal which might arise from the small number of those who believe. After refuting with great force and solidity all objections and counterarguments springing from human reason, one remained: if all this depends on the most free will of God, is it not strange that so few have been embraced by this kind of mercy?

Indeed, the small number of believers compared to the multitude of unbelievers has always been a source of offense, not easily dismissed.

Because Paul’s controversy is especially with the Jews—who always held the highest reverence for Scripture, as divine and supreme—he responds only by showing that this very thing had long before been foretold by the Spirit of God.

Thus, when Isaiah cries out concerning Israel that, “though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant shall be saved,” he shows that God had reserved such grace for a few, as a kind of remnant, even amidst the dreadful judgments He inflicted upon the people for their sins. God had always acted in such a way that, in common calamities, He was pleased to preserve a few—which served as a sort of image of election and reprobation.

Hence, Paul concludes that we must submit with utmost humility to the will of God, for He could have justly passed over all equally deserving of destruction. Therefore, although only a few have been effectually called, there is still reason to reverence and admire His mercy.

If these things do not openly contradict the Arminian hypotheses, then by all means, let them boast in their subtlety.

Having established and explained these points, I do not deny the reader freedom to judge for himself whether he prefers to refer the earlier type—represented in Isaac and Ishmael—to the doctrine of vocation, or rather to justification.

For in truth, this matters little—either for refuting Arminian errors or for confirming the truth. But if he chooses the former, he will have to consider those two sons of Abraham quite differently from how Paul considered them in Galatians 4.

There, Paul presented the two sons of Abraham not simply as those who came from the same father, but rather as born of different mothers, representing different conditions and pursuits—matters profoundly opposed in character. But in the passage we have now been examining in Romans, Paul observes nothing in them except this: that they were both born from the same father, which seems to imply a kind of equality between them—yet they were so unequally treated, that one was driven from the father’s house, while the other, by God’s own

decree, was counted not only as the legitimate heir of his father's goods, but also—what is far greater—the heir of the divine blessing.

Now if anyone wishes to maintain the view that the justification by faith alone apart from works—which is clearly the subject of the broader argument—remains in view even at the end of this chapter (beginning with verse 30), he will need to find some way to reconcile that conclusion with the preceding disputation. For that the earlier section concerns justification obtained by faith apart from works is so clear that it cannot escape even the most casual reader, and certainly not one honest or fair-minded in theological disputation. Nor, as far as I can tell, has anyone on our side ever denied this.

But if the latter view is preferred—that is, that the section between verses 6 and 29 concerns election and reprobation, and not justification—then it follows necessarily that the twenty verses we have just examined must be understood as a parenthesis. And this should surprise no one who is even moderately experienced in reading Paul's writings. For nothing is more common or more characteristic of his style than to interrupt an argument with lengthy parentheses, until, having dealt with a matter arising from the subject at hand, he returns to his original point. Indeed, he often inserts major parentheses within minor ones, if the topic warrants extended elaboration.

We embrace this interpretation not only because it has been favored by men of great critical judgment, but because the nature of the argument itself demands it. For having wonderfully concluded his treatment of justification and sanctification in the preceding chapters, and having strongly condemned the error and obstinacy of the Jews—who supposed that either of those could truly arise from the Mosaic Law—Paul, so that he might not appear alienated in spirit from his fellow Jews (despite being Jewish by blood), seeks to clear himself of any suspicion of hostility.

Thus, at the beginning of this chapter, he proclaims his great sorrow—that far from being stirred by hatred to attack his people's doctrines, he is deeply grieved to see the people joined to him by blood, and formerly adorned with incomparable privileges from God, now standing on the brink of eternal destruction. So great is this anguish that, were it possible without violating his love for Christ, he would not hesitate to be cut off himself if it might purchase the salvation of his people. No greater demonstration of true charity of soul could ever be imagined.

Yet after expressing such love, Paul moderates his sorrow by reflecting that what has happened is neither surprising nor unaccounted for, but was actually foreshadowed long ago—as if inscribed upon a most accurate map—in the different status of Abraham's sons.

What, after all, did the Spirit intend to signify when He so carefully wrote that Abraham had two sons, but that one was born according to the promise, and the other according to nature alone? One was treated as a slave, the other as a legitimate heir—called to the inheritance. Surely, the meaning was that in the matter of religion, there would be a great division among those who claim descent from Abraham:

- Some, relying on the strength of free will, would pursue justification by works—and must therefore fall short of their hope;

- Others, called by a certain miraculous grace, which is the true spiritual generation, would embrace the mercy of God unto justification and salvation.

For the Word of God is such that it cannot fail or become void. Whatever it predicts, whatever it foreshadows in types or cloaks in allegories, must be fulfilled in reality and confirmed in outcome.

And so, no one should wonder that God has rejected the people who stumbled at Christ, and has instead welcomed those who believed, to receive the heavenly inheritance. Indeed, Paul says, “I will now declare something still more astonishing.”

For someone may ask, “If one faith distinguishes Israel according to the flesh from Israel according to the Spirit, why has God granted faith to some and not to others? Why has He allowed some to remain in the blindness and stubbornness of their nature, while others He has raised to belief? If He was going to favor anyone, why not those who pursued holiness with such zeal according to the Law? Did their works—foreseen or otherwise—mean nothing to God in determining whom He would favor with the grace that creates faith?”

To such questions and objections, Paul says, take this with you: something that will satisfy such inquiries, strengthen those weak in faith, and shut the mouths of unbelievers so that they cease accusing God’s dealings.

Not only has the Spirit of God signified in the type of Isaac and Ishmael that some are preferred to others in justification because of faith, but also—through another example—that faith itself is freely given by God, apart from any works or anything at all inherent in man.

What, after all, does it mean that of Isaac’s two sons, conceived in one act of generation, born of the same mother, entirely equal in condition, still in the womb, before they had done anything good or evil, God should say that He hated one and loved the other—except that we might clearly understand:

- In the giving of justification, God acts in accordance with how people show themselves worthy or unworthy through faith or unbelief,

- But even more wondrously, in the actual granting or withholding of faith itself, He acts not because of anything in us, but from His own most free election.

For that phrase, “not only but also” (οὐ μόνον δέ), is joined with exceptional emphasis, and not with ordinary force.

Thus the strength of the two arguments on which this entire structure rests—both ruined by Arminius and his followers in their misreading of Paul’s argument—is now shown to be false.

Once their error is demolished, and our interpretation (that is, Calvin's) defended, it seems appropriate to close this treatise with a careful explanation and reasonable reconciliation of those topics in which the opinions of the most learned theologians appear to disagree somewhat.

CHAPTER XVI

That Calvin's Doctrine Does Not Contradict Itself

A certain anonymous author—whom I have already often mentioned—expresses surprise somewhere that, as he alleges, no one among the disciples of Calvin has deviated further from Calvin's doctrine on the subject of predestination than I have, and yet I have still dared to appeal to Calvin in support of my own teaching, and to confidently cite many testimonies from his writings, as though there were no disagreement between us on this matter. He therefore accuses me, in plain terms, of insincerity and disingenuousness.

But certainly, no one has ever rightly been accused of dishonesty in citing the testimony of an author, if he has neither fabricated anything on the author's behalf nor distorted the author's words into a foreign meaning. For my part, I do not believe there is anyone so shameless as to claim that I have ascribed anything to Calvin that is not found in his writings—even if he conceals his name, as is often the habit of those who want to lie safely and slander without consequence.

Calvin's works are readily available, printed in various places, at various times, and in various formats—and in all these editions, nothing has ever been marked as interpolated or spurious, or in any way questionable. My accuser could have consulted any of those editions, and compared them carefully with my writings. Had I attempted any deception, he could easily have proven me guilty of fraud.

And as for the accusation of twisting Calvin's words into a different meaning—on what basis does that stand? In what way have I misinterpreted Calvin's language? Have I produced any testimony from his learned writings that cannot be understood on its own, without commentary? I have not snatched some isolated, ambiguous phrase, nor truncated a period, nor mutilated a sentence. Rather, I have quoted entire passages—either transcribed fully, or summarized with clarity—so that the author's meaning is either evident, or one must admit that Calvin had no meaning at all. But that last claim, no one who possesses even modest decency would dare to make about so great a man, whom even the Roman Catholics themselves have acknowledged to possess extraordinary eloquence.

Still, my anonymous opponent objects that many statements found in Calvin's writings are so clearly contrary to the view I attribute to him, that I must have cleverly concealed them, and all such clever concealment seems to imply some degree of deceit.

But I protest: I have neither fraudulently attributed anything to Calvin, nor perversely interpreted his words, nor craftily concealed any contradictions. By God's grace, no hypocrisy sticks to my conduct, and even if someone bears me ill will, he may perhaps blame something else, but he will not accuse me of disguising my heart, which has always been open and candid, free from cunning.

Now the passages noted by this anonymous critic—from Calvin's writings—either truly do conflict with the statements I have cited in Calvin's support, or (if there is any appearance of contradiction) they can easily be reconciled. If reconciliation is possible, then perhaps I was not wise enough in failing to resolve that appearance of conflict—so that my doctrine, which is none other than Calvin's doctrine, might be seen as fully consistent. But even if I failed to do that, no one can accuse me of dishonest concealment for not including what I believed posed no real threat to the argument.

If the passages truly do contradict Calvin's other writings, what would be the point in shamelessly attributing to such a great man either carelessness, for failing to notice he held two opposing views, or inconsistency, for failing to persevere in a single position? Did not Calvin, that great servant of Christ—to whom the Church owes so much for its reformation—deserve better from me than that I should seek to tarnish his name and reputation?

It should have been enough for me to note that the position I cited from Calvin's works is the more frequent one, and the one set down most clearly in places where he expounds Scripture deliberately, outside of heated controversy. For it is well known that the heat of disputation often obscures judgment, and who doesn't know how passion in religious debates can impair clarity?

But in fact, there is no real contradiction in Calvin's various writings on predestination. What makes him appear to disagree with himself is sometimes:

- excessive brevity, which can lead to ambiguity,
- occasionally strong and unguarded expressions, which can be easily misrepresented by unsympathetic readers, or
- careless reading by those who have not studied him carefully enough.

To make this clear, it is worth examining carefully the very passages which the anonymous writer has cited.

The first point that I attributed to Calvin—along with the most illustrious Molina—is that the entire human race was created in hope of eternal blessedness, had it persevered in uprightness. But once the first man fell, dragging all his descendants with him into the same condemnation, the mass of fallen humanity became the material of election and reprobation, over which God's will exercised its sovereign liberty.

So although the decree of election, being eternal, logically precedes Adam's sin, it is nonetheless based on the certain and foreknown fact of the fall.

Against this view, the Anonymous cites the following from Institutes Book 3, Chapter 21, §5:

> "By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he has determined what he would have become of each person. For all are not created on equal terms: rather, some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation. So, according to the end for which each person is created, we say that he is predestined either to life or to death."

He adds from Chapter 24, §12 of the same book:

> "Those whom he created for the end of death, to be vessels of wrath and examples of severity, he now deprives of the opportunity to hear his word, or he blinds and stupefies them still more by its preaching."

These statements, according to the Anonymous, plainly contradict the doctrine I defended above.

But the reply is simple, if one just explains correctly the words "created" and "predestined." For the term created can sometimes refer to the original creation of all things, which took place prior to any consideration of sin. And in this sense, we saw above that, in Calvin's view, all men were created in hope of eternal life.

But created can also refer to the ongoing generation of human beings by ordinary propagation, in which God's providence and power are constantly involved—without which, the human race would perish altogether. And this kind of "creation" does include the consideration of sin.

In that sense, God is said to have created some unto destruction.

Just as in Book 3, Chapter 5, Section 20 of the Institutes, Calvin says that God brings to completion the salvation to which He had eternally destined the elect by the efficacy of His calling; so also in Chapter 24, he says that God has His judgments against the reprobate, by which He executes His counsel concerning them:

> "Those whom He created for the dishonor of life and the destruction of death, to be instruments of His wrath and examples of His severity, He now deprives of the faculty of hearing His word; now He blinds them and stupefies them even more by the preaching of that very word."

And although there are countless examples of the first part of that, let us select one that stands out among the rest as especially clear and notable: For nearly four thousand years before the coming of Christ, God withheld the light of saving doctrine from all the nations. If someone responds that He did so because He judged them unworthy of such a great benefit, then the question arises: were their descendants any more worthy? The answer is clearly no. Malachi is a faithful witness to this, as he accuses them of unbelief and coarse blasphemies, and yet still proclaims that the Redeemer will come.

Do you see, reader, that Calvin does not deny that that vast multitude of people was worthy to be deprived of the preaching of the word? Yet he also affirms that the rest were no less unworthy in judgment—and therefore, in the comparison between the two, one must return to the utterly free will of God.

And what was it that made them worthy of that judgment, except that they were born and raised in sin?

But what follows is even clearer. Calvin writes:

> "We need not fear that some disciple of Porphyry will assail the righteousness of God with impunity, while we say nothing in response. For when we affirm that none perish undeservedly, and that the fact that some are delivered is due to the free goodness of God, then that is sufficient for the manifestation of His glory, and needs no evasions or apologies from us."

Therefore, Calvin says, "The most high Judge clears the way for His predestination when, having once reprobated certain persons, He deprives them of the communication of His light and abandons them in blindness."

So then, according to Calvin, none perish undeservedly. And if condemnation is joined to guilt, can there be any doubt that the one is the cause of the other? And if guilt—namely, sin—is the true cause of damnation, then did God destine men to destruction by an absolute will, and apart from any consideration of sin?

Therefore, predestination presupposes sin, and thus operates in the mass of fallen humanity when it makes its distinction. This is entirely sufficient to vindicate the justice of God from all accusation.

Now, as for the method of Beza, in which he attributes God's sole will as the cause of setting aside one person for love and another for hatred, although he claims that the actual execution of hatred and love only arises because of sin, that method cannot be assigned to Calvin in any way. First, because he never explicitly taught it, nor followed it; and second, because it cannot possibly agree with the things he did explicitly teach.

It directly conflicts with the fact that Calvin so often affirms that the object of predestination is fallen humanity, and that Christ was given for all, if only they believe. This has been shown clearly enough already in the earlier disputation.

Now, as for the word praedestinare (to predestine): it is certain that Scripture never uses the Greek word προορίζειν (proorizō) in this matter, except when speaking of the decree to bestow eternal life. That decree includes two things: first, the firm and immutable will to give and preserve faith to the end of life; and second, the equally unchangeable will to grant salvation. Both of these are positive acts, as the Scholastics say, and they are brought about through some very powerful efficacy.

But in the case of the reprobate, the situation is different. Reprobation includes two things: first, preterition (or passing over) in the granting of faith; and second, damnation, which necessarily follows unbelief. But preterition is a mere negation or omission of action, which does not require any divine efficacious operation. Therefore, the term praedestinare in the proper sense does not apply here.

Still, because in the case of the elect the outcome is absolutely certain, and likewise in the case of the reprobate their destruction is equally inevitable, Calvin—along with many other excellent theologians—has referred to both as predestination. This does not greatly depart from the style of the Holy Spirit. Just as the elect are said to be "appointed unto eternal life" (Acts 13:48), which, no matter how much Arminians try to resist, clearly signifies a fixed and definite purpose, so also the unbelieving enemies of the gospel are said to be "written unto condemnation" (Jude 4), because their fate cannot be avoided.

And just as the elect are called (i.e., brought to faith) "according to purpose" (Romans 8:28), meaning by a decree immutably fixed from eternity, so also Peter says of others that "they stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto they were appointed" (1 Peter 2:8). Although one part of the decree is affirmative, and the other only negative, in both the outcome is equally necessary and inescapable: here because God withholds His grace, and there because He powerfully works; but both were established by deliberate will.

Now, when Calvin appears to speak in the same way about the execution of both decrees—as if God brings about the outcome of reprobation in the same way as the outcome of election—this must be understood carefully. For the end of election, being in itself good and worthy of God's will, is something God intends directly and properly. Therefore, the means by which He achieves it are also applied directly and primarily.

But the immediate result of reprobation is hardening, and then—what necessarily follows from hardening—damnation: things which are not in themselves desirable, but rather consequences (kata symbebēkos). Hence, the means which lead to that end are not truly means in the same sense, and God does not apply them except secondarily, as we explained earlier from Calvin's own words.

In other places, the Anonymous hopes to find more support. So he cites from Calvin's De Praedestinatione (On Predestination):

> "And why are some made vessels of wrath? Paul answers: so that God might show His wrath and power in them. He says they are prepared for destruction. From what, and how, if not from their original source and nature? For indeed the nature of the whole human race was corrupted in Adam's person. Not that God's counsel did not precede this—but from that fountain flows both God's curse and the destruction of mankind."

To this he adds another passage from the same book:

> "Three things must be considered: first, that God's eternal predestination, by which He determined what would happen to the whole human race and to each person, was fixed

> and decreed before Adam fell; second, that Adam himself, by the merit of his fall, was destined to death; and third, that in Adam's already lost and desperate person, the whole race was condemned, so that God might then freely elect those whom He would dignify with the honor of adoption."

Now I truly do not understand what the Anonymous intended by these citations. For what? Is Calvin not perfectly clear in both of these places, saying that sin is the cause of mankind's curse and condemnation? Does it not necessarily follow, then, that the cause of predestination unto destruction lies in sin?

As we argued above, God cannot have one decree in eternity about whom He would condemn, and then another cause in time when He actually carries out that condemnation.

But the Anonymous says, "It is ridiculous to suppose that the phrase before Adam fell merely refers to temporal precedence. For who would doubt that something eternal precedes Adam's sin in time?" Therefore, we must conclude that Calvin is referring not to the temporal order, but to the order of God's intention in His decrees.

As for the impelling causes of the divine decrees, I see that many have been discussed by Calvin, but nothing at all about their order. Why did God create man in the hope of eternal blessedness? He attributes that to His goodness alone. Why, after man had fallen into sin and curse, did He decree to send Christ to redeem the world by His death? He finds the cause in that marvelous love which God had for the human race. Why did He choose some and pass over others in the bestowal of faith? The cause, he says, lies in the mercy and severity of God. Why is one person preferred over another in that matter? He recognizes no cause other than God's most free will. Why did He will to save believers and to damn unbelievers to eternal torments? That, Calvin says, must be sought partly from His justice and partly from His mercy.

And so it is with all other matters that we have explained more fully above.

But as for the order in which all these things were arranged in God's eternal mind—what was first, what was later, what He proposed to Himself to think before anything else—Calvin never attempted to explain this. The reason for Calvin's decision in this matter is not difficult to guess: The relation between the impelling causes of the divine decrees and the decrees themselves is founded on those virtues and attributes of God which, although marvelous in themselves, are nonetheless somewhat revealed to us and made accessible to our minds for the sake of understanding—such as justice, mercy, and goodness, to which our own moral virtues bear a certain analogy.

To these we must also add the freedom to use His own things as He wills, which we pitiful mortals would not want taken from us or diminished in any way. And in this respect, Calvin followed the thread of Holy Scripture, which indicates not obscurely, but very clearly, what is to be referred to God's goodness, what to His justice, and what to His mercy.

But the arrangement of order is the work of wisdom, which undoubtedly is infinite in God—but whose depths and hidden recesses are so unsearchable, that anyone who dares to trace them

out must necessarily wander forever in an inextricable labyrinth. The Holy Spirit has given us no light in this area by which we might fully perceive or rightly arrange the thoughts of God, or assign each one its proper place.

Moreover, the simplicity of God's nature does not prevent there being, according to our mode of consideration, various attributes in Him, to which different qualities in objects may be correspondingly referred: sin to justice, so that it may be punished; perfect holiness to goodness, so that it may be rewarded; faith and repentance to mercy, so that impunity may be obtained; and the complete equality of two sinners to the freedom of God's will, so that they may be treated unequally by His choice alone.

But the immensity and infinity of the divine nature does not allow for those various objects to be presented to His eternal mind in succession, as if He saw, knew, willed, and ordered all things in distinct moments—for He sees all things in one undivided act, from all eternity.

Therefore, if we say that one decree of God comes before another, it is only to accommodate our weakness, and according to our method of reasoning. For our mind is limited by narrow boundaries and cannot comprehend many things at once. One thought pushes out another, just as one nail drives out another when both cannot occupy the same space.

But there is no number of things so vast—not even if we imagine, with Epicurus, a thousand worlds and even more inter-worlds—that the divine mind could not in a single moment fully, distinctly, and most perfectly comprehend and grasp them all.

Would the Anonymous like me, then, briefly to explain what happened when Calvin occasionally tried to ascend a little higher and fix the thoughts of his soul on the contemplation of all these decrees? Precisely what must happen to all mortals if they set their minds to meditate attentively on the mystery of predestination.

At first, he cast his eyes upon the whole human race, and he saw it as entirely enveloped in a dreadful curse, which did not overly disturb him. Why not? Because he also saw that it was defiled by sin. For what is so astonishing, if men suffer what they have deserved from divine justice? Who would deny that the immense multitude, and even more the atrocity and magnitude of their sins, have most justly merited that terrible curse?

He was not disturbed, then, by that condition, although perhaps, being a man of tender heart and a lover of the human race, he felt some pang of compassion.

Then, he turned his eyes to the cross of Christ, and saw that a path to that cross lay open to all mortals, provided they were not unwilling to obey the God who called them. And here, he recognized and admired the wonderful philanthropy of God, all the more because nothing from man had provoked it.

For who would not be stunned by such a display of divine mercy: that the Supreme God, adorned with infinite majesty, having been so often and so grievously provoked by the most perverse actions—actions so contrary to His nature—should nonetheless have found in Himself,

from eternity, and at last in the fullness of time actually exhibited, the most perfect satisfaction through the suffering of His only-begotten Son?

Far from being disturbed by that thought, Calvin was enraptured by it and filled with unspeakable delight.

Still, he could not rest content with that alone. He observed, as if it struck his very senses, that among men, some fled to that cross with faith and repentance, while others not only neglected and despised it, but even hated and rejected it. And so it was that some obtained salvation, and others perished eternally.

Nor could such divergent outcomes have arisen from any equality of causes. For those who believed ratified and validated God's gift by their reception of it, whereas those who rejected it rendered the donation null by their repudiation.

Nothing, indeed, could be said more justly or more suited to the rule of right reason. Yet the motions of the soul, which pursue and investigate the causes of things, could not rest there. It was necessary to ask further why some believe while others do not. And because that surpasses all human understanding, it was to be investigated above all in the Word of God.

There, indeed, Calvin immediately recognized the sweet yet powerful efficacy of the divine Spirit, as even his own conscience testified. And he also saw the native malice and blindness which the external presentation of the cross could not correct.

For since the native perversity of the human mind is as great as we have previously shown, a merely external object, if nothing else accompanies it, must necessarily be repelled. On the other hand, the wonderful act of the mind, by which the faithful apprehend the externally offered object, must proceed from an extraordinary, supernatural, and truly divine power.

And this, thus far, has no extraordinary difficulty. But what is most difficult and above the reach of human intellect is this: Why does that power affect some so powerfully and efficaciously, while it passes completely over others?

Wherever you turn your eyes, you will find nothing in man upon which the mind may rest or with which it may be abundantly satisfied. No difference of nature, no seeds of virtue, no works, no dispositions or preparations for faith, no foreseen good use of free will, no other thing whatsoever that distinguishes one man from another either by nature or effort, could have furnished God with a reason for distributing His mercy so unequally.

Therefore, when Calvin learned clearly from the Apostle that the sole will of God rules, for which no further reason can be given, he rested in it with that humility of soul which befits a Christian.

Yet even then a scruple remained in his heart. For since the number of those who believe is exceedingly small, and the multitude of unbelievers in comparison beyond number, he was stirred to ask what cause could have moved God to allow such countless myriads of men to

remain in their native wickedness and corruption—by which they came to reject the cross of Christ.

For it certainly follows—and follows necessarily—that eternal destruction comes upon unbelief. And it cannot be avoided that horror and compassion simultaneously grip the soul when it considers the abyss of immense curse swallowing up so many miserable souls.

And it is not easy to calm the surge of human intellect or to pacify a heart so disturbed, or to bring it down again to that humility proper to a creature.

Still, three considerations above all helped to mitigate this more somber and disturbed reflection.

First, that this concerns the will of God, of God, I say, who by His very nature neither owes anything to men, nor can be said to owe anything.

As the Apostle says, “Who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid?” (Romans 11:35). What common right do we have, as creatures, by which we may argue with Him?

Second, that God had created all men in the hope of blessed immortality, from which they fell through sin. And therefore, He is not to be blamed for exercising justice in punishment—rather, His goodness is to be admired more than His severity is to be blamed.

Third, that He offered forgiveness of sins to all in Christ, in which He displayed incredible clemency. Therefore, those who perished did not perish due to any excessive severity in God.

Yet, as the human mind is eager to contemplate and know, Calvin looked further into something that seemed useful to understand.

That men are punished because they rejected Christ and are deprived of salvation because they refused to accept it—this is a just cause.

That God did not will to remove their wickedness and blindness, and that He refrained from doing so only because He did not will to, and was not bound to do so—this is a sufficient reason to restrain any insolence in man.

But that mankind fell from the life for which they were created into destruction because of the guilt of one man alone—this presented a great difficulty.

Was there so much cruelty in God, that for the fault of one, He should devote an innumerable multitude of men to eternal torments? Who could conceive of such a thing in a most kind and gentle nature, without horror? Who would not think that so dreadful a punishment is utterly foreign and repugnant to God’s justice?

Yet, in truth, there are two things especially that can expel this care from the heart.

One is that it should not seem strange if the condition of the children is the same as the father's. That severity which is exercised upon the children of traitors by earthly rulers is partly attributed to justice—why then should it be thought unjust or cruel in God? Is not the rebellion of the first man against God worthy of a punishment as proportional as if someone had violated human majesty?

The second is that the parent who committed the crime also propagated the same guilt to his children. So that no one ought to fix his gaze only on the guilt of the first parent, but rather to examine his own, where there is more than enough to justify eternal ruin.

For whatever the origin of the corruption, whoever is tainted by it is, by the order of justice, subject to punishment.

One thing, then, remains: God created the first parent mutable, and willed that he be exposed to the temptation of the devil, and He certainly foresaw that man's fall would result. And He foresaw it because He decreed that it would arise from those circumstances which He Himself ordained and created.

Thus, He saw the entire human race fall into sin, and through sin into destruction, and in that destruction to remain eternally—and He both saw and willed it.

Indeed, although He knew perfectly, when He determined to send His Son into the world, that all would reject Him unless the most powerful assistance of His Spirit helped them, He still destined that aid for very few, and passed over the rest in a righteous severity.

And who would not shudder at this? Who would not tremble and be struck with fear? Who is there who, if lifted by thought to the heights, and with attentive eyes looked down upon the ruin of the human race—cast down so miserably from that height of happiness in which it was first placed—would not shrink in horror from the just yet dreadful vengeance of God?

Indeed, here let Arminius bring forth whatever he has of his superfluous subtlety, but he will never succeed in making this dreadful ruin, with its own appearance, any less terrifying to the eyes of the mind.

Let a man search and unfold all the secrets of his theology—he will never finish, for there will always remain many things here that surpass all understanding, not only of men but even of angels.

For what shall the imaginary liberty of the human will accomplish here, to which men flee as to a sacred anchor in every storm and swelling of doubts?

Could not God have restrained Adam's mutability, so that neither he would fall, nor by his fall drag all his posterity into inevitable ruin? This is why Calvin so often recalls his readers' minds to those things that preceded Adam's actual fall, in which it is necessary to revere and adore the infinite majesty of God.

Hence those words in Institutes, Book 3, Chapter 23, §7, part of which we already considered above:

> "They plainly deny that there was a decree of God by which Adam would perish by his own defection. But how could that same God, whom Scripture proclaims as doing whatever He wills, have created the noblest of His creatures with an ambiguous end?"

They say that Adam had free will to forge his own destiny, and that God destined nothing, except to treat him according to merit. But if this cold invention is accepted, where then is that omnipotence of God by which, according to His secret counsel, which depends on nothing else, He governs all things?

Yet predestination—whether they wish it or not—reveals itself in his posterity. For it did not naturally happen that all should fall from salvation by the fault of one parent. Why do they refuse to admit of one man what they grudgingly grant concerning the whole human race?

What purpose does this evasion serve?

The sacred Scripture loudly proclaims that all mortals were consigned to eternal death in the person of one man. Since this cannot be attributed to nature, it is clearly the result of an admirable counsel of God.

It is absurd that those defenders of God's justice should stumble over a straw, while passing over entire beams.

Again, I ask: Whence came it that so many nations, together with their infant children, were plunged into eternal death through Adam's fall, without remedy, unless because God willed it to be so?

Here, then, let the tongues that are usually so talkative be struck dumb.

Yes, I confess, it is a horrible decree. Yet no one can deny that God foresaw what the end of man would be before He created him, and He foresaw it because He ordained it by His decree. And similar things follow in that very same place.

Therefore, since Calvin considered each decree of God separately within the mystery of predestination, and compared it with the impelling reason that moved God to decree as He did, there is almost nothing in which he did not recognize God's justice, or suspect His goodness, or admire His mercy, or acknowledge His liberty—by which God is free to give unequal things to equally corrupt persons.

So that Calvin both judged these things sufficient to satisfy pious and modest minds, and indeed, he actually did satisfy them.

But when all these things must be harmonized together, and one thing comes to mind—namely, sin, so great a thing as eternal destruction, so dreadful a thing as everlasting ruin, which could

have been prevented or allowed by the mere will of God Most High—it is impossible that the human mind should not be struck dumb under the weight of such awe and collapse in astonishment.

I see that some most distinguished men still doubt whether Calvin truly believed that God wills the salvation of all men, provided that they obey the invitations by which He calls them to faith and repentance. But I believe that I have now fully removed that doubt from their minds, given the many and clear testimonies I have produced from Calvin's writings on this matter.

Nevertheless, these men are worthy of being satisfied fully and abundantly, so that not even the slightest occasion for doubt remains.

They say, "If such was Calvin's view, why did he say so many things in his book on predestination that seem contrary to it?"

For instance, these:

> "It is far from the truth to say that God's grace is rightly magnified by those who preach it as common to all."

Also:

> "Now let Pighius boast that God wills all to be saved, when even the external preaching of doctrine—far inferior to the illumination of the Spirit—is not common to all."

And again:

> "Let them admit, then, that either God is not able to fulfill His desires, or deny that He wills the salvation of all without exception."

Also, he sometimes seems to deny that Christ died for all without distinction—although elsewhere, as we have seen above, he affirms it a hundred times.

He writes:

> "I hear what Pighius babbles, that the human race was chosen in Christ, so that whoever embraces Him by faith obtains salvation."

To which he adds:

> "What childish nonsense!"

Pighius explains his view like this: that God, by an immutable decree, created all men for salvation; but since He foresaw Adam's fall, He then applied a remedy which would be equally common to all, so that the decree of election might still stand firm and stable.

And so forth.

But nothing could be more easily explained.

As to common grace, the opinion of Pighius—and of almost all the Semi-Pelagians—has always been that there is some kind of grace which is common not only in the external preaching of the Gospel, but also in that which internally illuminates and affects the mind, so that it places in the will the power to accept or reject Christ at one's own pleasure.

Therefore, the reason for the difference between the faithful and the unbelieving must be sought not in divine election, but in human free will.

This opinion, Calvin rejected and opposed as heretical.

And this is clearly evident from the context of the passage itself. He says:

> "It is far from the truth to say that God's grace is rightly magnified by those who preach it as common to all, while they claim it dwells efficaciously only in those who have embraced it by faith. Meanwhile, they bury the cause of faith itself, namely, that the Spirit of adoption was later given freely to the children of election."

These things are clearer in themselves than what follows needs to describe.

Therefore, he does not deny that grace is common as an object offered externally; he only denies that it is common as an internal affection of the mind, which depends on the purpose of election, while the Semi-Pelagians hold that it is left to free will.

As for the will of God, which is treated in the passages that follow, the matter is plain:

There is one will by which, as we have seen above, God commands the duty of the creature and promises salvation to those who perform it; there is another will by which He determines what shall actually happen in the outcome.

The former is called revealed, the latter secret. The revealed will only invites externally by a proposed object, and shows what reward is laid up with God for those who obey.

But the secret will operates powerfully in the elect, so that they truly obey.

The secret will does not extend to the salvation of all men.

But the revealed will not only grants salvation to those who ask, but also openly affirms and teaches as an undoubted truth that it is common.

Nothing shows this better than Calvin's own words. He writes:

> "Pighius protests, citing Paul's statement that God wills all to be saved, and that He does not will the death of the sinner, to which we ought to believe even if He swore it, when He says through the Prophet, 'As I live, I do not will the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live.'"

Since the prophetic sermon exhorts to repentance, it is not surprising that God is declared to will all to be saved.

But Calvin shows that such forms of speech are conditional, stemming from the mutual relation between threats and promises.

Just as God announces to the kings of Gerar and Egypt that He will do something which He will not actually do, so also here. When their repentance prevents the punishment He had threatened, it then becomes clear that the sentence was intended only for the obstinate. Yet the threat was expressed as precise and unqualified, as if the decree were irrevocable. But once He had terrified and humbled them by a sense of His wrath—and they were not completely hardened—He then raises them up by hope of mercy, so they would know that there was room for remedy.

Likewise, the promises which invite all to salvation are not precise declarations of what God has determined in His secret counsel, but rather demonstrate what He is prepared to do for all who are brought to faith and repentance.

Therefore, in Calvin's view, promises and threats are of the same kind. Both are true, and both are conditional. Both truly reveal the will of God—not deceitfully, not disingenuously—but a will whose execution depends on the fulfillment of the condition.

In the threats: if repentance comes beforehand, they pass harmlessly, for God does not denounce punishment except for the obstinate. If you do not repent of sin, you cannot escape punishment.

In the promises: unless you believe and embrace them, they confer nothing in reality; for they are ordained only for believers. But if you believe, whoever you are, you will undoubtedly receive the promised benefit, and God will not at all disappoint your expectation.

What else is this, if not that the promise is common to all, provided they believe?

This, however, belongs not to the secret will of God. For just as the announcement to the Ninevites—"Within forty days, Nineveh shall be overthrown"—did not prevent God from decreeing to bring about their repentance (which was the only means to avert the calamity), so the promise "If you believe, you will be saved" does not prevent God from having decreed to harden many to whom it is made—a path that leads certainly and undoubtedly to destruction.

And just as that secret decree to grant some kind of repentance to the Ninevites did not make the conditional denunciation untrue—"Unless you repent, Nineveh shall be destroyed within forty days"—so too, the certain will to harden some does not prevent the promise from being true even with respect to them: "If you believe, you will be saved."

And that this is also Calvin's view in another passage, where he responds again to Pighius, is evident from what immediately follows:

> “This I wrung from Pighius—that unless someone is deprived of all sense and judgment, he cannot believe that in God’s secret counsel, salvation was appointed equally for all.”

As for Christ’s death, the matter is entirely without difficulty—if one reads Calvin’s full statements.

Pighius’s position is exactly the same as the Arminian: that the whole human race was created in the hope of life, and when it fell, a remedy was procured equally for all in Christ. That for the sake of the whole human race, a decree was established—what Pighius calls “universal election”—whereby power to obtain salvation is granted to all, if they believe; and ability to have faith is granted, if they will make use of their own liberty. Then God foresaw who would believe and who would not, and only afterward decreed whom He would elect and whom He would reprobate—so that election and reprobation are founded on foreseen faith or unbelief.

What does Calvin say to this?

First, he condemns the term “universal election” as entirely unfitting.

Then, he mocks and refutes the idea that election is based on foreseen faith, and shows that election is unto faith, not from faith.

He passes over the rest [of Pighius’s arguments] untouched, as being irrelevant to the matter at hand, and in which the controversy does not truly lie.

And this is plain from his words:

> “I hear,” he says, “what Pighius babbles: that the human race was elected in Christ, so that whoever embraces Him by faith may obtain salvation. But in this fiction there are two gross errors, which are easily refuted by Paul’s words.”
> “For first, there is a mutual relation between elect and reprobate, so the election he speaks of cannot stand unless we admit that God separated out certain individuals, whom He willed to distinguish from others. And this very thing is expressed by the term predestination, which he repeats twice. Moreover, Paul calls them elect who are ingrafted into the body of Christ by faith—which is obviously not common to all. So he designates only those whom Christ honors with His calling after they have been given to Him by the Father.”

To make faith the cause of election, Calvin says, is absurd and contrary to Paul’s words.

> “For,” as Augustine wisely noted, “he does not say they were elected because they would be holy and blameless, but so that they might become such. Nor does he say, ‘Because you believed, God chose you,’ but ‘So that you might believe,’ lest it seem that we chose Him first.”

And what follows agrees with this.

As for what Calvin thinks of Christ's death, it is clear from that passage we mentioned earlier, and which now must be explained more fully.

Some say that the command to preach the gospel promiscuously to all does not agree with the doctrine of special election, since the gospel is a message of peace, by which the world is reconciled to God, as Paul teaches. And by his witness, it is announced so that those who hear might be saved.

I answer briefly: Christ is ordained for the salvation of the whole world, in such a way that He saves those given to Him by the Father; they belong to Him, and He gives them life, and receives them into the fellowship of His blessings—those whom God by His gracious good pleasure has adopted as heirs.

What of this can be denied?

The Apostle declares that the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled in Him: "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me."

Christ Himself cries out: "All that the Father has given me I will keep, and none shall perish."

We often read that life is diffused only into His members.

Whoever does not admit that incorporation into His body is a special gift, has never read the Epistle to the Ephesians attentively.

From this it follows that the power of Christ pertains only to the children of God.

Yet even the opposing party will admit to me that the universal grace of Christ must be evaluated from the preaching of the gospel.

Therefore, the solution lies in understanding how the doctrine of the gospel offers salvation to all.

Indeed, I do not deny that it is salvific in its nature to all. The only question is whether the Lord by His eternal counsel has destined that salvation there declared to be common to all.

It is well known that all are indiscriminately called to faith and repentance, and that the same Mediator is proposed to all, who reconciled them to the Father. But it is equally well known that nothing is actually conferred except by faith, so that Paul's statement may be fulfilled: "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes."

What remains for the others, except that it becomes the odor of death unto death, as he says elsewhere?

Therefore, Calvin does not deny that Christ is ordained for the salvation of the whole world, nor does he deny that He is the Redeemer of all.

He confesses that the same Mediator is proposed to all, that He is by nature salvific to all, and that all are called to faith and repentance, and thus to salvation.

He proclaims that all, if they believed, would certainly be saved through this Redeemer, since the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes.

He acknowledges a certain universal grace, which consists in the external call and offer of salvation.

He acknowledges a certain universal grace, which consists in the invitation and external proposition of salvation. He denies only two things. First, that according to the eternal counsel of God, that is, His secret will which has reference to the event, salvation was destined definitively and certainly for all. That, he asserts, is proper to the elect—those whom God decreed from all eternity to give to His Son.

Secondly, he denies that all actually partake of the power of Christ's death, since it is not infused into men in any other way than by faith, and faith itself flows from that secret purpose.

This is plainly and reverently defined by the Synod of Dort:

That many who are called through the gospel do not repent, do not believe in Christ, and perish in unbelief, is not because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, nor because God absolutely was unwilling for them to be saved—since He has seriously and truly testified that such is His delight.

Nevertheless, the Synod also truly declared this:

One point remains, which emerges from what has been said.

For if God truly wills the salvation of all men, then—since so few are saved—how can He be said to be in possession of the fulfillment of all His desires? If Calvin were to admit that God's will in this matter is frustrated, why does he so severely and earnestly refute Pighius, and George of Sicily, and others of the Pelagian school, for teaching that very consequence—namely, that God does not obtain what He wills?

The difficulty grows greater, since—as we have seen above—Calvin says that God not only wills the salvation of all men, but that He desires it, and not only desires, but even burns with longing for it, such that when it does not happen, He is grieved and even deeply sorrowful.

And although we believe that this difficulty has already been adequately addressed in Chapter IX of this disputation, something should nevertheless be added here for fuller explanation.

Holy Scripture presents the attributes and properties of the divine nature to us in two ways.

Either they are presented as exercised toward objects already constituted in this or that condition, with respect to the qualities they already possess; or they are considered as free and unrestricted, either clothing objects with such qualities or passing them by, at His discretion.

Of the first kind is that goodness which regards a man already created and endowed with excellent qualities of piety and holiness, and considers him as an object of divine love and reward.

This goodness is so determined by the presence of righteousness and holiness in man, that God cannot but love and benefit the creature who remains in that state, because He is good; and likewise, He cannot but cease to love a creature who has changed for the worse.

Of the same kind is that justice whose task it is to avenge sin: for just as He never punishes anyone who has not sinned, so He never leaves sin unpunished.

And again, of the same sort is that mercy which pardons sin because of antecedent faith and repentance: for just as it does not pardon the obstinate and unrepentant, it cannot fail to pardon those who believe and repent, according to the word of the prophet: "As I live, says the Lord, I do not will the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn and live."

Now, although God, once He has revealed these attributes to us, allows us to conceive that they correspond with the nature of His being, to such an extent that it is hardly possible—even barely possible—that such perfections could be absent from His nature, yet because of either the infinite transcendence of His nature, or the dullness of our natural reason, we could never have known them unless they had been clearly revealed.

Adam would never have known with certainty that the reward of eternal life was set before him by God's goodness, unless God had offered him the fruit of the tree of life, or threatened death for one sin, or in some other way declared this free, but necessary inclination to bless.

We would not have known with certainty that God's wrath is utterly unrelenting, unless He had made it manifest in the death of Christ, where the Apostle says the brightness of divine justice was revealed—that it was not possible for men to be granted impunity without some dreadful satisfaction.

Nor could we possibly persuade ourselves that there is forgiveness with God for penitent sinners, unless He had proved it by so many testimonies, declared it in so many oracles, confirmed it by so many promises, and demonstrated it by so many arguments—none of which can compare to the cross of Christ, which alone places this truth beyond all doubt.

It is therefore no wonder if, since He made no promise of restoration to the angels who fell from their original estate, and since He gave a Redeemer to mankind, who shares nothing in common with angelic nature—those angels have always supposed that for them, every avenue to mercy has been completely shut.

But with a Redeemer granted to the human race, this divine attribute has been revealed—namely, that while it cannot grant pardon to those who persist in sin, yet it can never be said to be without effect in those whom sincere repentance, joined with trust in mercy, compels to implore His help.

And three especially memorable consequences follow from that revelation.

First, that God did not hesitate to openly profess that He wills the salvation of all men. Surely the language is thoroughly human—if He had said anything else, we would be even less able to understand Him. But we speak this way too: we say we will that which pleases us, that which, if accomplished, delights us, that which is agreeable and harmonious with the natural inclinations of our minds.

Second, this will is never expressed except in phrases that either explicitly express or implicitly contain a condition. In this, God accommodates Himself to the capacity of our minds and borrows the customary manner of human speech. For in human agreements and covenants that rest upon a condition, the condition bears such a relation to the performance of the promise that the latter necessarily depends on the former. Hence, we use such expressions as: "If you do this, then I will do that"; "Unless you first fulfill this, the agreement I made shall be void."

So also among those divine virtues and attributes which deal with objects already disposed in this or that way, there exists a connection so close to the qualities they regard that if those qualities are lacking, the activity of those virtues necessarily ceases. From this come hypothetical propositions such as: "If Adam had retained his holiness, nothing could have been more blessed than he"; "If mankind had not sinned, it would not have incurred death and the curse"; "If you believe, you will not come into judgment, for Jesus has satisfied divine justice in your place"; "If you do not believe, the wrath of God remains on you forever."

And it follows from this that these statements are universal: for since the quality that fulfills the condition (faith) is such that—considered in itself, apart from sin which is naturally implanted in

men—it could apply equally to all (given their rational faculties), it cannot but be predicated equally of all, that what follows upon its fulfillment is also said of all.

Hence the Scripture uses such phrases as: “Whoever believes shall be saved”, “The power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes”, “Unto all and upon all who believe”, and so forth—almost without end.

For if faith, as an effect, could in principle exist in all, so also mercy, whose activity necessarily regards faith, would exercise itself equally in all. Just as if no one believed, no one would obtain salvation.

Third and finally, that this will or merciful inclination to pardon, once revealed and externally proposed, becomes an object fit to awaken that quality in us, insofar as it can be excited from without. For no one can believe that God is propitious toward him, unless God Himself first has revealed it; nor can one be brought to sincere repentance unless he knows that for the penitent, mercy is surely prepared with God.

As it is written: “With You there is forgiveness, that You may be feared.”

It was therefore fitting that this be announced to all, for otherwise faith and repentance could not rightly be commanded. And because the more illustrious and vivid an object is, the more capable it is of stirring the soul, what incomparable wisdom and goodness was shown by God in not only willing that this mercy be proposed, but in doing so with a representation of memorable affection. Hence arose those anthropopathisms—God’s grieving, desiring, rejoicing—which we have previously listed from Calvin.

For every affection that carries even the smallest degree of intensity awakens in the soul such movements as to make it feel the matter has gone either well or poorly, according to its judgment.

Now even though, as we have noted above, such anthropopathisms must be explained in such a way that nothing of the majesty of the divine nature is diminished—since that nature is certainly not subject to the perturbations of human emotion—they are nevertheless not empty or feigned declarations of the divine will. There is nothing truer or more serious than this: that God is supremely merciful to anyone who approaches Him with true confidence and heartfelt repentance.

Nor is the intensity of that affection—such as the figurative language suggests—without its foundation. For when God’s inflexible justice barred the way, so to speak, from any signal of mercy to mankind, and all that could be revealed from heaven seemed to be only unrelenting wrath, it was supreme philanthropy and wondrous love when God gave His only-begotten Son, who by offering satisfaction, marvelously reopened access to mercy, which otherwise would have remained closed and inaccessible.

For without that satisfaction, the severity of divine justice—like a bottomless abyss—would have separated us from it forever.

From all this, it is now evident that in those things God is said to will according to His attributes, whatever the outcome may be, it cannot properly be said that He fails to attain His will or is frustrated in His desires.

When the nature of this will is such that it remains within the limits of a condition fulfilled or not fulfilled, then whatever the result, God has either attained His end, or at least has not missed it.

Did you believe? You will obtain the salvation which God has appointed for all who believe.

Did you not believe? Since salvation is destined only for believers, nothing has occurred contrary to divine expectation, and nothing contrary to God's purpose, if you have failed to obtain it.

In the second category of divine attributes, that goodness must be placed which moved God to will to create the world—and in the world, man—by His infinite power. For the exercise of that goodness depended neither in fact nor in possibility on any quality in the object, since there was no object at all. Therefore, God was entirely free and unbound to create or not create the world, at His own pleasure.

Likewise, that mercy belongs to this same category which singled out certain men from the rest, to call them effectually and to lead them infallibly to salvation. For since there was nothing in any man that could have invited such mercy, God was just as free either to withhold it or to exercise it, and if He had either called all in this way or permitted all equally to remain in sin, there would be no cause whatsoever for even the least complaint against Him.

And just as the nature of these attributes is different from the former kind, so also differs that which follows from their revelation. First, nowhere has God declared that He wills to show this kind of mercy to all men. On the contrary, He has openly stated that there has been a choice in this matter, the cause of which He assigns to His own most free good pleasure.

For such is, as we have shown above, the meaning of those words: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy", and so on—words which could not be more inappropriate if that mercy regarded all men equally, or if it depended on any quality in the object, by which it might be triggered into action or restrained.

Secondly, this will to show such mercy is never expressed in Scripture conditionally, but always absolutely. For since it depends not on any quality in the object but on God's sheer good pleasure, it has nothing in common with human agreements and covenants, which involve reciprocal obligation to do or not do something.

Wherever Scripture speaks of this kind of mercy, it expresses no condition, either explicitly or implicitly, but simply pronounces what shall be. "I will write my laws in their hearts", and: "I will take away the heart of stone and give a heart of flesh", and: "They shall all be taught by God"—and similar texts which are recalled by the Apostle and expounded by us above in Chapter 9 of Romans.

And just as these statements are not conditional, so neither can they be universal. For that expression “they shall all be taught of God” is infinitely removed from the phrase “whoever believes shall be saved.” The latter is limited only by the condition of believing; the former is not only not limited by that condition but actually brings it about, since by that teaching of God, faith is ingenerated. That phrase is limited by the purpose of God’s will, who, in the place from which the oracle is drawn, does not speak indiscriminately to all men, but addresses and comforts His one Church.

Lastly, the revelation of this kind of will or mercy cannot serve as an object naturally fitted to excite faith. It is revealed either by the event or by promise. When revealed by event, it indicates a faith already formed, for the event consists in the exercise of faith. But in the promise, anyone can see what God promises to effect in some people in the future. Yet no one can clearly discern in that whether the thing promised pertains to him specifically, nor find in it any argument sufficient to excite belief.

For who would reason like this: “God promises that by the Spirit’s effectiveness, which He bestows at His pleasure, some will believe—therefore I ought to strive to believe in Christ”? Rather, we are impelled to believe by this reasoning: If I do not believe, I will be condemned eternally; if I do believe, I will surely be saved.

This concerns that form of mercy we previously said has necessary regard to the quality of the object.

And this is also why Scripture nowhere speaks anthropopathically about this will. For while it indeed magnificently proclaims the mercy by which God willed to show such mercy to some—nor can it ever be praised highly enough—it never portrays Him as grieving, rejoicing, or desiring. For those expressions of affection are adapted to move human hearts toward repentance.

Moreover, the one who declares that He desires something, or rejoices in its happening, or grieves at its non-happening, at the same time professes that He only demanded it, and did not effect it Himself, but left it to the creature’s will. But in the will of which we are now speaking, God does not leave the matter to the creature’s will, but determines to accomplish it, and executes what He has decreed by the exertion of His infinite power.

So there is no need here for wishful expression, or for signs of desire, grief, or joy. Much less, then, can God in this matter fail to attain His end, as He might seem to in other cases.

For, as we said above, this will involves a double act: the one negative, by which He wills to pass over some; the other positive, by which He determines to effectually call others. In the execution of this second act, He exerts such efficacious power that no resistance can hinder it. As it is written: “The exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of the strength of His might” (Ephesians 1:19).

Thus, He always attains His end. But in the negative act, because it has no further end than the use of His own will, there is nothing that could interrupt its accomplishment. For who shall compel God to do what He does not will by His own good pleasure?

From this well-established distinction, whatever difficulty remains in the proposed question is easily resolved. For by that second kind of mercy, God absolutely wills the salvation of His elect, and most effectually brings it to pass.

He wills the salvation of all the rest indiscriminately, provided they believe; and if this is not accomplished, it is because they did not believe—thus the outcome does not frustrate His intention. For He never set before Himself their salvation as an end except on the condition that they would embrace Christ when offered to them by faith.

Yet the true end He had in view—since it was placed in His desire to testify to His admirable compassion toward the human race—He most certainly achieved, even if men, by an inexpiable crime, stubbornly spurned that compassion. Therefore, that will of God which is limited by the condition of faith, if considered in itself, is a remarkable effect of divine goodness and philanthropy.

But when compared with the will which includes the decree to grant faith, it is far less remarkable, especially in light of the immense magnitude of mercy which is poured out upon the elect. If the two wills are not compared side-by-side, Calvin both acknowledges, proclaims, and admires the former—the one dependent on the condition of faith. But when a comparison is made, the brightness of the absolute will seems to overshadow the former, to such an extent that Calvin sometimes seems hardly to acknowledge it at all, let alone to exalt it.

In expressing that conditional will, by which God willed His act of saving to depend on the fulfillment of faith, Calvin follows the language of Scripture, portraying God not only as wishing for human salvation, but as burning with desire for it, in order to stir up faith more effectively in the hearts of mortals.

But as soon as he comes to explain the doctrine of election and reprobation, Calvin softens those expressions, clearly distinguishing what is actual from the hyperbolic anthropopathia, from that pure and sincere philanthropy by which God willed that no one should be denied access to mercy—access which the sacrifice of Christ has marvelously reopened, where once the way had been blocked.

Thus—unless we are greatly mistaken—we have clearly explained Calvin's doctrine, that is, the very mind of the Apostle Paul regarding the absolute decree of reprobation. We have carefully defended it from the arguments of the Anonymous author, and with invincible reasons drawn from Scripture, demonstrated it to be true. Finally, we have removed and utterly dispelled any suspicion of contradiction or repugnance within it.

Therefore, if our disputant wishes to be considered a rational man and a lover of truth, he will not think it permissible to doubt the truth of this doctrine, as he said at the conclusion of his

booklet, but will instead acknowledge it as most true, embrace it with affection, and once conceived in his soul, retain it unto the end.

To that end, I do not wish for him a mind dimly illuminated by some faint glimmer of the Gospel, or a will tossed in doubt between truth and falsehood, between good and evil—but rather a heart most effectually enlightened by the grace of the Spirit, persuaded by the knowledge of the truth, and subdued and brought under the power of Christ's mighty hand.

And with that desire, I conclude this disputation.

To the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—be praise, honor, and glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE END.