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Calvinism, Augustinianism, and the Will of God

While every generation must speak forth its own truth to the times in which it lives, no generation can live without its past and go its own separate way. Such a lesson has presented itself in recent years in regard to the theology and history of the Reformation. Through the work of Karl Barth, the theology of the twentieth century has come to realize that it can no longer pretend as the nineteenth century to dismiss the past for the sake of its own modernism, but remains both indebted and in need of the «time – hallowed» traditions of its past, especially those of the Reformation. In fact, this is so much the case that the new theology can truly be called a theology of the Reformation, and the study of the Reformation an absolute imperative.

And not only has modern theology become integrated to its past, but even the Reformation itself has undergone a similar transformation as well. In recent decades, it has been shown that the Reformation can no longer be interpreted as a simple disavowal of its past, as if summarily threwing off the errors of medieval scholasticism for the sake of its own brand of biblical piety, but remains deeply indebted to the work of its predecessors. The Reformation is not so decidedly a new start that its indebtedness to the «dark ages» of the past cannot be readily discerned, if not appreciated. Luther and Calvin certainly did not fail to mention their own appreciation of Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Gregory of Rimini and other Augustinian forebears. And while our own specific treatment might be viewed as more negative than positive, at least in regard to the doctrine at hand, it should never be forgotten that if modern theology stands a little higher it is only because it stands upon the shoulders of the great men of its past, whether through avoiding their mistakes or appreciating their insights.

It is within this spirit that the following article is offered upon the will of God in Calvinism and Augustinianism.

The interpretation of the will of God in sixteenth century Calvinism is to be seen as a development along the lines of the great Augustinian tradition of the Middle Ages. In both traditions the will of God was conceived to be sovereign in power but limited in scope, bound to its essence but free from absolute necessity, revealed in Christ but hidden within the recesses of the Father's secrets. In short, the will of God was conceived to be both unlimited and limited, bound and free, revealed and hidden. The following article is an attempt to display this antithetical character of the divine will in sixteenth century Calvinism, comparing it with its Augustinian forebears, and give some theological assessment of its merits.

In Augustinianism, the will of God is understood to be absolutely and irresistibly sovereign, and yet limited in scope to the salvation of a certain elected few. Augustine depicts the whole human race as a *massa perditionis* and hopelessly headed toward destruction. Such is not so much the fault of God (for God's work is good and right-handed in Augustine), but the result of Adam's own misuse of the freedom with which he was created. Salvation becomes here the work of God, as he in his goodness, through an unmerited act of the divine will saves those who were lost and could not seek his favor (*non posse non peccare*).[1] However, this favor does not involve the entire lost race, but only a certain elected few. Biblical statements such as I Tim. 2:4 which might imply an universal intendment of God to save «all men» become interpreted in the hands of Augustine as a synecdoche; i. e., God desires the salvation of «all sorts of men».[2] And so, God's will is limited to the salvation of those elected and really does not include any decidedly positive or negative movement toward those not elected.

Later on, in certain Augustinians such as Gottschalk, the will of God becomes more decidedly negative in regard to the reprobate with talk of *gemina praedestinatio* and more decidedly positive toward the elect with talk of limited atonement. And yet these two movements are never diametrically opposed. According to Gottschalk, although he has often been misinterpreted in this regard, the reprobate are not simply predestined apart from their merit unto wickedness and thus damnation, but only on account of their deeds and God's righteous judgment do they receive their just reward.[3] Reprobation is certainly not the unconditional opposite of election. The elect on the other hand are said to be chosen without any merit, antecedently and unconditionally, unto righteousness and receive their reward based solely upon God's will. Despite the talk of *gemina praedestinatio,* there is really no antecedent divine determination to seal the reprobate in wickedness. They only stand excluded from redemption. And yet, this time, the exclusion exceeds even Augustine, as the work of Christ becomes limited to the elect. Christ is said to have provided his sacrifice solely for the sins of the

[1] *Enchiridion* 30. *De correptione et gratia* 3,45.

[2] *Ibid.* 103. *De correptione et gratia* 44.

[3] PL 121, 247–49. Hincmar, *Liber de praed. dei et libero arbitrio,* fragm.15 (from Lambot, Œuvres théologiques et grammaticales de Godescalc d'Orbais [Louvain, 1945] 38): *«Deus incommutabilis ante mundi constitutionem omnes electos suos incommutabiliter per gratuitam gratiam suam praedestinavit ad vitam aeternam, similiter omnino omnes reprobos qui in die iudicii damnabuntur propter ipsorum mala merita idem ipse incommuitabilis deus per iustum iudicium suum incommutabiliter praedestinavit ad mortem merito sempiternam.»*

elect as they alone receive redemption from all sins-past, present, and future –through Christ.[4]

This limited interpretation of God's will and Christ's work is carried on by Duns Scotus in the later Franciscan School of theology,[5] and continued to be a vital force of theology in Nominalism, just before the outbreak of the Reformation. In Gregory of Rimini, for example, while there is no specific mention in his extant writings of limited atonement, he does continue to follow the Augustinian interpretation of I Tim. 2:4, limiting the will of God in salvation unto the elect alone.[6] Furthermore, predestination as with Augustine is said to particularly involve the good (i.e., the salvation of the elect), and reprobation is interpreted more in terms of «not showing mercy» than any active process of hardening.[7] While the good cannot be done apart from God's special grace, sin can in no wise be attributed to God's activity, even if the action itself as having *ens* is good and as such falls under God's hand.[8]

Calvinism in the sixteenth century followed in general this Augustinian concept of God's will. While all things, whether good or evil, are believed to be subject to his will, still as in Augustinianism the elect are accorded its most special and proper attention. The work of God in creation is relegated to a matter of general influence and is said to reveal nothing of his special redemptive purposes in Christ.[9] His work in redemption is oriented toward the elect as he is said to only desire their salvation and only offer up Christ for their sins. The Augustinian interpretation of I Tim. 2:4 is followed, and the limitation of the work of Christ to the elect in Gottschalk and Duns

[4] Lambot, Œuvres, 224–29, 243, 280–81, 345–46. *Ibid.*, 280: «*Verum tamen alia est illa specialis electorum redemptio quae illis a dei filio in crucis impertita est ligno, de qua scilicet ipsi dicunt agno suppliciter in caelo: Redemisti nos deo in sanguine tuo. Per ipsum enim redempti sunt solummodo electi non tantum a praeteritis verum etiam et a praesentibus et a futuris penitus peccatis.*» He says that God does not wish the reprobate to be saved and follows Augustine's interpretation of I Tim. 2:4. *Ibid.*, 10, 40–41, 45.

[5] For Duns the cross must be considered as a means in accordance with Aristotelian logic to the end for which God intends to use it. The cross is thus limited to the salvation of the elect since they alone receive its eternal benefits. *Opus Ox.* (Ed. Paris) 3.d.19.q.1.n.4,6,14. W. Pannenberg, Die Prädestinationslehre des Duns Scotus (Göttingen, 1954) 90–91, 104.

[6] *Lectura super Primum et Secundum Sententiarum* (Walter de Gruyter, 1982) 3.348.

[7] *Ibid.* 3. 323, 338, 347.

[8] *Ibid.* 6. 256–57, 262.

[9] Both predestination and its decree are divided between that which is *universale (generale)* and that which is *particulare (speciale),* separating God's general government and maintenance of the status quo from his special activity in redemption. A. Polanus *Syntagma Theologiae Christianae* (Hanoviae, 1609) 6.8 (2240).

Scotus is espoused in general after the times of Theodore de Bèze.[10] The reprobate are simply neglected by God in all this. They are simply «passed over», «not elected», «left in sin», and «excluded from grace».[11] The substance of their wicked deeds may be ordained by God, at least, in a physical sense, but in a moral sense the aberration of sinning per se can in no wise be attributed to him.[12]

This limitation of the will of God to a certain elected few in Calvinism, we must say, did attempt to address in a positive way the intensity of God's special activity in revelation and among his redemptive community. The presence and power of God in Christian faith certainly cannot be merged with the simple ubiquity of heathendom, where God is everywhere the same. Christ's presence was felt to be more intense in the Church than outside the Church, more intense among his people than in a world darkened with sin. And no monolithic or mechanistic view of even-handed causality could explain such dynamism and gradation in this presence. God was specially at work among his people. If Calvinism is to be faulted at this point it is perhaps only for employing such a concept as «permission» *(praeterire)* to describe God's activity in reprobation. Such a term would appear to be rather passive in speaking of the omnipotent «no» and more fitting for a deist who would withdraw God from the devices of his creatures. Calvin himself, of course,

[10] T. Bèze *Tractationes Theologicae* (Genevae, 1582) 1. 182–83; 3. 403. Polanus *Syntagma* (Hanoviae, 1611) 2. 26 (577–78). The earlier Calvinists, as for example Vermigli and Calvin himself, while accepting the basic Augustinian interpretation of I Tim 2:4, do not limit the atonement to the elect. Vermigli *Loci Communes* (Londini, 1583) 1.14, 27; 3.1.44–45. see Calvin's commentaries on Isa 53:12 and Mk14:24. R. T. Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649 (Oxford, 1979) 13–15. Calvin argues against Georgius that it is not so much the atonement which produces limitation but the God who works faith in the elect and applies its fruit to them alone. CO 8. 344ff. There is even talk of God being desirous of the salvation of all men, notwithstanding his special elective purposes. See his commentaries on Ez18:23 and II Pet 3:9. The distinction of John of Damascus and the later Amyraldian School between the antecedent and consequent (or absolute and conditional) will of God, where God is seen to seriously desire the salvation of all men, even the reprobate, if they would believe, is acceptable to a number of Calvinists in this century. Vermigli *Loci* 3.1. 45–46. Polanus *Syntagma* (1611) 1.19 (510–11).

[11] Zanchius *Opera* (Genevae, 1605) 2.547ff. Polan Kurtzer Inhalt der Gantzen Lehr... (as reproduced in Staehelin's Amandus Polanus von Polansdorf – Basel, 1955) 3.7, 5.23.

[12] Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 4.10 (808). *Syntagma* (1609) 6.7 (2230). Often the differences between human and divine involvement are interpreted in terms of motivation as man wills in an evil manner, while God has a good end in view. Vermigli *Loci* 1.14. 10, 15. Calvin *Inst.* 2.4.2.

criticized the use of this term[13] and many Calvinists would quickly add that such permission is not «bare» or «inoperative».[14]

A more serious problem, however, developed when this limitation of God's will unto the elect became a pretext for dividing his work in redemption from his work in creation. The general activity of God in the world and his special activity among his people were actually viewed as two different, if not separate, works. Creation was said to manifest divine wrath and justice, while it was only in special revelation and redemption that his mercy and grace were made known.[15] It was as if there were two different gods at work, as Marcion of old would say, or as if God's special revelation in Christ was only an afterthought to creation and not its true fulfillment or destiny, as modern theology would prefer. The will of the Creator and the Redeemer appeared to be at odds. Such a dichotomy will lead the Calvinists to develop a twofold covenant of works and grace in the middle of the sixteenth century, testifying to two ways of salvation, one by nature through works and one by Christ through faith.[16] This in turn will lead further to their doctrine of infralapsarianism in the seventeenth century, a doctrine which treats creation as a mere «given» (i. e., without any reason or rationale) before God launches his true and proper program in Christ. In both the twofold covenant and infralapsarianism Christ is the image unto which man is recreated but not created.

[13] *Inst.* 1.18. 1–2. Calvin uses much stronger language when speaking of God's left-handed work, even speaking of God directing, compelling, and hardening the reprobate. Calvin rejects any talk of God transferring his governance to the stars above or man below, discrediting such phrases as «natural law» and «free will». He even uses the term predestination unequivocally of both the elect and the reprobate. *Inst.* 1.16. 1–5; 1.1.8, 9; 3.21.5.

[14] Vermigli *Loci* 1.14.4; 17.16. Zanchius *Opera* 7.318. W. Perkins Workes 2.15, 16. Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 4.6 (763): *«Quapropter quum efficax esse decretum respectu peccatorum dicitur, tantum otiosae & a gubernatione vacuae permissioni, quam quidam imprudenter statuunt, opponitur; quum certum sit peccantibus diabolis aut hominibus Deum nequaquam tanquam otiosum spectatorem in theatro aliquo sedere, sed divina sua sapientia ac potentia omnia gubernare.»*

[15] The Amyraldians were condemned in the seventeenth century for suggesting that the knowledge of divine mercy might be found, however dim, outside of Christ in creation. J. Aymon, Tout les Synodes Nationaux (The Hague, 1710) 2.576–77. M. Amyraut Six Sermones de la nature (Saumur, 1636) 82 ff.; 90 ff.

[16] Z. Ursin *Summa theologiae, Opera theologica* (Heidelbergae, 1612) 1.14. As early Calvinism emphasized that divine mercy was only known through special revelation in Christ, so it was only logical for them to develop in nature a way to eternal life. This way was based on the knowledge of divine righteousness and its laws revealed to all men in creation.

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Another aspect of the Augustinian-Calvinistic concept of the will of God concerns its relation to the divine essence – the question being how bound or free is the will in regard to its essence. In some parts of their theology, the will of God was conceived to be so closely bound or related to its own essential being as to be immersed in that glory and intent on the glorification of that self. The divine essence was said to be the true object of the divine will. This essence, particularly since the late medieval ages, was considered to be the exemplar of all possible objects, presenting to the will of God all sorts of creative options. Thus all things created by God were said to move from God and unto God, from cosmology to eschatology, manifesting the glory of his essence. In the supralapsarian schemata of Duns Scotus and the later Calvinists, all of creation and its history was ordered in accordance with Aristotelian logic as a means to enhance God's glory, manifesting his wrath in some and mercy in others.[17] The reprobate became in such a scheme vessels specially created for wrath in order for God to glory in their destruction. The elect became vessels fitted for mercy, not for their own benefit, but chiefly for the glory of divine mercy.[18] And so, election and reprobation became means through which God could glory in himself.

[17] Duns *Ordinatio* (Ed. Vat.) 1.d.41.q.1.n.11. Bèze *Tract.* 1.173,179:3.403. Zanchius *Religione Christiana Fides (Opera* 8.486) 3.3. *Opera* 2.481. Polan *Partitiones* (Genevae, 1611) 57. *Syntagma* (1611) 1.19 (509,798).

[18] Zanchius *Opera* 7.314: *«Quos elegit Deus, eos non in hunc finem solum elegisse, ut ipsi serventur, sed in primis, ut suam in eis ostendat misericordiam: ac proinde, ut ipse Deus in eis & per eos glorificetur: credo atque doceo.»* Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 4.10 (801–02): *«Nec finis reprobationis est interitus reproborum per se, id est, quatenus est interitus & malum quid, sed quatenus est medium serviens illustrandae gloriae Dei & adjuvandae saluti electorum. Ergo finis reprobationis per se est tum gloria Dei, tum salus electorum. Gloria Dei finis est primarius: quia reprobatione voluit Deus declarare liberrimam voluntatem, jus & potentiam suam in omnes creaturas: & misericordiam erga electos, justitiam vero & iram in reprobatos, Roman.* 9,17, 21. *Salus electorum finis est secundarius: quia ideo Deus tam multos reprobavit, ut in electis excitaret reverentiam potentiae suae, & declararet magnitudinem gratiae suae erga electos eo quod & eos non reprobavit, eosque ad gratitudinem sempiternam sibi obligaret & impelleret ad operandam salutem suam cum timore & tremore.»* Far from being enhanced and perfected by creation in such a *theologia gloriae,* God's ways according to the *theologia crucis* find no higher justification than his unconditional love. On the cross he dies for others, not himself. In fact, when he chooses us, he chooses Judas for his disciple and Israel for his people. He chooses the flesh for his tabernacle, a manger for his bed, and the cross for his throne. He derives no benefit from his work, except grief and sorrow. Perfect communion and glory he has already in the Godhead Trinity.

Nevertheless, for the most part, it is really the freedom of the divine will which marks the fundamental penchant of the Augustinian and Calvinistic traditions in this regard. We shall illustrate this penchant in four ways and then provide some general comment. First, God is conceived in both traditions as was just seen to possess in himself innumerable creative options in potency, some of which he chooses and others of which he does not. Being split between what he can do *(potentia absoluta)* and what he did do *(potentia ordinata)*,[19] it is only the interjection of a will, free from the dictates of the essence and its innumerable options, which can determine what he will eventually enact. This is particularly true in the case of unconditional election where there is said to be no motivation *extra se,* i.e., beyond his mere good pleasure, to elect one vessel over another.[20] While the work of God *ad intra* might be necessary, his work *ad extra* certainly is not. Here the will of God is the rule.[21] Second, the work of Christ is also said to be subject to the secret intendment of the divine will and derives its worth and merit from the purpose for which God designs it. In the Franciscan doctrine of the Middle Ages, merit in general is said to be rewarded above and beyond its just due or

[19] This distinction which was so emphasized in later Medieval theology was acknowledged by most Calvinists of the sixteenth century, even though speculation over what God could do *de potentia absoluta* was greatly reduced. R. Muller, Christ and the Decree (Grand Rapids, 1988) 49. Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 2.19 (592). Zanchius *Opera* 7.295: «*Non male igitur omnipotentia Dei duplex est in Scholis definitur. Una absoluta, qua multa potest, etiam quae non vult: altera actualis, qua, quaecunque vult, non solum potest facere, sed etiam potenter facit. Iuxta primum, hoc est, absolutam omnipotentiam, Deus potuisset omnes ad aeternam vitam praedestinare, potuisset homines impedire, ne ullo modo peccarent, posset etiam omnium misereri, & omnes servare: sed quia neque voluit, neque vult, ideo non omnes sunt praedestinati ad vitam neque omnes servantur, sed quorum vult, miseretur, & quos vult, indurat. Rom 9. Iuxta alteram scilicet actualem omnipotentiam, Deus non solum onmia creavit, & quaecumque voluit semel, fecit in coelo & in terra, sed etiam perpetuo omnia regit & agit, & operatur omnia in omnibus.*» Most of these speculations are rather civil compared to the Nominalists. Calvin without doubt was the most critical when it came to speculations over divine secrets and searching out the naked will of God. He preferred to be submissive to the revelation of God in scripture. *Inst.* 3.23.1. W. Kickel, Vernunft und Offenbarung bei Theodor Beza (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1967) 158ff.

[20] While Anselm and his rationalistic program set an exact number for the elect, many Augustinians and Calvinists felt that God could elect «whom and how many he pleased». Zanchius *Opera* 7.324. Gregorius *Lectura* 3.351–54. Other times the choice was considered not so capricious and had some secret rationality within the recesses of God. Vermigli *Loci* 3.1. 19,29.

[21] Muller, Christ and the Decree, 153–54, 209. Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 1.19 (511).

intrinsic value through the *acceptatio* of the *liberissima voluntas Dei.*[22] And so, in the later Franciscan theory of atonement, it is the will of God and its most free *acceptatio* which assign to the work of Christ its meaning, above and beyond whatever value it might possess in its own right. As all submits to divine *acceptatio,* this work could even have been eliminated, or, in accordance with Duns Scotus, an angel, a pure man or even Adam himself could have been used as a substitute.[23] In Calvinism, this is translated to mean that Christ's work, regardless of its true and sufficient value, is subject to the intendment and acceptance of the divine will; in particular, its more abundant worth – being sufficient to cleanse the sins of the whole world – is said to be devalued by the intent of the divine will and becomes limited in its scope to the salvation of an elected few.[24] While the work of Christ in itself might be sufficient to cleanse the sins of the whole world, the will of God through its secret intent and in accordance with its purpose assigns the scope and meaning of the work. The work of Christ is thus seen to be actually emended by the Father's will and subject to higher elective purposes. Third, as merit is

[22] For the Franciscan tradition, see Ockham *Quod.* 6.q.2.a.2. *Sent.* 1.d.17.q.1. E,T. A. M. Landgraf, Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik (Regensburg, 1952) I/1. 276–78. B. Hamm, *Promissio, Pactio, Ordinatio* (Tübingen, 1977) 33 ff., 109 ff., 147 ff. W. Dettloff, Die Entwicklung der Akzeptations- und Verdienstlehre... (Münster, 1963) 274 ff.

[23] Duns *Opus Ox.* (Ed. Paris) 3 d.18.q.1.n.4; d.19.q.1.n.4,6,14; d.20.q.1.n.8,9. The Calvinists in general rejected these speculations, making Christ's work a necessity. Vermigli *Loci* 2.17.15. Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 2.29 (591). Arminius did query over the absolute necessity of Christ's work and many of the Remonstrants showed voluntaristic propensities in their theories of atonement, denying the legal exactitude of penal substitution, relaxing the divine law, and submitting the atonement to divine *acceptatio.* S. Curcellaeus *Opera Theologica* (Amsterdam, 1675) 300. Limborch *Theologia Christiana* (Amsterdam, 1700) 22.2. H. Grotius *Defensio Fidei* (Amsterdam, 1679) 6. William Twisse, the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, represented some of the more extreme Nominalistic speculations within Calvinism, maintaining that *de potentia Dei absoluta* Christ's work was unnecessary and God could damn the innocent, even the holiest of creatures, as he did with Christ. The Riches of Gods Love (Oxford, 1653) 1.65–66; 2.32–37.

[24] This oft-repeated phrase of Calvinism (i. e., that Christ died sufficiently for all but efficiently for the elect) confuses two different concepts of God, two theories of atonement, and two views of revelation. On the one hand, there is emphasized the concept of Anselm which exults in the absolutely necessary and just ways of God as they are enacted among us. The talk here is of the «sufficiency» of Christ's work and the infinite dignity of his person, the necessity of his death and the requisite ontological constitution of its Savior. The atonement has its intrinsic value and revelation its inherent rational necessity. On the other hand, when it comes to the «efficiency» of his work, there is emphasized the concept of Duns which prefers to find the will of God behind what was revealed, done, and effected by Christ, determining the meaning of his work by this higher purpose. Here the revelation and work of Christ are not necessary *de potentia absoluta* and are in fact negated *de potentia ordinata.*

not compensated through strict justice, but subsidized through an act of divine liberty and free *acceptatio,* so the basic relationship between God and his people becomes a matter of an order which the divine will has established. The talk here is not of absolute justice – ways that would be dictated by the righteousness of the divine essence – but the *sola liberissima voluntas* establishing the rules for its relationship to man *de potentia ordinata* and *ex pacto.* There is said to be no equality of justice between heaven and earth, eternal life and our merit, as there is no proportion. God simply promises to the ones who fulfill certain predetermined conditions his blessings. While to be sure there is no longer in such an arrangement the God of *potentia absoluta* who could do whatever, even damn the righteous according to Wilhelm Ockham, still these promises *de potentia ordinata* and *ex ordinatione pacto* do not result from any sense of righteousness but from the *sola liberissima voluntas.*[25] While God might have tempered his freedom here, indebting himself to the creature through covenant and acting through ordination in a faithworthy manner, the covenant still bestows its reward on those who are not strictly worthy. The covenant is after all proposed as a contrivance of the divine will to offset the demand for absolute righteous-

[25] Bonaventura *Sent.* 2d.27.a.2.q.3; d.29.a.1.q.2. Duns *Report. Paris.* (Ed. Paris) 4d.1.q.2.n.2; q.4.n.8,10. W. J. Courtenay, «Covenant and Causality in Pierre d'Ailly» (*Speculum* [46], 1971) 99–102, 116–17. M. Greschat, «Der Bundesgedanke in der Theologie des späten Mittelalters» (ZKG [81], 1970) 46–47. Biel *Sent.* 2d.27. q.1.C,G.: *«Vel ex ordinatione pacto aut conventione aut promissione premiantis: exemplum primi. Ut quando merces commensuratur utilitati quam premians consequitur ex actu et operatione merentis. Exemplum secundi quando ex conventione pacto vel liberalitate promittitur tantum pro tali. Sic dicitur in evangelica parabolo. Nonne ex denario convenisti mecum. Non facio tibi iniuriam scilicet dando tibi secundum commentionem: tolle quod tuum est et vade. Math. X.... Sic ergo patet quod debitum iusticie in premiando actum ex gratia procedentem tali premio eterno: non innititur bonitati actus quem habet ex natura sua intrinseca: et a principiis suis naturalibus sed divine ordinationi: que est quedam promissio sive conventio et pactum. Debitum est ut pacta ac promissa serventur.... Ad rationem conceditur: quod premium redditur merito condigni secundum debitum justicie: et negetur quod deus nullius potest esse debitor. Nam licet deus nullius debitor esse possit ex natura rei: potest tamen se facere debitorem nostrem ex sua libera voluntate: nobis promittendo pro talibus actibus tantum premium. Sicut hoc gratis promittens alicui ex sua libertate donum se debitorem illi constituit: tenetur enim secundum iusticiam servare promissum apostolus enim dicens.»* The same phrases and line of argumentation is found among the Calvinists, particularly in the seventeenth century. F. Burmann *Synopseos Theologiae* 2.2.20,21: *«Omnis enim operi nostri remuneratio & dignitas, sola Dei liberalitate, & gratiosa promissione, ac pacto nititur; nec aliter Deus nobis obligatus est... non vero interno operis valore & dignitate.... Atque in hoc solo hominis statu meritum obtinisset, sed non aliud quam ex pacto, ac liberali Dei repromissione; juxta quam jus postulandi praemii homo habuisset, ad quod Deus sese ultro obligaverat, pro amore suo, quo tanti nostra aestimare, & tali praemio remunerari dignaba-*

ness. Fourth, justification becomes more and more related to the divine will and its extrinsic pronouncements than to any righteousness subsisting in the essence of God or soul of the believer. This is all in accordance with the great Franciscan norms that *Deus nullius est debitor* and *nihil creatum formaliter est a Deo acceptandum.* For this school of thought, any inherent form in the creature, including the created habitus of late medieval theology, does not make one righteous or acceptable to God, but is subject, as is true of merit in general, to the gracious and unconstrained verdict of the divine will.[26] In other words, justification becomes subject to divine *acceptatio* and *imputatio.*[27] In Calvinism, this concept of justification is developed further, as righteousness is expressly said to no longer subsist in us, the object of the divine decree, but outside of us in the humanity of Christ. The obedience of Christ in the flesh is imputed to us by the Father «just as if» (*ac si* or *quasi*) we

tur. Non vero erat meritum de condigno; non cadit in meram creaturam, quia Deus hominis debitor fieri non potest, nec quicquam ei largitur, nisi ex sola liberalitate; quae quidem ipso non indigna est, non tamen ex dignitate hominis, vel intrinseco valore operis eius proficiscitur.» Cf. J. Cocceius *Summa Doctrinae* (Luduni Batavorum, 1665) 30–42. J. Cloppenburg *Disputationes Theologicae* XI (Amstelodami, 1684) 1.11–14,17; 2.2–3; 5.24. J. Heideggerus *Corpus Theologiae Christianae* (Tiguri, 1700) 1.9.57,67,68. F. Turretin *Inst.* 8.q.3.1,2,16–17. see Hamm, *Promissio, Pactum, Ordinitio, passim.* S. Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism (Bern, 1988) *passim*. This scholastic justification of covenant is not found however in its initial expressions in Zurich nor in its early evolution in the sixteenth century. *Ibid.*, 113 ff.

[26] Duns *Ordinatio* (Ed. Vat.) 1d.17.q.1.n.3,9,12. Ockham *Sent.* 3q.5. E,F. Biel *Sent.* 1d.17.q.1. C–E, P. Vignaux, Justification et Prédication (Paris, 1934) 123 ff. C. Feckes, Die Rechtfertigungslehre des Gabriel Biels (Münster, 1925) 10–13, 45–46.

[27] Melanchthon, the first Protestant to strongly put forth the term *imputatio* in regard to justification, uses it in parallel with the great Scotistic and Nominalistic term *acceptatio.* As with the Schoolmen, this *imputatio seu acceptatio iusticiae,* while concomitant with the *novitas* of regeneration in man, is not directly related to it. CR 15. 895–96; 21. 421–23, 742–43, 751–52. see Strehle, Calvinism, Federalism, and Scholasticism, 92 ff. Dettloff contends that these two terms are used with the same sense in the Schoolmen, and we can certainly add that their sense has become the same in Protestantism. Dettloff, Entwicklung, 206, 223. McGrath also emphasizes the relationship between the terms in Erasmus and his new Latin translation of Rom. 4, which must have influenced Melanchthon. A. McGrath, «Humanist Elements in the Early Reformed Doctrine of Justification», ARG 73 (1982) 18–19.

had done it ourselves.[28] Of course, we had not done it, nor were we really righteous through such imputation, but such is not the concern of the divine will which can declare the black white and the white black without any substantial change in the object of its decree. In fact, the Calvinists will proceed to assign the sin of Adam to his posterity, not because they participated in it seminally as with Augustine, but because the divine *imputatio* can «postfix the same conclusion about one who did not do something as one who did».[29] It becomes «true» through the divine will, «just as if» they had committed it themselves.

The freedom of God in limiting the work of Christ, assigning merit through covenant, imputing righteousness to sinners and guilt to the innocent all bespeak of a divine will dissevered from that which is true and just and exacting. The Father who according to scripture could not spare his own Son actually works here above and beyond what has been revealed and wrought in Christ. The work which Christ offered to the Father, while allegedly sufficient in value to cleanse the sins of the whole world, does not really suffice to propitiate the Father in this regard, but is immediately limited in value to the purposes for which the Father accepts and intends it, i.e., the salvation of the elect. In the end, it is the Father who actually imposes his will upon the cross and is in no wise affected by it. Furthermore, the work which Christ offered to the Father, which is said by the Calvinists to be performed in such an exacting manner, perfect and absolutely righteous – the victim being a spotless lamb, his death an exact payment for sin – is made superfluous when it comes to applying the work in justification, the very purpose for which it was offered, as the divine fiat makes its application an utter fiction.[30] If the Father, as was true in the extreme voluntarism of Thomas of Buckingham, can make the past not to have been and assign his

[28] Heidelberg Cat. fr. 60. J. Wolleb *Compendium Theologiae Christianae* (Amstelodami, 1633) 162–65. Polan *Partitiones* 114. *Ibid.* 126: *«Porro iustitia haec, per quam coram Deo iustificamur, non est vel haeret in nobis ipsis, sed extra nos est, haeret & subsistit in Christi humana natura, in qua illam Christus praestitit & comparauit.» Syntagma* (1609) 6.36 (2962): *«Christus est is, ad quem Lex respicit & ducit; ut qui solus eam impleverit perfectissime, ut omnis, qui credit in Christum, qui Legem implevit, perinde a Deo iustus censeatur, ac si ipsemet Legem implevisset.»*

[29] Heideggerus *Corpus* 1.10.31. Federal Headship is basically a seventeenth century development of the Reformed doctrine of covenant. There are however seeds of it in some sixteenth century Calvinists, who speak of the *imputatio* of Adam's sin to us, though they still retain the language of Augustine and refer to our sinning in Adam's loins. Polan *Syntagma* (1609) 6.3, 36 (2173, 2177, 2957). Perkins Workes 1.567–68.

[30] Such is Martin Luther's comment in regard to those who reduce justification to mere imputation. WA 10/1. 468–69.

«just as if» through the magic of imputation, one wonders why the Father would deem it so necessary to send his innocent Son to death in the first place. And finally, the work which Christ offered to the Father, which allegedly bridges the gap between a holy God and a sinful humanity, is also made superfluous if heaven and earth can be reconciled and justice dispensed with through the contrivance of a covenant. Where God and man, justice and mercy, are united together and stand eternally reconciled, as they are said to be in Christ, a covenant in which man would make his way to heaven need not be posited to circumvent justice and so replace Christ.

This discrepancy between the work of the Father and the work of the Son leads quite naturally to our final matter of interest in the divine will, the antithesis between the revealed *(voluntas signi)* and the hidden will *(voluntas beneplaciti)* of God. While Christ in the excellent words of Calvin is purported to be the *speculum praedestinationis,*[31] too often, as has been seen in the supralapsarian and later infralapsarian schemata, he becomes a subordinate means, subjected to the Father's higher elective purposes. Perhaps, the most fundamental presupposition from which such a subordinate, if not secondary, position of the Son could be developed, from which Duns Scotus himself also developed his supralapsarian schema, is the belief that some unknown God of *potentia absoluta* actually lurks behind his work *de potentia ordinata* in creation and redemption. This god, it is believed, could do almost anything according to the Scotistic and Nominalistic doctrine, even the opposite of that which he eventually enacted, as long as he did not, of course,

[31] *Inst.* 3.24.5. *Helv. Conf.* 10.9. In the context, this phrase is made to refer to the doctrines of eternal security and assurance. These doctrines in Calvinism do as we shall see make some attempt to align the revelation of Christ and the election of the Father. However, Christ too often in other contexts is said to be an effect of predestination or a means to some higher end. Vermigli *Loci* 3.1. 37. Christ is after all said to be given for our redemption from sin and so the incarnation and work of Christ are only conceived within the presupposition of creation, the fall, and election. This is quite in contrast with the original supralapsarian position of Duns Scotus where union between God and man was the beginning of the divine decree and so his incarnation had no necessary relation to sin. *Opus Ox.* (Ed. Paris) 3d.19.q.1.n.6. L. Veuthey, Jean Duns Scot. Pensée Théologique (Paris, 1967) 79–80, 92. In the words of Barth, reconciliation («God with us») is not God's reaction to sin but the original telos of creation, and God's grace only says «nevertheless» to his original covenant partner when he falls – i. e., «nevertheless» I, your God, will still fulfill this reconciliation in spite of my unfaithful partner. KD IV/1. 10–11, 46–50 (CD IV/1. 11–12, 44–48).

contradict Aristotle and his inviolable law of contradiction.[32] The real god is thus the great unmoved mover, hidden in potency behind the paucity of his activity in revelation. Wilhelm Ockham, the most important exponent of this god, produced an exhaustive «als ob» theology, speculating over what is indeed possible for this unknown god. After all, the real god is not so much the God of revelation but the god with all these possibilities, and theology must explore the why and the wherefore *behind* his decision to act in Christ. The Calvinists continue this tradition of searching out the God of *potentia absoluta* and his many possibilities, although to be sure in a less scholastic manner. They certainly do not participate in the ultraisms of Nominalism, as they limit speculation over divine possibilities, interject more righteousness into his options, and make the work of Christ absolutely necessary for the expiation of sin. And yet, the real god is still for them the *deus absconditus,* the one who decided to act in Christ and not the *deus revelatus* himself. This is seen from the very outset of their theology in the doctrine of an eternal covenant between the Father and the Son, where the role which the Son will assume in time is already depicted as subsumed under the Father's wishes. The Son is conceived here not so much as the one and only answer to man's plight, antecedently in himself, but as elected by the Father to assume a role in time *de potentia ordinata* and *ex pacto.* This role does not so much unveil his true self. It could, in fact, be otherwise. It becomes such only through the decision of the most free and arbitrary will of God *(liberum arbitrium).*[33]

If this is true, we must say that the secret will of God again stands separated from the God of revelation in Christ. In fact, one must wonder whether anything at all can be known of a god who acts here outside of his nature. His revelation after all is only treated in such a covenant as a role which has been assumed for the sake of dispensation and not an unveiling of his antecedent and eternal self. If this is true, then his crucifixion in time could never be made to speak, as was too often the case, of the passion and com-passion of the God of eternity;[34] his incarnation and resurrection, when the Father gives to the Son his life in time, could never be made to speak of

[32] Ockham *Quodl.* 6.q.2.a.1. Duns *Ordinatio* (Ed. Vat.) d.44.q.1.n.7.

[33] Heideggerus *Corpus* 1.11. H. Witsius *De Oeconomia Foederum Dei* (Leovardiae, 1685) 2.1,2. This doctrine is basically a seventeenth century phenomenon, although it does embody the sixteenth century concept that Christ was elected to his office, the first effect of predestination, from all eternity. Zanchius *Opera*. 2.496, 535–36. Ritschl traces the origin of this doctrine to Arminius and his use of *pactum* in regard to Christ's priesthood. O. Ritschl, Die reformierte Theologie des 16. und 17. Jahrhunderts (Göttingen, 1926) 3.427–28. J. Arminius *Opera Theologica* (Prostant Francofurti, 1635) 15.

[34] The church in general rejected any talk of deipassionism at this time and any talk of mercy in God was relegated to a subordinate option of the divine will.

his generation in eternity. The relationship which the Father has in begetting his Son in time would not be his essential and eternal relationship at all. One must wonder with such a doctrine how the Calvinists could continue to even speak of God as Father and Son in the first place. The God who through his eternal activity is said to exercise the entirety of his omnipotence in generating God the Son could not leave himself in potency when he does the same in time. Otherwise, the Son would not be the Son, but a mere contrivance of the divine will.

And yet, the Calvinists, at least in their doctrine of security and assurance, did attempt to bring the secret counsels of God more to bear than their predecessors upon God's elected people. Unlike the Augustinian doctrine of perseverance which in essence separated believers from the elect, those saved in time from those saved in eternity,[35] the Calvinists equated these two groups in their doctrine of eternal security and thus brought together God's secret decree of election and the good news which he announces to believers. God's elective purposes are said to be revealed in the Gospel and those who believe and receive salvation in time could rest secure that they had been elected to persevere in such from all eternity.[36] Election in eternity and salvation in time, the decree of the Father and the faith of the regenerate, are all one and the same. God's will concerning his people is clearly, even «once for all», manifested here on earth. They stand eternally secure.

This security is also seen to be the product of a salvation which is utterly and irresistibly gracious from the beginning to the end. Whereas Augustine had exchanged the irresistible grace of God by which one was first regenerat-

[35] Augustine believed that the elect were given a special *donum perseverantiae* by which they persevered in their faith to the end. Those who were washed in the laver of regeneration did not necessarily receive this gift and could lose faith and be damned. Gottschalk came the closest to the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance, maintaining that only the elect receive true and eternal forgiveness from Christ. The reprobate might receive a form of cleansing through baptism, but such is not the full forgiveness of Christ. Lambot, Œuvres, 224–27, 280, 345–46.

[36] Polan Kurtzer Inhalt der Gantzen Lehr 3. 13–14: «Wir lehren, dasz man die Gnadenwahl nicht im heimlichen Rath Gottes, sondern im heiligen Evangelio suchen solle, darinnen sie geoffenbaret. Wir lehren, dasz Alle, die warhafftig in Jesum Christum glauben unnd ihren Glauben durch die Liebe, Gedult und Hoffnung erweisen, gewiszlich zum ewigen Leben erwehlet sind, unnd dasz sie Wegs von ihrer Gnadenwahl zweifeln sollen, wie dann auch der H[eilige] Geist sampt ihrem Geist Zeugnusz gibt, dasz sie Kinder Gottes sind.» Zanchius *Opera* 2.506; 7.314–15, 317–18. Calvin *Inst.* 3.24.5–7.

ed for a *gratia cooperans* which worked with man to complete his salvation, Calvinism extended the doctrine and proclaimed salvation *in toto* to be solely the work of divine grace. The God who started a good work in us was said to perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Salvation was no longer preserved by the «chance» of a free will which might overturn its beginnings, but depended solely upon God. The Gospel was never left behind.

Our only reservation in this regard concerns the wrongheaded direction which many Calvinists took in developing out of this doctrine the so-called *syllogismus practicus,* a doctrine of assurance which only weakened the positive strides made here. As the will of God in eternal security is known through its a *posteriori* effects among us in time, assurance was thought to be obtained through an exegesis of oneself and the fruits done from a sincere faith. The *notae* of true belief and unbelief, of believers and unbelievers, were listed in order to divide the wheat from the tares and discern one's own status.[37] Even though it was admitted that the reprobate could and often do feign faith and the fruits thereof,[38] and may be deceived about their own status, true salvific faith became equated with the full persuasion that God is one's own Father, not the Father in general, and is thus propitious toward oneself.[39] In other words, one was beholden to have faith in his faith, or in

[37] Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism, *passim.* Bèze *Quaestionum & responsium Christianarum libellus* (Londini, 1571) 133–34: *«Sed in alla periculosissima particularis electionis tentatione, quo tandem confugium? Ad effecta ex quibus spiritualis vita certo dignoscitur, ac proinde nostra electio, sicut vita corporis ex sensu & motu percipitur ... Electum igitur esse me primum ex sanctificatione in me inchoata, id est, odio peccati & amore iustitiae intelligam .... Et huc spectat seria meditatio beneficiorum Dei, quae etsi nos de acharisia nostra simul cogitantes ad tempus terret potius quam solatur, tandem tamen necessario nos eregit quum in ea semper animaduertantur manifesta gratuiti & immutabilis illius in nos amoris paterni signa non adumbrata sed penitus expressa.» cf. Catechismus compendarius* 6.6 Perkins Workes 1.107ff., 356ff. Gomarus *Opera* 2.439. Zanchius *Opera* 2.506ff. Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 4.10 (803; 9.9 (792f.). Polan lists seven internal and three external marks of a true believer, and numerous types of belief (*fides hypocritica, historica, moralis,* etc.), which are short of *fides salvifica. Syntagma* (1609) 9.6 (3782–83, 3804ff.). His section on *fides salvifica* covers no less than ninety-four pages. – The later Cotton and his chief apostle, Anne Hutchinson, became the center of the so-called «antinomian» controversy when they discounted that one should «build the signes of theire adoption upon (any) sanctification». Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism, 169, 175–78.

[38] Polan *Syntagma* (1611) 4.10 (804–04). *Syntagma* (1609) 9.6. (3804).

[39] Kendall, Calvin and English Calvinism, 72–73. Polan *Syntagma* (1609) 9.6 (3750–52, 3773–74, 3783–84). *Partitiones* 110: *«Fides salvifica, est certa propitiae voluntatis Dei erga electos cognitio, fundata gratuitae in Christo promissionis veritate, cui unusquisque electorum pro se firmiter assentitur, ac certo confidit, non solum aliis, sed sibi quoque Christum datum esse, & in eo remissionem peccatorum aeternam iustitiam & vitam aeternam donatam, idque gratis, ex Dei misericordia, propter unius Christi meritum.»*

their words, to «know that he knows».[40] Nevertheless, in all this, the focus became more and more turned away from Christ and the witness of the Spirit toward an analysis of oneself, and in particular, one's own righteousness. In such an *actio reflexa,* all the diffidence, uncertainty and unbelief of their doctrine of total depravity – a doctrine which can only confess one's unworthiness – became forgotten, and an untainted, even cocksure, confidence was substituted. Of course, such a doctrine in the end only produced fear in those who honestly observed their shortcomings, as is well-attested in the history of Puritan casuistry. While God might have spoken his word to them, they never could pretend to have heard or understood it in full. The will of God after all is not one's own possession, but that which one seeks.

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The will of God in Calvinism is a vaste subject and beyond the scope of any study, let alone such a brief one. All we can hope to have presented here is some of the dominant tendencies as they emerged in this tradition – a tradition which is far from monolithic, especially in the sixteenth century – and illustrate them through doctrines which are most associated with Calvinism – limited atonement, infralapsarianism, covenant theology, federal headship, eternal security, etc.

Some of those tendencies which have been mentioned we would simply like to recount in closing. First, the will of God is seen to be absolutely sovereign, embracing creation and redemption, election and reprobation, and yet its proper activity is limited to the manifestation of mercy in a certain elected few. Second, it is seen to be bound to the truth and righteousness of the divine essence, even unto the manifestation of its glory, and yet the freedom of its activity in assigning merit, imputing righteousness, and limiting the atonement would speak little of such exacting standards. Third, it is seen to send the Son to offer the necessary acts of redemption, and yet emend that work in light of some higher purpose, overriding what was done of necessity. Fourth, it is seen to determine that the Son should act in a certain way in time unto the redemption of his people, and yet such acts do not grow out of his antecedent nature and are, in fact, attributed in general to his newly-added humanity. The will of God in Calvinism is thus extended to all but limited to a few, united to its essence but free from its demands, revealed in Christ but hidden within the Father's most free will *(liberum arbitrium).* His freedom allows him to act one way in creation and another

[40] *Ibid.*, 116.

way in redemption, one way in righteousness and another way in mercy, one way in Christ and another way in the Father. His ways are not one and narrow, simple and smooth, but even at odds with himself. He wills from necessity and freedom, but not always from both.

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