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### His Spear Through my Side into Luther Calvin's Relationship to Luther's Doctrine of the Will

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**For Tamara**

**Faithful wife, loving companion, and closest friend**



## CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS .....	ix
EDITORIAL METHOD .....	xi
ABSTRACT .....	xii
INTRODUCTION .....	1
Chapter	
1. WHAT CALVIN SAID AND WHAT SCHOLARS SAY .....	4
I. Background .....	4
A. Calvin's Claim of Solidarity with Luther on the Doctrine of the Will .....	6
B. The Question of Calvin's Debt to Luther on the Doctrine of the Will .....	21
II. The State of Scholarship .....	27
A. Anthony N. S. Lane and L. F. Schulze .....	28
B. Brian Gerrish and Susanne Selinger .....	28
2. A QUESTION OF METHOD: HOW DO YOU COMPARE THEM? .....	31
I. In Search of a Method: A Survey of Secondary Literature Comparing Luther and Calvin .....	31
A. Lane, Schulze, Gerrish, and Selinger Revisited .....	31
B. Willhelm Neuser and Otto Weber .....	34
C. Alexandre Ganoczy .....	38
D. Willem Van't Spijker .....	39
II. Method: A Hermeneutic of Historical Comparison .....	43
A. The Hermeneutic of Suspicion .....	43
B. The Hermeneutic of Preponderance of the Evidence .....	49
C. The Criteria of Historical Assessment .....	51

D. Avoiding the Ecumenical Accommodation: Richard Muller’s <i>The Unaccommodated Calvin</i> .....	52
E. Luther and Calvin on Each Other .....	54
F. The Role of the Renaissance: Humanism in Service of Rome or Reform? .....	58
3. CALVIN’S HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER’S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK 1 OF <i>THE BONDAGE AND LIBERTATION OF THE WILL</i> .....	65
I. Calvin Drawn into the Defense of the “Common Cause” .....	66
II. Calvin Identifies with Luther’s Reform .....	68
III. Calvin Defends Luther’s Struggles .....	70
IV. Calvin Defends Luther’s View and Use of Reason .....	72
V. Calvin Defends Luther’s Theology .....	80
A. On the Status of Good Works .....	82
B. On Necessity .....	86
VI. Conclusion .....	93
4. CALVIN’S THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER’S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK TWO OF <i>THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL</i> , PART 1 .....	94
I. Word and Spirit .....	95
II. Natural Reason .....	96
III. Pighius’s Seven Arguments and Calvin’s Responses .....	99
A. Necessity Removes the Need to Work. Response: God Employs Means .....	99
B. Necessity Removes Justice. Response: Providence Does Not Undermine Culpability .....	102
C. Necessity Undermines Political Order. Response: God Governs Secondary Causes .....	107
D. Necessity Removes True Religion. Response: Necessity Promotes True Religion .....	125

E. Necessity Makes God the Author of Sin. Response: God Uses Wicked Instruments .....	131
F. Corruption of Nature Implies That Nature Is Evil. Response: Nature Was Originally Good .....	141
G. God’s Law Is Unjust if Man Cannot Obey. Response: Distinguish Law and Gospel .....	144
IV. Conclusion .....	162
5. CALVIN’S THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER’S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK TWO OF <i>THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL</i> , PART 2 .....	163
I. The Charge of Heresy .....	163
II. Use of Aristotle .....	167
III. The Whole Man Is Flesh .....	173
IV. Free Choice, Pastoral Concern, and Scripture .....	177
V. Coercion vs. Necessity and the Nature of Free Choice .....	184
A. The Meaning of the Distinction .....	185
B. The Nature of Free Choice and Continuity with Augustine .....	193
C. Calvin’s Source for the Distinction .....	213
D. Necessity, Sin, and the Value of Good Works .....	216
VI. Two Kinds of Necessity? .....	224
VII. Conclusion .....	224
6. CALVIN BEYOND LUTHER: <i>THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL, CONCERNING THE ETERNAL PREDESTINATION OF GOD, AND THE INSTITUTES</i> .....	226
I. God’s Role in Man’s Fall .....	227
A. Does Divine Necessity Apply to the Fall? .....	228
B. Does the Necessity of the Fall Make God Unjust? .....	236
C. Does God’s Foreknowledge Impose Necessity? .....	243

II. The Hiddenness of God .....	248
III. The Charge of Disunity and the Significance of Calvin's Eucharistic Statements .....	267
IV. Luther and Calvin on the Will as Beast of Burden .....	274
V. Conclusion .....	278
CONCLUSION .....	279
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	287
VITA .....	308

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Assertio* Martin Luther. *Assertio omnium articulorum*.
- BW* Martin Luther. *The Bondage of the Will*.
- BLW* John Calvin. *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*.
- CR* *Corpus Reformatorum. Philippi Melancthonis opera quae supersunt omnia*. Ed. Karl Bretschneider et. al. 28 vols. Halle: A. Schwetschke and Sons, 1834-1860.
- CO* *Ioannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*, ed. Wilhelm Baum et. al. 59 vols. bound in 31. *CR*, vols. 29-87. Brunswick: C. A. Schwetschke and Sons, 1863-1900.
- CNTC* *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*. Ed. by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. 12 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-1972.
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna, 1866-.
- CWE* *Collected Works of Erasmus*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1974-.
- EP* John Calvin. *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*.
- Inst.* John Calvin. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. OS vols. 3, 4. LCC vols. 20, 21.
- LB* Jean Leclerc ed. *Opera Omnia Desiderii Erasmi*. 10 vols. Leiden, 1703-1706; reprinted London: Greg Press, 1962.
- LCC* *Library of Christian Classics*. London: SCM, Philadelphia: Westminster.
- LW* *Luther's Works: American Edition*, 55 vols. Philadelphia: Fortress, St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-1986.
- NPNF* *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- PL* *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J. P. Migne. Paris: Migne, 1844-1864.
- OC* *Ioannis Calvini opera omnia*. Series 3: *Scripta Ecclesiastica*. Geneva: Droz, 1991-.

- OS*                    *Joannis Calvini Opera Selecta*, ed. P. Barth et. al. Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1926-68.
- SA*                    Martin Luther. *Studienausgabe*. 6 vols. Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1979-1999.
- Sent.*                Gabriel Biel. *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*.
- Summa*             Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*.
- T&T*                *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises*. Trans. Henry Beveridge. 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959.
- TT*                    *Calvin: Theological Treatises*. Trans. J. K. S. Reid. LCC. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954.
- VD*                    *Verzeichnis der im deutschen Sprachbereich erschienenen Drucke des XVI. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986.
- WA*                    *D Martin Luthers Werke*. 70 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1883-1993.
- WABr*                *Briefwechsel. D Martin Luthers Werke*. 18 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau.
- WATr*                *Tishreden. D Martin Luthers Werke*. 6 vols. Weimar: H. Böhlau.
- Walter*             Desiderius Erasmus. *De libero arbitrio ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ sive collatio*, ed. Johannes von Walter, Quellenschriften zur Geschichte des Protestantismus, pt. 8. Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche, 1910.
- Works*             *The Works of St. Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Ed. John E. Rotelle. Hyde Park, NY: New City Press.

## **EDITORIAL METHOD**

Modern English translations are used when available. Where the Latin, German, or French is noted for reasons of vocabulary or grammar, the original language source is cited in the most recent critical editions. In those cases, translations are mine unless noted otherwise.

## ABSTRACT

Heckel, Matthew C. “‘His Spear Through My Side into Luther:’ Calvin’s Relationship to Luther’s Doctrine of the Will.” Ph.D. Diss., St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 2005. 307 pp.

In thesis thirteen of his *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1518), Luther stated that free choice before grace was a reality in name only and when it does what it can it sins mortally. This statement had a significant impact as it was one of the sparks that ignited Luther’s conflict with Rome, as Luther’s thesis was singled out for condemnation as the thirty-sixth article of the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* (1520). Luther responded with his *Assertio omnium articulorum* (1520), where he claimed that Article 36 was the essence of his reform. Luther’s defense of Article 36 later became the subject of Erasmus’s *Diatribes on Free Choice* (1524) and Luther’s response, *The Bondage of the Will* (1525), made the break with Erasmus complete. Luther continued to have influence beyond the debate as his thought became part of a later contest between another humanist and reformer—that of Albert Pighius and John Calvin. Pighius attacked Luther and Calvin, writing his *Ten Books on Free Choice* (1542). Calvin answered with *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (1543), not only defending Luther but also claiming to fully agree with him while softening some of his rhetoric. Today, Anthony Lane also challenges Calvin’s claim to solidarity with Luther, holding that Luther’s reduction of everything to “absolute necessity” embarrassed Calvin. Lane says that Calvin did not openly disagree with Luther at the time out of a desire to maintain Protestant unity. Lane argues however, that Calvin finally did distinguish himself from Luther when he adopted the medieval distinction between *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis* in his work *The Eternal Predestination of God* (1552).

My thesis explores Calvin’s relationship to Luther’s doctrine of the will and argues that Calvin’s claim to full solidarity with Luther in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* is supported by his defense of Luther’s necessitarian argument, and that Calvin’s claim was not reversed by his later work *The Eternal Predestination of God*. Luther’s influence on Calvin is also explored. In claiming full agreement with Luther, Calvin exhibited certain parallels that suggest Luther’s influence. Detecting influence from Luther on Calvin calls for a special comparison that reveals characteristic features of Luther’s thought in Calvin. Following this approach, this study argues that Luther was a formative influence on Calvin’s doctrine of the will. In fact, Luther’s influence appears more decisive than Augustine. Calvin appealed to Augustine for support of the position that he and Luther held in common. The reformers’ link to Augustine’s doctrine of grace has been challenged by Harry J. McSorley, but this study finds that both Reformers were faithful to Augustine’s anti-Pelagian writings. This study not only analyzes the validity of Calvin’s claim to solidarity with Luther, the influence of Luther, and both reformers’ claim to Augustine, but it also explores Calvin’s relationship to Luther’s doctrine of the will in the related categories of the fall, divine providence, predestination, and the hiddenness of God.



## INTRODUCTION

What's in a relationship? Given the history that rocked Europe during the Reformation, John Calvin could hardly avoid the specter of Martin Luther. It is part of Calvin in context. In fact, Calvin did not shrink from seeing and projecting himself in a certain way with respect to his Reformation predecessor. Luther for Calvin was Reformation father, true theologian, and model of reform. Calvin saw himself following Luther in what he laid down but adapting and changing reform to fit his German and French evangelical context. On the issue of the will, the topic at hand, Calvin viewed himself as closer to Luther than he did on the Lord's Supper, though Calvin considered himself a Lutheran on both counts. While Calvin argued for essential agreement among all the Reformers on the issue of the will, he appears to have regarded Luther as preeminent among the Reformers in closely adhering to the biblical teaching. Calvin also appears to have considered himself closer to Luther on this subject than he was to any other of his contemporary influences like Bucer or Melanchthon. In fact, Calvin made himself Luther's champion in a unique way in his work *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. There he claimed full agreement with Luther with only one qualification—softening of rhetoric. What's in a relationship? More specifically, what's in this relationship? First, there is Calvin's claim to agree fully with Luther, and second, the likelihood that Luther influenced Calvin in a formative way that reveals itself in uniquely Lutheran expressions and teachings of Calvin. It is this relationship that this study explores.

Chapter 1, "What Calvin Said and What Scholars Say," will explore the historical setting for Calvin's response to Pighius, Calvin's claim of solidarity with Luther, the question of Luther's influence, the state of scholarship, and then briefly state the thesis that will be argued. Chapter 2, "A Question of Method: How Do You Compare Them?" will consider the proper

approach to a documentary comparison of historical figures in light of the questions relating to Calvin's relationship to Luther on the doctrine of the will. Chapter 3, "Calvin's Historical Relationship to Luther's Doctrine of the Will," will focus on the historical link to Luther that Calvin sought to establish in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. It also will attempt to answer the challenges to Calvin's claim of solidarity with Luther that came from Albert Pighius in the sixteenth century and from Anthony Lane today. Chapters 4 and 5 cover "Calvin's Theological Relationship to Luther's Doctrine of the Will" in two parts and treat Calvin's defense of Luther's position in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*. These two chapters will also consider the ways in which Luther may have been an influence upon Calvin's doctrine and to what extent we can determine historically the possibility or probability of that influence. On this issue of influence, the work of Anthony Lane is both of great importance and concern because he, more than any other Calvin scholar, has proposed a methodology for determining Calvin's sources of influence. Chapter 4 will compare Calvin and Luther on Word and Spirit, natural reason, topics surrounding the imposition of necessity from the divine will—especially the medieval distinction between the necessity of consequence and the necessity of the consequent—and law and gospel. Chapter 5 turns to the question of the reformers' relation to the church fathers, Aristotle, and the medieval scholastics as well as to the issues of the human person as flesh and spirit, the reformers' view on the usefulness of the term "free choice," and the distinction between coercion and necessity for determining the nature of free choice. Harry J. McSorley has seriously challenged the reformers' relationship to Augustine's doctrine of grace and thus their claim to catholicity. McSorley's claim will be examined in detail as well as Luther and Calvin's response to the charge that necessity takes away the merit of good works. While Calvin went to great length to defend Luther and demonstrate solidarity in *The Bondage*

*and Liberation of the Will*, he did not feel compelled to do this in his later works on the will. So the final chapter, “Calvin Beyond Luther,” will consider whether Calvin, in moving beyond his defense of Luther, also moved away from Luther’s position, as charged by Anthony Lane. That involves exploring Calvin’s positions taken in *The Eternal Predestination of God*, the *Institutes*, and the later sections of *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* where Luther is no longer invoked by name.

This study hopes to contribute to Calvin and Luther scholarship by detecting and analyzing their historical and theological relationship. The method proposed and employed along with the conclusions reached seek to establish an approach to the two figures that takes into account the concerns of older scholarship for determining continuity between historical figures of common persuasion and the concerns of recent scholarship to be more realistic about discontinuity. Continuity and discontinuity are both important issues in historical research as historians try to determine cause and effect relationships. It is true that in the past some historians have overlooked tensions between figures that they wanted to portray together, such as Melancthon and Calvin. But it is also true that more recently historians have underestimated the level of agreement between figures—Luther and Calvin, for example—in an effort to be honest about practical tensions. This study attempts to strike a balance and delve deeper into the sources in an effort to discover exactly where some of those key continuities and discontinuities lie between Luther and Calvin supported by responsible historical research. The honest historian is never under the illusion that he or she is sure to have the last word. The hope is rather to contribute significantly to the conversation. Time now to speak up.

## CHAPTER ONE

### WHAT CALVIN SAID AND WHAT SCHOLARS SAY

#### I. Background

In 1542 Albert Pighius joined battle with John Calvin with the publication of his *Ten Books on Human Free Choice and Divine Grace*,<sup>1</sup> which attacked Calvin's position in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* published three years earlier.<sup>2</sup> Calvin responded immediately with *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*.<sup>3</sup> Calvin commented that Pighius did "indeed frankly declare that he is doing this with the specific intention of (as it were) driving his spear through my side into Luther, and the rest of our party."<sup>4</sup> It was a fitting image, for Calvin embraced this portrait of himself standing side by side with Luther on the doctrine of the will, specifically the human will in bondage to sin and divine necessity. The Lutheran background to this doctrine was important to Calvin as he sought to present a united front of reform against the papacy. In thesis thirteen of his *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), Luther had asserted that free choice before grace existed in name only, and when it does what it can, it sins mortally.<sup>5</sup> Luther was, of course, battling the medieval scholastic

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<sup>1</sup> *De libero hominis arbitrio et divina gratia, Libri decem* (Cologne: Melchior Novesianus, 1542). Henceforth referred to as *Free Choice*.

<sup>2</sup> Pighius was responding to Chapter 2, "The Knowledge of Humanity and Free Choice," and Chapter 8, "Predestination and the Providence of God," of the 1539 *Inst.* See A. N. S. Lane, "Introduction," in *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster, Baker, 1996), xiv. Henceforth referred to as *BLW*.

<sup>3</sup> *Defensio sanae et orthodoxae de servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii adversus calumnias Alberti Pighii Campensis* (Geneva, 1543). The Latin can be found in the series CO 6, 233-404. The critical edition in the series *Ioannis Calvini Opera Omnia* published by Droz has not yet appeared.

<sup>4</sup> *BLW* 8.

<sup>5</sup> "Liberum arbitrium post peccatum res est de solo titulo, et dum facit quod in se est, peccat mortaliter" (*WA* 1, 354.5,6; *LW* 31, 40.) Luther had already articulated the same sentiment in another disputation in 1516, "Homo, quando facit quod in se est, peccat" (*Quaestio de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia disputata*, *WA* 1, 148.14).

school of thought known as the *via moderna*. This was the Nominalist tradition most commonly associated with William of Ockham and Gabriel Biel. Biel was a representative of the *via moderna* in Germany in the late Middle Ages and an early influence on Luther when he received nominalist training at the University of Erfurt.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that Luther did not reject everything in his nominalist training, though here it was an issue with Luther combating the *via moderna* with respect to its interpretation of the soteriological creed, “God does not deny grace to the one who does what is in him” (*facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*). Luther accused the proponents of this maxim of advocating modern Pelagianism.<sup>7</sup> In turn Luther’s statement was singled out for condemnation as the thirty-sixth article of the papal bull *Exsurge Domine* issued on June 15, 1520, threatening Luther with excommunication if he did not recant within sixty days. In response, Luther published his *Assertio omnium articulorum* in December 1520,<sup>8</sup> and when it came to the thirty-sixth article, Luther concurred with the papal judgment that he had misspoken. Luther then proceeded to recant his statement, not by backing off his position however, but by making it even more explicit, saying he should have spoken plainly that free choice is a fiction (*figmentum*) since all things happen according to absolute necessity (*sed omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt*).<sup>9</sup> This statement had a significant impact. As one of the sparks that ignited Luther’s debate with Erasmus, it drove a wedge between the two figures, differentiating their approaches to reform. Erasmus wrote *A Diatribe On the Freedom of the Will*

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<sup>6</sup> See Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Under the category of nominalism, I follow the distinction between *via moderna* and the *schola Augustiniana moderna*. The latter was associated with Gregory of Rimini and was soundly Augustinian in its doctrine of grace. Luther specifically associated Ockham, Scotus, and Biel with Pelagianism in theses 2 and 28 in *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517). *WA* 1, 224.9,10, 225.22-26; *LW* 31, 9, 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Assertio omnium articulorum*, *WA* 7, 91-151. Henceforth *Assertio*. For an English translation of Article 36 see *Collected Works of Erasmus, Controversies*, vol. 76 (Toronto: Univ. Toronto, 1999), 301-10. Henceforth *CWE*.

<sup>9</sup> *WA* 7, 146.7-8.

(*Diatribes*)<sup>10</sup> against Luther's position, dealing specifically with Luther's *Assertio* in part III.<sup>11</sup> Luther responded with *The Bondage of the Will*.<sup>12</sup> The debate revealed an Erasmus who was content with theological options and a Luther who firmly asserted what had to be believed against the errors championed by the papacy.<sup>13</sup>

Luther's influence continued beyond the debate as his person and thought became an important factor in a later contest between another humanist and reformer—that of Albert Pighius and John Calvin. During the debate, Calvin claimed full agreement with Luther's doctrine of the will and left indications of Luther's influence upon his thought. The validity of Calvin's claim and precise nature and extent of Luther's influence on Calvin and this debate is the subject of this study. Did Calvin have solidarity with Luther and owe a debt to him on the doctrine of the will? The evidence to follow warrants that Calvin was justified in claiming consensus with Luther on the doctrine of the will and suggests that Luther is a likely source of Calvin's thinking on the issue.

#### **A. Calvin's Claim of Solidarity with Luther on the Doctrine of the Will.**

Pighius wrote against Luther and Melancthon in 1541 in his *Diligent and Lucid Exposition of the Controversies by Which the Faith and Religion of Christ Are Being Disturbed*.<sup>14</sup> *Controversies* dealt with the issues raised at the Regensburg Colloquy,<sup>15</sup> where

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<sup>10</sup> *De libero arbitrio DIATRIBH sive collatio*, ed. Johannes von Walter (Leipzig: A. Deichert'sche, 1910). Henceforth Walter. *De libero arbitrio Diatribe seu collatio*, LB 9 (Leiden, 1706; reprinted London: Greg Press, 1962), 1215-48. For English translations see *CWE* 76, 1-89; *LCC* 17, 35-97.

<sup>11</sup> *LCC* 17, 64, 74-85.

<sup>12</sup> *The Bondage of the Will*. Henceforth *BW*. *SA* 3, 170-356; *WA* 18, 51-787; *LW* 33; *LCC* 17, 101-334.

<sup>13</sup> Someone once quipped that where Luther said, "Here I stand," Erasmus said, "I stand here and here and here." For the difference in the approaches of Erasmus and Luther see Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Rhetoric and Reform: Erasmus' Civil Dispute with Luther* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> Henceforth *Controversies*. See Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW*, xvii. See also Hubert Jedin, *Studien über die Schriftstellertätigkeit Albert Pighes* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1931), 34-40.

Pighius had been a delegate along with Melanchthon and Calvin. In *Controversies*, Pighius attacked Luther's statements on free choice and divine necessity from *Assertio*. He also aimed at Melanchthon's *Augsburg Confession* and Calvin's 1539 *Institutes*.<sup>16</sup> In the following year, Pighius expanded his attack with the publication of his *Free Choice* (1542). In his new work Pighius focused on Calvin's *Institutes* while keeping Luther's *Assertio* in view.<sup>17</sup> Calvin responded with *BLW* (1543), and, in so doing, he answered attacks on Luther's character<sup>18</sup> and claimed evangelical consensus with Luther and Melanchthon on the issue of free choice. Calvin dedicated his treatise to Melanchthon<sup>19</sup> and referred to the Augsburg Confession as "our confession."<sup>20</sup> Calvin also referred to "Luther and the rest of our party"<sup>21</sup> and continual references to "we" and "us" throughout the work show that Calvin's solidarity with Luther never left his mind. Nearly a decade later, Calvin finished his response to Pighius with his *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (1552),<sup>22</sup> and also continued to deal with the issues of the debate in his later editions of the *Institutes*.

Pighius viewed Calvin as being in common cause with Luther and tried to undermine their position by pointing out variations in their treatments. In *Free Choice*, Pighius recognized

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<sup>15</sup> This was one in a series of colloquies beginning with Hagenau and Worms, which were called by the emperor in order to reconcile the disputing factions in the church and bring stability to the empire.

<sup>16</sup> L. F. Schulze, *Calvin's Reply to Pighius* (Potchefstroom, South Africa: Pro Rege-Press, 1971), 16. See *BLW* 8, 23, 24.

<sup>17</sup> This represented the second part of *Controversies*. See *BLW* 7, 8. For other treatments of *Free Choice* see Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW*, xvii. Schulze, *Calvin's Reply*, 15-17. Jedin, *Studien*, 40-43.

<sup>18</sup> *BLW* 21, 22.

<sup>19</sup> *BLW* 3.

<sup>20</sup> *BLW* 23.

<sup>21</sup> *BLW* 8. See also 30.

<sup>22</sup> *De aeterna Dei praedestinatione/De la Predestination Eternelle*, ed. Wilhelm Neuser, *OC*, Series 3, *Scripta Ecclesiastica*, vol.1, (Geneva: Droz, 1998). *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God* (London: James Clarke and Co. Ltd., 1961). Henceforth *EP*.

Calvin's agreement with Luther on the will's bondage to sin<sup>23</sup> but accused Calvin of qualifying Luther's doctrine of necessity to the point of retracting full agreement.<sup>24</sup> In *BLW*, Calvin assumed that Pighius was correct in viewing his and Luther's positions as one on the bondage of free choice to sin, but Calvin denied Pighius's charge of disunity with Luther on the bondage of the will to divine necessity. Calvin sought to demonstrate unity with Luther in the necessitarian argument by distinguishing the substance of the doctrine from merely rhetorical refinements of presentation employed by Melancthon and endorsed by himself.<sup>25</sup>

Calvin scholar Anthony Lane is skeptical of Calvin's claim. He has argued that Calvin was actually embarrassed by Luther's statement on "absolute necessity" and adopted a more moderate position while keeping up the appearance of consensus. Lane says, "His concern for Protestant solidarity prevented him from openly criticizing Luther's assertion."<sup>26</sup> Lane also argues that Calvin put "clear water between himself and Luther" in his later works *The Eternal Predestination of God* and the 1559 *Institutes* by adopting scholastic terminology that Luther expressly rejected in *BW*.<sup>27</sup> The older scholarship of L. F. Schulze seems to accept the legitimacy of Calvin's claim to solidarity with Luther and the Lutheran cause in general, at least at the time of *BLW*. Schulze says, "Calvin took Luther up into his defense," and he never questions whether their positions are really harmonious.<sup>28</sup> Is Calvin's claim of solidarity with Luther valid?

Calvin's claims do call for scrutiny, given that Calvin did not simply repeat Luther's formulations but "tried them on for size" and made certain alterations for a better fit with his

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<sup>23</sup> *BLW* 26-28.

<sup>24</sup> *BLW* 28.

<sup>25</sup> *BLW* 28, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxviii. See also Lane's comments on 28 n. 81, 30 n. 86, and 27 n. 74.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* *BLW* xxviii. *The Eternal Predestination of God* is henceforth referred to as *EP*.

<sup>28</sup> Schulze, *Calvin's Reply*, 42.



own defense. This is especially true in *EP* and the 1559 *Institutes*, where Calvin did use Luther's rejected distinction between the necessity of consequence (*necessitas consequentiae*) and the necessity of the thing consequent (*necessitas consequentis*).<sup>29</sup> Luther rejected the distinction in his *Lectures on Romans* (1516),<sup>30</sup> his *Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517),<sup>31</sup> and in *BW* (1525).<sup>32</sup> Luther spoke of necessity only, or in *Assertio*, of "absolute necessity." Lane speculates that "the purpose of this atypical foray into 'scholastic subtlety' is to enable Calvin to dissociate himself from Luther's doctrine of absolute necessity."<sup>33</sup> Lane's skepticism concerning Calvin's early claim of consensus and his speculation about Calvin's later adoption of the scholastic distinction do not appear to be borne out by the texts, however. With regard to what Calvin claimed, in *BLW* Calvin asserted that he did not depart from Luther's doctrine in any material way. As Melancthon had softened the "outward form" of Luther's words, there was "no difference" between Calvin and Luther "apart from the softening of the form of expression so as to remove anything displeasing." Does Calvin's claim hold up under analysis?

Calvin attributed the threat of possible misunderstanding to Luther's use of scholastic terminology, which he said was not suited to the understanding of the common man.<sup>34</sup> Calvin was probably implying Luther's use of the term "absolute necessity" in the *Assertio*. While Calvin hesitated to use scholastic categories, he did not shy away from the term "necessity." In fact, he employed it in the same way as Luther with the exception of using it in conjunction with the adjective "absolute." Calvin used the term "necessity" in his early, middle, and late writings: the

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<sup>29</sup> *EP* 170. *Inst.* 1.16.9.

<sup>30</sup> *Lectures on Romans*, *WA* 56, 382.21-383.19; *LW* 25, 372-73.

<sup>31</sup> See Thesis 32. *WA* 1, 225; *LW* 31, 11.

<sup>32</sup> *LW* 33, 38-40, 184-90, 192-95.

<sup>33</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxviii.

<sup>34</sup> *BLW* 29.

1539 *Institutes*, *BLW*, *EP*, and the later editions of the *Institutes*. Calvin did seek to explain carefully his usage and probably avoided the modifier “absolute” in *BLW* and distinguished “absolute necessity” from “consequential necessity” in *EP* to protect it from what he considered to be misinformed charges leveled by Pighius.

With regard to *EP*, while Calvin employed the scholastic distinction that Luther rejected, he did not follow the scholastic usage; that is, Calvin did not use the scholastic terms to affirm the theological point that Luther rejected or even undermine Luther’s position. Instead, he used the terms—absolute vs. consequential necessity—to make clear that necessity may apply to what something is by nature as created by God, but it may also be imposed by the will of God and not spring from nature itself. For Calvin the will of God is determinative: “The will of God is the cause of all things that happen in the world.... The free will of God disposes all things.... What necessarily happens is what God decrees.... For all things must necessarily remain intact and unimpaired because they are so determined by the fixed decree of God.”<sup>35</sup> Calvin compared his position to that of Augustine, and sought to distinguish himself from the scholastic approach to necessity.<sup>36</sup> He wrote, “I omit to mention the distinctions employed in the schools.” But Calvin went on, “And though I shrink from the received forms of speech and the distinction between absolute and consequential necessity, I use them, but only lest any subtlety should prevent even the most simple of my readers from understanding what I say.” Calvin, in fact, used the distinction to affirm that what happens necessarily by God’s decree “is therefore not exactly or of itself necessary by nature.” Calvin’s larger point is that while the will of God constitutes the necessity of all things, this does not nullify contingency from the human perspective. Calvin wrote, “But though it is proper for us to regard the order of nature as divinely determined, I do

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<sup>35</sup> *EP* 169-70.

<sup>36</sup> *EP* 168-70, 178.

not at all reject contingency in regard to human understanding.”<sup>37</sup> Was this a departure from Luther?

If it was a departure at all, it was in emphasis only, for even though Luther found the distinction practically useless he conceded the point: “So they [the scholastics] say that an action of God is necessary if he wills it, but that the thing done is not itself necessary.” According to Luther, this is true in so far as the created thing “does not exist necessarily, that is to say, it is not God and has not a necessary existence.” Luther added, “Nevertheless, it remains a fact that everything that comes into being does so necessarily, if the action of God is necessary.” Thus, from Luther’s point of view the distinction between two kinds of necessity seemed trivial; “It is of little concern to me that my being or becoming is mutable; for my contingent and mutable self, though not the necessary being that God is, is nonetheless brought into existence.” In fact, he performed a *reductio ad absurdum* on the distinction: “Hence their amusing idea, that everything happens by necessity of consequence but not by necessity of the consequent, amounts to no more than this: all things are indeed brought about necessarily, but when they have thus been brought about, they are not God himself. But what need was there to tell us this?”<sup>38</sup> But Luther was not properly representing the scholastics on this point, for things that do not have a necessary existence, and thus are not God, still are subject to absolute necessity when they live in ways dictated by their nature.

Harry J. McSorley never tires of pointing out that Luther did not correctly understand the distinction.<sup>39</sup> The distinction generally enabled theologians to say that something could be necessary as a consequence of human action or necessary by virtue of God’s foreknowledge and

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<sup>37</sup> *EP* 169-70.

<sup>38</sup> *LW* 33, 40.

was not therefore caused by God as if he made it that way. Thus, it was not absolutely necessary. It was, in fact, contingent or could have been otherwise. But in the specific context in which Luther encountered the distinction, something could only have been otherwise if the subject would have caused it to be different by the exercise of his free choice. But for the reformer this could never apply to humans since their will is not free from God's control. So it seems that Luther may have grasped the distinction after all and set out to critique it as pointless. Fredrick Brosché, in his work *Luther on Predestination*, offsets McSorley on this point by focusing on Luther's perspective behind his interpretation of conditional and absolute necessity. With respect to the example of Judas from *BW* he comments:

Erasmus...speculates on the conditional necessity (*necessitas consequentiae*): Judas could have changed his mind, which God could also have foreseen. The necessity is prompted by what Judas freely desired. Luther emphatically maintains that the difference between the absolute necessity and the conditional necessity is a mere play on words. If God preordained that Judas would be a traitor then Judas had to be a traitor. Neither Judas nor any other created being was capable of taking a different course of action or of changing his intention. This intention was God's handiwork.... When Erasmus would ascribe the cause both to God and to man Luther makes God the sole cause.<sup>40</sup>

Brosché also points out that, for Luther, God's foreknowledge is the same thing as foreordination: "God's prescience is explicitly regarded as a *causa* which initiates an inevitable *effectus*, considering that which is fore-ordained.... Prescience and predetermination are one."<sup>41</sup>

Luther wrote, "Here, then, is something fundamentally necessary and salutary for a Christian, to

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<sup>39</sup> Harry J. McSorley, *Luther Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 229, 231, 242, 259, 315, 317, 319, 321, 329. See also Phillip Watson *LW* 33, 38-39, n. 37.

<sup>40</sup> Fredrik Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity Between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God* (Uppsala: Uppsala Univ., 1978), 93-94.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95. François Wendell, *John Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997 [original French, 1950]), 141, 271-72, concurs on Luther and shows that Bucer conflated foreknowledge and predestination as well. Wendell says that while Calvin appeared to follow suit in 1536 (266, n. 108), he shows that Calvin more emphatically distinguished the two concepts from 1539 on (272-73). See *Inst.* 3.21.5, 3.23.6. See also Chapter 6, n. 79-82.

know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that he foresees and purposes and does all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will.”<sup>42</sup> This understanding of foreknowledge led Luther to reject the medieval concept of consequent necessity in its distinction from the absolute necessity of the consequent. This was because, from Luther’s understanding, there are no contingencies from the divine point of view.

Like Calvin, however, Luther acknowledged the value of the distinction with regard to the human point of view. Luther wrote, “From this [God’s will and foreknowledge] it follows irrefutably that everything we do, everything that happens, even if it *seems to us* to happen mutably and contingently happens in fact nonetheless necessarily and immutably, if you have regard to the will of God. For the will of God is effectual” (emphasis mine). In fact, Luther said, “A work can only be called contingent when *from our point of view* it is done contingently and, as it were, by chance and without out expecting it.”<sup>43</sup> Kathryn Kleinhans comments, “The scholastic distinction between absolute and conditional necessity does not serve an *actual* purpose of categorizing two different types of occurrence or ways of occurring; but the distinction does serve, for Luther, a *verbal* purpose in calling attention to the difference between the human point of view and the divine.”<sup>44</sup> Brosché adds, “*Coram hominibus* much appears contingent, since we encounter it as if it were by chance and without our expecting it. But *coram Deo* all things come to pass by a necessary and immutable will.”<sup>45</sup> But when the medieval scholastics identified things as contingent from the divine point of view, to Luther, whether he

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<sup>42</sup> LW 33, 37.

<sup>43</sup> LW 33, 38.

<sup>44</sup> Kathryn Ann Kleinhans, “Necessity, Sin, and Salvation: Luther’s Critique of Reason in The Bondage of the Will,” (Ph.D. diss., Emory Univ., 1995), 52.

<sup>45</sup> Brosché, 144-145.

fully grasped their point or not, this could only mean that the thing was not God Himself.<sup>46</sup>

Luther did not allow that man was somehow free because God willed some things to happen contingently. If God wills something to take place, it will take place and it does not make any difference whether it happens through a contingent cause or whether it could have been otherwise theoretically.<sup>47</sup> According to Luther, there are no actual alternatives to what happens, even if it appears that way from the limited human understanding.<sup>48</sup> Thus Luther only recognized the value of the medieval distinction for speaking about the finite point of view.<sup>49</sup> What Luther conceded, Calvin used in a more positive way in preserving human, perspectival contingency. Calvin also employed the distinction in order to avoid possible misunderstanding. Calvin did not want people to think that the Reformation taught that necessity was hardwired into created nature, and unless people read Luther carefully they could have received that impression from the *Assertio*.<sup>50</sup> While this is a difference in approach between Luther and Calvin, it does not put

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 145. McSorley considers Luther's pastoral concern (*Luther*, 267) and personal anxiety over trying to do what was in him (Ibid. 236) as reasons for rejecting free choice. But he is not as historically sensitive as Brosche to understanding Luther's experiential base for abandoning the scholastic understanding of contingency and free choice. Brosché writes, "Luther's criticism of the double *necessitas* concept of scholasticism may thus be based on rational arguments. [But] Reason can reach no further. When Luther presents God as being nearby and incessantly active in all earthly things and phenomena, he takes a critical view of the capacity of reason to reflect upon such things.... It is also necessary to pay attention to the role played by the Biblical revelation and the personal experience in faith." McSorley does everything he can to interpret Luther as preserving some soteriological value for free choice, as if to give back to him what he mistakenly rejected (*Luther*, 259-60, 327-28, 354-55). But Luther only allowed for the faculty of choice or self-determination (*LW* 33, 65, 67, 69, 103, 176, 283) and freedom in what is below (*LW* 33, 70, 285). Luther did not want the kind of free choice conceived by McSorley, as this threatened his conscience with uncertainty (*LW* 33, 289). See Chapter 5, §V, B.

<sup>47</sup> Luther wrote, "For if I myself am brought into existence necessarily, it is of little importance to me that my being or becoming is mutable" (*LW* 33, 40).

<sup>48</sup> *LW* 33, 194-95. See Brian Gerrish, Review of *Luther: Right or Wrong?* By Harry J. McSorley, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970): 575-76.

<sup>49</sup> *LW* 33, 38.

<sup>50</sup> Calvin said that he used the scholastic distinction "lest any subtlety should prevent even the most simple of my hearers from understanding what I say" (*EP* 170). See Lane, "Bondage and Liberation in Calvin's Treatise against Pighius," in *Calvin Studies IX*, ed. John h. Leith and Robert A. Johnson (Davidson, NC: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), 24-25, who says Calvin wanted to prevent the possible misunderstanding created by Luther but is incorrect in saying that he "diverges significantly from Luther" in using the medieval distinction to clarify. Calvin's position was open to the same misunderstanding since it agreed with Luther in saying that everything happens by necessity.

them at odds. As noted above, Luther dropped the provocative “absolute” from “absolute necessity” in *BW*, and Calvin rejected the *via moderna* interpretation of necessity, which left an independent role for free choice to play with contingencies and made God a passive spectator and responder to human choice.

The distinction between the *necessitas consequentiae* and the *necessitas consequentis* has a long history and was used across the lines dividing the schools of Scholasticism.<sup>51</sup> This distinction meant that something may be necessary as a consequence of something else that was freely chosen (*necessitas consequentiae*), but the thing consequent was not itself absolutely necessary if it did not derive from human nature as such, created by God (*necessitas consequentis*).<sup>52</sup> As already mentioned, the first kind of necessity is conditional and the second is absolute. Thomas Aquinas gave this distinction its classical form. Harry McSorley writes:

He uses the terms “necessary by absolute necessity, which is called necessity of the *thing* consequent” and “necessary by conditional necessity, which is called necessity of consequence.” Thus, says Thomas: “It cannot be concluded from God’s foreknowledge that our acts are performed out of absolute necessity, which is called necessity of the thing consequent, but out of conditional necessity, which is called necessity of consequence.”<sup>53</sup>

To give an example, a person may be a medical doctor by a necessity of consequence, since he has actualized a certain course of events by choosing medical schooling. But this state of affairs is not necessary by a necessity of the thing consequent since it was not dictated by human nature. Put another way, being a doctor is accidental to human nature. On the other hand, by a necessity of the consequent the same person has a rational capacity, since that does pertain to what it

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<sup>51</sup> McSorley gives the history of the distinction going back to its rudimentary form with Augustine and Boethius (*Luther*, 85, n74) and then traces it through the Middle Ages with Anselm (*Ibid.*, 133, n. 23), Bonaventure (*Ibid.*, 137, n. 60), and Thomas Aquinas (*Ibid.*, 148-65).

<sup>52</sup> See Heiko Oberman, *Harvest*, 472. Watson *LW* 33, 38-39, n.37. See also Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 199-200.

<sup>53</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 149-50.

means to be human. Thus the necessity of consequence applies to what is necessary by actualizing a contingency in one way or another, and the necessity of the consequent applies to what is necessary by definition. In the 1559 *Institutes*, Calvin used the bones of Christ to illustrate:

Whatever changes are discerned in the world are produced from the secret stirring of God's hand. But what God has determined must necessarily so take place, even though it is neither unconditionally, or of its own peculiar nature, necessary. A familiar example presents itself in the bones of Christ. When he took upon himself a body like our own, no sane man will deny that his bones were fragile; yet it was impossible to break them [John 19:33, 36]. Whence again we see that distinctions concerning relative necessity and absolute necessity, likewise of consequent and consequence, were not recklessly invented in the schools, when God subjected to fragility the bones of his Son, which he had exempted from being broken, and thus restricted to the necessity of his own plan what could have happened naturally.<sup>54</sup>

Considering Calvin's example, the bones of Christ would have been breakable by an absolute necessity of the thing consequent. The thing consequent was human bones and they were breakable by the fact that they were human, but they were necessarily spared by a condition or consequence imposed by the will of God and thus a conditional or consequential necessity pertained.

On another level, a person's actions might be considered necessary from the perspective of God's foreknowledge but not necessary in and of themselves. This is the case when another course of events was open to a person who was not bound to act from a necessity of human nature. The *via moderna* emphasized this concept of divine foreknowledge with respect to human salvation and distinguished itself with its teaching of preparation (*praeparatio*) for grace.<sup>55</sup> According to Ockham, God's foreknowledge is necessary because God as God must

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<sup>54</sup> *Inst.* 1.16.9. See also *EP*, 170. For another example see *LW* 33, 38-39, n. 7.

<sup>55</sup> See at n. 58 below. For the approach of the *via moderna* to questions of will, grace, foreknowledge and predestination see Chapter 4 at n. 60-76; William Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents*, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969); Kleinmans, "Necessity, Sin, and Salvation," 51-58; Oberman, *Harvest*, 39, 50, 168, 185-248; "Via antiqua and via moderna: Late Medieval Prolegomena to Early Reformation Thought," in *From Ockham to Wycliffe*, ed. Anne Hudson and Michael Wilks (Oxford, New York:



know the future, but what he foreknows may not be necessary in an absolute way.<sup>56</sup> God foreknows everything that will be and everything occurs just as God foresaw, but God's foreknowledge does not cause it to happen and is purely passive. God's foreknowledge does not impose necessity since what he foreknows will come about through contingent causes. It comes about as a necessity of consequence, not a necessity of the thing that is consequent. God merely foresees the necessities that arise as a result of human free choice at play within contingencies.<sup>57</sup> Predestination is based upon this and Biel identifies it with divine foreknowledge of human merit: "Predestination...is the precognition of God concerning the things that pertain to salvation and good works of grace."<sup>58</sup> According to the *via moderna*, free choice can prepare for grace before a person is in a state of grace, by a purely natural act (*ex puris naturalibus*) when a person does what is in him (*facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratia*).<sup>59</sup> This is referred to as *meritum de congruo*, that is, merit deemed by God as congruent or appropriate to human moral ability. The grace that is received as a result of this natural preparation is considered a

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Blackwell, 1987), 445-64; Phillip Watson in *LW* 33, 38-39, n.37; Harry Klocker, *William of Ockham and the Divine Freedom* (Milwaukee: Marquette, 1992); Marylyn McCord Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 2 (Notre Dame, 1987) 481-87; "Ockham on Will, Nature, and Morality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham* (Cambridge, 1999), 245-72; Rega Wood, "Ockham's Repudiation of Pelagianism" in *The Cambridge Companion to Ockham*, 350-74; David W. Lotz, "Late Scholasticism: Duns Scotus and William of Ockham," in *A History of the Christian Church* (New York: Scribner, 1985), 348-59; Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge, 1986, Second ed. 1998), 83-91, 115-19, 137-40, 166-72; Brosché, 17-19, 76-85; McSorely, *Luther*, 199-215; Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio Contra Scholasticam Theologiam* (Gyldendal, 1962), 114-261.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 4 at n. 60-63.

<sup>57</sup> For a comparison and contrast with Thomas see Chapter 4 at n. 54-58, 60-67.

<sup>58</sup> "Praedestinatio (ut dicit Magister dist. 35 et etiam 40) est praecognitio Dei de salvandis et bonis gratiae" (I *Sent.* d. 40, q. 1, A, art. 1, nota 1.6-7).

<sup>59</sup> "Thus it is said that God gives grace to the one who does what is in him (*facienti quod in se est*) by a necessity of immutability or on account of a supposition, because he immutably arranged to give grace (*disposuit dare immutabiliter gratiam*) to the one who does what is in him" (II *Sent.* d. 27, q. 1, art. 3, dub. 40.7-9). See Chapter 4 at n. 73-75. The *via moderna* defined this state of grace relationally in covenantal terms, according to which works are deemed meritorious because God has ordained to accept them, not because they are meritorious in and of themselves. The *via antiqua* defined grace ontologically, according to which works are meritorious as such because they are the product of grace in the soul. See Oberman, "'IUSTITIA CHRISTI' AND 'IUSTITIA DEI': Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification," *Harvard Theological Review* 59, 1 (1966), 17-19. For a full

supernatural habit of grace and is referred to as *meritum de condigno*, that is, true merit performed in a state of grace. Predestination is God's precognition of the person who merits grace *de congruo* and perseveres in meriting grace *de condigno* and his decree to save such a one.<sup>60</sup> Thus predestination is on account of divine knowledge of future contingents controlled by free choice and not based upon an efficient divine causality.<sup>61</sup> In this way the *via moderna* gave free choice an independent role in bringing about merit, justification, and predestination. Luther strenuously rejected this use of the distinction.<sup>62</sup> Luther also posited a rationale behind this usage:

Admittedly, it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason that God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men... And who would not be offended?... That is why there has been such sweating and toiling to excuse the goodness of God and accuse the will of man; and it is here the distinctions

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discussion of the terms see McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 109-19. See also Oberman, *Harvest*, 471-72 and McGrath's section "The Subjective Appropriation of Justification," 70-91.

<sup>60</sup> Luther rejected the distinction as early as 1516, "Man, having rejected the grace of God is by no means able, of himself, to keep his commands, to prepare for grace, either *de congruo* or *de condigno*, for truly he remains necessarily under sin (*necessario sub peccato*)" (*Quaestio de viribus et voluntate hominis sine gratia disputata*, WA 1, 147.10-12).

<sup>61</sup> While Ockham and Biel taught that a person is elected by God's foreknowledge of merit, they also taught that, from the human point of view, it is oriented towards the future state when it will be finally revealed to the ones who have persevered in grace. See Oberman, *Harvest*, 185-217. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 137-140, says that Oberman imposes the idea of foreknowledge upon Ockham and Biel since for them predestination is the bestowal of final salvation and cannot be certain until then. McGrath also criticizes Oberman for discussing Ockham's and Biel's doctrine of predestination under the categories of *praedestinatio post praevisa merita* and *praedestinatio ante praevisa merita*, since these belong to the age of Protestant Orthodoxy. McGrath contends that it is more appropriate to discuss Ockham and Biel under their own categories of *praedestinatio cum praevisis meritis* and *praedestinatio ex gratia speciali*. But McGrath's charge of anachronism, while important, does not seem to blunt the force of Oberman's point, since Ockham and Biel only apply *praedestinatio ex gratia speciali* to the special cases of the Virgin Mary and the Apostle Paul. The *facere quod in se est* applies to everyone else. With respect to the appropriateness of discussing Ockham and Biel's thought under foreknowledge, McGrath admits that the granting of final salvation only demonstrates what has always been the case, apparently from God's vantage point (137, 139). Thus predestination has always been certain to God's foreknowledge though it is only granted to the person in the eschaton. Foreknowledge is also explicit in the *praedestinatio cum praevisis meritis* and when Ockham and Biel call the reprobate *presciti*. Oberman's proof-text is also telling, "Deus non prius sit ultor quam aliquis sit peccator" (187, 190). See also at n. 58 above. McGrath also makes much of the fact that Ockham and Biel put the ultimate cause of predestination in the *acceptatio divina* and thus avoid the charge of Pelagianism, but this hardly acquits them since predestination is not granted without having done one's best to merit justification. Brosché, *Luther*, 76-85, aligns himself with Oberman showing that Biel's doctrine of salvation is by "grace alone" *de potentia Dei absoluta* since "God has established the decisive order of justification," and that it could at the same time be characterized as "semi-Pelagian" *de potentia Dei ordinata*, since *facere quod in se est* means "Man himself... creates the essential conditions for his final salvation or rejection" (78). Brosché also provides more telling texts for Biel's doctrine of foreknowledge: "culpae Deus reprobans non est auctor, sed solum praecognitor" (78, n. 8), "utrum perseveraverit an ne, inevitabiliter ab aeterno Deus novit" (82, n. 23). See also Oberman, *Harvest*, 246.

<sup>62</sup> LW 33, 36-42, 190, 195.

have been invented between the ordained and the absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent.<sup>63</sup>

But far from adopting this purpose, Calvin used the terms to uphold Luther's understanding that, while necessity is imposed by the will of God, things could be otherwise from the limited human perspective.<sup>64</sup>

Lane, with respect to the distinction between conditional and absolute necessity, makes much of Calvin avoiding the "absolute" in Luther's "absolute necessity." But if Calvin was familiar with *BW*, as Lane seems to imply,<sup>65</sup> Calvin would most likely be aware that Luther had dropped the "absolute" from his usage. Thus, it does not appear that Calvin would need to distance himself from Luther so much as to clarify his own position and qualify the proper use of the distinction. Regardless, Luther and Calvin spoke of the will of God imposing necessity on all things with the one qualification of contingency from the human perspective. If Calvin was distancing himself from Luther, it does not amount to repudiating the content of what Luther taught, but only of rescuing a distinction too quickly discarded. Thus the use of the scholastic terminology does not put "clear water" between Luther and Calvin as Lane claims.<sup>66</sup> In fact, Luther was only denying the distinction as used in the tradition of the *via moderna* which he had inherited, and which does not touch Calvin's usage.<sup>67</sup>

While I do not think that Calvin's use of Luther's rejected distinction was a rejection of Luther's position, it is also true that Calvin did not defend his solidarity with Luther anymore on

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<sup>63</sup> *LW* 33, 190. See also 195 where Luther gave an example of how the distinction was used by the scholastics and Erasmus in exegeting the case of the necessity of Judas's betrayal.

<sup>64</sup> For Calvin's relationship to the *via moderna* see David Steinmetz, "Calvin and the Absolute Power of God," in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 40-52.

<sup>65</sup> *BLW* xxviii n. 98, 40 n. 25, 48 n. 73.

<sup>66</sup> *BLW* xxviii.

<sup>67</sup> Calvin's usage was consistent with the *via antiqua* of Thomas Aquinas, "The objects of God's knowledge must be necessary in their condition as such...yet not absolutely necessary considered as existing in their own causes" (*Summa Theologica*, 1a.14, 13, 3).

this subject after *BW*. Perhaps he thought he had settled the issue. At the time of *EP* Pighius was dead and Calvin was fighting the Protestant Bolsec, who was not concerned with undermining unity between Luther and Calvin.<sup>68</sup> Thus it appears that the coupling of Calvin's use of Luther's rejected distinction and his non-defense of Luther is merely coincidental. It is not that Calvin had come to disagree with Luther and thus had no interest in defending him, but that his unity with Luther on the will was not at stake. In addition, it was not the common practice to quote and reference contemporaries. Suzanne Selinger notes, "Theologically, there was a clear and simple reason for the rarity of Calvin's statements about Luther: human beings are instruments of God. 'In the church we must always be on our guard lest we pay too great a deference to men,' Calvin wrote to Melancthon.... Only the ancients, such as Augustine, sanctified by time as authorities, could be revered."<sup>69</sup> On the latter point, Lane says that only the church fathers are cited by Calvin as authorities; "They are witnesses to be called to give evidence for the Reformed cause."<sup>70</sup> Calvin's contemporary reformers did not serve this function, as their authority was also in question and it did not make sense to appeal to them. Thus even when there may be great interest in or influence from contemporaries, they were not cited. But this later lack of reference to Luther on the will does not mean that Calvin was still unconcerned about his relationship to the reformer who came before him. In the upcoming controversies with the Lutherans Joachim Westphal and Tileman Hesshusius, Calvin was forced to defend his solidarity with Luther again. Calvin did defend his old claim but this time on a different issue—the Lord's Supper—and here he conceded differences between himself and Luther. Calvin did so early in his career as well,

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<sup>68</sup> For Calvin's battle with Bolsec see Philip C. Holtrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551-1555: The Statements of Jerome Bolsec, and the Responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Other Reformed Theologians*, vol. 1, 2 parts (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1993).

<sup>69</sup> Suzanne Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself: An Inquiry in Intellectual History* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1984), 12.

<sup>70</sup> Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 30.

showing that he was always a critical disciple of Luther who was not afraid to disagree with his Reformation forefather even when Protestant solidarity was at stake.<sup>71</sup>

## **B. The Question of Calvin's Debt to Luther on the Doctrine of the Will**

Now that Calvin's perceived relationship to Luther on the will has been sketched, it is proper to address the question of debt to Luther. Pighius saw Calvin as a follower of Luther and attacked them together as a common threat to the papacy. In attacking Calvin's doctrine of the will, he also made Luther his target. As noted above, Calvin recognized that Pighius was using him to attack Luther.<sup>72</sup> Calvin did not quarrel with Pighius's assessment or drop the subject of his relationship to Luther, but made Luther intrinsic to his self-defense.<sup>73</sup> But why did he do this?

Calvin was compelled to defend Luther because Pighius had attacked his beloved Reformation father. Unlike Zwingli, Calvin did not declare independence from Luther.<sup>74</sup> Calvin respected Luther and felt the greatest debt to him as "founding father." Calvin even personally addressed Luther as "my much respected father."<sup>75</sup> But Calvin goes beyond defending Luther's godly character and reputation as the father of the Reformation. Calvin took it upon himself to defend Luther's doctrine of the will where Pighius had attacked it, and in so doing he made himself Luther's champion. Calvin's treatment of Luther's thought evinces knowledge beyond the *Assertio*, as he demonstrated familiarity with the finer nuances of Luther's teaching that is found in *BW*.<sup>76</sup> The same arguments made by Luther continually appear throughout Calvin's

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<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 6 at n. 181-88.

<sup>72</sup> See at n. 4 above.

<sup>73</sup> Schulze, *Calvin's Reply*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Brian Gerrish, "The Pathfinder: Calvin's Image of Martin Luther," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1982), 31.

<sup>75</sup> Letter to Luther dated January 21, 1545. Alan Farris, "Calvin's Letter to Luther," *Canadian Journal of Theology* 10, no. 2 (1964): 127, n. 14, has commented that this goes beyond normal politeness.

<sup>76</sup> *BLW* 40 n. 25, 49 n. 73.

works on the will. A comparison of their statements suggests that Luther was a formative influence upon Calvin, providing both the language and ideas for his doctrine of the will.<sup>77</sup>

While determining direct dependence on contemporaries is always difficult, the evidence for Luther's influence on Calvin's language and thought is more than suggestive, and this study explores whether or not a good circumstantial case can be brought forward. For instance, Luther asserted the will is in bondage not only to sin but to divine necessity.<sup>78</sup> He made a distinction between necessity (*necessitas*) and coercion (*coactio* or *violentia*)<sup>79</sup> and said that the law teaches duty and not ability.<sup>80</sup> He also used the stock metaphor of the will as beast of burden in a way distinct from the rest of the tradition.<sup>81</sup> As noted above, Calvin also used the language of divine necessity regularly in his treatments on the will. Calvin defended Luther's usage and maintained that his softening of Luther's expression did not change the substance, and he was in complete agreement with everything that Luther had written.<sup>82</sup> Calvin used and defended at length Luther's language about God using wicked tools.<sup>83</sup> Add to this that Calvin made the same rare distinctions as Luther between necessity (*necessitas*) and coercion (*coactio*)<sup>84</sup> as well as the law as teacher of duty and not ability,<sup>85</sup> spoke of the wicked as the tools of God (*instrumentum Dei*), and used the

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<sup>77</sup> See Chapters 4-5, but esp. 4 for an in-depth treatment of what is sketched below.

<sup>78</sup> *Assertio*, WA 7, 146.7-8; LW 33, 33-6, 64-70, 151, 184-95.

<sup>79</sup> LW 33, 64. Luther distinguished between *necessitas immutabilitatis* or *infallibilitatis* and *necessitas coactio* or *violentia*. See also 37-43, 151, 193, 213. Aquinas made the same distinction: "Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod [preparatio] est a Deo movente; et tunc [preparatio] habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest" (*Summa* 1a2ae.112, 3). See also 1a.19, 3, 8; 25, 4, 5.

<sup>80</sup> LW 33, 127. See also 126-38, 261, 262.

<sup>81</sup> LW 33, 65, 66. McSorley, *Luther*, 335-40.

<sup>82</sup> BLW 26, 28, 35-39. See also 69, 88, 93, 94, 97, 98, 101, 139-50, 203, 204.

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter 5, § III, 5.

<sup>84</sup> BLW 69, 101, 146-51; CO 6, 280, 302, 333-36. *Inst.* 2.3.5, 2.4.1; OS 3, 277.19-20, 291.5-6. See Chapter 5 at n. 193-199.

<sup>85</sup> BLW, 41, 138, 166-67 (law reveals sin), 170 (Calvin distinguished "law and gospel" and referred to it as "our opinion"), 206-08 (law prepares for promise of grace). See Chapter 5, § III, 7.

figure of the will as a beast of burden in a similarly unique way as Luther,<sup>86</sup> and the case for influence seems difficult to dismiss. But though the comparisons are striking, proof of direct influence tends to be elusive. With regard to Calvin's self-professed softening of Luther, did Calvin imply that what he softened in Luther he had received from Luther? Yes, but this does not necessarily imply that Calvin received the usage originally from Luther. Calvin could have been exposed to it elsewhere, either in another contemporary like Martin Bucer or in the tradition, perhaps in Augustine, and then noticed it in Luther.<sup>87</sup> Luther could have also influenced Calvin indirectly through Bucer and Melancthon. Regardless, Luther is a promising place to look for evidence of influence, direct and otherwise. This is because Luther was Calvin's father in the Reformation, a well from which Calvin had acknowledged drawing,<sup>88</sup> and their usage of necessity lines up into a small section of the tradition and diverges from that tradition in basically

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<sup>86</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 336, 337.

<sup>87</sup> For Luther's influence on Bucer see Wilhelm Pauck, "Luther and Butzer," and for Bucer's influence on Calvin see "Calvin and Butzer," in *From Luther to Tillich: The Reformers and Their Heirs*, ed. Marion Pauck (Cambridge et. al.: Harper and Row, 1984), 11-40. For Luther's influence on Calvin see Willem Van't Spijker, "The Influence of Bucer on Calvin as becomes evident from the Institutes," in *John Calvin's Institutes His Opus Magnum: Proceedings of the Second South African Congress for Calvin Research* (Potchefstroom University, 1986), 106-132. Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987, original French 1966), 158-68.

<sup>88</sup> For Calvin's general view of Luther see *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (1539), in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, LCC 22 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 185-186. Henceforth *TT*. In his dispute with Westphal, Calvin said that he read in Luther that Zwingli and Oecolampadius reduced the sacraments to mere signs and that afterwards he avoided their writings. Calvin located his reading of Luther at a time when he was just emerging from the darkness of the papacy with a beginning taste for reform. See *Second Defense of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to Joachim Westphal* (1556), CO 9, 51; *Calvin's Tracts and Treatises*, vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 252-253. Henceforth *T&T*. The text seems to imply that this was during the late 1520s when Luther and Zwingli were writing against each other. See Chapter 2 n. 47. Calvin also credited Luther with the discovery of justification by faith alone and noted in various places that not even Augustine could not be accepted uncritically as an authority on that subject. For Calvin's view of Augustine on justification see Matthew Heckel, "Is R. C. Sproul Wrong About Martin Luther? An Analysis of R. C. Sproul's *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* with Respect to Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Catholic Luther Scholarship," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 47 (2004): 101-02. With respect to justification, Calvin sided with Luther over Bucer. See Van't Spijker, "The influence of Bucer on Calvin," 127. The outline of Calvin's 1536 *Institutes* followed Luther's small catechism. See Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 137; Gerrish, "The Pathfinder," 31; Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford, 2000), 103-04. Other connections to Luther have been noted in the 1536 *Institutes*: verbal parallels, resemblance in introduction, transition, and breakdown of teaching order, as well as Christocentric orientation. See Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 137-45. On Christocentrism see also Van't Spijker, "The Influence of Luther," 96. Others have

the same patterns. With respect to contemporaries, where Luther and Calvin stand out from Melancthon and Bucer on the will, they stand beside each other. In his dispute with Westphal, Calvin claimed nothing less than being a disciple of Luther<sup>89</sup> and it would not be surprising to find the master's thought in his pupil. In a study that seeks to explore influence through a comparison of texts the problems are many and a map of the possible pitfalls must be always before us. The biggest problem in detecting influence is the apparent, striking similarity that may or may not come from another source, and to a further consideration of this pitfall we now turn.

The question of whether Calvin received something originally from Luther applies to every point where Calvin defended Luther. Lane demonstrates the problem of "original source" with respect to Calvin's dependence on the church fathers:

The *mere* existence of parallels and similarities between two authors is of itself no proof of the influence of one upon the other. Suppose we can demonstrate very close parallels between the thought of writer A and an earlier writer B. This is not enough even to *prove* that A knew of the existence of B. There are a number of possibilities. A might be dependent upon B. But, equally, both might be dependent upon an earlier writer, C. Or the points in common might turn out to be the commonplaces of a particular theological tradition, so that no one writer can be singled out as A's source. Alternatively, A might have encountered B's thoughts through an intermediate writer D. Doubtless this does not exhaust the range of possibilities. The existence of very close parallels between two writers does not prove a relationship of dependence, even if one knew the other (emphases mine).<sup>90</sup>

Calvin forthrightly acknowledged that he received much from Luther in terms of sacramental theology, justification by faith, and reforming impulse. All that can be said for sure on the doctrine of the will is that Calvin defends Luther, credits Luther for beginning the reform of the doctrine, claims to agree with Luther in every respect, and uses what appear to be uniquely Lutheran expressions. As far as Luther as formative influence, Calvin only hints at the possibility

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pointed to Calvin's definition of the term "sacrament" and his sacramentology in general. Gerrish, *idem.* Ganozcy, *idem.*, 139-42.

<sup>89</sup> See n. 88 above.

<sup>90</sup> Lane, *John Calvin*, 8.



as he defends him, but his apparently unique Lutheran expressions suggest that this is indeed the case. It is true that Luther was the original source of the controversy then taken up by Calvin, but determining dependence on Luther hinges upon the strength of the evidence for Lutheran idiosyncrasies in Calvin, such as terminological peculiarities, unique phrases, and isolated ideas. These are treated in Chapter 4 predominantly, taking note of the Latin where the vocabulary is common.<sup>91</sup> We will find that the parallels mentioned above do favor Luther as the influence on Calvin to various extents. The denial of “free choice,” God’s use of wicked tools, and the views on contingency, necessity, and coercion are the most definitive. To a lesser degree, other points, such as Calvin’s seemingly Lutheran take on the will as a beast of burden, on predestination, and the hiddenness of God, all corroborate the view that Calvin echoes his Reformation forebear.

A further piece of evidence may suggest Luther’s influence on Calvin’s doctrine of the will. When Calvin did use an authority such as Augustine, he habitually gave credit. In the early part of *BLW*, Calvin did not credit Augustine; instead he defended Luther. He defended Luther on Luther’s terms and gave him credit for true reform of doctrine. There is no appeal to Augustine on the issue of the will until the middle of “On Book Two.”<sup>92</sup> Was Calvin, then, acknowledging his indebtedness to Luther? Did Calvin reveal Luther as his primary impetus, bringing Augustine in later as a supporting testimony to Luther and to himself as a follower of Luther? Again, much of Calvin’s language and argumentation sounds like Luther’s, and the pattern Calvin followed in citing authorities suggests Luther is the immediate influence. It adds up to a common sense conclusion.

In the end, Calvin claimed to be not only one of Luther’s party but following his lead as theological reformer. Thus Calvin showed his readers his indebtedness to Luther as more than

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<sup>91</sup> For the terminological parallels see Chapter 5, § III, 5. Parallel ideas and vocabulary are noted *passim*.

founding father but also as true theologian and reforming stimulus to further refinements of expression. In some cases Calvin could have inherited the terminology from elsewhere, but in other instances Luther appears to be the only source possible, and beyond that, it was Luther who set forth the ideas that Pighius also found in Calvin, sparking the controversy that Calvin took up. It was Luther's person, language, thought, and cause that Calvin defended. Thus it could be said that Luther set the terms of the debate, and the debate provided the motivation for Calvin's further reflection on what Luther had written. In this way, Luther goes beyond mere inspiration and model for reform to providing the content and direction of reform. In short, Calvin puts forth and defends as his own what Luther had already laid down. The case for the formative influence of or direct dependence on Luther's thought falls short of unquestionable proof but remains likely. We cannot prove that as Calvin composed *BLW* he had access to or had opened Luther's *BW* if front of him.<sup>92</sup> It is possible, but seems strained to think that Calvin drew his close familiarity with Luther's thought on the will merely from common knowledge in Luther circles.

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<sup>92</sup> *BLW* 40. Calvin's defense of Luther runs throughout as the use of the first person plural pronoun shows, but Luther is the focus of "On Book One" and the first third of "On Book Two."

<sup>93</sup> In 1572 the Genevan Academy catalogued its holdings and some of the books came from Calvin's personal library. Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l'Académie de Calvin. Le catalogue de 1572 et ses enseignements* (Geneva: Droz, 1969). Luther's Latin works in eight volumes are accounted for but were not published until 1551. *Idem*. 191, #93. While some earlier Luther volumes appear, *BW* is not one of them, though this does not mean that Calvin did not have access to it or could not have read it. Bucer's Romans commentary does not appear in the catalog either, and Calvin consulted that for his Romans Commentary while in Strasbourg. As Lane says, very little can be garnered from the library holdings except for secondary corroboration and determining which of the available editions of a work Calvin used. Lane writes, "If a work is found there it might be Calvin's copy, or it might explain why the library did not take Calvin's copy, having one already. If, on the contrary, a work is not found there one must ask why the library chose not to take Calvin's copy. This is not an infallible guide, but it does affect the balance of probability that Calvin used a particular source." In Lane's own work he says, "It has been used to confirm conclusions already reached but not to dictate conclusion in advance" (*John Calvin*, 209). *BW* was published in Calvin's circles at Strasbourg in 1526 by Wolfgang Köpfel. See *Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana CXLIII*, Joseph Benzing/Helmut Claus, *Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod*, Band II (Valentin Koerner: Baden, 1994), 256-57, #2206, 2207. Thus Calvin could have read it in Strasbourg or even bought it there or at the Frankfurt book fairs. If Calvin owned a copy it might not show up in the Geneva library because the academy probably owned Luther's Latin works by then, or Calvin could have passed it on to another person. If he did not own a copy he could have gotten access to one of the thousands through another party. The possibilities are legion. See *WA* 18, 597-99 and Benzing 256-57, 172-73 (Claus additions) for the full publication history.

While the evidence for Luther's influence leaves the extent of that influence a question open to further research, I believe the evidence for Calvin's claim to full agreement with Luther will be shown to be unambiguous and conclusive.

In sum, my thesis explores precisely how Calvin related to Luther's doctrine of the will. First, is Calvin's claim to solidarity with Luther valid? Contra Lane, I will argue that Calvin's claim is legitimate for three reasons:

1. Calvin did not shrink from but actually defended Luther's necessitarian argument.
2. Calvin's claim was not discredited by his later work *Eternal Predestination* since Calvin did not employ the scholastic distinction in the form that Luther rejected.
3. Calvin's eucharistic position both before and after the debate with Pighius supports this argument by showing that Calvin was always a critical disciple of Luther who did not merely keep up the appearance of unity with Luther but contradicted him when real disagreement was present.

Second, did Luther influence Calvin? It will become plain that Calvin was indebted to Luther as founding father, true theologian, and reforming stimulus. Beyond this, I will argue that the evidence shows that Luther is likely a formative influence upon Calvin and a probable primary source for his doctrine of the will.

## II. THE STATE OF SCHOLARSHIP

One might think that exploring such questions about Luther and Calvin on the will would be plowing old ground, but this is not the case. Assertions have been made but not proved, assertions that actually contradict each other.

### A. Anthony N. S. Lane and L. F. Schulze

In the introduction to *BLW*, Lane asks, “Finally, to what extent do Pighius and Calvin draw upon the earlier debate?” He responds:

The answer appears to be none at all. Pighius attacks Luther’s *Defense [Assertio]*, but to the best of my knowledge makes no mention of either Erasmus’s *Diatribes* or Luther’s *Bondage of the Will*. Calvin makes no allusion to earlier debate. In the notes to this work a number of parallels are noted, but none of these amounts to clear proof that either Pighius or Calvin had the earlier debate in mind. What is remarkable is not the occasional parallel, nor the inevitable fact that certain commonplace arguments are reiterated, but the lack of similarity between the two debates.<sup>94</sup>

On the other hand, L.F. Schulze asks, “Were there other stimuli between 1536 and 1539 that prompted Calvin to this detailed treatment of the will?”<sup>95</sup> He then provides evidence that Calvin was responding to Erasmus’s *Diatribes* in the 1539 *Institutes*. Schulze then adds, “Calvin also knew Luther’s *De servo arbitrio*; his distinction of *necessity* and *constraint*, taken from Luther, testifies to this.”<sup>96</sup> While the distinction also appears in Aquinas,<sup>97</sup> Schulze’s comment seems more plausible since Calvin showed little interest in Thomas, but he offers no proof beyond the logical supposition. This is typical of comparison studies of Luther and Calvin in general.

### B. Brian Gerrish and Susanne Selinger.

In his article “John Calvin on Luther,” Brian Gerrish comments on the state of this scholarship:

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<sup>94</sup> “Introduction,” in *BLW*, xxviii, xxix.

<sup>95</sup> Schulze, “Calvin’s defense of the will in bondage according to the *Institutes* with reference to a few of his contemporaries,” in *John Calvin’s Institutes*, 166.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. Schulze makes the same point in “Calvin’s Reply to Pighius – A Micro and a Macro View,” in *Calvin’s Opponents*, vol. 5 of *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: A Fourteen-Volume Anthology of Scholarly Articles*, ed. Richard C. Gamble (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992), 78. Hermann Barnikol believed Luther’s influence on Calvin was undeniable: “Das Calvin auch Luthers Schrift: *De servo arbitrio* gekannt hat, ist nach seinen Ausführungen in seiner Schrift gegen Pighius ohne allen Zweifel. Diese Schrift Luthers kommt in erster Linie als Quelle bei der nun folgenden Darstellung der Lehre Luthers vom unfreien Willen in Betracht” (*Die Lehre Calvins vom unfreien Willen und ihr Verhältnis zur Lehre der übrigen Reformatoren und Augustin* [Neuwied, 1927], 40).

<sup>97</sup> *Summa* 1a2ae.112, 3. See also 1a.19, 3, 8; 25, 4, 5.

It does not seem to me that historical scholarship has yet sorted out the elements of continuity and discontinuity between the two major Reformers. The attempt to enumerate their theological differences, even though it has often been carried out with sensitivity and insight, leaves much to be desired. The contrasts are too quickly drawn and made to rest upon an insufficiently comprehensive examination of the sources, which are admittedly formidable in bulk for either reformer alone. Divergent lines of thought are taken to represent a difference between Luther and Calvin, when a more thorough investigation would show that the divergence lies on both sides—that it exemplifies, in fact, the complexity of a theological outlook which the two reformers had in common. For example, both speak of faith as at once knowledge and trust, and both regard Scripture as at once inspired words and witness to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. And yet, by means of ‘diagonal’ comparisons which link the Reformers’ unlike utterances instead of pairing the resemblances, it can be alleged that Calvin’s idea of faith was more intellectual than Luther’s and his understanding of Scripture more inclined toward literalism. By an equally judicious selection of sources the exact opposite could be “proved.”<sup>98</sup>

Illustrating what he means by proving the “exact opposite” with “an equally judicious selection of sources” Gerrish says:

For instance, Luther says that faith is *notitia*, that it is *in intellectu*, that its object is *veritas* (W.A. 40<sup>2</sup>.25.27ff.;L.W. 27:20-25); Calvin, that even assent is more a matter of the heart than of the mind (*Inst.*, 3.2.8, 33). Again it was Luther who took his stand upon the letter of Scripture in the eucharistic debate; Calvin on the other hand, states expressly that the sole function of Scripture is to draw us to Jesus Christ (C. O. 9.815).<sup>99</sup>

Gerrish finishes his comments adding, “*Much more historical research is needed to determine whether seeming differences are really matters of emphasis or even wholly illusory. Only then can we decide how far Calvin was in fact what he claimed to be, a genuine disciple of Luther*” (emphasis mine).<sup>100</sup> Selinger states, “The traditional picture of Luther and Calvin in historiography is that they are separate. Parallels between the two are often noted, yet without the establishment of a relationship. Exceptions to this pattern certainly exist.... However, *the precision of the relationship remains unexplored and its possibilities neglected*” (emphasis

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<sup>98</sup> Gerrish, “The Pathfinder,” 44-45.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* 289, n. 97.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.* 45.

mine).<sup>101</sup> The precision of the relationship of Calvin to Luther on the will is exactly what this study seeks to determine. Gerrish speaks of his own limited research:

I have sought only to carry out the first-stage historical task of marshaling such evidence as seems most relevant to our limited theme: What did Calvin actually *say* about Martin Luther? But the further question immediately presents itself: *Was Calvin right? Was he right in the way he understood his relationship to Luther?*...In each of these conclusions my interest is in the shape or form of Calvin's thinking rather than in its specific content. *I do not ask whether his reading of Luther and the Reformation was correct in detail, but what kind of reading it was* (emphasis mine).<sup>102</sup>

Was Calvin's claim of solidarity with Luther on the doctrine of the will valid? I think the evidence shows that it was. How far will the evidence go in determining indebtedness? After establishing the exact nature of Calvin's relationship to Luther, this is the further question that this study seeks to answer. So far, Luther and Calvin scholarship has not adequately dealt with these questions. With this study I seek to further the research and dialogue on these issues.

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<sup>101</sup> Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself*, 15.

<sup>102</sup> Gerrish, "The Pathfinder," 44, 45.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A QUESTION OF METHOD: HOW DO YOU COMPARE THEM?

#### I. In Search of a Method: A Survey of Secondary Literature Comparing Luther and Calvin

As with any study, a scholar's method should be front and center. So much is conditioned by the method that scholars have to be sure they are approaching their work properly. Method is a hermeneutic, a set of tools, and an attitude used for understanding a subject. If researchers do not deliberately and constantly consider, question, revise, and reevaluate their methods, then their treatment of their subject will be bludgeoned by blunt hermeneutical instruments and marred by obnoxious mistakes. But if scholars acknowledge their methods at the outset, then they can be adjusted to fit and adorn their subjects, and mistakes will at least be made comparatively less egregious. With respect to Calvin and Luther, it is important to map the terrain of comparative scholarship to avoid the pitfalls and to discern a trustworthy path. Once this task is completed, the method for proceeding with Luther and Calvin on the issue of the will promises to become clearer. At this point it is appropriate to rehearse briefly the groundwork already laid on the question of Calvin's relationship with Luther in order to proceed further into the secondary literature.

#### A. Lane, Schulze, Gerrish, and Selinger Revisited

Anthony Lane maintains that Calvin actually diverged from Luther, but out of a felt need to maintain a united front, created or perpetuated the illusion that they were in full agreement.<sup>1</sup>

L. F. Schulze, on the other hand, never questions the claims of Calvin. Brian Gerrish only traces

the broad outlines of Calvin's stance towards Luther's doctrine of the will. Moving on, we find more from Gerrish, who concludes generally that Luther was both Calvin's pathfinder and pioneer whose theological progress was open to further development. Commenting on three of Calvin's treatises from 1550, 1556, and 1561, Gerrish captures the nuance of Calvin's lifelong perspective on Luther: "Calvin wishes to claim for his reformation a continuity with the reformation of Martin Luther. But the claim of continuity is a claim of legitimate development, not of formal identity."<sup>2</sup> Calvin was a critical disciple of Luther who faulted some Lutherans, like Joachim Westphal, for taking Luther as an unquestionable norm. This should cause us to take Calvin's claim of full agreement with Luther on the subject of the will with great seriousness.

One example of this kind of *gravitas* is seen in Suzanne Selinger's psychological treatment of the reformers, where she opens the question of Luther's influence on Calvin. She traces influence from Luther on Calvin through such topics as justification by faith, predestination, the knowledge of God, transcendence, and God's revealed and hidden wills.<sup>3</sup> Calvin is portrayed as Luther's systematizer. She explores their psychological experience of sin and presents it as the key to understanding Luther's influence but finds differences in Calvin's theology stemming from his personality. She holds that Calvin's experience of sin made him receptive to Luther but Calvin's personality made him differ.<sup>4</sup> Luther's path to grace was primarily experiential, a long and agonizing struggle set in the monastery. Calvin's path to grace was primarily intellectual, a long exposure to medieval thought set in the academy.<sup>5</sup> Selinger contends that these are only

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<sup>1</sup> A. N. S. Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxviii. See also Lane's comments on 28 n. 81, 30 n. 86, and 27 n. 74.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Gerrish, "The Pathfinder: Calvin's Image of Martin Luther," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1982), 44.

<sup>3</sup> Suzanne Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself: An Inquiry in Intellectual History* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon, 1984), 18-40.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 16.



characteristic features of the lives of the two men, and are not mutually exclusive categories. We find that both men experienced relief from sin through the apprehension of true doctrine, and in the case of Calvin, it was the apprehension of Luther's discovery. Selinger says, "The certitude of salvation that Luther and Calvin sought had to answer an intellectual and experiential need in both."<sup>6</sup> Luther and Calvin's "radicalization and revision [of late medieval thought] were intellectual matters with an experiential base."<sup>7</sup> Selinger's psychological evaluation of the two reformers is significant for its illumination of the experiential aspect in their lives, and she makes some useful comparisons. At the same time, she does not offer much in the way of detailed textual comparison needed to indicate more specific influence beyond general reforming trends.

It is also appropriate to revisit the scholarship dealing with the question of Calvin's indebtedness to Luther. As with most of the literature comparing the two figures, it does not reflect the kind of historical research that Gerrish is calling for.<sup>8</sup> When Lane says that Calvin makes no allusion to the earlier debate between Luther and Erasmus, he seems to miss the mark, given the title of Calvin's work. Calvin also makes numerous references to Pighius's attacks on Luther and seeks to defend Luther's positions more broadly. Though Calvin does not explicitly cite from where he is drawing Luther's positions, it is natural to look to *BW* since it was widely available and was Luther's most definitive and developed treatment of the issue.<sup>9</sup> Combine this with the fact that article 36 of *Assertio* is so brief, and Calvin appealed to ideas in Luther which do not appear in *Assertio* but do show up in *BW*.<sup>10</sup> There are also a number of parallels which appear to indicate borrowing. Beyond this, Calvin claimed he was defending Luther's doctrine

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 1, § II, B.

<sup>9</sup> On the publication history of *BW* and its availability in Calvin's circles see Chapter 1, n. 93.

<sup>10</sup> *BLW* 40, n. 25, 49, n. 73.

and in the same terms laid down by Luther—bondage of human choice to sin and necessity imposed by the divine will. *De servo arbitrio* is certainly in the family tree of the controversy over these issues, if it is not actually the trunk of that tree. Calvin could well have had immediate access to Luther's thought in *BW*, but even if he did not have a copy of *BW* before him when he wrote, he could have drawn on his memory from a prior reading or from common knowledge in Luther circles. The Luther/Erasmus exchange was well known, and *BW* was hardly an obscure tract. While Calvin's memory was strengthened by a rigorous education, his knowledge and defense of Luther's thought seems to go beyond sheer recall. Regardless, Calvin's self-professed stance toward Luther provides a rationale for comparison and invites exploration of Calvin's claim to solidarity with Luther and the possibility of Luther's influence on Calvin. Exploring how Calvin worked with the categories shared with Luther and examining how Calvin sought to defend the Reformation by assertions, qualifications, and developments from Luther will underscore the nature of their theological relationship. As it stands, the issue needs more attention than either the short treatments of Gerrish and Selinger, which merely introduce the issues, and the brief statements of Lane and Schulze.

## **B. Wilhelm Neuser and Otto Weber**

Perhaps a good example of the kind of comparative historical scholarship that Gerrish calls for may be found in Wilhelm Neuser and Otto Weber.<sup>11</sup> Neuser notes that Luther has been referred to as the theologian of justification for whom the chief use of the law was the exposure of sins, while Calvin is considered the theologian of sanctification for whom the third use of the law was chief.<sup>12</sup> Neuser basically grants this characterization but cites Otto Weber who points to

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<sup>11</sup> Wilhelm Neuser, "Calvin and Luther—Their Personal and Theological Relationship," *Hervormde Theologische Studies* 38, 223 (1982), 89-103.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-96.

a historical reason for this difference between the two reformers. Weber says that the German Reformation had primarily legalistic opponents, while the western Reformation had primarily libertinistic opponents. Explaining Luther's legalistic context, Neuser writes:

Under legalism one understands a legal piety which tries to evade the wrath of God through good works—albeit with the “help” of divine grace. Christ is for them the awesome judge, not the essence of the love of God. This is the picture which presents itself to Luther in Saxony as heir to the medieval church. It is not therefore incumbent on him to lay emphasis on the commandments of God in his congregations. The people knew they were required to keep them. It was his task to explain...that sin was not primarily breaking commandments but disbelief which spurns the mercy of God.... It was always Luther's concern that the good works of faith were taken to be meritorious and understood as justification by works.<sup>13</sup>

Calvin's struggles against immorality and the Perrinist party in Geneva are well attested.<sup>14</sup>

Neuser also points to the work of Josef Bohatec who documents Calvin's conflict with “those humanists at the French court who deride the ten commandments and glorify the ‘ethics’ of pleasure, the life of love and adultery.”<sup>15</sup> Weber adds that these libertinistic opponents “did not elicit any declarations [from the western Reformation] which were fundamentally different in content from it [the German reformation] but modified its mode of expression considerably.”<sup>16</sup>

Weber continues:

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>14</sup> See William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the consolidation of the Genevan Reformation* (Manchester, New York: Manchester Univ., 1994). Robert M. Kingdon, “The Control of Morals in Geneva,” in *The Social History of the Reformation*, ed. Lawrence P. Buck and Jonathan W. Zophy (Ohio State Univ., 1972), 3-16. Ross William Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva*, ed. F. D. Blackley (Toronto, Vancouver.: Clarke, Irwin, & Co. Ltd., 1968), esp. 104-05.

<sup>15</sup> Neuser, “Calvin and Luther,” 96. Bohatec treats libertinism in relation to the Nicodemite controversy in *Budé und Calvin: Studien zur Gedankenwelt des französischen Frühhumanismus* (Herman Böhlau Nachf., 1950), 142-48. See also William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (Oxford, 1988) 64-65, who says, “His [Calvin's] world swarmed with ‘Epicureans’ who had,” according to Calvin, “entirely discarded their religion and sneered angrily at the whole teaching of our faith as ‘fairy tales.’” Bernard Cottret gives numerous examples of problems with free thinking and living in and out of Geneva in *Calvin: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge, U. K.: Eerdmans; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000 [original French 1995]), 184-86, 191-200, 211-13, 250-53, 333-34. See also F. M. Higman, “The Question of Nicodemism,” in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. Wilhelm H. Neuser (Frankfurt am Main et. al.: Peter Lang, 1982), 165-70.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 95 (trans. Neuser). Weber, “Immerhin, einer gewisse „Engführung“ ist schwer zu verkennen. Sie erklärt sich für die deutsche Reformation daraus, daß diese im ganzen einen nomistischen Gegner hatte. Die westliche Reformation hatte es dagegen weithin mit einen libertinistischen Gegner zu tun, der ihr zwar keine

The western world of that time was already largely autonomously structured: (Christian) preaching often appeared as something strange to it, and consequently the nature of law as address took on a much more concrete form.... Unlike Luther, [Calvin] is not primarily in dispute with legalism...but with an accomplished antinomianism, an ethical autonomy of thought which could take the form of strictness as well as libertinism.

Thus Calvin “is forced out of circumstance to lay stronger emphasis on the address-nature of the law than Luther did.”<sup>17</sup> Neuser concludes:

The different spiritual and religious situation in the East and West is the reason for the distinct positions of Luther and Calvin with regard to the law.... Nevertheless, their theologies are not totally opposite. It has already been mentioned that justification is not absent from Calvin nor sanctification from Luther. There was no dispute between them over these doctrines.<sup>18</sup>

While Neuser and Weber may be guilty of over-generalizing the historical contexts in question, they may be correct in seeing a historical reason for how two biblically conditioned reforms receive different emphases.<sup>19</sup> It seems a more detailed study is needed to determine the extent to which the contexts of Luther and Calvin can be contrasted in this way. Nevertheless, the salient feature of the Neuser and Weber insight is the importance of the historical impulse for relating the two figures. Rather than dealing with the apparent doctrinal differences by analyzing them systematically, Weber, and Neuser after him, sought to explain historically how and why the theologies are different. In the process they were able to point out fundamental agreements

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materiell wesentlich anderen Aussagen abnötigte, aber ihre Aussageweise gegenüber der deutschen Reformation beträchtlich modifizierte” (*Grundlagen der Dogmatik*, Bd 2 [Neukirchen, 1962], 358).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 96 (trans. Neuser). Weber, “Die westliche Welt jener zeit war bereits weitgehend autonom strukturiert: die Verkündigung trat ihr vielfach wie etwas Fremdes gegenüber, und der Charakter des Gesetzes als Anrede nahm daher sehr viel konkretere Gestalt an. Die mittelbare, durch voraufgegangene, geschehende und aufgenommene Verkündigung bestimmte Form der Anrede ist für Calvin nicht mehr Voraussetzung. Er steht daher auch nicht, wie Luther, überwiegend im Streit mit dem Nomismus, dem sich für den Wittenberger Reformator nur allmählich auch ein Kampf mit den „Antinomern“ anschloß, sondern mit dem vollendeten Antinomismus, mit einem ethischen Autonomie-Denken, das die Form des Rigorismus wie des Libertinismus annehmen konnte. Er ist daher aus seiner Lage heraus genötigt, den Anrede-Charakter des Gesetzes stärker herauszuarbeiten, als es Luther tut. Damit aber tritt auch eine Akzentverlagerung in der Aussage selbst ein” (Ibid. 414-15).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

between Luther and Calvin on an issue where Calvin is obviously indebted to Luther but still has his own differences of nuance and presentation. Similarly, this study seeks the historical contexts in order to evaluate Calvin's claim to theological unity with Luther in the face of the charges of disunity from Pighius then and Lane now. For example, what is the significance of the Lord's Supper controversies as background to Calvin's claim?

By the time Calvin wrote against Pighius, differences over the Lord's Supper had threatened to split the reformers of Wittenberg and Strasbourg into separate movements, but the Wittenberg Concord had united the two groups in 1536. This had been challenged by certain Nuremberg theologians such as Veit Dietrich, who believed Calvin had broken the Concord in his 1539 *Institutes*. Luther however, refused to interpret Calvin's words in that way and spoke of Calvin as "a great soul." When Calvin heard of Luther's reaction, he was overwhelmed by the senior reformer's generosity. Calvin wrote a *Satisfactio* in order to make clear that he was not parting company with Wittenberg but accusing certain disciples of Rome of incorporating Christ under a crude presence that was not worthy of the Savior.<sup>20</sup> It does not appear from this that the historical situation was volatile, but Pighius was creating a situation with his charge of disagreement among the reformers. As we will see below, the French Calvin saw himself as one of the German reform party,<sup>21</sup> and he wanted to protect what Pighius was trying to threaten. Thus the historical situation supports the idea that Calvin was not previously in danger of appearing at odds with Luther, but Pighius was trying to create that impression. It appears that Calvin was not trying to hold a tenuous situation together but trying to prevent one from occurring. He did not want the strands to break within the cord that tied him to Wittenberg, but this does not mean that

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<sup>19</sup> On the danger of over-generalizing and using partial historical contexts see Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York, Oxford: Oxford, 2000), 9-11.

<sup>20</sup> Neuser, "Calvin and Luther," 90-94.

he tried to conceal tensions between himself and Luther on the will. Calvin's claim of agreement in substance with only softening in rhetoric does not appear as a desperate distinction to "save face" for the Reformation. Thus the historical background sheds light on Calvin's claim, but the validity of the claim must stand or fall on the textual evidence that we will explore in Chapters 4 and 5. While I do not think that the softening Calvin referred to was meant to conceal tensions between himself and Luther, the questions beg for further historical attention along the methodological lines modeled by Neuser and Weber. Another question that will be taken up concerns what it means that Calvin was always willing to admit that he differed with Luther over the bodily presence, but not on the will?

### C. Alexandre Ganoczy

Alexandre Ganoczy's *The Young Calvin* offers another study that seeks to determine influences on Calvin. In part two, Ganoczy explores the sources of the first edition of the *Institutes* and compares statements between the Calvin and Luther.<sup>22</sup> It appears that Calvin followed the outline of Luther's *Small Catechism*: law, faith, prayer, and sacraments. While this is also a medieval division, Ganoczy says, "A whole series of similarities lead us to believe that in writing the *Institutes* our author actually took as his model the *Small Catechism* of Wittenberg and not the catechism of his childhood."<sup>23</sup> This series of similarities consist in verbal parallels and similarities in introduction, transition, and breakdown of teaching order,<sup>24</sup> as well as orientation to theology, namely, Christocentricity.<sup>25</sup> Ganoczy compares thought patterns on the

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<sup>21</sup> See at n. 73 below.

<sup>22</sup> Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987 [First French ed. 1966]), 137-45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, *passim* 137-45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 138, 139.

forgiveness of sins, prayer, sacraments, the mass, and Christian liberty.<sup>26</sup> Ganoczy concludes the section:

It is evident that such parallels—especially if taken individually—do not allow us to affirm that Calvin had before his eyes the various texts of the German reformer when he worked on his compendium. But taken as a whole, they allow us to establish with *a high degree of probability* that Calvin had read these texts and was inspired by them in his personal reflections (emphasis mine).<sup>27</sup>

This represents the usual way comparative historical studies have been done and the kind of conclusions that the present study is capable of drawing.

Ganoczy also shows how Calvin was not slavish in following Luther but considered him “nearest to the truth.” In his own pursuit of the question of Christ’s presence in the Lord’s Supper, Calvin criticized “several expressions of the Saxon reformer” while incorporating “quite a few ideas” from two of Luther’s sermons translated into Latin.<sup>28</sup> Ganoczy sums up his treatment, “In my opinion, these ‘soundings’ are sufficient to establish the fact that Luther’s writings exerted profound influence on the young author of the *Institutes*.”<sup>29</sup>

#### **D. Willem Van’t Spijker**

The last study is from Willem Van’t Spijker who, after noting Ganoczy’s verbal parallels, detects conceptual influence from Luther in Calvin’s Christocentric orientation to theology.<sup>30</sup>

Luther was concerned not with a philosophical but with a theological knowledge of God and of man: “The real object of theology is man, who is guilty because of sin, and the justifying God as Lord of this sinner. Whatever is sought and dealt with as theology outside this is heresy and poisoned.” At the point where the justifying God and man needing redemption meet, *there*, and nowhere else, true theology originates. For Luther this is the theology of the Cross: “The Cross alone is our theology”. In

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 139-43.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>30</sup> Willem Van’t Spijker, “The Influence of Luther on Calvin According to the *Institutes*,” in *John Calvin’s Institutes: His Opus Magnum* (Potchefstroom: Pro Rege-Press, 1986), 83-105.

this regard Calvin is a faithful pupil of Luther's. For him there can be no mention of true theology without Christ.<sup>31</sup>

Van't Spijker says Calvin took the heart of Luther's theology and made it his own point of departure. Luther held that theology revolves around unjust man encountering the justifying God and Calvin distinguished the *Dei notitia et nostri* and said it is difficult to discern which precedes the other.<sup>32</sup> Van't Spijker shows that within the one overall concept of the knowledge of God, Calvin distinguished the knowledge of God as creator and redeemer as the *ordo recte docendi* but insisted that since the fall these can only be known in the sight of Christ. Van't Spijker adds that for Calvin this was "knowledge of God and of ourselves in the experience of sin and grace, law and gospel," and "since 1536 the subjects emerged from the heart of the issues, being encompassed in the schema of law and gospel." Calvin is quoted: "After we had therefore fallen...all this knowledge of God the Creator...will be of no use, if faith were not added to it, the faith that we observe God in Christ as our Father."<sup>33</sup> Thus, according to Calvin, even our knowledge of God as creator is mediated through Christ the redeemer, a perspective Van't Spijker sees as stemming from Luther.

Even in the Eucharistic controversy Calvin accepted and promulgated Luther's Christocentrism but gave it a pneumatic twist. Calvin differed with Luther over the interpretation of the communication of attributes (*communicatio idiomatum*) between Christ's divine and human natures. For Calvin, Christ's body was fully united to the divine nature, but it remained in

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>32</sup> For Calvin's use of the *Cognitio Dei et hominis* see Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien*, bd. 1 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1971), 231-255.

<sup>33</sup> Van't Spijker, "The Influence of Luther," 97, 98. I. John Hesselink, "Calvin's Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2004), 78-80, points out that Calvin is also theocentric and pneumocentric which combined with Christocentric just means that he was Trinitarian. Hesselink also warns of the danger of trying to narrow down the characteristic features of Calvin's theology to one central motif, but Calvin seemed to do that very thing by making Christ the mediator of the knowledge of God the Creator. Christ is the fundament of all theology for Luther and Calvin.



its finite form and did not receive the ubiquity of the divine nature.<sup>34</sup> Calvin was concerned about the integrity of the human nature but also felt the problem of its remoteness from human experience after the ascension. This was bridged, however, by the Spirit, who overcame the remoteness by bringing Christ's own virtue to us, so that his very life is transfused into us from his body and blood. Calvin wrote:

I come now to the Cock [Tileman Heshusius], who with his mischievous beak declares me a corrupter of the Confession of Augsburg, denying that in the Holy Supper we are made partakers of the substance of the flesh and blood of Christ. But, as is declared in my writings more than a hundred times, I am so far from rejecting the term substance, that I simply and readily declare, that spiritual life, *by the incomprehensible agency of the Spirit*, is infused into us from the substance of the flesh of Christ. I also constantly admit that we are substantially fed on the flesh and blood of Christ, though I discard the gross fiction of a local compounding.... When I say that the flesh and blood of Christ are substantially offered and exhibited to us in the Supper, I at the same time explain *the mode*, namely, that the flesh of Christ becomes vivifying to us, inasmuch as Christ, *by the incomprehensible virtue of his Spirit*, transfuses his own proper life into us from the substance of his flesh, so that he himself lives in us, and his life is common to us (emphasis mine).<sup>35</sup>

Van't Spijker says, "Calvin maintained the Lutheran *extra nos* right to the doctrine of Holy Communion. And at the same time he bound *pro nobis* in a realistic fashion with the concept of communion with Christ. We grow through the Spirit to one corporeality with Christ."<sup>36</sup> Van't Spijker says that Luther was also Calvin's forerunner on covenant and promise: "Luther's speech about *foedus* and *testamentum* and his handling of the correlation between *promissio* and *fides* he

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<sup>34</sup> Pursuing the Lutheran concept of ubiquity would get us sidetracked. It is worth noting, however, that "Lutherans" in the early Reformation did not all have the same rationales in explaining Christ's presence in the sacrament. Luther tied it closely to the words themselves, "This is my body," and spoke of a sacramental presence. In contrast Johannes Brenz, the reformer of Württemberg, brought in the broader concept of ubiquity as proof that God was everywhere, and so Christ could be in the Supper.

<sup>35</sup> *The true partaking of the flesh and blood* (1561), TT 264, 267. See also 276. See also *Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ* (1541), TT 166. Inst. 4.17.12.

<sup>36</sup> Van't Spijker, "The Influence of Luther," 104. Calvin seemed to replace Luther's doctrine of the communication of attributes and the ubiquity of Christ's body with the Holy Spirit as the sole mode of Christ's sacramental presence.

[Calvin] took over from there.”<sup>37</sup> Van’t Spijker cites Luther’s *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* as formative in this way for Calvin. Luther explained God’s relation to us in terms of covenant and promise and our relation to God as faith. Luther made this “a point of departure for his explication of the nature of the sacrament, so Calvin deals with it to clarify the concept of the seal of the covenant, ‘Wherever there is a covenant, a promise, there is something for faith to lean on, through which consolation is possible and through which faith may be strengthened.’”<sup>38</sup>

While Van’t Spijker focuses on conceptual links, these are grounded in the common vocabulary of the two reformers, and he justifies his approach further by providing the historical rationale, “Calvin felt himself to be a kindred spirit with Luther.”<sup>39</sup> The kind of connections made by Van’t Spijker are built upon the documentation of their historical relationship. Van’t Spijker outlines the historical touch points, acknowledges Ganoczy’s detailed work around verbal parallels, and then argues for Luther’s continuing influence in Calvin’s later editions of the *Institutes* as a *presentia realis* that left the realm of direct borrowing, as Calvin had outgrown his earlier reliance on Luther’s wording and phraseology. Van’t Spijker knows that “Luther is present. But one should not stick too closely to the outward formulations when one tries to pin him down.” This is because Calvin was too strong a personality ever to be totally dominated by Luther or overwhelmed by him for very long. Van’t Spijker says, “His personality was never excluded by Luther, but activated.... With regard to Luther Calvin is progressive, that is, he follows in his footsteps, but he also goes further along this road.”<sup>40</sup> Selinger adds that the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 102.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 91. The quote from Calvin is from the 1536 *Institutes* and concerned the sacrament, “Verba enim sunt: hic calix novum testamentum est, in meo sanguine (Luc. 22. I Cor. 11). Hoc est documentum ac testimonium promissionis. Ubicunque autem est promissio, illic fides habet quo nitatur, quo se consoletur, quo se confirmet” (OS 1, 137).

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. 87.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. 92.

question is not one of Calvin vs. Luther, but of Calvin's Luther.<sup>41</sup> Van't Spijker's approach to a continuing conceptual influence from Luther is invited by the facts of Calvin's historical relationship to Luther starting in the late 1520s. This approach, with all attending cautions, can advance our understanding of Luther and Calvin in intellectual history. While this study attempts to establish, where it is able, the kind of links detailed by Ganoczy, it acknowledges that Calvin was spreading his wings intellectually when he began his work on the will. This enabled him to fly beyond the terminological borrowing found in his earlier works, though further indications of it do appear.<sup>42</sup> This study acknowledges with Van't Spijker that Luther's influence on Calvin did not end in 1536, as Calvin still adhered to Luther conceptually and verbally, especially on the subject of the will.

## **II. Method: A Hermeneutic of Historical Comparison**

In considering the proper method for this study, it seems that Lane's critical approach to source material is to be preferred for individual texts taken on a case by case basis. Ganoczy's and Van't Spijker's approach is to be preferred for reaching conclusions on an accumulation of circumstantial evidence. In other words, even when a smoking gun, like Lane is seeking, does not appear, a body of suggestive texts may lead in a certain direction. False moves may be made along the way as trails get hot and go cold, but scholarship will be advancing in the right direction, provided that certain methodological controls are in place.

### **A. The Hermeneutic of Suspicion**

Lane is following a hermeneutic of suspicion. This is a minimalist approach in which Lane limits the study of Calvin's influences to such evidence as direct quotations, frank acknowledgments, or plain allusions. Thus, Lane is suspicious of any evidence that is either not

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<sup>41</sup> Selinger, *Calvin Against Himself*, 1, 18.

explicit or that is inconclusive. Conjectures, inferences, or circumstantial cases based on unacknowledged allusions or theological similarities are excluded as non-historical.<sup>43</sup> Lane says there are three types of studies of Calvin's relationship to predecessors:

*First*, some studies set out to compare Calvin's teaching with that of one or more earlier theologians (usually Augustine or Thomas Aquinas). Such studies need not presuppose Calvin's being influenced by, or even acquainted with, the figure concerned. As has been observed, it is possible and profitable to compare Calvin and Thomas Aquinas systematically, even though 'Calvin was not greatly interested in the Thomistic synthesis; at least, Calvin utilized Thomas' thought scarcely at all'. The significance of such studies is usually ecumenical or polemical rather than historical. *Secondly*, other studies examine the use that Calvin made of earlier theologians. Here the emphasis lies not on the similarities or the differences between them, nor on any alleged influence on Calvin by his predecessors but simply on how he viewed them and how he cited them in his writings. *Finally*, there are studies which seek to determine the influence of earlier theologians upon Calvin. Such studies are, historically, the most interesting but they are the hardest and the least conclusive.<sup>44</sup>

Lane's distinctions clarify, but he does not take into account a fourth possibility: there can be studies like this one that combine elements of all three. This study also carries the caveat that while the "significance" of the first type might "usually be ecumenical or polemical," these are applications that should only be made after the historical task has been carried out, and that historical task is concerned with the contextual nature of historical theology.<sup>45</sup> Such a study is historical in the sense of documenting the history of ideas in their original setting. Thus, to pit an ecumenical study *versus* an historical one may, in some cases, create a false dichotomy and unnecessary separation. It would be more accurate to speak of ecumenical studies that are historically responsible and historical studies that have ecumenical implications. As Richard Muller contends, the historical task must precede the systematic task.

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<sup>42</sup> See Chapter 4, § III, 5.

<sup>43</sup> Lane outlines his method in *John Calvin*, x- xiii, 1-13, esp. 8, 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.* 15.

In looking for textual connections, Lane goes on to lay down principles for detecting Calvin's influences:

If there are to be reliable conclusions about Calvin's influences it is essential that certain elementary principles be observed. It does not suffice, in seeking to demonstrate influence, merely to draw parallels between Calvin and an earlier figure. There might be the most remarkable parallels with no actual influence.... Unless there is evidence of Calvin's familiarity with a writer, the burden of proof lies heavily upon those who would claim that he influenced Calvin. Even where Calvin was unquestionably familiar with an earlier figure and quoted him freely, mere parallels in thought are not sufficient to demonstrate dependence, without more precise evidence.<sup>46</sup>

Lane has a point in warning against being overly eager to claim or assume an intentional association. Just because it looks, walks, and sounds like a duck, one must not automatically assume that it is one. Lane's are important concerns that must be addressed by any comparison study, that is, by any study that compares texts of historical figures to look for influence, agreement, or any other kind of relationship. This study is able to show Calvin's acknowledgement of and familiarity with Luther, to argue for his agreement with Luther, and collect precise evidence of Luther's influence. In this pursuit, Lane's hermeneutic of suspicion is useful as a caution against an over-reliance on inferential argumentation, but it should not be a total negation of the same. Inferences may be drawn legitimately and a good circumstantial case may be built after the hermeneutic of suspicion has been applied. In this way tenuous links and fanciful connections may be exposed, acknowledged, and distinguished from real historical evidence that points out connections in a more definitive but still cautious way. A comparative

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<sup>45</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 10, says that the historical task must precede the systematic task in order to avoid accommodating Calvin to modern day theological concerns that may be foreign to his context.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 15, 16. This principle is also stressed by David Steinmetz in his critique of Oberman's thesis that Gregory of Rimini and his late medieval Augustinian school was a formative influence on Luther: "Furthermore, similarities in thought are not by themselves sufficient to establish lines of influence.... Agreement does not prove influence; neither does disagreement disprove it. There must be acknowledgment of sources, quotation of them, some kind of tangible evidence in the texts themselves before historians can claim influence" ("Luther and the Late Medieval Augustinians: Another Look," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 44 [1973]: 256). See also n. 48 below.

study is also historical if it serves to point the way to possible historical sources. Ganoczy's conclusion is applicable here:

It is evident that such parallels—especially if taken individually—do not allow us to affirm that Calvin had before his eyes the various texts of the German reformer when he worked on his compendium. But taken as a whole, they allow us to establish with *a high degree of probability* that Calvin had read these texts and was inspired by them in his personal reflections (emphasis mine).<sup>47</sup>

Historical studies need not be able to prove something definitively or absolutely to be useful.

There are, as Ganoczy points out, degrees of probability. Detecting influence from one figure on another through a comparison study carries degrees of possibility that span a spectrum ranging from contrary evidence and no connection, to lack of evidence and unknown, to some evidence and a possible connection, to more evidence and a likely connection, to a strong circumstantial case beyond reasonable doubt, and finally to clear proof. Regardless of where the evidence leads, all responsible historical studies will investigate historical sources with a historical method and seek to understand historical thought in its historical context before drawing any further applications, whether they be ecumenical or polemical.

Applying this to the present study, we have intellectual history that compares Luther and Calvin for indications of theological similarities and differences. By intellectual history of the Reformation, I mean the history of ideas, or simply how ideas developed in Reformation history. The conclusions may be diverse. Intellectual history may only reveal parallels belonging to the Reformation's general intellectual climate created by preceding schools of thought from the Renaissance, the Middle Ages, or the patristic era. It also could indicate shared capital within a common tradition, or it could indicate borrowing, direct influence, and historical causation. With regard to theological similarities, this study does, as Lane says, leave the door open to a comparison of systems with ecumenical and/or polemical concerns taking over from there. While

this study finds that door open, it does not walk through it. That would head in a different direction. The primary concern here is to find and illuminate the historical context and assess the content of the theology of Luther and Calvin as primary conditions for accurately comparing their positions on the will. This study indicates that the parallels between Luther and Calvin are uncommon enough to suggest that their agreement goes beyond the mere accidents of history. The special character of their theological common ground goes beyond the mere “what” of intellectual history, and begs the question as to the “why” of history. For example, why does Calvin mirror Luther on so many issues related to the will when other contemporary reformers appear different than Luther? This raises the question of historical influence, a deeper question than the ones about whether they merely agree and how the historical contexts affect their thought.

We now turn to addressing Lane’s concerns in the case of Luther and Calvin. He has established three “principles” for detecting influence:

1. Parallels between Luther and Calvin;
2. Calvin’s familiarity with Luther;
3. Precise evidence adhering to the hermeneutic of suspicion.

Lane also has given three types for the categorization of the study as a whole:

1. Comparison of teaching between Luther and Calvin;
2. Calvin’s use and view of Luther;
3. Possible influence of Luther on Calvin.

But as noted above, the present study combines elements of all three categories and thus may be considered a fourth type. Dealing with the first principle for detecting influence, there are clear parallels between Luther and Calvin on the will, namely the bondage of the human will to sin

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<sup>47</sup> Ganozcy, *The Young Calvin*, 143.

and its subjugation to the divine will, that is, divine necessity. These are broad and general and do not prove influence by themselves.<sup>48</sup> Dealing with the second principle for detecting influence, Calvin was obviously familiar with Luther. There is a real historical connection in time, place, and thought and a track record of influence from Luther to Calvin on multiple topics—in the words of Neuser, a “personal and theological relationship.” On the issue of the will, Calvin was clearly familiar with Luther’s *Assertio* at least from Pighius’s focus upon it. And, as mentioned above, there are several places where Calvin demonstrates knowledge of Luther’s thought beyond *Assertio*, suggesting preeminently *BW*. This leads to the third principle for detecting influence—“precise evidence.” There is telling “precise evidence” of Luther’s on Calvin: his use of Luther’s dictum that God uses wicked tools, remarkable terminological parallels, the distinction between necessity and coercion, and Calvin’s formal denial of the term “free choice.” This all falls into Lane’s third type of investigation—“studies which seek to determine the influence of earlier theologians upon Calvin.” Calvin’s claim to be in full agreement with Luther would fall into Lane’s second type of investigation—“the use that Calvin made of earlier theologians...how he viewed them and how he cited them in his writings.” And all comparisons corresponding to the first type of investigation—“studies” that “compare Calvin’s teaching with that of one or more earlier theologians”—are considered in their historical context and import first. After the historical task has been carried through, then the way open to systematic comparison and ecumenical or polemical reflections are left to the reader. This study, however, focuses simply upon historical-theological similarities, that is, on Calvin’s claim of agreement with Luther and the question of historical connections with Luther’s thought.

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<sup>48</sup> Muller comments, “Projects that compare Calvin and Barth or of Calvin and Schleiermacher will not enlighten us particularly about Calvin.... Neither will a *broad* comparison of Calvin and Luther or of Calvin and Bullinger be particularly helpful to our understanding. The comparison must examine actual partners in the ongoing sixteenth-century theological conversation and be sensitive to the fact that ideas held in common may not be evidence of direct conversation” (*The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 187). See also n. 46 above.



## B. The Hermeneutic of a Preponderance of the Evidence

Offsetting Lane, Schulze follows a reasonable, common sense approach comparable to Ganoczy and Van't Spijker. Ganoczy's approach might be called "a preponderance of the evidence," where parallels between Luther and Calvin being inconclusive by themselves, "but taken as a whole" they warrant the conclusion that Luther influenced Calvin.<sup>49</sup> Schulze's and Van't Spijker's approach can be incorporated under Ganoczy's, considered under the title "a preponderance of the evidence."

In seeking to identify Calvin's historical relationship to Luther, we note that Calvin, according to his own testimony, had been reading Luther when Calvin was just beginning to be exposed to reform.<sup>50</sup> Calvin credited Luther for the recovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone, acknowledging that none of the fathers, including Augustine, taught correctly on that point.<sup>51</sup> The issue of justification is also closely related to the question of the will and grace. If Calvin was following Luther on the one issue, it would be reasonable to look for evidence of him doing the same on the other.<sup>52</sup> As has been noted, other characteristically Lutheran ideas appear in Calvin—covenant, promise, and faith, and the Christocentric approach to theology. Calvin also followed Luther's understanding the two-kingdom idea in principle, though the specific applications differed.<sup>53</sup> Given Calvin's penchant for borrowing "freely from the fund of Lutheran

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<sup>49</sup> Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 143.

<sup>50</sup> *Second Defense of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to Joachim Westphal* (1556). CO 9, 51; T&T 2, 252-53. See § E below.

<sup>51</sup> BLW 28. *The Necessity of Reforming the Church* (1539), in TT 185-86. For Calvin's view of Augustine's doctrine of justification see Heckel, "Is R. C. Sproul Wrong About Martin Luther?" 101-02.

<sup>52</sup> Calvin sided with Luther over his mentor Bucer on whether justification included inner transformation. Van't Spijker, "The influence of Bucer on Calvin," in *John Calvin's Institutes: His Opus Magnum*, 127.

<sup>53</sup> For Calvin's relationship to Luther's doctrine of two kingdoms see Gerrish, "Strasbourg Revisited," in *The Old Protestantism and the New*, 258, 262. Lewis W. Spitz, Jr., "The Impact of the Reformation on Church-State Issues," in *Church and State Under God*, ed. Albert G. Huegli (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964), 59-112.

ideas,”<sup>54</sup> and given his acknowledgment of Luther as true theologian and predecessor of reform of the doctrine of the will, and Calvin’s own similar argumentation on the subject, Schulze’s common sense approach would lead us to favor Luther as a formative influence, and on certain issues, an even a greater one than Augustine. To be sure, Augustine’s influence was present as well as Bernard’s, as Calvin’s positive appeals to their writings show, but Calvin’s thought reveals the unique emphases of Luther.<sup>55</sup> The structure of the argument sets up Luther as true theologian and reformer, with Augustine as a venerable authority on the side of Luther and Calvin.<sup>56</sup> Augustine supports the Reformation stance, but that stance has its own unique emphases not found in Augustine.<sup>57</sup> Following a hermeneutic of common sense or “the preponderance of the evidence” while checking it with a hermeneutic of suspicion offers a promising method for pursuing a valuable comparison study of Luther and Calvin that seeks to shed more light on their relationship and intellectual history and also to reveal likely sources for Calvin’s theology.

With all this, what does the process look like? How does one proceed through the particulars of the text? Assessing Calvin’s claim of consensus means comparing the texts with a view to similarities and differences—simple enough. But detecting influence from Luther to Calvin calls for a special comparison that reveals characteristic features of Luther’s thought in Calvin. Based upon Lane coupled with Schulze and Ganoczy, a two-pronged hermeneutic is needed to detect influence:

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<sup>54</sup> Gerrish. “The Pathfinder,” 31.

<sup>55</sup> Calvin, like Luther, but unlike Augustine, has little use for a positive emphasis on free choice. It was an important philosophical point to Augustine, but the reformers considered it dangerous from a pastoral point of view. See Chapter 5, § IV.

<sup>56</sup> In the *BLW*, Augustine received far and away the most citations from among the fathers with Luther specifically referred to more than any other contemporary. Luther is mentioned by name at least sixteen times.

<sup>57</sup> Calvin plainly acknowledges this on the related issue of justification: “Augustine reckons [people to be] holy on the basis of good works, while I deny works...any power for attaining righteousness” (*BLW* 116).

1. Skepticism that looks for influence based on distinctive elements of thought and peculiarities of language—thus the hermeneutic of suspicion (Lane’s approach).
2. Openness to the dictates of common sense and the accumulation of suggestive evidences that, taken together, points to the probability of influence—thus the hermeneutic of “a preponderance of the evidence” (Schulze’s and Ganoczy’s approach).

### **C. The Criteria of Historical Assessment.**

This study follows this compound “hermeneutic of comparison” in order to show whether Luther may be singled out as a formative influence or at least suggested as a likely source. The following sub-points flesh out this approach even further, serving as criteria of textual evaluation for the study as a whole.

1. Contexts: in determining Calvin’s relationship to Luther on the will, it is necessary to grasp how their theologies are contextually conditioned by their settings. Both reformers responded to attacks by Catholic humanists who gravitated toward medieval theology. Calvin considered himself and Geneva in a common cause with Luther and Germany.
2. Content:
  - a) Explicit references, many in number, to the person of Luther. Significant references include:
    - 1) Founding father.
    - 2) True theologian.
    - 3) Reforming stimulus.
    - 4) Godly man.

b) Specific material in numerous places, is attributed to Luther and is interpreted in these ways:

- 1) Adoption of the material and agreement.
- 2) Modification, qualification, or refinement of the material and thus some degree of divergence.

c) Parallels, in abundance, with Luther's thought:

- 1) Common enough in the tradition to be useless in making connections, e.g., the bondage of the will to sin.
- 2) Uncommon enough in the tradition to suggest influence. These would be characteristically Lutheran emphases that would point to Luther as a general influence on Calvin. The bondage of the will to divine necessity and the distinction between the law as teacher of duty and not ability both seem to fit this category, as does the metaphor of the will as beast of burden.
- 3) Not found in the tradition but uniquely Lutheran. This is the strongest evidence and would point to Luther specifically and exclusively as an influence on Calvin. Calvin's statement that God uses wicked tools, his application of the distinction between necessity (*necessitas*) and coercion (*coactio* or *violentia*), his view of contingency, and his formal denial of free choice seem to fit this category.

#### **D. Avoiding the Ecumenical Accommodation: Richard Muller's *The Unaccommodated Calvin***

One last note on method must be brought into focus in order to resist recasting Luther and Calvin to meet modern day ecumenical concerns. Richard Muller in his highly valuable book

*The Unaccommodated Calvin* insists that the historical task must precede the systematic one in order to prevent accommodation of Calvin's thought to theological systems and concerns that were foreign to his sixteenth-century context but (surprise!) not so foreign to the interpreter's own.<sup>58</sup> This applies to modern ecumenical concerns. If the original context is not carefully observed, then accommodations to the modern context will naturally occur with harmonistic abuses of the texts. Lane has already warned about the difference between historical and ecumenical comparisons. Muller's remedy for curing the historical poison of modern accommodations is to read Calvin's theology "in its development in dialogue with the past and with his contemporaries" and "with attention to the continuities and discontinuities between his thought and that of predecessors, contemporaries, and successors."<sup>59</sup> In seeming reaction to accommodations to later contexts, some segments of modern day historiography focus on discontinuities, for example, Lane's work on Calvin and Luther.<sup>60</sup> But if Muller's approach is sound, and I believe that it is, then we must not diminish the presence and import of continuities. Thus the historian needs to walk the fine line between modern accommodations and overplaying

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<sup>58</sup> Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 14. Ganoczy's earlier insights are especially memorable in this respect, "The majority of historians...in order to show the considerable influence that the head of Geneva has had upon both religious and world history...write from the perspective determined by the relationship 'Calvin-history.'...But if one considers that before he was able to influence later history, Calvin himself was influenced by earlier and contemporary history, one must also take into account the relationship 'history-Calvin' (*The Young Calvin*, 32). Then more forcefully he adds, "I am convinced that it is not the heritage of the dead Calvin that will lead us to the living Calvin, nor will the elder Calvin lead us to the younger Calvin. The proper method consists of approaching him through the milieu from which he emerges, then accompanying him on the paths of his youth in light of contemporary documents" (*Ibid.*, 34).

<sup>60</sup> See also Timothy Wengert, "'We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever': The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melancthon," in *Melancthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 19-44, who argues that Calvin blunted theological differences between himself and Melancthon out of an ecumenical concern. While Wengert is basically correct, the case of Calvin and Melancthon on the will is fundamentally different than Calvin and Luther on the will. Calvin admitted the differences he had with Melancthon in a way that he did not with Luther. In fact, Calvin tried to overcome the differences with Melancthon personally and publicly. Personally through epistolary persuasion and publicly by appealing to Melancthon's approach to the question, which Calvin considered more philosophical than exegetical. Calvin took no such approach with Luther. Calvin simply championed Luther without resort to private persuasion or public qualification. Where Melancthon retreated from his earlier position on necessity, Calvin claimed to take Luther's same approach, grounding necessity in the texts of Scripture. See Chapter 4 at n. 87-89.

tensions and discontinuities that may or may not be in the original context. Discontinuities are important for displaying individuality and variety in history. Continuities are important for establishing meaningful historical connections that might have secondary applications to modern concerns for ecumenical ties between traditions.

This study does not pretend that its conclusions impinge only on the historical relationship between Luther and Calvin. It also touches the relationships between their traditions both then and now. But the methodological commitment at the very outset is to acknowledge those concerns and then table them so that the historical task can be carried out first with all objective controls mentioned above in place. Then the theological commitments and ecumenical impulses of the author and readers and of our times may be brought to bear on what is, first and foremost, a sixteenth-century matter. At that point applications may be drawn from the context of Luther and Calvin for the benefit of questions being posed today. Of course, these modern concerns can never be fully excluded, and I acknowledge them as part of my motivation to begin the study at all. But they must be methodologically controlled to the fullest extent possible, so that we might get to the sixteenth-century men that Luther and Calvin were, ensconced in their early modern surroundings and starting from all of their pre-modern concerns. Until this is done, we must resist the ecumenical impulse and confessional accommodation and view the reformers in the creative contexts of their own time. Lane has already argued that Calvin's ecumenical concerns played a role in that they prevented him from openly disagreeing with Luther. While I argue that Calvin is not actually guilty of letting his ecumenical impulses obscure the truth, I do not want to fall under the same charge myself.

#### **E. Luther and Calvin on Each Other**

When did Calvin first know of Luther? In 1517, when Luther was nailing his *95 Theses* to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, Calvin was eight and attending a small

boys school in Noyon, France. In August of 1523 the fourteen-year-old Calvin rode into Paris to begin his academic university career, and on the eighth of that month an Augustinian monk, Jean Vallière, was burned at the stake for Lutheran ideas.<sup>61</sup> Reform was in the atmosphere that Calvin breathed during his student years at the universities of Paris, Orléans, and Bourges. The intellectual elite had been reading Luther since 1519, and the theological faculty of the Sorbonne in Paris already had taken action against reform in 1521, condemning Luther's teachings. Later that same year the Parliament of Paris followed suit and banned Luther's works. Calvin learned Greek in Orléans and Bourges from Melchior Wolmar who was a devotee of Luther. Calvin also dedicated his commentary on Second Corinthians to Wolmar. After presenting the commentary to Wolmar as compensation for his failure to keep in touch, Calvin wrote to his friend:

I remember how faithfully you have cultivated and strengthened the friendship between us which had its first beginnings so long ago, how generous you have been in putting yourself and your services at my disposal, whenever you found an opportunity of giving proof of your friendship, how assiduously you offered your help in promoting my advancement...But the main reason has been my recollection of how, the first time my father sent me to study civil law, it was at your instigation and under your tuition that I also took up the study of Greek.<sup>62</sup>

While there is no evidence that Wolmar decisively influenced Calvin in his later reforming direction,<sup>63</sup> it is evident that Calvin came into contact with reform-minded scholars with whom he became friends and regarded highly.<sup>64</sup>

The first encounter with Luther that we know of was mentioned by Calvin in his controversy with Westphal in 1556. There Calvin recalled reading Luther's work against Ulrich Zwingli on the Lord's Supper. Calvin wrote that he was "just emerging (*emergere incipiens*)"

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<sup>61</sup> This reflects traditional dating. T. H. L. Parker has made the case for an earlier date of 1520-1521 in *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 156-161.

<sup>62</sup> *CNTC* 10, 1.

<sup>63</sup> For a biographer who attaches great importance to the influence of Wolmar see Jean Cadier, *The Man God Mastered: A Brief Biography of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960), 23-29, 38-39.

<sup>64</sup> For a survey of French humanism and evangelism in relation to Calvin's student days see Cottret, 54-63.

from the darkness of the papacy having “barely formed a taste (*gustu concepto*)” for sound doctrine, when he read Luther in his Eucharistic controversy with the Swiss. Calvin “confessed (*fateor*)” that upon realizing that Zwingli and Oecolampadius left the sacraments as nothing more than “mere and empty signs (*nudas et inanes figuras*)” he avoided their writings for a long time out of a sense of “estrangement” (*alienatum*).<sup>65</sup> Calvin had sided with Luther over Zwingli, but can we determine the time Calvin encountered Luther? Jean Cadier places it before the Marburg Colloquy of 1529 and sees it in connection with Calvin’s conversion that he related in his 1557 *Commentary on the Psalms*.<sup>66</sup> Was Luther in fact on Calvin’s personal reading list prior to 1529 when Luther and Zwingli were locked in controversy? This could very well be since, after mentioning his reading of Luther, Calvin immediately added, “Later on (*porro*) [from his reading of Luther], before I had begun to write (*antequam scribere aggressus sum*), the Marburg representatives met together (*Marpurgi inter se solloquuti*).”<sup>67</sup> This reading would seem to indicate that the Marburg Colloquy of 1529 occurred between Calvin’s reading of Luther and Calvin’s first writing. But a pre-1529 date for Calvin’s Luther reading cannot be fixed with absolute certainty since *porro* could also mean “furthermore” or “moreover” without any reference to time sequence.<sup>68</sup> T. H. L. Parker comments, “I do not think that the *Admonition to Westphal* proves anything in terms of dates.”<sup>69</sup> While I concur that nothing can be proved for certain, the text leaves an impression of chronology that points to Calvin going in a Lutheran

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<sup>65</sup> *Second Defense to Westphal* (1556). *CO* 9, 51; *T&T* 2, 252-53. Gerrish, “Pathfinder,” 284, n. 15, also cites *CO* 5, 458-60; 9, 51; 10, 2, 346; 11, 24, 438, indicating Calvin’s preference for Luther over Zwingli.

<sup>66</sup> Cadier, 36-37. The difficulty with determining the date and nature of Calvin’s conversion can be seen by a survey of some of his major biographers. François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997 [First ed. Presses Universitaires de France, 1950]), 37-45. Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 241-66. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography*, 156-65. Cottret, 65-70.

<sup>67</sup> *Second Defense to Westphal*. *CO* 9, 51; *T&T* 2, 253.

<sup>68</sup> It seems worth noting however, that for *porro* the primary referents and the majority of referents either denote or connote a subsequent state of affairs. See the first four out of six in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (1968), and five out of six in the *Dictionary of Ecclesiastical Latin*, ed. Leo F. Stelton (Peabody, Mass. 1995).



direction quite early. There appears to be a temporal progression from the time Calvin had just emerged from the influence of the papacy with a taste of sound doctrine to the time when he was about to start writing (that is, prior to 1532 [*Senecae de clementia*] or 1534 [*Psychopannychia*]). It is precisely in that time period that the Marburg Colloquy took place. This would locate Calvin's exposure to Luther's writings against the Swiss sometime during or after Calvin's first movements toward reform and Marburg in 1529. But it should also be remembered that Calvin was recalling his exposure to Luther from a distance of at least twenty years. While the ambiguity may be intentional on Calvin's part due to memory loss, dating Calvin's change seems more promising than pegging Luther's gospel breakthrough that he also recalled from approximately the same distance in time.<sup>70</sup>

Luther and Calvin's relationship to each is well documented from this point by Gerrish and includes overtures from Luther that overwhelmed Calvin and numerous examples of Calvin's devotion to Luther and his teachings.<sup>71</sup> To this can be added the research of Neuser, who documents Luther's defense of Calvin to certain Nuremburg theologians that accused Calvin of breaking the 1536 Concord of Wittenburg.<sup>72</sup> Also important to note is Cornelius Augustijn's research into the relationship between Bucer and Calvin in Strasbourg. Augustijn shows that Calvin came to see himself as one of the German Lutheran party. Augustijn says that in the imperial city of Strasbourg, Calvin became acquainted with another world. The Frenchman was now in the midst of German Protestant churches and German theologians. Calvin had known Luther as a theologian, but never having lived in the environment of Germany, Luther was still a

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<sup>69</sup> Parker, *Calvin: A Biography*, 162.

<sup>70</sup> Luther recounted his breakthrough in his *Preface to the Latin Writings* (1545). *WA* 54, 186.16-20; *SA* 5, 618-638. *LW* 34, 337.

<sup>71</sup> Gerrish, "The Pathfinder," 27-48.

<sup>72</sup> See at n. 20 above.

foreign guest to him. Now Calvin was introduced to German life and politics, and attended the Leipzig Disputation (January 1539), the Schmalkaldic League in Frankfurt where he first met Melanchthon (March 1539), and the colloquies of Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg (1540-1541) where he mingled with the Germans as a Lutheran representative. Calvin was at first suspicious of Luther's intentions with the Wittenberg Concord. But after Luther sent a letter to Bucer wherein he forwarded words of praise to Calvin, Calvin's attitude toward Luther changed. But Augustijn notes that it was not a theological change. Calvin had always preferred Luther over Zwingli. What is new is that in a letter to Farel Calvin "counts himself among the Strasbourg party: *nos, nostri*, in an emphatic contrast to *illi*, the Zwinglians; and this also means allied to the Lutherans."<sup>73</sup> This is seen also in Calvin's further comments to Westphal, "I was...brought into familiar intercourse with the leading advocates and keenest defenders of Luther's opinions, and they all vied in showing me friendship. Nay, what opinion Luther himself formed of me, after he had inspected my writings, can be proved by competent witnesses. One will serve me for many—Phillip Melanchthon."<sup>74</sup> All this goes to the historical ties that unite Luther and Calvin as sixteenth-century reformers that we will explore on the issue of the will in Chapter 3.

#### **F. The Role of the Renaissance: Humanism in Service of Rome or Reform?**

Harry J. McSorley, in his work *Luther: Right or Wrong*, comments, "The particular doctrine which Luther found *most* in need of reform was...the doctrine concerning free will."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Cornelis Augustijn, "Calvin in Strasbourg," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 172, see also 168-72.

<sup>74</sup> *Second Defense to Westphal. T&T* 2, 253.

<sup>75</sup> Harry J. McSorley, *Luther Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 263.

By Luther's own acknowledgment he focused his efforts on the doctrine of free choice writing in response to the papal condemnation:

In the other articles concerning the papacy, councils, indulgences and other non-necessary trifles, the foolishness and stupidity of the pope and his people must be suffered, but in this article, which is the most important of all and the greatest of our concerns (*qui omnium optimus et rerum nostrarum summa est*), one is compelled to grieve and lament that these miserable people so rage."<sup>76</sup>

This condemned article from the thirteenth thesis of the *Heidelberg Disputation* took aim at the *facere quod in se est* of the *via moderna* and was a continuation of *The Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* where Scotus, Ockham, Biel, and Pierre D'Ailly were singled out by Luther as opponents. These were the theologians that gave shape to the *via moderna* as a school, and the *via moderna* made up part of Luther's early training.<sup>77</sup> As Luther was transformed into the role of reformer, he retained elements of the *via moderna* approach to theology that he learned at Erfurt but rejected its doctrines of the will and grace. Luther associated these doctrines with the pope himself:

Christ says in John 15, "Without me you can do nothing." What is this 'nothing' that free choice does without from Christ? It prepares itself for grace, they say, through morally good works. But Christ makes these works nothing, thus it prepares itself through nothing. What a wonderful preparation which happens through nothing. In truth, what that nothing is reveals itself in the following saying: "If anyone does not remain in me he is cast out as a branch and withers, and they collect him and cast him into the fire where he burns up." I ask, what is your unfaithful branch, Most Holy Vicar of Christ, that you hear your Lord speak against? You say, that free choice is able to prepare itself to enter into grace (*Tu dicis, quod liberum arbitrium*

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<sup>76</sup> WA 7, 148.14-17.

<sup>77</sup> For Luther's relationship to the *via moderna* and scholasticism in general see Leif Grane, "Luther and Scholasticism," in *Luther and Learning: The Wittenberg University Luther Symposium* (Selinsgrove, New Jersey, 1985), 52-68. Idem. *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio Contra Scholasticam Theologiam* (Gyldendal, 1962), 9-48, 263-368. Idem. *Modus loquendi theologicus: Luthers Kampf um die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1518)* (Leiden: Brill, 1975). Friedrich Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity Between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God* (Uppsala: Uppsala Univ., 1978), 17-19, 76-85. McSorely, *Luther*, 217-246. Bagchi, "Sic et Non: Luther and Scholasticism," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Paternoster, 1999), 3-15. Cornelis Augustin, "Wittenberg contra Scholasticos," in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker, Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 65-77.

*possit se preparare, ut intret ad gratiam*). But Christ says that it is cast out so that it could not be further from grace.<sup>78</sup>

It was the papacy that had condemned Luther's article, calling for the recantation of the doctrine that had given him peace, and thus it was the papacy that received his full enmity. In *BW* Luther congratulated Erasmus for putting his finger on the central issue: "You alone, apart from all the rest, have attacked the essence of the matter (*rem ipsam*), the point in question (*summam causae*)...you and you alone, have seen the heart of the matter (*cardinem rerum*), and have aimed for the jugular itself (*ipsum jugulum*)."<sup>79</sup> What was this "essence of the matter" in the debate between Luther and Erasmus? The issue was whether man's free choice could play an independent role in contributing to grace and salvation or whether grace also secured the positive response of the will.<sup>80</sup> From the Erasmus encounter we realize that Luther had multiple targets in the larger battle line over free choice. The pope is associated with the medieval theologians; and now, in opposing Erasmus's view of free choice, Luther's reform took on a new opponent—a humanist. In the end, Erasmus's position was not substantially different, though Erasmus disliked the hair-splitting scholastics and tried, like other humanists, to reach and defend the same theological end by different means.<sup>81</sup> Yet while the bottom line is the same, Erasmus's more textually based approach interjected a new method into the debate, distinguishing him from the scholastics as a new or second target in his own right.

Erasmus was an advocate of the new learning, an opponent of scholastic problems of speculation and obscurity, and a sometimes-caustic promoter of church reform.<sup>82</sup> With respect to

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<sup>78</sup> *WA* 7, 142.31-143.3.

<sup>79</sup> *SA* 3, 355.5-9; *LW* 33, 294.

<sup>80</sup> *LW* 33, 35, 197, 260.

<sup>81</sup> An example of the humanist effort to support Roman Catholic theology by different arguments and means is shown by Charles Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1970).

<sup>82</sup> See Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*.

reform, Erasmus desired an educated and morally upstanding clergy and pious parishioners but had no stomach for disputing the theology endorsed by the Roman church. Where the church had spoken, Erasmus would not question.<sup>83</sup> His reform was not so much aimed at doctrines of the church but at practical Christ-like living, the *philosophia Christi*.<sup>84</sup> Given his unwillingness to dispute church teaching, it is not entirely surprising that the prince of humanists was influenced by scholastic theology on the question of free choice and justification.<sup>85</sup> Erasmus was eclectic and often tried to play more than one side, and when it came to free choice and the will he drew upon scholastic opinions in his attack on Luther and revealed certain affinities with the *via moderna*.<sup>86</sup> Pighius, a humanist like Erasmus, did the same.<sup>87</sup> In fact, Erasmus and Pighius seem to have held Ockhamist ideas not so much because of their humanism but rather because, in their desire to refute the reformers, they gravitated toward affirmations of free choice which happened to be found in later scholasticism. It must be kept in mind that Luther was devoted to the

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<sup>83</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 279-82, argues that Erasmus would not and did not question the church on matters where it had spoken and on “central questions of the faith” (ibid. 281).

<sup>84</sup> See James D. Tracy, “The Philosophy of Christ,” in *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (Berkeley et. al.: Univ. of California, 1996), 104-15. See also ibid. 152-53. Cornelis Augustijn, “Christian Philosophy,” in *Erasmus: His Life, Works, and Influence*, (Univ. of Toronto: Toronto et. al., 1991 [original 1986]), 71-88.

<sup>85</sup> Trinkaus, “The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation,” in *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan, 1983), 404-21, draws the spectrum of views on free choice and highlights the problems addressed. Aquinas argued that man is free/self-determined in the world where he participates in providence and free in salvation where he participates in grace. Ockham argued that freedom is not voluntary self-determination but spontaneous movement within the contingencies of life where man is amoral in the world but may achieve merit in salvation. Petrarch, Ficino, and Pico were stoic humanists who argued that man is subject to deterministic economic forces in the world and is only free in his mind where he must retreat from his passions and seek the divine. Valla and Pompanazzi foreshadow the Reformation as they argued that man was not free in the world by virtue of reason or in relation to God. Valla held that voluntary actions are determined by inborn character given by God. Luther and Calvin argued that man is in bondage to sin in the spiritual and civil spheres and cannot achieve righteousness. Luther and Calvin both appealed to Valla. *LW* 33, 72. *Inst.* 3.23.6.

<sup>86</sup> For Erasmus’s affinities with Ockhamism see James D. Tracy, “Two Erasmuses, Two Luthers: Erasmus’ Strategy in Defense of *De Libero Arbitrio*,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 78 (1987): 37-60. McSorley, *Luther*, 288-93. Gordon Rupp, “The Erasmian Engima,” in *LCC* 17, 11-12. Phillip Watson, “The Lutheran Riposte,” *idem.*, 14-15, 24-25.

<sup>87</sup> See Chapter 3 at n. 72-74. See also Schulze, *Calvin’s Reply*, 11-12, 41, 46-48, for Pighius’s background in humanism and his ties to medieval scholasticism.

academic and cultural reforms of humanism as well,<sup>88</sup> and Calvin was trained as a humanist.<sup>89</sup> It appears the *via moderna* fostered a certain kind of ideological humanism in Erasmus and Pighius, that is, a humanism advocating late medieval doctrine associated with Rome. This led the humanistically inclined Luther and Calvin to oppose these humanists. It could be argued that Luther and Calvin's doctrinal reforms fostered another kind of ideological humanism, that is, a humanism advocating reform of medieval church doctrine. Thus, both sides employed humanism as an approach to scholarship, and the real conflict was not between humanism and reform but between a generally entrenched Ockhamism and reform.

The real divide, then, was over positions asserting human preparation for grace (*facere quod in se est*) and grace alone (*sola gratia*). An intractable semi-Pelagianism and opposition to it drove the debate and created the division between the humanism of Erasmus and Pighius on one side, who were faithful to Rome, and the humanism of Luther and Calvin on the other, who wanted to reform the church. In the end, Erasmus found himself on the other side of Luther's reform for various reasons. First, he was influenced by a strain of medieval theology that he associated with Scotus but that was better reflected by Ockhamism.<sup>90</sup> Second, his scholastic views seem to be reinforced by his humanistic studies in the classical world where the solution to the human predicament tended to lie not in radical grace but in proper education. The third reason for Erasmus's opposition to Luther was his disdain for Luther's dogmatic assertions on issues where the church had not settled upon a final position and now found itself opposing Luther. The fourth and perhaps the greatest reason was the one given by Erasmus himself.

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<sup>88</sup> Heiko Oberman, "Headwaters of the Reformation: *Initia Lutheri—Initia Reformationis*," in *Luther and the Dawn of the Modern Era*, ed. Heiko Oberman (Leiden, 1974), 40-88. Spitz, "Headwaters of the Reformation: *Studia Humanitatis, Luther Senior, et Initia Reformationis*," *idem.*, 89-116. *Idem.*, "The Third Generation of German Renaissance Humanists," in *The Reformation: Basic Interpretations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. *idem.* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath, 1972), 44-59.

<sup>89</sup> See n. 64. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 40, 44. Bouwsma, *John Calvin*, Chapter 7.

Erasmus feared that Luther's position would lead to determinism or fatalism and remove moral responsibility. This was at the heart of Erasmus's combination of grace with moral effort in effecting salvation.<sup>91</sup>

Luther's opponents ranged from the representatives of the *via moderna*, to the pope, to Erasmus, and there was one common enemy behind them all—the idea of a purely natural act of human cooperation with grace that prepares for justification. While there were strands in the classical tradition that could be linked with medieval emphases, and these probably reinforced each other in the mind of Erasmus, Luther's enemy was not humanism *per se*. Luther “connected the dots” between Erasmus and medieval ideas of cooperation but did not fault Erasmus as a humanist. In fact, he praised his eloquence, but lamented that Erasmus used it to communicate gross theological error. For Luther, Erasmus's problem was not humanism but only humanistic eloquence in service of false teaching.

Calvin also viewed Pighius in a similar and qualified way, “I admit that in other respects the man is clever and learned. I allow that he is an incisive debater and a skillful orator. I recognize that he is, in the popular sense, eloquent—that is, he is strong in that kind of eloquence which is able to captivate and allure those who have not much education, of whom are many today.” But Calvin said madness had afflicted Pighius, and the only remedy was for the humanist to “cease to wage war...against the clear and certain truth of God” and “cast away his stupid opinion of himself and arrogant pride.”<sup>92</sup> As with Luther, Calvin did not fault his opponent for his learning and rhetorical sophistication, but for using it against Christ.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *LCC* 17, 51.

<sup>91</sup> *LCC* 17, 40-42. Tracy says, “Although Erasmus could for pastoral purposes agree with Luther's understanding of faith...when it came to making dogmatic statements of his own Erasmus parted company with Luther insisting that ‘faith itself is a human work in which free choice has a role’ (*Erasmus*, 152).

<sup>92</sup> *BLW* 9-10.

<sup>93</sup> Calvin said that Pighius uttered “nothing but abominable insults against Christ” (*BLW* 9).

Erasmus's non-committal attitude in refusing to come down with a firm position on free choice while resting in the arms of the church which had not settled the issue infuriated Luther even more. Erasmus's approach to the question could be more closely associated with humanism *vis-à-vis* the tradition of skepticism.<sup>94</sup> Erasmus is yet another example of the fact that humanism and scholasticism were not neatly divided into separate camps but could and did flow into each other and create certain flavors of ideological humanism.

Theology never springs full-grown as if from the head of Zeus. Systems are built gradually over time and, while texts and logic may dominate, other factors play important roles. Clearly historical contexts and settings are major factors and may contain other dominating elements. In other words, history does not usually follow the necessary inferences that some would assume. Luther and Erasmus shared, to varying degrees, an interest in humanism but parted company over other issues. Calvin and Pighius can, in broad terms, be said to have done the same. Also they swam in the wake of Luther and Erasmus. When we turn to the question of a Luther-Calvin connection, it is apparent that limiting the studies' approach to just one of the two types we sketched in this chapter is likely to miss factors that would be uncovered by another. The best tactic would be to balance and blend both the hermeneutic of skepticism and a preponderance of the evidence into one hermeneutic of historical comparison that uses both as tools—just what we will endeavor to do now in the chapters that follow.

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<sup>94</sup> Robert Rosin, *Reformers, the Preacher, and Skepticism: Luther, Brenz, Melancthon and Ecclesiastes* (Mainz: Phillipp von Zabern, 1997), 88-97.



## CHAPTER THREE

### CALVIN'S HISTORICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK 1 OF *THE BONDAGE AND LIBERTATION OF THE WILL* <sup>1</sup>

Calvin wrote his 1539 edition of his *Institutes* for candidates preparing for ministry in the reformed churches. It went beyond the expanded catechetical approach of the first edition (1536) and represented the *loci* approach employed by Phillip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer. Richard Muller points out that Calvin's method, as outlined in the 1539 *Institutes* and 1540 Romans commentary, called for a new approach that turned exegesis and the topical exposition of doctrine or the *loci* method into different assignments. Calvin devoted himself to formal exegesis in his commentaries and sermons, and reserved the topical teaching of doctrine for his *Institutes*. In this way Calvin distinguished himself from Melanchthon who devoted a great deal of space to exegesis in his *Loci communes* and Bucer whose commentaries expanded with theological reflection on doctrinal topics encountered in the text.

Calvin's aim in the *Institutes* was lucid brevity (*brevitas*).<sup>2</sup> Calvin's orderly and focused approach to instruction and disputation in theology (*institutio*) did not go unnoticed by Pighius whose book *Free Choice* was attacking the 1539 *Institutes*. Calvin wrote, "He issues the challenge to me alone in particular and joins battle with me because he thinks that I have dealt with the full extent of this subject more carefully and arranged everything in a more orderly and

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin's "On Book One" sets the historical background to his debate with Pighius and shows the link to Luther. Calvin's "On Book Two" includes more historical connections with Luther but moves the debate primarily into theological discussion where this study will explore parallels with Luther and consider the question of influence from Luther.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford, 2000), 28-29.

methodical way than others have done.”<sup>3</sup> Soon Pighius, who had been fighting Luther, Melanchthon, and Bucer, was fighting Calvin.<sup>4</sup>

### I. Calvin Drawn into the Defense of the “Common Cause”

Albertus Pighius of Kampen was a Dutch Roman Catholic theologian and humanist. As already mentioned, Pighius attacked Calvin’s 1539 *Institutes* and the Lutheran cause in general on the subject of free choice with the publication of *Free Choice* in 1542. He specifically aimed at chapter 2 of the *Institutes*, “The Knowledge of Humanity and Free Choice,” and chapter 8, “The Predestination and Providence of God.” In *BLW*, Calvin acknowledged Luther as the forerunner to his debate with Pighius. The role of Luther as a herald of the new debate can be seen from the fact that Pighius had been focusing on Luther and Melanchthon in *Controversies* before addressing Calvin as one of their group in *Free Choice*.<sup>5</sup> This can also be seen in the way that Calvin repeatedly defended Luther and Melanchthon from the standpoint of a common cause. Calvin not only sides with them by name in the early part of his work, but refers to the whole body of reformers as “we” and “us” throughout the work. Thus the pre-history of the debate is especially crucial in understanding Calvin’s claim to solidarity with Luther, Melanchthon, and indeed all of the reformers who owed their impetus to Wittenberg.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *BLW* 8.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 1, at n. 14-24, and § V, A below.

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 1 at n. 14-17.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth considering whether Calvin considered Zwingli and the Swiss in this group. Perhaps, but Calvin did not hide his disdain for Zwingli on the Lord’s Supper. See *Second Defense of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to Joachim Westphal* (1556). *CO* 9, 51; *T&T* 2, 252-53. Calvin referred to Zwingli’s doctrine as *falsa et perniciosa* (Calvin to Andrew Zebedee, 19 May 1539, *CO* 10, 2, 346, no. 171) and wrote to Farel, “For if the two [Zwingli and Luther] be compared, you yourself know by what distance Luther excels (*Lutherus excellat*)” (Calvin to Farel, 4 March 1540, *CO* 11, 24, no. 211). See also Cornelis Augustijn, “Calvin in Strasbourg,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. Wilhelm Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 168-172, and Chapter 2 at n. 69.

Pighius's *Free Choice* was a continuation of his earlier *Controversies* of 1541.<sup>7</sup> Calvin referred to "that half a book" which was published "after the Colloquy of Regensburg" and was "written chiefly against Luther and Phillip Melanchthon but secondarily against all of us together."<sup>8</sup> Pighius had also encountered Calvin face to face as a Lutheran representative of Strasbourg at the Colloquies of Worms (1540) and Regensberg (1541).<sup>9</sup> Calvin said he was relieved that Pighius had not attacked him directly in *Controversies*, and reasoned that Pighius considered him an "unworthy victim...for him to prove his strength" as "he had preferred to turn [his book] into an attack on the common cause itself." Calvin also noted that "in many places he turned his pen specifically against me."<sup>10</sup> But Calvin said that he did not dare "to take up the defense of the common cause...for fear that I would appear to have wanted to put myself before others who are agreed to be far more competent."

Calvin would, however, enter the fray after the publication of Pighius's *Free Choice*, which Calvin referred to as Pighius's "large volume *Free Choice*."<sup>11</sup> According to Pighius's own account, Calvin's work came to his attention through Bernardus Cincius, bishop of Aquila, and through Cardinal Marcello Cervini who considered it more dangerous than other "Lutheran writings."<sup>12</sup> Calvin commented on Pighius's intent, "He does indeed frankly declare that he is doing this with the specific intention of (as it were) driving his spear through my side into Luther

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 1 at n. 14-16.

<sup>8</sup> *BLW* 7.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Gerrish comments, "At Hagenau, Worms, and Regensburg (1540-41) Calvin was treated as a Lutheran representative. Any lingering doubts one may entertain are removed by the fact that at Worms he was officially transferred from the Strasbourg delegation to the delegation of the Duke of Lüneburg" ("Strasbourg Revisited," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* [Chicago, 1982], 251). Gerrish adds that Calvin's differences with Luther over ubiquity were also widely known at the time (*Ibid.*).

<sup>10</sup> *BLW* 7.

<sup>11</sup> *BLW* 8.

<sup>12</sup> A. N. S. Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xiv. Hubert Jedin, *Studien über die Schriftstellertätigkeit Albert Pighes* (Münster: Aschendorf, 1931), 163.

and the rest of our party.”<sup>13</sup> Thus Calvin recognized Pighius’s view of the reformers’ unity was such that getting Calvin was getting Luther, and Calvin said nothing to dispel this notion. In fact, Calvin implied that he was flattered that Pighius would associate him with Luther in this way.

But if Pighius thought this bit of flattery would mollify Calvin and soften the clash to follow he was mistaken. Calvin wrote, “For he is mistaken if he supposes that I am in the slightest degree affected by that incidental remark that he devoted to me. Perhaps when he gives me some priority over others, he is making this up for his own advantage, in case he appear to have joined battle with a mere man of the ranks.”<sup>14</sup> Calvin was also eager to assert solidarity with Luther throughout the book, including himself among the Lutherans. He wrote that Pighius “wants to appear to be opening a battle against the whole party of the Lutherans, not against any individual member of it. But he cannot attack us all at the same time except as a unified body. Grudgingly he is brought to acknowledge that there is agreement between us.”<sup>15</sup> This comment confirms Brian Gerrish when he observes, “It cannot be too strongly emphasized...that Calvin did not think of himself as ‘Reformed’ in the sense of inner-Protestant polemics. Calvin was not a Calvinist but an Evangelical.... He identified himself wholly with the common Protestant cause and never faced the Wittenbergers as the sponsor of a rival movement.”<sup>16</sup> Calvin saw both reforms as parts of one and the same movement in the church.

## II. Calvin Identifies with Luther’s Reform

Pighius had dedicated his work to Cardinal Jacopo Sadoletto, who had addressed a letter to Geneva in 1539 to restore the city, formerly taken for the Reformation by William Farel, to the

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<sup>13</sup> *BLW* 8.

<sup>14</sup> *BLW* 9.

<sup>15</sup> *BLW* 30.

<sup>16</sup> Gerrish, “The Pathfinder: Calvin’s Image of Martin Luther,” in *The Old Protestantism*, 29.

Roman Church. Calvin's famous *Reply to Sadoletto* (1539) had fortified his former home against papal inroads and was likely the piece that garnered him the praise of Luther.<sup>17</sup> Now Calvin was fighting Pighius who had singled Calvin out from among the Lutherans. Calvin noted that Pighius's letter of dedication to Sadoletto did not impinge directly on his topic, but since it was intended to exert pressure on the reformers by consolidating the other side, Calvin addressed it by establishing the lines on his side. He did this by way of counter-attack on Pighius, who had claimed to be surprised at the success of the reformers. Calvin responded, "So let Pighius cease to be amazed about the origin of this new and unheard-of efficacy of our teaching, when the fact itself proclaims that at the beginning it was not Luther who spoke, but God thundered through his mouth, and that now it is not we who speak, but God is displaying his power from heaven."<sup>18</sup>

Pighius had also contrasted the reform movement with the unity of the apostles. In countering the negative comparison, Calvin picked up on what Pighius had said about apostolic unanimity, "As if the Lord had not given this same unanimity to those who today seek to restore the teaching of the gospel to its original place." To that Calvin added, "We have sought nothing else these twenty-five years but that the whole conflict should be ended in such a way that the victory should not fall to men, but should remain...with that teaching which was proclaimed by Christ and the apostles."<sup>19</sup> What was Calvin's reference to "these twenty-five years?" It was the twenty-fifth year since Luther's posting of the *Ninety-five Theses*.<sup>20</sup> This indicates a historical consciousness on the part of Calvin that reform began with Luther's posting, and that he himself

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<sup>17</sup> Luther wrote to Bucer, "And will you reverently greet (*salutibus...reverenter*) John Sturm and John Calvin. I have read their little books with singular enjoyment (*singulari voluptate*).... As for Sadoletto, I wish he would believe that God is the creator of men even outside of Italy" ("Luther to Bucer, 14 October, 1539," *CO* 10, 2, 402, no. 190).

<sup>18</sup> *BLW* 12.

<sup>19</sup> *BLW* 13.

<sup>20</sup> *BLW* 13, n. 29.

was part of the ongoing significance of that act. Continuing the comparison with the apostles, Calvin noted that between the conditions of their time and “the time when Luther came to prominence” anyone with insight

will see that he shared almost all other difficulties in common with the apostles, but that in one respect his situation was worse and harder than theirs. In their time there was no kingdom or dominion in the world for them to declare war upon, whereas [Luther] could in no way arise from the depths except by the overthrow and destruction of that empire.... This is the difficulty which we now face.<sup>21</sup>

Thus the battle lines of reform and resistance were clearly drawn and, for Calvin’s part, solidarity in reform with Luther was zealously maintained from the very beginning of Luther’s rise.

### **III. Calvin Defends Luther’s Struggles**

Calvin also defended Luther’s anxieties, and in so doing, demonstrated an understanding of them. According to Calvin, Pighius was so vehement in his attacks on Luther’s character that he made him out to be “a hellish monster” because Luther “has often been troubled by grave struggles of the conscience equal to the pains and torments of hell.”<sup>22</sup> Calvin, while noting that Luther needed no defense from him, was ready to say that Luther’s anxieties sprung not from demonization but from devotion. Pighius on the other hand was an “idiot” who would be “struck dumb or rather changed into an admirer and a praiser of Luther” if he “could imagine even in a dream what this means.”

It might also be asked, “What does this mean to Calvin?” As Calvin continued he spoke of what is familiar to every devout person: “For it is the common lot of the devout to endure from time to time awful tortures of the conscience, so that by these they may become more

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<sup>21</sup> *BLW* 14.

<sup>22</sup> *BLW* 21, 22.

accustomed to true humility and fear of God.” Calvin also spoke of what can be indicative in extraordinary saints:

Therefore as each is endowed with particular excellence of character in excess of others, so he is sometimes afflicted in strange and unfamiliar ways, so that he can say that he has been not only surrounded and besieged by the pains of death but devoured by hell itself. So it is necessary for the most excellent saints to be as it were choice workshops of God for him marvelously to carry out his judgments beyond all fleshly feeling.<sup>23</sup>

That Calvin thought of Luther in the latter way as one of the “most excellent saints” is clear from the context. But how did Calvin think of himself? We have little access to Calvin’s views of himself since by his own admission he was a private person, “*De me non libenter loquor.*”<sup>24</sup> Even though Calvin did not speak freely about himself, we may be certain that he at least included himself in the first group of devout persons.<sup>25</sup> This is all the more clear since Pighius, in his view, belonged to a third group that Calvin designated as “those irreligious people who have no conscience or feeling of devotion, and who, if anything is said about the judgments of God, receive it as if they were hearing Homer’s stories about the banquets of the gods.”<sup>26</sup> Calvin seems

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<sup>23</sup> *BLW* 22.

<sup>24</sup> *OS* 1, 460.

<sup>25</sup> Gerrish writes, “He [Calvin] would not, I think, have wished to include himself among the *ex sanctis praestantissimi*, the exceptional religious personalities in whom the marvelous judgments of God are displayed. But ‘spiritual assaults’ were not foreign to him, and he knew how Luther understood them theologically” (“The Pathfinder,” 37). See William Bouwsma’s *John Calvin: A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford, 1988), for a restrained psychological treatment of Calvin that detects anxieties and portrays him as conflicted between two sides to his personality that stem from his training in both scholastic tidiness and humanistic openness. See esp. 37, 40-48, 157. Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1987), 257-59, does think that Calvin’s pre-conversion state compares to Luther’s crisis of conscience. For a critique of Bouwsma from one who does not see Calvin as stressed by anxiety, at least post conversion, see Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 79-98, see esp. 96. Heiko Oberman, “*Initia Calvini*: The matrix of Calvin’s Reformation,” in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor*, ed. Neuser (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 117-27, is largely sympathetic to Bouwsma saying, “Initiating his [Calvin’s] conversion is an experience of drowning and annihilation which Calvin regards as generic and applies to all true Christians at all times.... If saved from drowning by God’s out-stretched hand, this soul-rending experience gives way to the resuscitating power of God as pledged in His Word. This encounter with naked terror is not left behind however, but ever-present and methodically kept to mind by continuous meditation.... Bouwsma is right: the *timor Dei* as awe of God has marked Calvin for life” (26-27). For a critique of Muller on this point and an appraisal of Bouwsma see my forthcoming review of *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, in *Presbyterion*, fall 2005.

<sup>26</sup> *BLW* 22.

to understand well the experience of being shattered before God, when he writes that God's judgment "fills even the angels with dread."<sup>27</sup>

#### IV. Calvin Defends Luther's View and Use of Reason

Pighius connected Luther's rejection of free choice with his perception of the reformer's rejection of reason. Calvin commented:

Now since the principle device he uses to try to overturn our teaching is the charge that it is in the highest degree contrary to common sense, he begins by saying that it is not without reason that Luther schools his disciples, as a first principle, with a requirement that they learn to disown fleshly reason and wisdom. For most of Luther's doctrines are so absurd (and especially that one with which we are dealing, concerning the bondage of human choice) that if you want to persuade anyone of them, you have first to pluck out the "eyes" of his mind and take away all rational sense.<sup>28</sup>

By contrast, Pighius's arguments for free choice reveal a view of reason whereby what holds *coram hominibus* also holds *coram Deo*. Pighius argued that if Luther was correct on free choice, then certain problems are evident from a rational human perspective. Pighius also implied that since God views the universe in the same rational way, these problems apply from the divine perspective as well. Calvin recounted Pighius's objections:

Why are crimes punished by law if they are committed of necessity? Why does the judge pass sentence on the person through whom God has acted? For if a murder has been committed, no punishment will be inflicted upon the sword. But the wicked when they commit their crimes are, according to Luther, in exactly the same position in God's sight as is a sword in someone's hand.<sup>29</sup>

According to Pighius, Luther's position is untenable to the divine by standards of reason that apply in the law courts of men.

While Luther was known to appeal to common sense and use rational arguments, these were tempered by his theology of the cross whereby God reveals himself under a contrary

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<sup>27</sup> BLW 27.

<sup>28</sup> BLW 24.



appearance (*sub contrario*) that reason would not expect.<sup>30</sup> Luther's comments about "*Frau Hulda*" or "the great whore of reason" are often repeated as if that alone summed up the reformer's view. Luther's position was far more complex however, and reflected a more positive side as well. In fact, his understanding was as multifaceted as it was versatile, depending on the context. For instance, Luther's thoughts on reason in the realm of faith and conversion were often occasioned by Ockhamism, which left natural ability a role to play after the fall.<sup>31</sup> In response, Luther considered natural reason—an otherwise positive gift—an enemy of faith that must be overcome by revelation, "It is up to God alone to give faith contrary to nature, and ability to believe contrary to reason."<sup>32</sup> With respect to the civil realm Luther was positive toward reason<sup>33</sup> but abhorred speculation in theology<sup>34</sup> or any idea of a constructive natural theology.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *BLW 37. Free Choice* 16a. Cf. all of Pighius's seven arguments, *BLW 36-42*.

<sup>30</sup> On Luther's theology of the cross see *Heidelberg Disputation*, theses 19-22 and proofs. *LW 31*, 40-41, 52-54. *BW. LW 33*, 62-63, 145-46, 289-90. See also Chapter 6, n. 94-108. Walther von Loewenich, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976 [original German, 1967]). Heinrich Bornkamm, "Luther's Theology of the Cross," in *The Heart of the Reformation Faith: The Fundamental Axioms of Evangelical Belief* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 45-55. Gerhard O. Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross: Reflections on Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). For a concise treatment see Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 36-39.

<sup>31</sup> Luther wrote, "But there are those who have impiously asserted that natural powers remain undiminished after sin.... They are more correct who firmly confess that human nature has been corrupted through Adam's sin.... It is certain enough to the believers that neither animal nor rational powers have been left undiminished" (*The Disputation Concerning Justification*, theses 14-15, 17. *LW 34*, 155).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid. LW 34*, 160.

<sup>33</sup> "And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of this life, the best and something divine. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, 'have dominion' [Gen. 1:28]. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it" (*Disputation Concerning Man*, theses 4-9. *LW 34*, 133). Even though reason is "that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures...even after sin" it "remains under the power of the devil" (*Ibid.* thesis 24, *LW 34*, 138-139). For an in-depth analysis of the disputation see Gerhard Ebeling, *Lutherstudien*, Band II, *Disputatio de homine*, 3 Teile (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1977, 1982, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> See n. 37 below.

<sup>35</sup> Luther reflected, "Let us go one step further and compare the monastic system with natural reason; that is, let us look at it in the plain light of nature. Even if natural reason in itself is not concerned with spiritual truth or divine activity nevertheless, when it asserts affirmative statements (to use their jargon) its judgment is wrong, but when it asserts negative statements its judgment is right. Reason does not comprehend what God is, but it most certainly

Luther, however, did not completely disavow reason in theology.<sup>36</sup> In response to the question, “Is the light of reason also useful [to theology]?” he responded:

I make a distinction. Reason that is under the devil’s control is harmful, and the more clever and successful it is the more harm it does. We see this in the case of learned men who on the basis of their reason disagree with the Word. On the other hand, when illuminated by the Holy Spirit, reason helps to interpret the Holy Scriptures.... The tongue, as a tongue, doesn’t contribute to faith, and yet it serves faith when the heart is illuminated. So reason, when illuminated [by the Spirit], helps faith by reflecting on something, but reason without faith isn’t and can’t be helpful.... But reason that’s illuminated takes all its thoughts from the Word. The substance remains and the unreal disappears when reason is illuminated by the Spirit.<sup>37</sup>

This was the sense of Luther’s words standing before the Diet of Worms, “Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust in the pope or in

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comprehends what God is not. Granted, reason cannot see what is right and good in God’s sight (faith, for instance), but it sees quite clearly that infidelity, murder, and disobedience are wrong” (*The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows*. LW 44, 336).

<sup>36</sup> For Luther’s view of reason see *Disputation Concerning Man*, LW 34, 133-44, esp. theses 24-27; Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (Oxford, 1962); Bernard Lohse, *Ratio und Fides: Eine Untersuchung über die ratio in der Theologie Luthers* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958); Idem. “Reason and Revelation in Luther,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 13 (1960), 337-65; Robert H. Fisher, “A Reasonable Luther,” in *Reformation Studies: Essays in Honor of Roland Bainton*, ed. Franklin H. Littell (Richmond: John Knox, 1962), 30-45; Bornkamm, “Faith and Reason in the Thought of Erasmus and Luther,” in *Religion and Culture: Essays in Honor of Paul Tillich*, ed. Walter Leibrecht (Free Port, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1959), 133-39; Lewis W. Spitz, “Man on this Isthmus,” in *Luther for an Ecumenical Age: Essays in Commemoration of the 450<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation*, ed. Carl S. Meyer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1967), 23-66, esp. 37-39; Idem. “Luther’s Importance for Anthropological Realism,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies 4*, ed. John L. Lievsay, (Durham: Duke Univ., 1970), 134-75. See also Chapter 5, § II, for a comparison of Calvin and Luther in their relationship to Aristotle and scholasticism.

<sup>37</sup> *Table Talk*, no. 439, LW 54, 71. Gerrish sums up Luther’s variegated approach, “In order to do justice to the complexity of Luther’s thought, we must carefully distinguish: (1) natural reason, ruling within its proper domain (the Earthly Kingdom); (2) arrogant reason, trespassing upon the domain of faith (the Heavenly Kingdom); (3) regenerate reason, serving humbly in the household of faith, but always subject to the Word of God. Within the first context, reason is an excellent gift of God; with the second, it is Frau Hulda, the Devil’s Whore; within the third, it is the handmaiden of faith. And if ‘we find no more precise discussion of the activity thus attributed to reason in the lives of the regenerate (reason in the third sense), this is not...merely because its function has become purely formal, that is, to deal in thought and speech with the material presented to it by faith and the Word; it is also because reason, when regenerate, is virtually absorbed into faith, becoming faith’s cognitive and intellective aspects. Because reason belongs to the natural sphere, Luther will not allow that it is competent to judge in matters of faith; and yet, because faith comes through the hearing and understanding of the Word, Luther found himself bound to concede that reason—man’s rationality in the broadest sense—was, when regenerate, faith’s indispensable tool. We cannot, I think, deny that Luther’s understanding of the place of reason is perfectly intelligible, sometimes well-argued, even if we neither like it nor are willing to accept it” (*Grace and Reason*, 26-27). Luther’s attitude to philosophy considered either as a discipline or as a specific school was consistently negative when it was brought into theology. See n. 42 below.

councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God.”<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, Luther’s polemic against speculation or what he termed the “theology of glory” aimed at the unbridled use of reason, especially scholastic logic and Aristotelian philosophy, in the domain of theology.<sup>39</sup> Luther criticized the scholastics for making the same assumption as Aristotle, specifically that doing good works makes one good,<sup>40</sup> and he chided them for proceeding with a logical apparatus *sine textu*.<sup>41</sup> Luther welcomed “illuminated reason” in theology but was consistently opposed to philosophy in the domain of theology where the Word tolerated no usurpers of its authority, whether friends of Aristotle or speculators that would use it as a springboard.<sup>42</sup> While Calvin was not addressing the nuances of Luther’s thought on

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<sup>38</sup> LW 32, 112.

<sup>39</sup> “It is an error to say that no man can become a theologian without Aristotle. This is in opposition to common opinion. Indeed, no one can become a theologian unless he becomes one without Aristotle. To state that a theologian who is not a logician is a monstrous heretic—this is a monstrous and heretical statement. This in opposition to common opinion. In vain does one fashion a logic of faith, a substitution brought about without *regard for limit and measure*. This is in opposition to the new dialecticians. No syllogistic form is valid when applied to divine terms. This is in opposition to the Cardinal [Peirre d’Ailly]. *Nevertheless it does not for that reason follow that the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity contradicts syllogistic forms*” (emphasis mine) (*Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, theses 43-48, LW 31, 12).

<sup>40</sup> “We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This in opposition to the philosophers. Virtually the entire *Ethics* of Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This is in opposition to the scholastics.” (Ibid. theses 40-41. LW 31, 12). In the *Heidelberg Disputation* Luther added, “For the righteousness of God is not acquired by means of acts frequently repeated, as Aristotle taught, but it is imparted by faith” (proof 25, LW 31, 55).

<sup>41</sup> In 1518, Luther wrote, “Porro scholasticus doctoribus et canonistis constat nullam deberi a nobis fidem, dum suas opinantur opiniones. Et, ut vulgo dicitur: Turpe est Iuristam loqui sine textu. At multo turpius est Theologum loqui sine textu. Non Aristotelis dico, Nam hunc plus, valde, nimis, satis loquuntur, sed nostro, id est sacrae scripturae, Canonum, Ecclesisticorum patrum” (*WABr* 1, 139.27-32). See Leif Grane, “Luther and Scholasticism,” in *Luther and Learning: The Wittenberg University Luther Symposium* (Selinsgrove, New Jersey, 1985), 52-68, see esp. 58-62.

<sup>42</sup> See Gerrish, “Luther’s Attitude to Philosophy,” in *Grace and Reason*, 28-42. While Luther sought to extricate philosophy from theology, Gerrish delineates a variegated approach for Luther here as well, “In the *Table-Talk* we find it bluntly stated: ‘Philosophy does not understand sacred things.... I do not disapprove its use, but let us use it as a shadow, a comedy, and as political righteousness.’... Hence, whilst Luther is willing to use philosophy to back up a point, he will not build upon its foundations” (*Grace and Reason*, 29-30). The latter sentiment is basically the thesis of Wilhelm Link, *Das Ringen Luthers um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1955). Link argues that Luther was not slavish to any one philosophical school but would only employ insights and terminology from them in his effort to exposit and apply the Word. Grane comments with respect to scholasticism, “Luther obviously felt free to return to scholastic usage whenever it could improve his

reason in *BLW*, he was mirroring Luther's polemic against those, like Pighius, who invited reason to trespass into theology. The range of Calvin's statements on reason parallel Luther's: praising its accomplishments in the arts, sciences, and civil realm,<sup>43</sup> excluding the possibility of a constructive natural theology,<sup>44</sup> and limiting its role in sacred matters to the investigation of Scripture texts<sup>45</sup> and prohibiting speculation upon them.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Calvin distinguished three kinds of reason, when the Lutheran Tileman Heshusius accused him of giving it priority over God's word:

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arguments.... He felt free to use its intellectual achievements to sharpen his wit, to defeat less competent opponents, to argue in disputations, but above all to warn against the clever ways by which men try to destroy the gospel" ("Luther and Scholasticism," 65). Luther put his general attitude to philosophy most memorably, "Philosophy is, as it were, the theology of the heathen and reason (*Philosophia est quasi theologia gentium et rationis*)" (*WATr* 1, 4, no. 4).

<sup>43</sup> "What then? Shall we deny that the truth shone upon the ancient jurists who established civic order and discipline with such great equity? Shall we say that the philosophers were blind in their fine observation and artful description of nature? Shall we say that those men were devoid of understanding who conceived the art of disputation and taught us to speak reasonably? Shall we say that they are insane who developed medicine, devoting their labor to our benefit? What shall we say of all the mathematical sciences? Shall we consider them the ravings of madmen? No, we cannot read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration. We marvel at them because we are compelled to recognize how preeminent they are. But shall we count anything praiseworthy or noble without recognizing at the same time that it comes from God?... Those men whom Scripture [1 Cor. 2:14] calls 'natural men' were, indeed sharp and penetrating in their investigation of inferior things (*rerum inferiorum*). Let us, accordingly, learn by their example how many gifts the Lord left to human nature even after it was despoiled of its true good" (*OS* 3, 258.10-37; *Inst.* 2.2.15 [trans. Battles]). See also *Inst.* 2.2.12-17. Åke Bergvall, "Reason in Luther, Calvin, and Sidney," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992), 115-27, see esp. 118-22.

<sup>44</sup> "We must now analyze what human reason can discern with regard to God's kingdom and spiritual insight. This spiritual insight consists chiefly in three things: (1) knowing God; (2) knowing his fatherly favor in our behalf, in which our salvation consists; (3) knowing how to frame our life according to the rule of his law. In the first two points—and especially in the second—the greatest geniuses are blinder than moles! Certainly I do not deny that one can read competent and apt statements about God here and there in the philosophers, but these always show a certain giddy imagination. As was stated above, the Lord indeed gave them a slight taste of his divinity.... They are like a traveler passing through a field at night who in a momentary lightening flash sees far and wide, but the sight vanishes so swiftly that he is plunged again into the darkness of the night before he can take even a step—let alone be directed on his way by its help. In short, they never even sensed that assurance of God's benevolence toward us (without which man's understanding can only be filled with boundless confusion)" (*Inst.* 2.2.18). See also *Inst.* 1.15.8. 2.2.24.

<sup>45</sup> See also n. 52 below.

<sup>46</sup> "From this passage we should allow ourselves to be reminded of the bounds we must set to our knowledge. We are naturally given to curiosity so that we tend to pass over carelessly, or, at least, taste only slightly teaching that tends to edification while we become involved in frivolous questions. To this curiosity we add boldness and rashness, so that we are ready without hesitation to pronounce on things about which we know nothing and which are hidden from us. From these two sources there has sprung up a great deal of scholastic theology.... It is all the more incumbent upon us to seek to know nothing but what the Lord has been willing to reveal to His Church. Let

Three kinds of reason are to be considered.... There is a reason naturally implanted in us which cannot be condemned without insult to God; but it has limits which it cannot overstep without being immediately lost. Of this we have a proof in the fall of Adam. There is another kind of vitiated reason, especially in a corrupt nature, manifested when mortal man, instead of receiving divine things with reverence, wants to subject them to his own judgment. This reason is intoxication of the mind, a kind of sweet insanity, at perpetual variance with the obedience of faith; for we must become fools in ourselves before we can begin to be wise unto God. In regard to heavenly mysteries, therefore, this reason must retire, for it is nothing better than mere fatuity, and if accompanied with arrogance rises to madness. But there is a third kind of reason, which both the Spirit of God and Scripture sanction.... He [Heshusius] charges us with paying more deference to reason than to the Word of God. But what if we adduce no reason that is not derived from the Word of God and founded on it?<sup>47</sup>

Calvin defended Luther's position against "fleshly reason" by maintaining that it was so axiomatic among the faithful that it was no more open to debate than the proposition that "God is one."<sup>48</sup> Pighius had claimed that Luther's position was in conflict with Paul who said faith comes from hearing (Rom. 10:17). If Luther's position was true, Pighius contended, then faith was more suited to "infants and idiots," not to those who could hear. It appears that Pighius had in mind a rational hearing whereby a person produces an intellectual faith in response to preaching. To this Calvin brought in 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 as a parallel passage and added, "As if indeed Paul did not immediately afterwards cut this knot of Pighius's by adding that faith depends on the secret revelation of God!" Thus to Calvin's way of thinking the secret revelation of God brings faith, while Pighius's idea of faith as a rational response to preaching did not square with the whole counsel of Scripture. But Calvin noted that this secret revelation did not thereby remove reason, nor did the change from fleshly reason make a person a "woodenhead."

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that be the limit of our knowledge" (Commentary 2 Cor. 12:4, *CNTC* 10, 157). See also *Inst.* 1.4.1, 1.5.9, 1.14.1, 1.15.8, 2.1.10, 2.12.5, 2.17.6, 3.25.6, 10.

<sup>47</sup> *The true partaking of the flesh and blood* (1561), *TT* 272. It is interesting that Calvin outlined the same three kinds of reason that Gerrish discerns in Luther. Luther explicitly distinguished what Gerrish calls arrogant and regenerate reason at *WATr* 1, 191-92, no. 439; *LW* 54, 71, see at n. 37 above. What Gerrish calls natural reason in the Earthly kingdom is clear from *Disputation Concerning Man*, theses 4-9. *LW* 34, 133.

<sup>48</sup> *BLW* 24-25.

At this point it is important to ask, “What did Calvin mean by fleshly reason?” He referred to it simply as “vain belief in one’s own reason.”<sup>49</sup> He obviously meant, like Luther, to prevent natural reason from invading the realm of revelation, and Calvin proceeded to Paul to make his point: “The natural man...does not receive those things which belong to the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually.” To that Calvin added Paul’s statement that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God,” and concluded, “Whatever wisdom a person has of himself is pure folly with regard to God.” Calvin contended that Pighius was under the spell of his own wisdom and attempted to fully expose Pighius for holding a magisterial view of reason: “Pighius...says he will believe no apostles, no Scriptures, nor all angels, if they teach that very thing in which he supposes Luther to be in error.”<sup>50</sup> In opposition to this, Calvin, and Luther before him, took the view that reason must always submit to revelation and curb its curiosity when its questions are left unanswered.<sup>51</sup> While

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<sup>49</sup> See *BLW* 36, where Calvin referred to the “common understanding of mankind” as “the mind of the flesh,” which is opposed to Luther’s understanding of “absolute necessity.”

<sup>50</sup> *BLW* 25. Free Choice 6a.

<sup>51</sup> Calvin quoted the adage of Augustine, “When a certain shameless fellow mockingly asked a pious old man what God had been doing before the foundation of the world, the latter aptly countered that he had been building a hell for the curious” (*Inst.* 1.14.1). Calvin continued, “Let this admonition, no less grave than severe, restrain the wantonness that tickles many and even drives them to wicked and hurtful speculations.... For just as the eyes, when dimmed with age or weakness or by some other defect, unless aided by spectacles, discern nothing distinctly; so, such is our feebleness, unless Scripture guides us in seeking God, we are immediately confused” (*Ibid.*). In reply to John Eck et. al., who argued that God makes our affairs known to the departed saints, Calvin said, “Yet what is it to affirm, especially with such boldness as they dare to do, but to wish through a drunken dream of our brain to break into and penetrate God’s secret judgment apart from his Word, and to trample upon the Scripture? For Scripture often declares that the prudence of our flesh is at enmity with God’s wisdom [Rom. 8:6-7, Vg.]. Scripture wholly condemns the vanity of our mind [Eph. 4:7]; laying low our whole reason, it bids us look to God’s will alone [cf. Deut. 12:32]” (*Inst.* 3.20.24). See also 3.21.1, where Calvin warns about speculation into the mysteries of predestination. Bouwsma surveys Calvin at length on the subject of reason, “The Schoolmen treated even repentance abstractly, having ‘never awakened from their brute stupor to feel a thousandth part, or even less, of their faults.’ Sadoletto himself had ‘too indolent a theology, as is almost always the case with those who have never had experience in serious struggles of conscience.’ With such accusations Calvin mingled the equally serious charge of ‘curiosity,’ the immoderate pursuit of knowledge, to which we are ‘impelled by nature and therefore ask frivolous questions.... God does not wish us to be too wise’ but to exhibit ‘sobriety’; we must not seek to know more than ‘it pleases him to teach us.’ When he ‘is our teacher and we hear him speak, he is able to give us prudence and discretion to understand his teaching, and we cannot fail in that; but when our Lord keeps his mouth closed we must also keep our senses closed and hold them captive’” (emphasis mine) (*John Calvin*, 157). See also 139-40, 152-57. *Inst.* 4.8.13-14. For Calvin’s view of reason and its relationship to his followers see Charles Partee, “Calvin,

Luther and Calvin saw the role of reason differently on the issue of the Lord's Supper,<sup>52</sup> they share the same basic view of reason that might be characterized as a ministerial use within the bounds of Scripture texts and as an exercise of dominion in the horizontal sphere of life. In relation to Scripture, reason was for them the receptacle of revelation.<sup>53</sup> This stood in contrast to

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Calvinism, and Rationality," in *Rationality in the Calvinian Tradition*, ed. Hendrik Hart et. al. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983), 1-15. Dewey Hoytenga, "Faith and Reason in Calvin's Doctrine of the knowledge of God," *idem.*, 17-39.

<sup>52</sup> Luther held that reason had to simply accept the mystery of the words "this is my body," and be "blinded and taken captive" (*Confession Concerning Christ's Supper* [1528], *LW* 37, 296). Calvin on the other, hand believed that these words called out for examination. In his controversy with Tileman Heshusius Calvin noted that in Psalm 24:8 "the ark of the covenant is distinctly called the Lord of Hosts." Calvin continued, "After reverently embracing what he says, piety and fittingness require the interpretation that the name of God is transferred to a symbol because of its inseparable connection with the thing and reality. Indeed this is a general rule for all the sacraments, *which not only human reason compels us to adopt*, but which a sense of piety and the uniform usage of Scripture dictate" (emphasis mine). But Heshusius is one who "repudiates examination, and leaves us no other resource than to shut our eyes" (*The true partaking*, 269). Lohse says, "Even Calvin probably did not quite share Luther's view of reason and revelation, though his position is nearer to Luther than to Melancthon," ("Reason and Revelation," 364). This can be qualified to say that while Luther and Calvin generally held the same view of reason they applied it differently in the specific example of the Lord's Supper. While Luther did defend his view with rational arguments against Zwingli he provided the caveat that he was speculating and only wanted to show how his view could be rationally explained (*LW* 37, 223-25).

<sup>53</sup> Like Luther, Calvin views regenerate reason taking its information from God's revelation and not from itself, "We are called to a knowledge of God: not that knowledge which, content with empty speculation, merely flits in the brain, but that which will be sound and fruitful if...it takes root in the heart. Consequently, we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously to search out, but for us to contemplate (*contemlemur*) him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself" (*OS* 3, 53.11-23; *Inst.* 1.5.9 [trans. Battles]). Calvin added, "We must strive onward by this straight path if we seriously aspire to the pure contemplation (*contemplationem*) of God. We must come, I say, to the Word, where God is truly and vividly described to us from his works, while these very works are appraised not by our depraved judgment but by the rule of eternal truth.... For we should so reason (*Sic enim cogitandum est*) that the splendor of the divine countenance...is for us like an inexplicable labyrinth unless we are conducted into it *by the thread of the Word*" (emphasis mine) (*OS* 3, 63.24-64.2; *Inst.* 1.6.3. [trans. Battles]). See also 1.6.2, 4. 4.8.9, 11, 13, 14. *The true partaking*, 269. Similar to Gerrish's point about Luther seeing regenerate reason as the intellectual side of faith, Muller shows that for Calvin the intellect is active in faith in its subservient role, "We must view Calvin as holding to a nonspeculative, soteriological voluntarism that carries over into the language of faith...faith is a gift that awakens all the powers of the soul, intellect and will, so that both are enlightened and moved, each in its own way, to grasp the gift of God in Christ" (*The Unaccommodated Calvin* 172). While Calvin saw reason and the intellect as an active part of faith, Calvin held that faith is more affective than intellectual, saying, "...assent itself...is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than the understanding" (*Institutes* 3.2.8). See also 3.2.33. Muller says, "Calvin's polemic...bears a distinct resemblance to Melancthon's emphases on the heart and on *fiducia* in polemic against the scholastics" (170). Calvin undoubtedly bears a distinct resemblance on this point to Luther as well. According to Luther, faith could be present in infants. *Disputation Concerning Man*, *LW* 34, 142. In "Fides and Cognition in Relation to the Problem of the Intellect and the Will in the Theology of John Calvin," in *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 159-73, Muller argues that Calvin designated the soul as the entire spiritual side of the person and that while its two faculties of intellect and will are both involved in faith, Calvin gave the primacy to the will and its affections (171). This is especially the case since the fall as the intellect became a weak guide and the will was no longer inclined to follow it. According to Muller, Calvin was "not a philosophical but a soteriological" voluntarist more akin to Scotus, and he was not an

someone such as Pighius who tended to a more authoritative use, where reason may determine beforehand a range of acceptable interpretations of Scripture.<sup>54</sup>

## V. Calvin Defends Luther's Theology

Calvin wrote, "Pighius...quickly moves on to an exposition of our opinion: first in fact from the words of Luther (which he deems insufficiently accommodated to the popular mind), and then from mine, which he also keeps in view throughout the work, so that my head bears the brunt of the attacks on our whole 'sect,' as he calls us."<sup>55</sup> The "words of Luther" that Pighius

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intellectualist in the tradition of Aquinas (171-72). Bouwsma on the other hand, presents what he believes is another side to Calvin—an Aristotelian, moderate realist, scholastic side in the mold of Aquinas where everything is penetrable by reason. *John Calvin*, 69-72, 88, 98-109. Muller recognizes Calvin employing rational scholastic forms but always treats him as an integrated personality as opposed to having distinct sides. Muller sees Calvin as a humanist who sought to correct scholastic problems and retain what was helpful for his own synthesis, and in this synthesis, Calvin came down on the side of voluntarism, not intellectualism. Bouwsma implies that Calvin unwittingly tipped his hand to the intellectualist account of the soul (88). Bouwsma comes close to presenting Calvin as integrated but can only see a counterbalancing of intellectualist and voluntarist forces contending for the reformer's heart, "What we have been considering so far suggests that Calvin tended toward the scholasticism of the *antiqui*, with its relative confidence in the powers of human reason. But he was eclectic even in his rationalism; he was prepared to follow its negative as well as its positive impulses.... As a result Calvin also exhibited some of the traits of the nominalist *moderni*, who, by a more self-conscious reasoning, found reason inadequate to illuminate religious truth.... Calvin's tendency to assume God's intelligibility was counterbalanced...by his insistence on God's transcendence and a nominalist conviction that the first duty of man is to glorify his Creator" (107). From there he proceeds to open the humanistic side of Calvin in the rest of the book, and thus the sides remain distinct in Bouwsma's portrait. Bouwsma is talented at portraying tensions in Calvin, though the disjunct between the two sides seems artificial at times, and Muller is better at showing the theological result, though, with Muller, Calvin tends to come across like a smooth monolith. Perhaps most satisfying in this regard is Lane, who argues that Calvin was consistently a voluntarist, holding that the will could overrule the intellect. Lane acknowledges that Calvin expressed himself in terms that sounded intellectualist in two places in the *Institutes*, but Lane says Calvin was simply being incautious in his language. "Bondage and Liberation in Calvin's Treatise Against Pighius," in *Calvin Studies IX*, ed. John H. Leith and Robert A. Johnson (Davidson, NC: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), 16-45, see 20-21. Bouwsma, in his psychological approach to Calvin, uses another example of apparent intellectualism from the Ezekial Commentary and sees it as a revealing slip (88). Dewey Hoitenga, *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), in a more philosophical approach, views Calvin as giving an intellectualist account of man before the fall and a voluntarist account of man in conversion and charges Calvin with inconsistency (see chapters 1-3). But Muller and Lane pick up on Calvin's nuances and argue convincingly for Calvin's consistency on this point (see citations from these authors above). For an earlier form of the debate see R. T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649*, New York: Oxford, 1979, see esp. 13-28. Idem., "The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 197-214, who argues for Calvin as an intellectualist. Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1982), answers him as does Muller's article above.

<sup>54</sup> See *BLW* 35, where Calvin said that Pighius had rejected the reformers' teaching on free choice because it was "condemned by common sense and by consent of all mortals since the creation of the world."

<sup>55</sup> *BLW* 24.



challenged came from “Article 36” of *Assertio*.<sup>56</sup> Calvin added that Pighius moved from Luther’s words to his, so that Calvin was now the primary target of the attack upon “our whole ‘sect.’” While Calvin claimed consensus with Luther, dedicated *BLW* to Melancthon, called the *Augsburg Confession* “our confession,” and took up “the common cause,” his reception of Luther’s doctrine was not passive.<sup>57</sup> He claimed to retain everything of Luther’s that Pighius had criticized, but, in defending him, Calvin sought to explain more carefully what Luther had asserted. Calvin noted:

When the discussion has reached Luther’s actual opinion, [Pighius] reduces everything in it which he desires to condemn to two main charges: namely that he taught that since the fall of the first man free choice has been a reality in name only (*rem esse...de solo titulo*), and that we can of ourselves do nothing but sin; and that, not content with that, he added afterwards that [free choice] is something imaginary (*figmentum esse in rebus*), a name without substance (*titulum sine re*), and then that nothing happens by chance, but everything befalls us by absolute necessity (*sed absoluta necessitate nobis provenire omnia*).<sup>58</sup>

Calvin immediately began to exegete Luther’s teaching on these two points: free choice and necessity. On the first point Calvin said there were many things that annoyed Pighius, one of which was that, “[according to Luther] the righteous sin even in their good works, and while

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<sup>56</sup> *WA* 7, 142-49. For an English translation see *CWE* 76, 301-10.

<sup>57</sup> *BLW* 3, 23 respectively.

<sup>58</sup> *CO* 6, 248; *BLW* 26 [trans. Davies]. This restatement of Luther’s position comes from two sources and the phrases given in Latin parallel Luther’s wording italicized below. (1) Thesis 13 of Luther’s *Heidelberg Disputation*, “Liberum arbitrium post peccatum *res est de solo titulo*, et dum facit quod in se est, peccat mortaliter” (*WA* 1, 354.5,6). The papal Bull *Exsurge Domine* incorporated this as Article 36 to which Luther responded in *Assertio*. (2) Article 36 of Luther’s *Assertio*, “Hunc articulorum necesse est revocare. Male enim dixi, quod liberum arbitrium ante gratiam sit res de solo titulo, sed simpliciter debui dicere ‘liberum arbitrium *est figmentum in rebus seu titulus sine re*’. Quia nulla est in manu sua quippiam cogitare mali et boni, sed omnia (ut Viglephi articulus Constantiae damnatus recte docet) *de necessitate absoluta eveniunt*” (*WA* 7, 146.3-8). Lane notes that what Pighius “added afterwards” were the phrases from *Assertio* that represented “Luther’s provocative heightening” of his original claims (*BLW* 26, n. 70). For the context and significance of *Assertio* see James Atkinson, *The Trial of Luther* (New York: Stein & Day, 1971), 83-89, 102-12. Harry J. McSorley, *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther’s Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 253-73. Lief Grane, *Martinus Noster: Luther in the German Reform Movement 1518-1521* (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1994), 231-43, 269-73.

such good works are pardonable in the mercy of God, of themselves they are mortal sins.” Calvin was concerned that Luther be properly understood on the issue of good works.

### A. On the Status of Good Works

Calvin commented, “When Luther spoke in this way about good works, he was not seeking to deprive them of their praise and their reward before God. Nor did he ever say that God does not accept them or that he will not reward them; but he wanted to show only what they are worth if they are considered by themselves apart from God’s fatherly generosity.” Then Calvin restated Luther’s position in his own words: “It is certain that whatever good works can be cited do not please God by virtue of their own worth but by his gracious favour, because he wills to value them so much, even though they do not deserve it.”<sup>59</sup> Calvin’s comments reflect a nominalist understanding of the merit of works consonant with Luther and brought a fuller exposition to what *Assertio* had treated one-sidedly for emphasis.<sup>60</sup> Luther spoke of works “considered by themselves;” Calvin added his comments about works considered according to “God’s fatherly generosity,” and thereby indicated that works could be viewed from two perspectives. Calvin considered his own comments consistent with Luther and as bringing a balance to what the German reformer had treated exclusively. In fact, he noted that Luther could be charged with exaggeration:

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<sup>59</sup> *BLW* 26.

<sup>60</sup> For Calvin’s relationship to nominalism see Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, 168-78. David Steinmetz, “Calvin and the Absolute Power of God,” in *Calvin in Context* (New York: Oxford, 1995), 40-52. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, 162, 166, 171. Lane, *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 17-25. Idem., “Traditional Protestant Doctrine: John Calvin,” in *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London, New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 29-39. Oberman, “*Initia Calvini*,” 117-27. Alister McGrath, “John Calvin and Late Medieval Thought,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 77 (1986): 58-78, see esp. 73-77. Luther could just as well have written the following sentiments, “For God’s will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it must be considered righteous. When therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has so willed it. But if you proceed further to ask why he so willed, you are seeking something greater and higher than God’s will, which cannot be found” (*Inst.* 3.23.2). Cf. what Luther did write at *LW* 33, 181.

But, you will say, Luther exaggerates (*hyperbolicum*). I can grant this, but only when I say that he had a good reason which drove him to such exaggeration; that is, he saw that the world was so deprived of sense by a false and perilous confidence in works, a kind of deadly drowsiness, that it needed not a voice and words to awaken it but a trumpet call, a peal of thunder and thunderbolts.<sup>61</sup>

Calvin added, “Yet there is nothing in those words of his which is not straightforwardly and unambiguously true (*simpliciter et citra ullam figuram verum*).”<sup>62</sup> Lane says that Calvin “seems here to withdraw his earlier concession that Luther was exaggerating.”<sup>63</sup> But this may not represent a withdrawal on the part of Calvin, since he was following the two-perspectives view of good works, that is, the distinction between good works “considered by themselves” and good works considered according to “God’s fatherly generosity” that Calvin had just made before dealing with Luther’s exaggeration.<sup>64</sup> If we read Calvin’s next sentence it becomes clear that he was using this “two-perspectives” distinction to show that Luther’s words were acceptable as far as they went. Calvin’s complete thought reads, “Yet there is nothing in those words of his [about good works] which is not straightforwardly and unambiguously true. For (*Nam*) the worth of good works depends not on the act itself but on perfect love for God, a work will not be righteous and pure unless it proceeds from a perfect love for God.”<sup>65</sup> Thus Calvin explained that Luther’s apparently exaggerated treatment was “straightforwardly and unambiguously true” for the reason that works are worthless “considered by themselves.”<sup>66</sup>

Calvin explained further that the worth of a work “depends not on the act itself but on perfect love for God.”<sup>67</sup> Calvin added that good works “evaluated *in themselves* are without

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<sup>61</sup> CO 6, 249; BLW 26, 27 [trans. Davies].

<sup>62</sup> BLW 27.

<sup>63</sup> BLW 27, n. 74.

<sup>64</sup> BLW 26.

<sup>65</sup> CO 6, 249; BLW 27.

<sup>66</sup> BLW 26.

<sup>67</sup> BLW 27.

exception sinful,” and they can only “receive praise and reward *through God’s fatherly acceptance*, not by their own inherent merit” (emphasis mine).<sup>68</sup> Calvin wrote, “There has never been a good work which was entirely pure and perfect, which lacked any blemish at all.”<sup>69</sup> So, from Calvin’s perspective, Luther’s exaggeration appeared to lie not so much in what he said but in what he did not say, that is, in Luther’s almost exclusive emphasis on what man can achieve by himself, apart from the grace of God. Luther’s single-mindedness should be no surprise given that the *via moderna* played a large role his orientation to theology and piety.<sup>70</sup> Calvin said that Luther was driven to speak this way because he “saw that the world was so deprived of sense by a false and perilous confidence in works.”<sup>71</sup> Luther was an occasional writer and the occasion did not elicit from him a consideration of works in terms of reward by “God’s fatherly generosity.” Thus the given medieval context conditioned the acceptability of Luther’s single-minded approach. Luther’s treatment only appeared lopsided because he had focused on a target and did not give a complete survey of the Bible’s teaching about works. But what specifically, according to Calvin, was Luther’s target?

Calvin wrote that Pighius was annoyed by Luther’s rejection of free choice as “a reality in name only” and by his corollary assertion “that we can of ourselves do nothing but sin.” Why? Calvin gave a reason for this: “It would follow from this that man cannot prepare himself by his natural powers to receive the grace of God.”<sup>72</sup> This allusion to “*Facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*” shows that Calvin was aware that Luther had specifically attacked the *via moderna*, and Pighius fought back because he was an advocate on this point. Calvin specifically

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<sup>68</sup> BLW 28.

<sup>69</sup> BLW 27.

<sup>70</sup> For Luther’s relationship to the *via moderna* and scholasticism see Chapter 1 at n. 5-7, Chapter 5 at n. 13-30.

<sup>71</sup> BLW 26.

<sup>72</sup> BLW 26.

mentioned Ockham as the originator of Pighius’s view, “He [Pighius] concludes by affirming the utter truth of William of Ockham’s well-known statement (which throughout smacks of Pelagianism): God does not deny his grace to one who does what he can (*facienti quod in se est Deum non denegare gratiam*).”<sup>73</sup> Pighius was a humanist but Calvin recognized that Ockhamism had also influenced him, and Calvin, like Luther, identified the position as Pelagian.<sup>74</sup> Calvin’s statement about the world being stupefied by “a false and perilous confidence in works” that called for Luther’s trumpet blast refers to the medieval context, and Calvin said that this is what Luther “saw.” Calvin understands that the medieval context led Luther to focus on what works could accomplish “considered in themselves” in order to refute the Pelagianism of the time. Calvin added said that since we cannot love God perfectly he would like someone to find him “that much-talked-of human perfection...that there are some works good in themselves.”<sup>75</sup> In this way Calvin displayed familiarity with the Ockhamist conception of a person loving God above all things before he is in a state of grace. Thus the humanistically trained Calvin demonstrated that he was aware that Luther’s target was late medieval scholasticism and the teachings associated with Ockham.

Calvin contended that Pighius had mistaken the Bible’s teaching on rewards and needed the “two perspectives view” of good works, which began with Luther’s treatment of works considered apart from God’s “gracious favour” in their purely natural state. For Calvin, Pighius’s

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<sup>73</sup> CO 6, 397; BLW 234 [trans. Davies]. Calvin’s attribution of the *facienti quod in se est* to Ockham goes back to the 1539 *Inst.* 2.3.10, where Calvin was more tentative in referencing Ockham as the source. Lane comments, “Calvin’s ascription to Ockham is hesitant (‘unless I am mistaken’); the most likely source is in fact Gabriel Biel *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, book 2, distinction 27, articulus 3, dubium 4” (BLW 234, n. 181). The *facienti quod in se est*, simply as a formula, has a long history going back to an early form with Irenaeus, and then becoming a permanent part of the doctrine of justification in the Middle Ages. Its standard form appeared in the twelfth century and was employed by Aquinas. See McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, Second ed. (Cambridge 1998), 83-91. While the formula predates Biel, Luther was exposed to his interpretation, and Calvin was concerned with the understanding of the *via moderna* in general. The fact that Erasmus and Pighius defended that interpretation also made it foremost in the reformers’ minds.

<sup>74</sup> For the ways in which Pighius and Erasmus were influenced by Ockhamism see Chapter 2 at n. 86-91.

view suffered from a lack of this divine perspective. “But if something base is...always included in the works of the saints, then when they are reviewed by God and weighed in that balance which fills even the very angels with dread, they will there be exposed as corrupt, whatever may be the value set on them by human judgment.”<sup>76</sup> Calvin delineated the divine and human perspectives on good works and defended Luther’s selective treatment from the divine perspective by saying “he had a good reason” to focus his point and provide a strong antidote to the medieval view of works. Thus the exaggeration of Luther’s approach was appropriate to his context, and Luther’s rejection of works as a preparation for grace offended Pighius because he was still bound to the *via moderna*. But Calvin also implied that Luther exaggerated in another way. Luther’s hyperbole also consisted in using pointed language, “a voice and words to awaken...a trumpet call, a peal of thunder and thunderbolts (*fulminibusque*).”<sup>77</sup> It is unlikely that Calvin thought of this sledgehammer approach as inappropriate, since he had already stated, “It was not Luther who spoke but God thundered (*fulminasse*) through his mouth.”<sup>78</sup>

## **B. On Necessity**

Calvin went on to address Pighius’s attacks upon Luther’s statements about necessity. Pighius had accused the reformers of backing away from Luther concerning his doctrine “about the absolute necessity of [all] events” because they had allowed man freedom “in external matters and public affairs.” But Calvin maintained that this was not the case: “Concerning Luther there is no reason for him to be in any doubt when now also, as we have done previously, we openly bear witness that we consider him a distinguished apostle of Christ whose labour and

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<sup>75</sup> *BLW* 27.

<sup>76</sup> *BLW* 27. See Lane, *Justification by Faith*, 38-39.

<sup>77</sup> *CO* 6, 249; *BLW* 27 [trans. Davies].

<sup>78</sup> *CO* 6, 238; *BLW* 12 [trans. Davies].

ministry have done most in these times to bring back the purity of the gospel.”<sup>79</sup> But Calvin’s respect for Luther did not automatically mean that he fully agreed with him on this point.

Perhaps sensing the difference between respect and agreement, Calvin added:

It is indeed possible that we use different ways of speaking, that almost every one of us has his own manner of speaking which is different from that of others. But why could we not be allowed something that has been the common practice of everyone in every generation? This too I recognize without reluctance, that when our works are reprinted we improve what was rather coarse, we soften what was too harshly expressed, we also strengthen our argument with new reasons, and finally, where we fear the danger of causing offense, we also tone down and soften our language.<sup>80</sup>

Here Calvin admitted only a softening of language, not a change of substance. Thus, while claiming to keep the core of Luther’s teachings on the will, Calvin said he sought only to refine and qualify their linguistic form and rhetorical presentation. Is Calvin right in this regard?

Lane says that Calvin was uncomfortable with Luther’s language of “absolute necessity.” He writes, “This...caused Calvin some embarrassment. His concern for Protestant solidarity prevented him from openly criticising Luther’s assertion, but he was annoyed by the attention that Pighius devoted to it at the beginning of his work, especially as the subject belonged in the last four books, where providence was treated.” Lane adds that Calvin “adopted a more moderate position” and thus seems to concur with Pighius’s assessment that Calvin backed away from Luther.<sup>81</sup> Calvin protested this kind of conclusion:

But that teaching which is the chief issue in this controversy and the cause of everything else that is said we defend today just as it was put forward by Luther and others at the beginning. Even in those matters which I have declared to be not so necessary for faith there is no difference, apart from the softening of the form of expression so as to remove anything displeasing.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> *BLW* 28.

<sup>80</sup> *BLW* 28-29.

<sup>81</sup> Lane, “Introduction,” in *BLW* xxviii. Lane makes the same arguments in “Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?” *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981), 72-90, see 74-75. “Bondage and Liberation,” 23-25.

<sup>82</sup> *BLW* 29.

Schulze comments that Calvin was claiming “a natural diversity but no discord.”<sup>83</sup> Calvin also wrote of Melanchthon and his “careful and very adept softening of the outward form of some things which Luther had written in scholastic language, in a style alien to popular taste.”<sup>84</sup> This may refer to Melanchthon’s 1521/2 *Loci communes*, a work that, as Schulze notes, “was well known to Calvin.”<sup>85</sup> There Melanchthon explained free choice in terms of *libertas in externis*. After this possible allusion to the *Loci communes*, Calvin explicitly referred to the Augsburg Confession as a similar instance where Melanchthon gave some mention to the *libertas in externis*:

Likewise when the wording of the Augsburg Confession needed to be produced, [Melanchthon] desired to linger only on that teaching which alone is peculiar to the church and necessary to know for salvation, namely that natural powers by themselves have no ability to conceive faith, to obey the divine law, and [to attain] entire spiritual righteousness. What they can do in public affairs and outward behavior (*in civilibus et externis*) he did not want to discuss in too much detail.<sup>86</sup>

Thus Calvin cited Melanchthon’s two-kingdoms or at least two-dimensional view of free choice with approval and was adamant that this involved no retreat from the original position of Luther but only a clarifying distinction. In fact, it is apparent that Luther approved of this distinction, since he also employed the substance of it in different terminology in *BW*:

We are not disputing about nature but about grace, and we are not asking what we are on earth (*super terram*), but what we are in heaven before God (*in coelo coram Deo*). We know that man has been constituted lord over the lower creatures (*inferioribus*), and in relation to them he has authority and free choice, so that they obey him and do what he wills and thinks. What we are asking is whether he has free choice in relation to God (*erga Deum*).<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Schulze, *Calvin's Reply*, 33.

<sup>84</sup> *BLW* 29.

<sup>85</sup> Schulze, *Calvin's Reply*, 31. Calvin wrote the preface for the 1546 French translation of Melanchthon’s *Loci communes*.

<sup>86</sup> *CO* 6, 250-51; *BLW* 29 (trans. Davies). For Melanchthon’s discussion see *Augsburg Confession* 18, *Book of Concord*.

<sup>87</sup> *SA* 3, 348.36-349.2; *LW* 33, 285 (trans. Watson and Drewery). See also *LW* 33, 70.



Luther repeatedly puts forth the distinction between what a person can do *coram Deo* or *erga Deum* and what a person can do in relation to the *inferioribus* in the same work that contains his necessitarian argument.<sup>88</sup> Lane says that Calvin “glosses over the differences between Luther and Melanchthon concerning human free choice in external and secular matters.”<sup>89</sup> But how can there be a difference between Melanchthon and Luther on this point when they make the same distinction?<sup>90</sup> Luther did not believe that divine necessity and human freedom over creation were in conflict.<sup>91</sup> Pighius assumed that the later represented a retraction of the former. Lane seems to agree with Pighius, but Calvin said no retraction had occurred in his *Institutes*, only qualification with respect to peoples’ role in civil matters.<sup>92</sup> This seems clear from the fact that Calvin also employed both necessitarian language and approved the notion of “free choice in external matters and in public affairs” in *BLW*.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> *LW* 33, 118, 119, 239.

<sup>89</sup> Lane, “Introduction,” in *BLW* xxviii.

<sup>90</sup> A conflict between Melanchthon and Luther on this point could only exist in Calvin’s mind and that only if he was unaware that Luther shared the same perspective as Melanchthon and himself on the *libertas in externis/inferioribus*. This could be, or Calvin could have simply failed to reference Luther’s teaching in haste. Calvin was, by his own admission, hurrying his response to Pighius: “To be honest, there is also another reason which compels me to be brief. I am limited by the pressure of time, since I have barely two months before the Frankfurt market, at which I have decided, if possible, to publish this reply. And if only I had half of that time absolutely empty and free for writing! For this reason readers will forgive my haste if anywhere I should too lightly hurry over things which deserve longer reflection and more careful attention” (*BLW* 11). This question also pertains to Calvin’s knowledge of *BW*, which will be taken up in the next chapter.

<sup>91</sup> Incompatibility is commonly assumed in the literature. For a survey of those who consider Luther a determinist see McSorley, *Luther*, 257. Discussing von Loewenich McSorley notes, “He admits, however, that Luther’s affirmation of universal necessity and of *liberum arbitrium in inferioribus* are ‘statements which are not readily harmonized’” (Ibid.). Gerrish, “To the Unknown God,” n. 30, 338, says that “freedom” here is not from divine foreordination. It is true that Luther never conceived of freedom as something independent of God, but here freedom means only volitional efficacy towards the creation that God has placed under man but which God still controls. For Luther, necessity does not contradict mere volitional efficacy for man in things under human stewardship. Divine necessity only contradicts human autonomy or sovereignty.

<sup>92</sup> See *Inst.* 2.6-8.

<sup>93</sup> On the issue of *libertas in externis/inferioribus* Schulze notes, “It seems as if Calvin is here holding the Lutheran conception of the two spheres of life. He is indeed saying it in so many words and the reference to Melanchthon and Augsburg is not without meaning. It shows that against the criticism of Pighius Calvin wants to defend the Reformation in its general lines.” Schulze identifies this as the “Lutheran’ language of Calvin” (*Calvin’s Reply*, 31).

Calvin appealed to divine necessity early on in *BLW*. Pighius’s first charge against Calvin concerned the relationship between faith and grace. Calvin wrote, “He [Pighius] says that we labour in vain in urging and exhorting people to believe, if it is really the case that they do not conceive [faith] themselves by their own power, but God inspires it by his grace.” Calvin replied, “We are no more laboring in vain than do farmers while they plough the earth and sow seed.” For, continued Calvin, it is still God’s will that the farmer plant even though “all labour is in vain without the blessing of God,” so that where “some fruit follows, it results from the fact that God has answered from heaven.”<sup>94</sup> Then Calvin added, “You see there that God causes everything and of necessity (*Deum omnia perficere, et necessario*), that is in accordance with his providence (*providentia*). Why is it that the earth waits for the hand of the farmer when its fertility depends entirely on nothing but the blessing of God? Evidently because God has ordained it so (*ordinavit*).”<sup>95</sup> Calvin grounds necessity in God’s will and relates it to the doctrine of providence. According to Calvin, divine necessity works through human efforts in a compatible relationship set up by the ordination of God. While Calvin identified this generally with the providence of God, he also specifically applied necessity to salvation when he asked:

What is the point of our labour in writing and public speaking if man, before he believes, is held captive in Satan’s bonds so that he cannot by himself receive and embrace sound teaching, but when he is enlightened (*illuminatur*) by the Spirit of God he effectually and necessarily receives it (*efficaciter et necessario eam recipit*)? Let Paul reply here: it is because God appointed the gospel to be the means to display the power of his Spirit.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *BLW* 32.

<sup>95</sup> *CO* 6, 253; *BLW* 32.

<sup>96</sup> *CO* 6, 254; *BLW* 33. Erasmus had argued that free choice accounts for the different responses to the gospel, but Luther reached a conclusion similar to Calvin on the use of the God-ordained means and its relationship to human response. Concerning the cultivated and uncultivated land in Hebrews 6:7-8, Luther wrote, “The simile of the sun and the rain... would be more correctly used by a Christian if he let the sun and the rain represent the gospel (as in Psalm 18 [19:4] and the epistle to the Hebrews 10 [6:7]), and the cultivated land the elect (*electos*), the uncultivated land the reprobate (*reprobos*); for the former are edified and made better by the Word, while the latter are offended and made worse” (*SA* 3, 275.25-29; *LW* 33, 172).

In introducing Pighius's criticism of necessity, Calvin had referred it to both "God's providence and predestination."<sup>97</sup> Luther had done the same. In his *Assertio*, Luther had said generally, "*omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt*," but expounded it thus in *BW*, "God foreknows nothing contingently," but "he foresees and purposes and does all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will."<sup>98</sup> Applying this specifically to salvation Luther wrote, "Everything takes place by necessity (*necessario*) in us, according as he either loves or does not love us from all eternity, so that not only God's love but also the manner of his loving imposes necessity on us (*necessitatem nobis inferat*)."<sup>99</sup> In this way Luther and Calvin both put forth necessity as imposed on all things by the will of God and it is God's very ordination that makes necessity what it is, whether it be with respect to providence or salvation and predestination.

While God's will imposes necessity on all things, Luther and Calvin primarily spoke of necessity in relation to sin and located it in the human will. Thus it is needful to distinguish the specific necessity to sin located in the human will and a general necessity imposed on all things by the will of God. While Calvin located the latter in providence and predestination, Luther paralleled this in talking about necessity in connection with "sovereign authority," which referred to providence, and God's "manner of...loving," which referred to predestination.<sup>100</sup> While necessity imposed by the will of God and necessity imposed by the sin of man may be

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<sup>97</sup> *BLW* 28.

<sup>98</sup> *LW* 33, 37.

<sup>99</sup> *SA* 3, 293.4-9; *LW* 33, 199 [trans. Watson].

<sup>100</sup> The doctrines of providence and sovereignty also condition the reformers' understanding of the *libertas in externis/inferioribus*. God overrules creation so that, according to Luther, "No man's plans have ever been straightforwardly realized" (*LW* 33, 41). Calvin wrote, "There is no created thing which does not, either of its own accord or under coercion, obey his will" (*BLW* 39). Luther treated this at length in his *Notes on Ecclesiastes*. See *LW* 15, 7-187. See also Robert Rosin, *Reformers, the Preacher, and Skepticism: Luther, Brenz, Melancthon and Ecclesiastes* (Mainz: Phillip von Zabern, 1997) 97-108, 127-37, 141-47. "From one's perspective in the created order, it appears that man can make willful decisions, and Luther speaks constantly of taking up one's tasks, indicating at the same time that one may also choose not to.... At the same time the larger divine perspective provided by Ecclesiastes indicates that man is not left on his own, and his will finally does not determine the

distinguished, they cannot be separated in the thought of the reformers. In fact, Luther put them in close proximity in a section where he rejected Erasmus's definition of free choice. Luther wrote, "You would not call a slave free, who acts under the authority of his lord (*imperio domini*); and still less do we call a man or angel free, when they live under the absolute sovereignty of God (*imperio plenissiom Dei*) (not to mention sin and death [*peccatum er mortem*])."<sup>101</sup> In this way, Luther appealed both to the sovereignty of God and to the sinfulness of man as both contrary to Erasmus's understanding of free choice—a power that can apply itself "in relation to God."<sup>102</sup>

Calvin also applied the doctrine of necessity to the preaching ministry of the reformers. Calvin said that Pighius had made fun of the reformers: "There is no reason for this fellow to seek praise for being funny when he jeeringly ascribes to us the reply that whether for good or ill we [preach] of necessity, without purpose or reason." Calvin went on to say, "We were not roused to this ministry by our own wisdom or by chance, but by the sure and steady purpose of God and the effective movement of the Holy Spirit." Calvin answered the joke of Pighius with a sober claim of an effectual call. This is also an example of Calvin using different words to talk about necessity—"the effective movement of the Holy Spirit (*efficacique spiritus sancti motu*)"—as applied it to the ministry of the reformers. He also used Paul in Galatians 1:15,16 as an example of the reformers' calling, "For our reason for [preaching] is no different from that of Paul, who declares both that from the womb he was appointed by divine choice to the task of an

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happenings in the world. God's will prevails, always ordering whatever happens and always using man's responses for his good purposes" (134).

<sup>101</sup> *SA* 3, 230.14-19; *LW* 33, 103. Calvin linked necessity to human sinfulness in *BLW* 68-70, "We locate the necessity to sin precisely in corruption of the will" (69-70).

<sup>102</sup> For Erasmus, "free" meant, in effect, neutral or left unfettered to act on one's own. For Luther, "free" is godly acting in the way God intended and for which that person was created. Cf. Erasmus at *LCC* 17, 47 to Luther's "royal freedom" *LW* 33, 65. For Luther, sin was so radical that it always turned the choices of the human will in the wrong direction unless grace intervened.

apostle, and that he did not begin until the day had come which God had determined.” Thus Calvin wrote that they were performing a service in accord with “divine election...and effective for the salvation of believers...and, to use Augustine’s words, ‘we exhort and preach so that those who have ears to hear may hear.’”<sup>103</sup> In this way Calvin sees necessity in the reformers’ preaching, which comes from the divine call, and in the response to their preaching, which comes from divine election.

## **VI. Conclusion**

In response to Pighius’s charge of disagreement among the reformers, Calvin defended Luther and himself as part of a common cause against Rome. Calvin gladly joined himself to Luther historically as a Lutheran, and saw himself as one who fully agreed with him on the doctrine of the divine and human wills and their relationship. Calvin supported this by defending Luther’s integrity as a reformer and his agreement with Luther’s teachings on the role of reason, the nature of good works, and necessity. Calvin’s claim of historical relationship to Luther is one of full continuity on the doctrine of the will. In his response to Pighius’s second book, Calvin delved deeper into the theological issues where he claimed to be united to Luther. It is in Calvin’s response to Pighius’s second book that we will take a further look into Calvin’s theological relationship to Luther as a basis for his historical claim and thereby assess that claim in an effort to determine whether Calvin rightly laid claim to solidarity with Luther.

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<sup>103</sup> *BLW* 34. Lane identifies Augustine’s quote from *The Gift of Perseverance* 14.37 (NPNF 5:540).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CALVIN'S THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK TWO OF *THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL*, PART 1

As we have seen in Chapter 3, Calvin's claim to Luther is a historical-theological claim. In "On Book One" Calvin brought the historical link with Luther to the fore, claiming to be descended from and true to the same reform movement that Luther began. In "On Book Two" Calvin leaves the historical relationship to Luther in the background as already established, and treats the theological issues at greater length. I am distinguishing Calvin's transition from primarily historical to primarily theological concerns, but it is clear that these cannot be separated. The historical movement is also a theological movement. Thus the historical question of unity has a theological foundation and the theology has historical implications on the validity of Calvin's claim.

In the first half of the second chapter of *BLW*, Calvin laid out the primary issues of his controversy with Pighius and explicitly established his theological relationship with Luther as one of full agreement. Pighius and, more recently, Anthony Lane have challenged this. In Calvin's response we will see his defense of his historical claim extended theologically. The questions of whether Calvin actually shared a common cause with Luther's doctrine of necessity and whether his theology bears the imprint of Luther's unique influence will become prominent in my assessment. Therefore, we will not only consider Calvin's response to Pighius in *BLW*, but we will pivot from there to other writings of Calvin to further assess his claim in *BLW*. In this way, we hope to paint a bigger picture of Calvin's theological relationship to Luther and shed light on his historical claim to be one with him in the doctrine of the will. Before proceeding to

“One Book Two” however, it is necessary to treat a theological point of comparison invited by Calvin in “On Book One,” concerning the relationship of Word and Spirit.

### I. Word and Spirit

Calvin commented on Paul’s words from 1 Corinthians 3:6-7 about the nature of the apostolic ministry:

Paul, when he speaks about the task of the apostles, compares them to gardeners who plant or water. And immediately he adds that they are nothing; God alone who gives the increase, is everything.... Paul...has a ministry of the Spirit by which he is to write the preaching of the gospel on human hearts, not by his own activity and effort or (as they say) by his own exertions, but by the Spirit of the living God. Now you hear where the effectiveness of his ministry comes from, namely from the secret action of the Holy Spirit, not by human labour or desire. You hear also that the instrument which the hand of God uses to complete his work is thereby of no importance. So let the holy apostle [Paul] adapt this defence of his to us to in our common cause (*communi causa*). Pighius asks, What is the point of our labour in writing and public speaking if man, before he believes, is held captive in Satan’s bonds so that he cannot by himself receive and embrace sound teaching, but when he is enlightened by the Spirit of God he effectually and necessarily receives it (*efficaciter et necessario eam recipit*)? Let Paul reply here: it is because God appointed the gospel to be the means to display the power of his Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

For Calvin, the ministry of the Word of God does not have effect without the operation of the Holy Spirit. Calvin also taught that the Spirit does not work apart from the Word, but rather through the Word:

God by his Spirit engraves on human hearts what he speaks through his mouth to their ears, not before or after but at the same time. So in preaching the seed is being sown, but that it puts out roots, germinates, and bears fruit is brought about by the Spirit inwardly.... Let us keep hold of that connection which, as Paul describes, exists between the secret working of the Spirit and the outward preaching by human beings.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CO 6, 254; BLW 33 [trans. Davies].

<sup>2</sup> BLW 165. See also 214-215. Calvin also said, “The Holy Spirit so inheres in His truth, which He expresses in Scripture, that only when...proper reverence and dignity are given to the Word does the Holy Spirit show forth his power” (*Inst.* 1.9.3). See also 1.9.2, 4.8.13.

Calvin certainly seems justified in claiming consensus with Luther on this point. Luther wrote in

*BW*:

Reason may turn up her nose and say, “Why should God will these things to be done by means of words, when nothing is accomplished by such words, and the will is unable to turn itself in either direction?... And the will of itself neither gains in strength nor effectiveness from hearing the word, if the inward movement of the Spirit is lacking,... since everything depends on the power and operation of the Spirit?” We shall reply: It has thus pleased God to impart the Spirit, not without the Word, but through the Word, so as to have us as cooperators with him [1 Cor. 3:9] when we sound forth outwardly what he himself alone breaths inwardly wherever he wills.<sup>3</sup>

For both Calvin and Luther, the Spirit is necessary. Calvin said, “Man cannot by himself receive and embrace sound teaching,” and Luther, “The will is unable to turn itself in either direction.”

But whereas the Spirit could impart faith without preaching, God has, according to the reformers, appointed the means of the gospel Word to be effectually used by the Spirit in bringing faith.<sup>4</sup>

## II. Natural Reason

Calvin opened “On Book Two” by criticizing Pighius for confusing the issues. Calvin said that Pighius had promised to treat free choice and providence separately as a “good practitioner of orderly discourse” but now, according to Calvin, Pighius rushes at him in a “blind and confused combat.”<sup>5</sup> Calvin acknowledged that Pighius dealt with “providence” in the last four books of *Free Choice* but said that early on he drug in Luther’s language about “absolute

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<sup>3</sup> *LW* 33, 154-155.

<sup>4</sup> For Calvin’s agreement with Luther on the relationship between Word and Spirit see Neuser, “Calvin and Luther – Their Personal and Theological Relationship,” *Hervormde Theologische Studien* 38, 223 (1982), 97-100. Idem., “Theologie des Wortes – Schrift, Verheißung und Evangelium bei Calvin,” in *Calvinus Theologicus: Die Referate des Europäischen Kongresses für Calvinforschung, September 1974 in Amsterdam*, 17-37. Alexandre Ganoczy has a different view however: “Neu und eigenständig gegenüber Luther sind auch die Gedanken Calvins über das Verhältnis von Wort und Geist” (“Calvin als pualinischer Theologe: Ein Forschungsansatz zur Hermeneutik Calvins,” in *Ibid.*, 55, see 55-60). See also I. John Hesselink, “Calvin’s Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2004), 80-81, who says that while Calvin held to the unity and inseparability of Word and Spirit, he differed with Luther “who emphasized the objective external Word” to such an extent that he ran “the risk of identifying them” (80).

<sup>5</sup> *BLW* 35.



necessity” from “Article 36” of *Assertio*.<sup>6</sup> Calvin said that this belonged in the section on providence since necessity depends upon providence. Calvin added that Pighius has mixed free choice with providence and necessity not because of “inexperience” but “out of cunning and malice.” Calvin elaborated:

For since he could see that the statement of Luther about absolute necessity which he quotes was less in agreement with the common understanding of mankind, he thought that this very point would be the most promising place for him to begin, so as to have the mind of the flesh agreeing with him but shuddering at the teaching of Luther. Therefore he steers clear of the whole subject of the corruption of [human] nature, like some rock.<sup>7</sup>

Calvin accused Pighius of framing the discussion with Luther’s statement on absolute necessity in order to win the debate in the eyes of the common man, since the mind of the flesh would not find Luther agreeable. Notice that Calvin did not fault Luther’s language and the problem was with the “mind of the flesh” which shudders at Luther’s teaching.<sup>8</sup> While Lane claims that Calvin was embarrassed and annoyed by Luther’s talk of “absolute necessity,” it appears that he was only annoyed with Pighius using it to “poison the well” on another issue—the issue of free choice.

Calvin said that Pighius steered clear of the subject of human corruption “like some rock.” It appears that Calvin believed that dealing with human corruption first, as a distinct though not separate issue, puts the “mind of the flesh” in proper perspective and thus opens the way for the discussion of providence, predestination, and necessity. It seems that Calvin did not fear Luther’s assertion of absolute necessity so much as he feared a presupposed human interpretation that would seek to minimize God’s providential necessity. Calvin also thought this could be

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<sup>6</sup> *WA* 7, 146.7-8.

<sup>7</sup> *BLW* 36.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 4, § IV.

discouraged by first emphasizing human rebellion towards God's governance over his creation.

Luther had the same disdain for natural reason in this area of revelation:

Admittedly, it gives the greatest possible offense to common sense or natural reason (*sensum...communem seu rationem naturalem*) that God by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men as if he enjoyed the sins and the vast, eternal torments of his wretched creatures.... It has been regarded as unjust, as cruel, as intolerable, to entertain such an idea about God, and this is what has offended so many great men during so many centuries. And who would not be offended? I myself was offended more than once, and brought to the very depth and abyss of despair, so that I wished I had never been created a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace. That is why there has been such sweating and toiling to excuse the goodness of God and accuse the will of man; and it is here that the distinctions have been invented between the ordained and the absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent.... Nevertheless, there has always remained deeply implanted in the hearts of ignorant and learned alike, whenever they have taken things seriously, the painful awareness that we are under necessity if the foreknowledge and omnipotence of God are accepted. Even natural reason herself (*ratio naturalis*), who is offended by this necessity and makes such efforts to get rid of it, is compelled to admit it by the force of her own judgment, even if there were no Scripture at all.<sup>9</sup>

Luther continued that as soon as God's omnipotence and foreknowledge are admitted "the minds of all...are quickly compelled by inescapable logic to admit that just as we do not come into being by our own will, but by necessity, so we do not do anything by right of free choice, but as God has foreknown and as he leads us to act by his infallible and immutable power." According to Luther, this is written "in the hearts of all alike...though this fact is obscured by the many arguments to the contrary and the great authority of all the men who for so many centuries have taught differently."<sup>10</sup> Thus Luther appealed to the dictates of reason<sup>11</sup> and the authority of revelation in arguing for necessity, though he was negative toward reason in both realms trying to suppress this knowledge with the distinctions "between the ordained and the absolute will of

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<sup>9</sup> SA 3, 287.10-27; LW 33, 190 [trans. Watson].

<sup>10</sup> LW 33, 191.

<sup>11</sup> See also LW 33, 41, 189. Fredrik Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God* (Uppsala Univ., 1978), 30-41, 51-54, 85-88, has an extended discussion of Luther's thought on the natural knowledge of God and a survey of the secondary literature.

God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent.”<sup>12</sup> Luther’s exposure to these distinctions came from his training in the *via moderna*, and we will see their understanding below.

### III. Pighius’s Seven Arguments and Calvin’s Responses

Next Calvin turned to Pighius’s seven arguments against the reformers, which were lifted from statements of Luther and Calvin. Calvin conceded to the wish of Pighius to treat the issues of free choice and providence at the same time. Thus Calvin deals repeatedly with necessity in this section.

#### A. Necessity Removes the Need to Work. Response: God Employs Means.

Calvin stated the first argument, “If we do not think of anything good or evil or plan our ways, whether good or evil, but everything is in God’s control and happens necessarily in accordance with it, why do we not snore and sleep for ever?”<sup>13</sup> That this argument was drawn from *Assertio* “Article 36” can be seen from the nearly identical wording: “If we do not think of anything good or evil” parallels Luther’s, “it is in no one’s power to think anything good or evil.”

<i>BLW</i>	<i>Assertio</i>
<i>Si nihil boni aut mali cogitare...possumus</i>	<i>nulli est in manu sua quippiam cogitare mali aut boni</i> <sup>14</sup>

The reference to necessity also comes from *Assertio* and Luther’s provocative “but all things happen by absolute necessity (*sed omnia de necessitate absoluta eveniunt*)” which followed

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<sup>12</sup> See at n. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *BLW* 36.

<sup>14</sup> *CO* 6, 255, *WA* 7, 146.6-7 respectively.

immediately from his statement above. Thus Pighius simply recast Luther's assertion in making it the object of his attack.<sup>15</sup>

Calvin proceeded to his answer by first listing a whole host of examples where diligent work brings about good results in everyday life. The first hearkened back to "On Book One," where Calvin compared the preaching effort of the reformers to farmers who "plough the earth and sow the seed" but do not receive an increase "without the blessing of God." This also brought in the Pauline imagery of gardening cited above.<sup>16</sup> With Paul's point already made about the apostles being nothing without God adding the increase, Calvin did not tarry long on this point, "If Pighius is waiting for me to fashion some new reply he is mistaken." So Calvin quoted from his 1539 *Institutes* at length and to the point that "the skills of taking counsel and being careful are inspired by God, so that with their help we may be subject to his providence in the preservation of our life. Just as, on the other hand, by carelessness and laziness we invite the evils which he has imposed on us."<sup>17</sup> In answering Pighius, Calvin distinguished the divine and human points of view, which correspond to divine providence and human responsibility respectively. For Calvin there is a confluence of providence and human responsibility in bringing about God's will. Since man cannot know the plan of God's providence, he must simply concern himself with God's established means. With regard to the human viewpoint of responsibility there may be a good use or neglect of the God-given means, which leads to a good providence or a harsh one respectively. Calvin's point is that God equips "us with ways and means" but they must be positively applied if we want to find God's predetermined will preserving us through life. The opposite experience of suffering natural evil brought on by "thoughtless indiscretion" is

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Lane implies that Pighius was recasting statements from Calvin in *Inst.* 1.16.6, 8 and 1.17.2. *BLW* 36, n. 4. While the concepts are similar, the wording was taken from Luther. See *Free Choice* 15b for Pighius's original.

<sup>16</sup> *BLW* 33.

a possibility that must be considered and can only be avoided by applying the God-given means of prevention. Thus Calvin sought to exclude passive fatalism as a human response to the divine governance. He stated, “We are not stoics who dream up a fate based on a continuous connection of events.”<sup>18</sup> From the divine perspective both “folly and prudence” are subject to God’s will and are “instruments of divine governance on either side” of human experience. But from the human perspective, “The heart of a man ought to plan his way, and the Lord will direct his steps (Prov. 16[:9]). He thereby indicates that we are not in the least prevented by the eternal decrees of God from, subject to his will, having regard for our interests and managing all that is ours.”<sup>19</sup> The same was true for Luther as well:

Free choice is allowed to man only with respect to what is beneath him and not what is above him. That is to say, a man should know that with regard to his faculties and possessions he has the right to use, to do, or to leave undone, according to his own free choice, though even this is controlled by the free choice of God alone, who acts in whatever way he pleases.<sup>20</sup>

Thus we see Luther working with the same distinction of points of view. Man has free choice in what is below him, but from where God is sitting, human freedom *in inferioribus* comes under his governance as well. Luther made this point repeatedly in his *Notes on Ecclesiastes*,<sup>21</sup> and commenting on that work, Robert Rosin notes that for Luther, “The divine hand is never withdrawn, and nothing comes to pass unless the time is right, satisfying divine purposes. The

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<sup>17</sup> *BLW* 37. See *Inst.* 1.17.4 for the quoted section.

<sup>18</sup> *BLW* 38. Calvin was sensitive to this point and elaborated it in *Inst.* 1.16.8 and *EP* 169-70. Luther used the pagan notion of fate as a positive proof for necessity, “How often does Virgil (for one) remind us of fate! ‘By changeless law stand all things fixed.’... The wise men of those days were well aware of what fact and experience prove, namely that no man’s plans have ever been straightforwardly realized.... Hence the very common saying on everyone’s lips, ‘God’s will be done.’... From this we can see that the knowledge of God’s predestination and foreknowledge remained with the common people no less than the awareness of his existence itself” (*LW* 33, 41; see also 76). Though Calvin was more sensitive to the charge of Stoic fate he used it in a way similar to Luther, “And yet what is set forth in Scripture concerning God’s secret providence was never so extinguished from men’s hearts without some sparks always glowing in the darkness” (*Inst.* 1.16.9).

<sup>19</sup> *BLW* 36-37. See also *Inst.* 1.17.3, 4, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *LW* 33, 70. See also 285.

opportunities that man does have to exercise his will do not arise independently from God but are given by him.”<sup>22</sup> This could just as well be a commentary upon Calvin’s words, “For he who set boundaries to our life with his own limits has put the care of it in our hands.”<sup>23</sup>

### **B. Necessity Removes Justice. Response: Providence Does Not Undermine Culpability.**

Calvin stated the second argument, “Why are crimes punished by the law if they are committed of necessity? Why does the judge pass sentence on the person through whom God has acted? For if a murder has been committed, no punishment will be inflicted upon the sword.”<sup>24</sup> Then follows a reference to Luther, “But the wicked when they commit their crimes are, according to Luther, in exactly the same position in God’s sight as is a sword (*gladius*) in someone’s hand.”<sup>25</sup> Lane notes that Pighius brought this charge against Luther by appealing to “Article 36” of *Assertio*, but adds that Luther did not use a sword analogy there.<sup>26</sup> Lane points out however, that Erasmus had made a similar accusation against Luther:

What is the point of praising obedience if in doing good or evil works (*ad bona et simil mala opera*) we are the kind of instrument for God (*instrumentum deo*) that an ax is to a carpenter (*quale securis est fabro*)? But such a tool (*instrumentum*) we are if Wyclif is right. All things before and after grace, good equally with ill (*bona pariter ac mala*), yes even things indifferent, are done by sheer necessity. Which opinion Luther approves. That nobody may suppose me to have invented the charge, I will cite his own words from his “assertions”: “Wherefore,” he says, “it is needful to retract this article. For I was wrong in saying that free choice before grace is a reality only in name. I should have said simply: ‘free choice is in reality a fiction, or a name without reality.’ For no one has it in his own power to think a good or bad

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<sup>21</sup> *LW* 15, 7-187.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Rosin, *Reformers, the Preacher, and Skepticism: Luther, Brenz, Melancthon and Ecclesiastes* (Mainz: Phillipp von Zabern, 1997), 136. See also 97-108, 127-37, 141-47. Chapter 3, n. 100.

<sup>23</sup> *BLW* 36.

<sup>24</sup> *BLW* 37. Cf. *Free Choice* 16a.

<sup>25</sup> *CO* 6, 256; *BLW* 37 (trans. Davies). *Free Choice* 16a.

<sup>26</sup> *BLW* 37, n. 8. Pighius also quoted Article 36 at length in “Book One.” See *Free Choice* 7b-8b and Cf. *Assertio*. See also n. 30 below.

thought, but everything (as Wyclif's article condemned at Constance rightly teaches) happens by absolute necessity." These are Luther's actual words.<sup>27</sup>

While Lane notes the similarity here, he earlier dismissed any connection between Erasmus and Pighius: "To what extent do Pighius and Calvin draw upon the earlier debate? The answer appears to be none at all. Pighius attacks Luther's *Defense* [i.e. *Assertio*], but to the best of my knowledge makes no mention of either Erasmus's *Diatribes* or Luther's *Bondage of the Will*."<sup>28</sup> But if one compares what Erasmus and Pighius are doing with Luther, the resemblance seems preternatural.

Erasmus charged Luther with reducing man to mere passivity since "in doing good or evil works we are the kind of instrument for God that an ax is to a carpenter." Erasmus cited Luther's statement about "absolute necessity" in *Assertio* to support this charge. Specifically with regard to God doing "good or evil works" or "good equally with the ill" by necessity, this charge surely stems from Luther's statement that "no one has it in his own power to think a good or bad thought, but everything...happens by absolute necessity." Erasmus could have also had in mind what Luther said about God's inducement of sin in *Assertio*, "For God even works evil deeds in the wicked (*Nam et mala opera in impiis deus operatur*)."<sup>29</sup> When this is compared to Pighius, we see the same charge with only slight variation. Pighius accused Luther of reducing man to a "sword...in hand (*gladius...proximum*)."<sup>30</sup> Pighius explicitly cited Luther's inducement text to support this, "Since, as he [Luther] says, God also works evil deeds in the wicked (*cum & mala, ut dicit, opera in impiis operetur Deus*)."<sup>30</sup> Pighius also cited Luther's ironic renunciation of

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<sup>27</sup> Walter 45.27-46.13; *LCC* 17, 63-64 (trans. Rupp).

<sup>28</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxviii.

<sup>29</sup> *WA* 7, 144.34-35. Erasmus claimed to have read Luther's *Assertio* in an attitude of "an investigator...toward an arraigned prisoner" but without prejudice. *LCC* 17, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Free Choice 16a. Pighius added, "et ita vivamus, faciamus, patiamurque omnes et omnia: sicut ille vult" (16a). Cf. "Quia non sicut nos, se sicut ille vult, ita vivimus, facimus, patimur omnes et omnia" (*WA* 7, 146.31-32).

“Article 36,” appealing to Luther’s language about “absolute necessity” and the inability “to think anything good or evil.”<sup>31</sup> In this we see that Erasmus and Pighius both brought Luther up on the same charge of treating the human person as a passive instrument (ax and sword respectively), even in committing evil acts, and both supported this from their own similar accounts of Luther’s words in *Assertio*. This similarity suggests influence from Erasmus because, as stated above, no “tool” imagery, either of an ax or sword, is to be found in *Assertio*.<sup>32</sup> It seems uncanny that Pighius would come up with the same curious gloss on the same text unless he was following Erasmus’s lead.<sup>33</sup> Lane is correct in saying that Pighius was not referring to the “earlier debate” itself or making an explicit reference to Erasmus, but it does appear that in criticizing Luther he was taking his cue from Erasmus’s *Diatribes*. Another possible piece to this puzzle is discussed below. Pighius could also have had Calvin in mind since the young reformer had addressed this issue in the 1539 *Institutes*, considering whether civil law can justly punish the evildoer since he was only the “minister of God’s providence.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Free Choice* 16a. Pighius referred to Luther’s statements that “everything happens by absolute necessity” and “none have the power to think either good or evil.” They sandwich Pighius’s accusation in the quoted section below. The relevant statements and the accusation is italicized: “*Si omnia absoluta necessitate eveniunt, quid frustra molitur potestas gladio? quid cruces, & supplicia minitatur nocentibus? Quid prohibere quaerit, quod prorsus vitari et prohiberi non potest? Quid immeritos, sine causa et utilitate flagellat, urit, fecat, et suppliciis afficit, pro eo quod in ipsis, sine ipsis, operatur Deus. Nunquid gladio quo in necem innocentium est usus ficarius, an ipsi potius ficario quis indignatur, irasitur, et parat supplicia? Ita vero, si huius Evangelii auctori et Evangelistae Luthero credimus, se habent scelerati ad ea quae patrant crimina, ut gladius quo quis iugulat proximum: cum & malo, ut dicit, opera in impiis operetur Deus, et ita vivamus, faciamus, patiamurque omnes et omnia: sicut ille vult. Quorsum valent leges divinae, humanae, publicae, privatae, quorsum cohortationes ad capescendam virtutem: dehortationes a vitiis, his poenarum comminationes, illis proposita praemia, quorsum de nostrique disciplinae universae, si in nullius potestate est quicquam cogitare, aut male aut boni: sed Deus operatur in nobis, & per nos, omnia: sicut ipse vult.*” Pighius interacted with Article 36 at length. *Free Choice* 7b-8b roughly corresponds to *WA* 7, 144.27-147.2. See also 15b.

<sup>32</sup> That Luther was not afraid to fully embrace this is clear from his reply to Erasmus. In *BW* Luther employed the imagery of a carpenter “cutting badly with a chipped or jagged ax (*securi*)” and of a horseman riding a lame horse to illustrate how God uses wicked instruments (*SA* 3, 278.13-24; *LW* 33, 176 [trans. Watson and Drewery], see also 177-180).

<sup>33</sup> The variation that is seen is attributable to Pighius’s personal style. Pighius was a more elaborate in lifting out Luther’s language and mocking it with long series of rhetorical questions. Erasmus was fond of the rhetorical style but was sparser in multiplying examples and proofs. Cf. *Walter* 45.26-46.13; *LCC* 17, 61-64 to *Free Choice* 15b-16b and one can see why Pighius might be guilty of being overly fond of this style.

<sup>34</sup> *Inst.* 1.17.3. See also 1.17.4-5, 9.



In answer, Calvin said one must take into account the “way in which divine providence governs human affairs.” God’s providence does not force the wicked against their wills but the wicked sin voluntarily with evil intent because they desire to do so. Necessity stems only “from the fact that God accomplishes his work...through them.” It is “the purpose to do evil which dwells within them” that Calvin said made them “liable to censure.” Calvin brought up the rejoinder to his argument, “But, it is said, they are driven and forced to this by God (*Atqui huc a Deo aguntur et feruntur*).” Calvin did not disagree. He replied, “Indeed, but in such a way that in a single deed the action of God is one thing and their own action is another. For they gratify their evil and wicked desire, but God turns this wickedness so as to bring his judgments to pass.”<sup>35</sup> According to Calvin, the will of the wicked and the will of God activate the same event but in different respects, that is, in different ways and for different reasons. God’s will drives or forces the wicked into action in order to bring about his own righteous judgments, but the wicked act upon their own evil intent and perverted desire. Calvin then returned to Pighius’s analogy of a sword that he had attributed to Luther. Calvin replied that Pighius was attempting to “heap odium on Luther for comparing the wicked to a sword.” Calvin defended Luther, whether he had implied this point in his *Assertio* or not: “For they are the Holy Spirit’s words, not Luther’s: O Assyria, rod of my anger! Again: Why does the axe boast, which is guided by the hand of him that cuts? (Isa. 10).”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *CO* 6, 256; *BLW* 37 [trans. Davies]. In the *Inst.* Calvin wrote, “Will they either involve God in the same iniquity with themselves, or will they cloak their own depravity with his justice? They can do neither. In their own conscience they are so convicted as to be unable to clear themselves; in themselves they so discover all evil, but in him only the lawful use of their evil intent.... And whence...comes the stench of a corpse, which is both putrefied and laid open by the heat of the sun? All men see that it is stirred up by the sun’s rays; yet no one for this reason says that the rays stink.” (1.17.5).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

What is most curious about Erasmus's and Pighius's gloss of Luther's *Assertio* is that while the language of the *instrumentum Dei* and the cutting ax (*securis*) did not come from there, as Lane noted, it can be found in the *Lectures on Romans* (1515/1516) at 9:16:

And in Eccl. 9:11 we read: "I saw that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the men of skill." And then whose are these things? Is the race to those who sit and snore? Is the battle to the weak? Certainly not. But they are all the instrument of God (*instrumentum Dei*) "who works all things in all" (1 Cor. 12:6). So the cutting of wood is not of the ax (*securis*) but of the cutter.... Hence Is. 10:13 ff. is spoken against those who brag about their own powers to injure and inflict evil on others.... And it continues (v. 15): "Shall the ax vaunt itself over him who hews with it?"<sup>37</sup>

What could be going on here? Perhaps Erasmus, who was focusing on Luther's *Assertio*, combined Luther's necessitarian language from there with his statements about the *instrumentum Dei* and the ax imagery from the *Lectures on Romans*. Pighius either did the same thing by coincidence, which seems highly unlikely, or followed Erasmus in this but simply replaced the reference to the "ax" with sword imagery (*gladius*). Calvin followed Pighius's gloss in referring to the sword but added Luther's proof text saying that the language belonged originally to the Holy Spirit. Again Calvin could, by coincidence, have come up with the same proof text to defend Luther that Luther based his theology upon, but perhaps he was following Luther's argument for himself and was only too glad to point out the omission of Luther's critics.<sup>38</sup> This

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<sup>37</sup> *WA* 56, 399; *LW* 25, 388-89 [trans. Preus].

<sup>38</sup> Calvin's *Commentary on Romans* appeared in 1540, and he may have been familiar with Luther's interpretation of Isaiah 10:15 from there. In the dedication to Simon Grynaeus, Calvin treated the methodological approaches of Melancthon, Bullinger, and Bucer and said that they provided the most significant work on Romans in this respect, but Calvin was familiar with many more: "With regard to those who are alive today, there is no point in mentioning them all by name" (*CNTC* 8, 2). There is no doubt that Calvin was an avid follower Luther's exegesis. Luther was a favorite even when Calvin had to disagree with him. When Calvin was accused of invective against Luther's Genesis commentary, he said that nothing could have been further from the truth, though out of respect to Luther he "refrained more than a hundred times from mentioning his name" (*Second Defense of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to Joachim Westphal* [1556], *T&T* 2, 256). But Luther's works were not always available to him. Calvin's Genesis Commentary bears the imprint of the first two volumes of Luther's Genesis commentary. See Chapter 6 n. 167. But it is less likely that Calvin had access to Luther's *Lectures on Romans*. See at n. 39.

tantalizing scenario is made less likely however, by the scant publication history of the *Lectures on Romans*.<sup>39</sup>

### **C. Necessity Undermines Political Order. Response: God Governs Secondary Causes.**

Calvin moved to the third argument, “This argument banishes all political authority and order, all instruction in good living, from human life. For the promise of rewards for good deeds would be to no purpose, and the threat of punishment for crimes equally so, if it is necessary that what will happen should happen” (*si necesse est fieri quod fiet*).<sup>40</sup> This seems nothing more than, like the first argument, a restatement of Luther’s doctrine of “absolute necessity” but without the adjective “absolute.” If the future is set by necessity, it is absolute and cannot be otherwise, and to Pighius’s mind, using threat of punishment and promise of rewards is pointless.

It seems that for Luther, absolute necessity meant nothing more than something has to happen regardless of how God accomplishes it. Whether God brings something to pass according to creation or through contingencies or whether the existence of the consequent was necessary, like God’s being, or not, it did not matter to Luther. If God was behind it, then it was absolutely necessary, and since God was behind everything, everything was absolutely necessary. Simply put, absolute necessity is a function of God being God. There does not appear to be any difference in meaning between Luther’s talk about “necessity” or “absolute necessity.” For Luther, necessity, by definition, is absolute and this can only be qualified from the finite human perspective, and even then it only *appears* open-ended. Thus, for Luther, the term “absolute” meant something like “categorical” and “without exception.” Used in conjunction with

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<sup>39</sup> See *Bibliotheca Bibliographica Aureliana CXLIII*, Joseph Benzing/Helmut Claus, *Lutherbibliographie: Verzeichnis der gedruckten Schriften Martin Luthers bis zu dessen Tod*, Band II (Valentin Koerner: Baden, 1994), 68b. VD B 5019. No manuscript appears in Genevan Academy holdings either. See Ganoczy, *La Bibliothèque de l’Académie de Calvin. Le catalogue de 1572 et ses enseignements* (Geneva: Droz, 1969).

<sup>40</sup> CO 6, 257; BLW 38 [trans. Davies]. See *Free Choice* 16b.

“necessity” the terms together signified that something was “not subject to change or variation,” that is, it “could not be otherwise.” This all-encompassing necessity can only be seen from the divine standpoint, and from the human standpoint, where outcomes are largely unknown, necessity is taken by faith and based on divine revelation.

McSorley writes, “If Luther understood *necessitas absoluta* in the Scholastic sense, this ‘exception’ [freedom *in inferioribus*] would be a manifest contradiction, since he says ‘*all things* happen by absolute necessity.’”<sup>41</sup> It must be remembered however, that when Luther rejected the medieval distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, he did not prefer one of the accepted meanings to the other. It appears that Luther did not accept the “Scholastic sense” in any form and set aside both terms as they were used in the tradition. Luther considered the distinction worthless and rejected the supposed difference between the terms and the differentiating factors given to them by the scholastic theologians. It might be said that he kept “absolute necessity” in name only, perhaps to be provocative,<sup>42</sup> and used it in his own way. In other words, Luther did not accept the “Scholastic sense” but used one of the scholastic terms in his own sense, giving it his own definition.<sup>43</sup> This can be seen from the fact that Luther did not speak of necessity arising from God’s creation as such, or of things necessary by their very

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<sup>41</sup> *Luther*, 259.

<sup>42</sup> Calvin’s acknowledged softening of Luther’s terms most likely referred to “absolute necessity” since that was what Pighius charged the reformers with abandoning by their allowance of freedom in externals (*BLW* 28). Calvin was in a different position and of a different personal inclination than Luther. He did not want to be provocative or inflammatory here but to “remove anything displeasing” (*Ibid.*, 29) and guard against misunderstanding. The latter concern is clear in *EP*, “And though I shrink from the received forms of speech, and the distinction between absolute and consequential necessity, I use them, but only lest any subtlety should prevent even the most simple of my readers from understanding what I say” (170). Calvin did not want to be misunderstood by simple readers who would take absolute necessity at face value as the scholastics defined it and assume that Calvin was saying that all things happened according to the innate principles of created nature. Calvin wanted to make clear that the necessity he was referring to was imposed by the will of God on true contingencies from the human perspective. Luther also dropped the provocative “absolute necessity” in *BW*.

<sup>43</sup> This was something that Luther was not bashful in doing. See Leif Grane, *Contra Gabrielem: Luthers Auseinandersetzung mit Gabriel Biel in der Disputatio Contra Scholasticam Theologiam 1517* (Gyldendal, 1962), 331-37.

definition, as Thomas and the scholastics had done.<sup>44</sup> Instead, Luther characteristically spoke of necessity as issuing from the decisions of God's will and/or human sin.<sup>45</sup> Even right after the provocative passage about "absolute necessity" Luther described necessity as imposed by the will of God, and, in the same breath, he also preserved contingency from the human viewpoint:

Changeability or (as they say) contingency (*inconstantia seu [ut vocant] contingentia*) leads these wretched people astray. For they fix their foolish eyes on things themselves and upon the workings of things, and never lift them up to the viewpoint of God so that they might know in God the things above things. For when we are observing from below, things appear arbitrary and accidental (*res apparent arbitrariae et fortuitae*), but when we are observing from above all things are necessary (*omnia sunt necessaria*), because, we so live, do, and suffer each and every thing not as we, but as he wills (*non sicut nos, sed sicut ille vult... omnes et omnia*). Free choice, which appears in relation to us and temporal things, ceases in relation to God, for there, as James [1:17] says, there is no turning or shadow of change, here however all things change and vary (*mutantur et variantur*).<sup>46</sup>

According to Luther, necessity applies to all of our actions, deeds, and sufferings, and comes from what "he wills" (*ille vult*), and not from contingencies actuated by us (*non... nos*). There are three observations in this passage that reveal Luther's conception of necessity: (1) Luther did not speak of necessity stemming from created nature. (2) Luther denied that necessity is a consequence of the human will making choices. (3) Luther located necessity in the imposition of the choices of the divine will. These points convey Luther's idea of "absoluteness." He meant nothing more than that necessity is categorical and admits "no exception," because God does not vary or change. This appears to have been understood by Pighius and Calvin and carried over from Luther's *Assertio*, being interpreted as meaning simply that everything that will happen "should happen." So it is safe to say that, in this objection, Luther's conception of "absolute necessity" was the target of Pighius's argument.

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<sup>44</sup> See McSorley, *Luther*, 149-53, 234-35.

<sup>45</sup> Contrary to Watson Luther does not equate the scholastic idea of "absolute necessity" with his own understanding of "the necessity of immutability" (*LW* 33, 39, n. 37).

<sup>46</sup> *WA* 7, 146.27-35.

This is confirmed by the fact that Calvin once more responded from the standpoint of a common cause with Luther. “*We say (dicimus) that those things which appear to be in the greatest degree due to chance (fortuita maxime videntur) happen of necessity—not by their innate properties but because the purpose of God, which is eternal and steadfast, is sovereign in governing them*” (emphasis mine).<sup>47</sup> Calvin, like Luther, positively linked necessity to the will of God. But Calvin denied, more specifically than Luther, that this necessity comes from created nature, saying that necessity does not work by “innate properties.” Again his answer was along the same line as Luther but was more nuanced, apparently by the medieval distinction that Luther formally rejected. It must also be kept in mind that though Luther formally rejected the distinction, he did so with respect to the *via moderna* conception of free choice and conceded the idea of contingency with respect to the earthly standpoint and human freedom *in inferioribus*.

Luther, as we saw in *Assertio* above, linked contingency (*contingentia*) to chance (*arbitrariae et fortuitae*) and contrasted that with the divine standpoint, i.e., “observing from above” where everything is seen to be necessary. Thus for Luther, contingency does not apply to God. Luther unambiguously asserted this in *Lectures on Romans*, “Does the contingency of an event constitute an impediment of the certain predestination of God? The answer must be: With God there simply is no contingency (*Quod nulla est contingentia apud Deum simpliciter*), but only with us (*sed tantum coram nobis*), because not even a leaf of a tree falls to the ground without the will of the Father.”<sup>48</sup> In *BW*, Luther wrote, “Moreover, a work can only be called contingent (*contingens*), when from our point of view (*nobis*) it is done contingently (*contingenter*) and, as it were, by chance (*casu*) and without our expecting it, because our will or hand seizes on it as something presented to us by chance (*casu*), when we have thought or willed

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<sup>47</sup> *CO* 6, 257; *BLW* 38 [trans. Davies].

<sup>48</sup> *WA* 56, 383.18-19; *LW* 25, 373. *LCC* 15, 250 [trans. Pauck].

nothing about it previously.”<sup>49</sup> What about for Calvin? Did Calvin link contingency with chance and thus exclude it from the divine perspective? As noted above, Calvin said the most unpredictable events (*fortuita maxime*) only appeared random. It was merely an appearance because they were governed by the purpose of God and were therefore necessary.<sup>50</sup> While Calvin saw chance as a human and not also a divine experience, did he also exclude contingency from the divine purview? It depends on whether he equated it with chance. It is not clear from *BLW*, but Calvin did speak of contingency in *EP* where he did associate it with chance: “That God directs by His counsel the things that seem most fortuitous (*maxime videntur fortuita*) is clearly attested by Scripture when it says: The lot is thrown into the lap, but the judgment of things is from the Lord (Prov. 16.33)... The free will of God disposes all things. Yet it seems absurd to remove contingency from the world.” Calvin’s French version added that contingency “means that things can happen either in one way or another.”<sup>51</sup> And Calvin’s view of contingency was clarified further when he wrote, “But though it is proper for us to consider the natural order as divinely determined, I by no means reject contingency with regard to our perception (*quoad sensum nostrum*).”<sup>52</sup> Contingency for Calvin is a human and not a divine perception. Thus for Calvin, as for Luther, contingency belongs to the experience of the earth-bound and is closely tied to chance. This is significant for the very reason that the medieval scholastics did not link contingency to chance or fortune, nor did they limit contingency to the human point of view.

For the medievals, contingency was not identified with chance but linked to the conditional necessity of consequences (*necessitas consequentiae*) and applied from God’s point of view as

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<sup>49</sup> *SA* 3, 191.16-18; *LW* 33, 38 [trans. Watson].

<sup>50</sup> See at n. 47 above.

<sup>51</sup> “Mais il semble estre absurde d’oster ce qu’ on appelle contingence, c’est que les choses puissent advenir d’une sorte ou d’ autre” (*OC* 3, 1, 239.13-14; *EP* 170, n. 1 [trans. Reid]).

<sup>52</sup> *OC* 3, 1, 236.16-18, 238.7-8, 23-25; *EP* 170.

well.<sup>53</sup> If one merely looks at what Aquinas said about chance, his view is consonant with Luther and Calvin:

In the lower beings some things come about by fortune or chance (*fortuna vel casu*). Now it happens occasionally that something that is fortuitous or chancelike, from the point of view of lower causes, is seen to be directly intended from the point of view of higher causes. For instance, if two servants are sent, unbeknown to each other, to the same place, their meeting, so far as they themselves are concerned, is by chance, since it occurs without reference to their intentions. If, however, the meeting is seen from the point of view of the master who prearranged it, then it does not happen by chance.... We must say that what happens on earth accidentally, either in nature or in human affairs, is derived from a preordaining cause, namely divine Providence.... Nothing prevents certain things happening by chance or fortune with respect to their immediate causes. But this is not so with respect to divine Providence, for in this respect *nothing happens randomly in the world*, as Augustine says.<sup>54</sup>

But according to Aquinas, contingency was altogether different from this, as it was not just in the appearance of things. Aquinas wrote, “God wills some things to happen necessarily and others contingently.”<sup>55</sup> Thus contingencies are real from God’s perspective as well as ours.

Contingencies derive not from surprise at unpredictable occurrences or from being “in the dark” with regard to causes and outcomes. Contingencies derive from the nature of their causes, that is, according to Aquinas, they have contingent causes prepared for them by God as opposed to absolute ones. Thus they are still necessary, but they have a contingent necessity, not an absolute necessity. Aquinas explained:

Accordingly for some he has designed necessary causes...and for others defectible and contingent causes from which effects result contingently.... Consequents have necessity from their antecedents according to the mode of their antecedents. Hence things which come into being from the divine will have that necessity which God wills them to have, whether absolute or only conditional. Accordingly not all of them are absolutely necessary.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See McSorely, *Luther*, 322-327. “For Thomas, Erasmus, and the Scholastics generally, contingent events—unlike chance and fortune—are *really* contingent even in the eyes of God and not just in our eyes” (324).

<sup>54</sup> *Summa* 1a.116, 1 [trans. Charlesworth].

<sup>55</sup> *Summa* 1a.19, 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Summa* 1a.19, 8. See also 1a.14, 13.



Hence, for Aquinas, contingencies are contingent from God's point of view in the sense that they do not have necessary causes and could have been otherwise. But they are also necessary given that God willed the contingencies to go a certain way in his providence. Aquinas asserted, "Indeed nothing resists God's will, and from this it follows not only that everything God wills comes about, but also that it comes about necessarily or contingently just as he wills."<sup>57</sup> Just because something came about by the divine will did not mean for Aquinas that it was absolutely necessary as it did for Luther. According to Luther, "To happen contingently...means in Latin, not that the work itself is contingent, but that it is done by a contingent and mutable will, such as there is not in God. Moreover, a work can only be called contingent when *from our point of view* it is done contingently and, as it were by chance."<sup>58</sup> Luther was willing to admit that contingent means done by a contingent cause, that is, "a contingent and mutable will," but this does not apply to God because his will is also involved and it is not mutable. The will of God removes contingency from the divine perspective and contingency only applies only to the human point of view where chance is apparent to our senses. Thus Luther and Calvin diverge from Aquinas, not in their views of chance or fortune, but in seeing contingency as its counterpart. Erasmus took the medieval view in his answer to Luther: "I know not whether Luther believes the same happens by chance or fortune that happens contingently, but something happens by chance or fortune when it occurs without our expectation or attention. Contingency however, that is what Aristotle calls *endechomenon*, extends to the possibility of being or not being."<sup>59</sup> According to Aquinas God actively ruled the free choices of man, and the distinction between *necessitas*

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<sup>57</sup> *Summa* 1a.19, 8.

<sup>58</sup> *LW* 33, 38.

<sup>59</sup> *Hyperaspistes* 2, LB 10, 1416 E; *CWE* 76, 497.

*consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis* preserved the notion of human free choice as natural freedom and self determination.

Ockham's view was basically the same as Aquinas in that some things were contingent from the divine viewpoint, but they appear to emphasize different things. Aquinas emphasized God's will that wills things to happen contingently, while Ockham emphasized God's knowledge which merely knows future contingents. Ockham wrote:

I maintain that ['God does have necessary knowledge regarding future contingents'] can be understood in two ways. [Understood] in the first way [it means] that God's knowledge whereby future contingents are known is necessary. And this is true, since the divine essence itself is one single necessary and immutable cognition of all things...necessary and contingent. [Understood] in the second way [it means] that by that knowledge future contingents are known necessarily. And [His knowledge] is not necessary in that way. It need not be granted that God has necessary knowledge regarding future contingents; instead, [His knowledge regarding them] is contingent. For just as this or that future contingent contingently will be, so God knows that it contingently will be.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast to Aquinas's view, Ockham portrays God as passive with respect to contingencies. He does not will them to happen a certain way, he only foreknows them. Their views do agree, however, on the basic assumption that contingencies are real from God's perspective. In Ockham's case, he did not explicitly introduce here the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity used by Aquinas,<sup>61</sup> but his understanding of necessity and contingency corresponds to it respectively. At other times however, Ockham did distinguish *necessitas absoluta* from *necessitas peraccidens*.<sup>62</sup> For Ockham, God knows all things, but he knows them as they fall in to the two categories—"necessary" or "contingent." Even though a future contingent will come to pass just as God knows it will happen, it still comes to pass in a

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<sup>60</sup> William Ockham, *Predestination, God's Foreknowledge, and Future Contingents* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1969), 67.

<sup>61</sup> See at n. 56 above for Aquinas. Cf. at n. 74 below.

<sup>62</sup> See Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 2 (Notre Dame, 1987), 481-87.

contingent way. In other words, God cannot be mistaken in his foreknowledge, but his foreknowledge is merely passive, so that it does not impose itself upon future contingents. According to Ockham here, God respects contingencies by knowing them contingently not necessarily. Ockham wrote, “Many things that God knows will be, contingently will be and not necessarily.”<sup>63</sup> Once again Aquinas and Ockham both relate contingencies to God though in different ways. Aquinas spoke of God preparing contingent causes or willing things to happen contingently and Ockham spoke of God simply knowing contingencies, but the salient point with respect to the reformers is that contingencies are in the divine purview for these medieval theologians.

Though Ockham and Aquinas held the same basic view of contingency, Ockhamism was more radical by Reformation standards, since it conceived of free choice as a purely natural act whereby a person could do what was in him to prepare for grace, earn congruous merit, and open the way for justification.<sup>64</sup> As expressed by Biel, this was only possible within the context of God’s merciful covenant (*ex pacto divino*), wherein God graciously accepted a person’s natural

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 70. See also 48, 50-51.

<sup>64</sup> It has been debated to what extent Luther was familiar with the contrast between the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* on the doctrine of grace. Catholic Luther Studies, following Joseph Lortz, have made the case that Luther’s understanding of Roman Catholicism was dominated by the *via moderna* and had Luther been pointed to the authentic Catholic doctrine of grace in the *via antiqua*, the break with the papacy would not have been necessary. For a summary of the Lortz Schools and their impact on ecumenism see Matthew Heckel, “Is R. C. Sproul Wrong About Martin Luther? An Analysis of R. C. Sproul’s *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* with Respect to Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Catholic Luther Scholarship,” *JETS* 47 (March 2004): 112-19. But Heiko Oberman has shown that Luther did distinguish the *doctores in papatu* who corresponded to the “earlier tradition, approximately from Lombard to Scotus,” from Ockham and the *moderni* who, according to Luther, became worse Pelagians (“‘Iustitia Christi’ and ‘Iustitia Dei’: Luther and the Scholastic Doctrines of Justification,” *Harvard Theological Review* 59 [1966] no. 1: 6-7). Luther also distinguished thusly in *BW*, “For it is well known that even the Schoolmen, with the exception of the Scotists and the Moderns, affirm that man cannot love God with all his heart” (*LW* 33, 134, see also 105). While it appears Luther saw the entire medieval period in degrees of Pelagianism, his break with the period connected with all of scholasticism at the point of justifying righteousness. For the Medievals it was something infused *in nobis* and progressively transformative of human nature, but for Luther it was located *extra nos in Christo* and was imputed all at once. See Oberman, “‘Iustitia Christi,’” 15-26. Even though Luther does not appear to be familiar with the tradition of the later Aquinas, he was thoroughly familiar with Augustine’s doctrine of grace. But even though Luther embraced it as part of his reform, he self-consciously broke with Augustine over the nature of justifying righteousness. See Heckel, 99-104.

preparation as a *meritum de congruo* which would receive an infusion of justifying grace producing acts according to the *meritum de condigno* and thus truly worthy of God's acceptance.<sup>65</sup> Despite the context provided by *ex pacto divino*, the *via moderna* was still subject to the charge of a semi-Pelagianism with respect to its view of free choice. This can be seen from Ockham's position on the created will: "For I ask whether or not the determination of a created will necessarily follows the determination of the divine will. If it does, then the will necessarily follows the determination of the divine will. If it does, then the will necessarily acts [as it does], just as fire does, and so merit and demerit are done away with."<sup>66</sup> In this way, Ockham argued that if the divine will imposes necessity, then this reduces the created will to following the laws of nature (i.e., absolute necessity) and thus there can be no merit in its works. Calvin differed with this assessment: "We say that those things which appear to be in the greatest degree due to chance happen of necessity—not by their innate properties but because the purpose of God, which is eternal and steadfast, is sovereign in governing them" (emphasis mine).<sup>67</sup> For Calvin the will of God was ultimately determinative but it did not impose absolute necessity on the choices of man as if they followed "*innate properties*" of nature, as in Ockham's allusion to fire. There was only a necessity of consequence based upon the decisions of God's will in providence and predestination.<sup>68</sup> But Ockham's *reductio ad absurdum* left him only one option, that of

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<sup>65</sup> See Chapter 1 n. 55. For Ockham's understanding see Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 2, 1257-97, esp. 1273-78.

<sup>66</sup> Ockham, *Predestination*, 49.

<sup>67</sup> *CO* 6, 257; *BLW* 38 [trans. Davies].

<sup>68</sup> Ockham also differed from Aquinas on this point. Aquinas held that the providence of God was determinative of contingencies. See at n. 54, 57 above. Luther and Calvin differed from Aquinas in assigning contingency to the mere appearance of things from the limited human perspective.

independent human free choice. He maintained that “future things...depend absolutely on a created will” and “a created will can oppose the determination [of the uncreated will].”<sup>69</sup>

Biel too attributed much to the will in its natural state: “The human will of the pilgrim is able to love God above all things by its natural powers (*ex suis naturalibus*) and therefore to fulfill the command of love. This is so because if the pilgrim could not fulfill it by his natural powers, then God commands the impossible.”<sup>70</sup> Biel also followed the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity:

There is a certain necessity on account of supposition (*necessitas ex suppositione*), which is the necessity of consequence (*necessitas consequentiae*) (not of the consequent [*non consequentis*]) indicating that something follows (*sequitur*) as a necessary result: ‘As when a man says, I live,’ although to be alive itself is not [absolutely] necessary. In this way, on account of the supposition of the divine ordination (*ex suppositione divinae ordinationis*) (by which he ordains to save none generated out of the mass of perdition...except through the sacrament) the sacraments themselves are necessary for salvation. This is because it is impossible to be saved without the sacraments, given the ordination of Christ, “Unless someone be born from water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven” [John 3].<sup>71</sup>

According to Biel, salvation through the instrumentality of the sacraments was not an absolute necessity for God. The *necessitas absoluta* does not apply to what God wills, since he could have established another way according to his absolute power (*de potentia absoluta*). But as a consequence of the fact that God ordained the sacraments as the means of grace, the sacraments are necessary for salvation. They are necessary for salvation not by an absolute necessity but as a consequence of God’s choice, according to his ordained power (*de potentia ordinata*).<sup>72</sup> Thus

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<sup>69</sup> Ockham, *Predestination*, 49. Erasmus sounded the same note: “It is true that what depends on the will of man is simply contingent both to us and to God. For so he knows and wills according to the nature of the thing; If necessary, then necessarily, if contingent then contingently” (*Hyperaspistes* 2, LB 10, 1417 A; *CWE* 76, 489).

<sup>70</sup> III *Sent.* d. 27, art. 3, dub. 2Q.1-4.

<sup>71</sup> IV *Sent.* d. 1, q. 2, art. 1, nota. 1A.27-35.

<sup>72</sup> I *Sent.* d. 17, q. 1, art. 3, dub. 2H. Oberman defines the *potentia dei absoluta* as follows: “The absolute power of God subject only to the law of non-contradiction, which leaves the actually chosen order out of consideration.” He defines the *potentia dei ordinata* as follows: “The order established by God and the way in which

there is a clear relationship between the *necessitas consequentiae* and the distinction between the *potentia dei absoluta* and the *potentia dei ordinata*. According to God's absolute power there are a number of contingencies he could actualize and correspondingly a number of necessities that would follow as a consequence. But according to God's ordained power, he decrees a certain course of action, and a certain result follows as a necessity of consequence. Thus the necessity of consequence applied to all of God's actions as they are all ordained. This also means that by a necessity of consequence God had committed himself to the *facere quod in se est* and the *meritum de congruo* and *meritum de condigno* as the means to justification.<sup>73</sup> The main components in Biel's soteriology can be seen in his answer considered to the question, "Whether God gives grace necessarily to the one who does what is in him:"

It is answered according to Alexander [of Hales] II q. 69 in the next to last article, that there is a necessity of compulsion (*necessitas coactionis*) and there is a necessity of immutability (*necessitas immutabilitatis*). This distinction can be put another way according to Ockham *Quodlibeta* VI q. 2, and can be found in I dist. 17 q. 1: For necessity is, simply stated, either absolute, the opposite of which involves a contradiction, or it is a necessity on account of a condition or a supposition.

Thus it is said that God gives grace to the one who does what is in him (*facienti quod in se est*) by a necessity of immutability or on account of a supposition, because he immutably arranged to give grace (*disposuit dare immutabiliter gratiam*) to the one who does what is in him. Therefore by that standing decree (*ordinatione*) and supposition he is not able to refuse grace to the one who does what is in him, because then he would be mutable. Thus, the predestined are not able to not be saved in the composite sense (*in sensu composito*), because it is impossible that the predestined not be saved; although in the divided sense (*in sensu diviso*) the one who is predestined is able to not be saved, because he is able to not be predestined, since the predestination of anyone is contingent (*contingens*). Thus every decree of God with respect to what is outside (*ad extra*) is contingent. Hence this consequence is necessary: 'A is predestined; thus A will be saved', although both the antecedents and consequents would be contingent. Likewise it follows: 'A does what is in him, thus God gives him grace', although both the antecedents and consequents would be contingent. It follows that necessity is on account of the supposition that God gives

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God has chosen to act in his *opera ad extra*, i.e., over against the contingent order outside him. It is the power which is regulated by the revealed and natural laws established by God" (*The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963], 473).

<sup>73</sup> II *Sent.* d. 27, q. un., art. 1, nota 3C - art. 2.

grace to the one who does what is in him, because this condition is necessary: If a person does what is in him, God gives him grace. But it is not purely necessary nor is he compelled to give grace to the one who does what is in him, because that kind of necessity does not apply to God with respect to any creature whatsoever.

But you might say: It is impossible for a person to do what is in him, because to do what is in him is to remove the obstacle and impediment to grace; the obstacle to grace is mortal sin; but no one can remove his own sin since God alone forgives sins.

It is answered that the obstacle to grace is sometimes said to be mortal sin when it refers to guilt, and it is sometimes spoken of as mortal sin with respect to interior and exterior action, by which there is consent to and approval of sin. In the first way a person is not able to remove sin because sin, when it refers to guilt, cannot be removed except by remission, which God alone can do. Nevertheless, he has determined that he will forgive the one who does what is in him (*tamen paratus est remittere facienti quod in se est*). In the second way it is said that the sinner can remove the obstacle because he is able to stop by consent even in the act of sinning, indeed to hate sin and to will not to sin.<sup>74</sup>

Following Ockham, Biel asserted that God committed himself to accepting what man could do by his natural powers as a preparation for grace. On the subject of predestination, Biel said it was necessary by definition (i.e. by absolute necessity) that the predestined be saved because that is what they are predestined for, but he located the cause of that predestination in the human will which can resist sin and remove the obstacle to grace. In this way Biel guarded contingency and thus made a place for free choice. In the system of the *via moderna*, free choice is preserved by appealing to the contingent order created by God and outside of God (*ad extra*), where the pilgrim can do his best (*facere quod in se est*) and receive grace as a result (*Deus non denegat gratiam*) and join the predestinate (*predestinatum*).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> II *Sent.* d. 27, q. un., art. 3, dub. 4O.1-33.

<sup>75</sup> David Lotz comments, "It will be seen that the cardinal point of theological difference between Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus is the latter's insistence upon, and constant recourse to, the unconditional freedom of God. Everything outside of God, all that belongs to the created realm and to God's ordained will, is wholly contingent upon God's absolute will and in no way necessary. This contingency extends to the church and its sacraments and priesthood—in sum, to all the means of salvation. Thomas, by contrast, ... did not thus oppose God's absolute power (*potentia absoluta*) to his ordained power (*potentia ordinata*).... In Scotist thought, however, contingency has replaced Thomist 'necessity.' ... Ockham... took over the Scotist distinction between the absolute and the ordained power of God, making it the touchstone of his theology and giving it an even more radical application.... The central concern of both Ockham and Scotus was to free Christian theology and ethics from any trace of Greco-Islamic necessitarianism—the idea of a God who is bound to act in accordance with the dictates of 'right reason.' ... While

The medieval scholastic traditions of the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna* differed over the relationship between grace and free choice in salvation, but regardless of whether free choice was conceived in Augustinian or semi-Pelagian terms, they agreed upon its existence. Both traditions found the viability of free choice in the contingent order of creation, and they supported the notion of contingency by distinguishing between the two kinds of necessity. *Necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis* simply corresponded to the common understanding of contingency and necessity respectively. The will of God meant necessity in the world, but God could will certain things to happen contingently and thus preserve human freedom, and the medieval scholastic traditions concurred that this was exactly what God had done in creation.<sup>76</sup> Thus contingency was the presupposition for the medieval conceptions of free choice, and it was also the distinction between the two kinds of necessity that preserved contingency even from the divine perspective, and guaranteed the reality of free choice. Since Luther and Calvin formally rejected free choice with regard to fallen humanity, it should be no surprise that they rejected this distinction as it was used in the Middle Ages and relegated contingency to the category of chance.

For Luther's rejection of free choice one has only to remember his words from *Assertio*, "*Liberum arbitrium est figmentum in rebus seu titulus sine re.*"<sup>77</sup> Luther favored Augustine's term "bound or enslaved choice" (*servum arbitrium*)<sup>78</sup> and only one kind of necessity that did not allow any concessions to free choice (except *in inferioribus*) but destroyed it instead. While

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both Ockham and Scotus, and their followers, held to the principle of 'doing one's best' with one's natural abilities and in cooperation with grace, Ockham significantly modified Scotus's doctrine of salvation by rejecting his teaching that God eternally predestines the elect without any regard to their foreseen merits" (*A History of the Christian Church* [New York: Scribner, 1985], 352-54).

<sup>76</sup> McSorley also traces the history of the distinction going back to its rudimentary form with Augustine and Boethius (*Luther*, 85, n. 74) and through the Middle Ages with Anslem (*Ibid.*, 133, n. 23), Bonaventure (*Ibid.*, 137, n. 60), and Aquinas (*Ibid.*, 148-65).

<sup>77</sup> *WA* 7, 146.5-6.



Augustine may have preferred to speak of the bound will, he did not use it to reject free choice. In fact, Augustine was careful to preserve the notion of free choice. In *On Grace and Free Choice* Augustine answered the objection of the monks of Hadrumetum that his emphasis on grace takes away free choice. Augustine argued that all people are free, but grace is necessary for the good use of free choice; “We...always have free will, but it is not always good. For it is either free from righteousness when it is enslaved to sin, and then it is evil, or it is free from sin when it is enslaved to righteousness, and then it is good.”<sup>79</sup> In the 1539 *Institutes* Calvin also quoted Augustine’s language about the “unfree” will but, in rare contradistinction to Augustine, Calvin formally rejected free choice as well.<sup>80</sup> In *BLW* he also claimed consensus with Luther in the act of doing so; “We deny that choice is free, because through man’s innate wickedness it is of necessity driven to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil.”<sup>81</sup>

Lane points out that Calvin took this position in seeming contradistinction to the entire “tradition of the Western church,” but he notes that Calvin was willing to admit free choice in a qualified sense, and allow it if it was properly defined.<sup>82</sup> Luther also affirmed the natural freedom of the will especially *in inferioribus*; “Indeed [the will] is always naturally free, but only with

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<sup>78</sup> SA 3, 234.6-7; LW 33, 108. Luther was quoting Augustine’s *Contra Julian* II 8, 23.

<sup>79</sup> *Grace and Free Choice* 15, 31, *Works* 1, 26, 92.

<sup>80</sup> *Inst.* 2.2.

<sup>81</sup> *BLW* 69. In the *Institutes* Calvin noted that though Augustine preserved the term “free will” the church father was clear to point out that it was nevertheless “laid under by shackling and conquering desires.” Despite this, Calvin seemed uncomfortable with Augustine’s interest in preserving the term: “If anyone, then, can use this word without understanding it in a bad sense, I shall not trouble him on his account. But I hold that because it cannot be retained without great peril, it will, on the contrary, be a great boon for the church if it is abolished. I prefer not to use it myself, and I should like others, if they seek my advice, to avoid it” (*Inst.* 2.2.8).

<sup>82</sup> Lane, “Bondage and Liberation in Calvin’s Treatise Against Pighius,” in *Calvin Studies IX*, ed. John H. Leith and Robert A. Johnson (Davidson, NC: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), 18. See *BLW* 68-69. In the 1539 *Institutes* Calvin could only grudgingly admit Augustine’s use of the term: “Thus there is left to man such free will, if we please so to call it, as he [Augustine] elsewhere describes: that except through grace the will can neither be converted to God nor abide in God; and whatever it can do it is able to do only through grace” (emphasis mine) (*Inst.* 2.4.14).

respect to the things which are in its power and inferior to it.”<sup>83</sup> While Luther and Calvin diverged somewhat from Augustine, they both appealed to him for support.<sup>84</sup> We have also found that Calvin adopted the distinction between two kinds of necessity in a unique way that preserved what Luther conceded—contingency according to the human perspective where chance appears on the surface of events. Calvin used necessity the same way as Luther though he was clearer about the fact that it sprang from the will of God and not from the created order. The fact that Luther preceded Calvin in this suggests his unique influence, as there was no other precedent, even in the Augustinian tradition.<sup>85</sup> This case is made even stronger by the fact that

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<sup>83</sup> *Liberum quidem semper est naturaliter, Sed respectu eorum, que in potestate sua sunt et se inferiora* (*Lectures on Romans WA* 56, 185). In *BW* Luther wrote, “This will and nature of theirs, therefore, which is thus averse from God is not something nonexistent. For Satan and ungodly man are not nonexistent or possessed of no nature or will, although their nature is corrupt and averse from God. That remnant of nature, therefore, as we call it, in the ungodly man and Satan, as being the creature and work of God, is no less subject to divine omnipotence and activity than all other creatures and works of God” (*LW* 33, 176. See also *LW* 33, 65, 67, 69, 103, 283. For *in inferioribus* see *LW* 33, 70, 285).

<sup>84</sup> *LW* 33, 72, 108. *BLW* 116, from 47 *passim*. McSorley repeatedly points out that Luther’s rejection of free choice puts him at odds with Augustine, Aquinas, and the whole Catholic tradition. But McSorley assumes that Luther’s rejection of free choice and affirmation of necessity is inconsistent with natural freedom or freedom *in inferioribus*. I will argue below that if Luther and Calvin are properly understood, we find that their denial of free choice and doctrine of necessity are compatible with the concept of natural freedom understood as self-determination. The difference between Luther and Calvin on one side and Augustine et. al. on the other is over the usefulness of the term itself.

<sup>85</sup> Bernard of Clairvaux also insisted that fallen man did not lose his free choice as it was a permanent endowment: “There are, then, these three forms of freedom, as they have occurred to us: freedom from sin, from sorrow and from necessity. The last belongs to our natural condition” (*On Grace and Free Choice*, [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications Inc., 1988], 3.7). Bernard added, “Freedom from necessity belongs alike to God and to every rational creature. Neither by sin nor by suffering is it lost or lessened; nor is it greater in the just man than in the sinner, nor fuller in the angel than in the man. For the consent of the human will, which is directed by grace toward the good, makes man freely good.... In the same way, when it inclines willingly toward the bad, it makes man nonetheless free and spontaneous in the bad” (*Ibid.* 4.9. See also 1.2, 2.4, 9.28). Bernard affirmed free choice as part of the *imago Dei*: “Maybe, therefore, the reason why free choice alone suffers no lessening or falling away, is that in it, more than in the others, there seems to be imprinted some substantial image of the eternal and immutable deity” (*Ibid.* 9.28). Next to Augustine, Calvin cited Bernard in support of his doctrine of the will, “Yet he [Bernard] concludes; ‘Thus the soul, in some strange and evil way, under a certain voluntary and wrongly free necessity is at the same time enslaved and free: enslaved because of necessity; free because of will. And what is at once stranger and more deplorable, it is guilty because it is free: enslaved because it is guilty, and as a consequence enslaved because it is free.’” Calvin praised Bernard as one who knew how to distinguish between necessity and compulsion (*Inst.* 2.2.5). But Calvin also noted that Bernard wished to speak “subtly ‘on account of the imperishable freedom of the will’” and taught more obscurely than Augustine when he defined free will as “consent” (*Inst.* 2.2.4). See the debate between Vincent Brümmer, “Calvin, Bernard and the Freedom of the Will,” *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 437-55, and Paul Helm, “Calvin and Bernard on Freedom and Necessity: A Reply to Brümmer,” *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): 457-65. Brümmer, “On not Confusing Necessity with Compulsion: A Reply to Paul Helm,” *Religious Studies* 31 (1995): 105-09.

Melanchthon and Bucer, the two other preeminent influences on Calvin, did not formally reject free choice.

Bucer wrote in his 1536 Romans commentary:

There is freedom of choice in as much as the faculty of one's own choice is seen acting without any compulsion. I say without any compulsion, but not without necessity. In as much as God necessarily wills what is right and is not able to will otherwise and yet he has the greatest freedom, so we will only have complete freedom (*plenam libertatem*) when we will not be able to will what is evil, and we will necessarily will what is good.<sup>86</sup>

For Bucer, man has free choice since he is not compelled against his will. This does not rule out necessity, however, since God is free and yet necessarily good. In a like manner man is free and yet necessarily sinful. He will not be free to do good until his will is made perfectly good, but the fact of freedom still stands. In his 1521 *Loci Communes*, Melanchthon was firmly on the side of Luther; "Seeing that all things that happen, happen necessarily according to divine predestination, there is no freedom of the human will."<sup>87</sup> By the time of his 1535 *Loci communes* however, Melanchthon had changed his views. In emphasizing the universality of the promise as a basis of assurance, Melanchthon contended that there were three causes in bringing about the promised salvation: "the Word, the Holy Spirit, and the will (*voluntatem*), which was not idle (*non otiosam*)."<sup>88</sup> Melanchthon elaborated this in 1543:

Therefore, some of the ancients put it this way: The free choice in man is the ability to apply oneself toward grace, that is, our free choice hears the promise, tries to

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<sup>86</sup> Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et enarrationes perpetuae epistolarum D. Pauli Apostoli...tomus primus ad Romanos* (Strasbourg, 1536), 360b. See 400-404 where Bucer answers "The Question on Free Choice, whether man is endowed with free choice, and what it avails." There he follows Augustine and Aquinas, notes that Melanchthon spoke of "liberum arbitrium in rebus vitae civilis (401a)," and attempts to deal with the fathers generally (403a-04a). See also François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997; First ed., 1950), 190-91, n.19.

<sup>87</sup> Phillip Melanchthon, *The Loci Communes of Phillip Melanchthon* (Boston: Meador Publishing, 1944), 73. Melanchthon went on to write, "'What then,' to use the term of some (the Schoolmen), 'is there no contingency in things, no chance, nor fortune?' The Scriptures teach that all things happen by necessity. Such is the case; and it may seem to you that there is contingency in human affairs but in this idea, rational judgment must be overruled" (Ibid. 74). See also 81.

<sup>88</sup> *Loci communes*, CR 21, 376. See also 428, 450-53.

assent to it and rejects the sins which are contrary to conscience.... Since the promise is universal and since in God there are not conflicting wills, it is necessary that there is some cause within us for the difference as to why Saul is rejected and David received, that is, there must be a different action on the part of the two men.<sup>89</sup>

While Melanchthon came to see free choice as its own independent cause in salvation, Bucer did not take that position. But in contradistinction to Luther and Calvin, both of these reformers saw free choice as proper to theology and gave it a formal place in the structure of their thought. Calvin clearly threw his support behind Luther's more radical position. Calvin's allowance of free choice properly defined was no departure from Luther, who, once again, held to the equivalent of natural freedom, and affirmed free choice for man *in inferioribus*. Though Calvin was claiming consensus for the entire Reformation cause and not just with Luther, it was his formal rejection of free choice that distinguished him and Luther from the rest of the pack and points to Luther's unique influence over Calvin in this area.

To conclude the findings to this point, we see that Luther and Calvin broke with the medieval tradition in three ways. (1) They linked contingency to chance and not to free choice. Luther understood contingency as applying to things which "appear uncertain and accidental (*arbitrariae et fortuitae*)" and are either not premeditated or anticipated by humans. Chance and contingency were integrally related if not identical for him. For Calvin, a chance happening is unpredictable by human standards of knowledge, and contingency meant something could happen in various ways that might not be discernible from a finite perspective. (2) They rejected the medieval understanding of *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*. Though Calvin used the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity positively, he was making

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<sup>89</sup> Melanchthon, *Loci communes*, 1543 (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 44. See also 175. See Timothy Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever": The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 26-33, who exposes the tensions between Calvin and Melanchthon over the will, "Calvin could hardly have been ignorant of Melanchthon's (and, he had to assume, Wittenberg's) shift on the issue of human bondage from Luther's attack

the same point as Luther, who conceded its relevance to the finite human perspective. (3) They formally denied free choice. In the last way Luther and Calvin also stood apart from the rest of the reform party. Thus Calvin, more than any other of the reformers, appears as the heir of Luther's doctrine of the will in bondage. Anything that preserved the notion of free choice was, for these two reformers, perilous to the conscience and pastorally dangerous. This leads to Calvin's response to the fourth argument.

#### **D. Necessity Removes True Religion. Response: Necessity Promotes True Religion.**

Calvin stated Pighius's fourth argument, "All religion is done away [by our doctrine] and human beings are turned into brute beasts, or rather monsters, before which argument Pighius goes rigid with wonder like a stone."<sup>90</sup> In responding to Pighius, Calvin maintained that he, Luther, and the rest simply taught man to blame himself for his inborn corruption, depend solely upon God, give him all credit for good works, and that God rules all things, even Satan, so that "everything that happens happens of necessity, as he has ordained."<sup>91</sup> Quite apart from undermining true religion, Calvin maintained that it was exactly these doctrines which upheld it. In Calvin's response to Pighius we see that it was the medieval crisis over assurance that led him to formally reject the term free choice and divine contingencies, and we see a parallel to the reasons given by Luther. We might say that for Luther and Calvin, it was the medieval doctrines of contingency and free choice, especially associated in their minds with Ockhamism, that led them to a biblical resolution that brought certainty back to faith and restored true religion.

According to Luther and Calvin, leaving something to free choice, as in the case of the *via moderna*, meant leaving something to man, and therefore pricked the conscience with

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against Erasmus in *De servo arbitrio*—Pighius himself had pointed this out.... Thus, Calvin in prosecuting his case against Pighius, sought to reclaim the authority of Melanchthon, whose own opinion on the topic was unclear" (27).

<sup>90</sup> BLW 38.

uncertainty. Luther wrote, “For if you doubt or disdain to know that God foreknows all things, not contingently, but necessarily and immutably, how can you believe his promises and place a sure trust and reliance on them?”<sup>92</sup> Luther also remarked that he would not desire free choice if it could be granted, since his salvation would be left in his own hands. Luther wrote of the dire consequences:

I should be unable to stand firm and keep hold of it amid so many adversities and perils and so many assaults of demons...and...even if there were no perils or adversities or demons, I should nevertheless have to labor under perpetual uncertainty and to fight as one beating the air, since even if I lived and worked to eternity, my conscience would never be assured and certain how much it ought to do to satisfy God. For whatever work might be accomplished, there would always remain an anxious doubt...as I myself learned to my bitter cost through so many years. But now, since God has taken salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine, and has promised to save me, not by my own work or exertion but by his grace and mercy, I am assured and certain.<sup>93</sup>

For Luther, the assurance that is based upon God’s choice comes to the one who clings to the promise in faith. While the doctrine of election was linked to the hidden counsel of God and caused Luther anxiety as a monk, this was resolved by his discovery of justification by faith alone. Luther wrote that he was “offended...and brought to the very depth of despair, so that I wished I had never been created as a man, before I realized how salutary that despair was, and how near to grace.”<sup>94</sup> When Luther realized God had taken salvation out of his hands, “making it

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<sup>91</sup> *BLW* 39.

<sup>92</sup> *LW* 33, 42.

<sup>93</sup> *LW* 33, 288-89. Peter Brown has referred to predestination as “the doctrine for fighting men.” *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: Univ. of California, 1967, 2000), 406. This fight for assurance and “ultimate identity” is something evident also in the lives of Luther and Calvin. Martin Brecht says of Luther, “The *Anfechtungen* of being abandoned by God was fundamentally the problem of God’s election or reprobation. It was Augustine who had most deeply considered this, and a few Augustinian theologians had attempted to regain his insights lost by the concept of merit. In Luther’s first lectures on the Psalms the problem of predestination played only a secondary role, but it was discussed intensively in his lectures on Romans 1515/16. This is strong evidence that the *Anfechtungen* are not to be dated before approximately 1515” (*Martin Luther: His Road to the Reformation 1483-1521*, [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985], 80-81).

<sup>94</sup> *LW* 33, 190, see also n. 36, where Watson relates how the Ockhamist teaching of the *potentia Dei absoluta* and the *potentia Dei ordinata* contributed to Luther’s struggle.

depend on his choice,” predestination became a comfort for Luther. It was on the other side of faith that Luther recognized that God, whose will had been hidden, was eternally gracious to him in Christ.<sup>95</sup> Luther had been racked with uncertainty when he thought that something was left to his will, but with the knowledge that salvation did not depend on Luther’s own will, he was “assured and certain.” Luther said that “the necessary foreknowledge of God and the necessity of the things that are to come to pass” are “the one supreme consolation of Christians.” Luther saw Erasmus’s skepticism toward such questions as teaching others “to despise faith, let go the promises of God, and treat all the consolations of the Spirit and certitudes of conscience as of no account.”<sup>96</sup> Brosché argues that Luther did not deduce predestination from justification but held that we trust in Christ and are justified because God chose us for this. Brosché notes that for Luther:

Predestination is based not on justification but on the contingent creation's absolute dependence on the Creator who alone exists by necessity. Election is regarded as a special case of absolute necessity which binds and governs all created things. Simply because the theory of predestination has this independence *vis-à-vis* the doctrine of justification, it can become an effective knife which, *inter alia*, excises the idea of human merit from justification and creates certainty of salvation.<sup>97</sup>

Luther asserted early in his reforming career, “The best and infallible preparation for grace and the sole disposition toward grace is eternal election and predestination of God.”<sup>98</sup>

Calvin responded to Pighius:

All this [teaching] has no other purpose but to make the believer rest, free from anxiety, in the omnipotence (*omnipotentia*) of God. He then will fear neither fortune nor chance and will not be afraid for himself because of wild animals or human beings or devils, as though the reins had been let go or broken and they came on

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<sup>95</sup> On the hiddenness of God see Chapter 6 § II.

<sup>96</sup> *LW* 33, 43.

<sup>97</sup> Brosché, 144.

<sup>98</sup> *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517), thesis 29, *LW* 31, 11. Luther echoed this in *BW*, “For if grace comes from the purpose or predestination of God, it comes by necessity and not by our effort or endeavor” (*LW* 33, 272).

under their own impulse without any control from above. Instead he will entrust his soul and body to God and so, with a calm and tranquil mind, sink back into the protection of him whose will he knows determines everything and whose hand brings everything to pass.

Calvin here emphasized assurance in the face of physical and spiritual threats based upon God's omnipotent control of all things and his benevolence toward his people. The assurance of faith is also in view as Calvin assumed trust in the promise of God. In fact, Calvin premised his point about the omnipotence of God with this statement, "We say that man not only cannot do anything good but cannot even think it, so that he may learn to depend totally on God and, despairing of himself, to cast himself entirely upon him."<sup>99</sup> The faith that trusts God's omnipotence and benevolence has already cast itself entirely upon God for salvation. In his later work against Pighius, Calvin wrote about the relationship between assurance based upon the promise and assurance based upon election:

There is no consideration more apt for the building up of faith than that we should listen to this election which the Spirit of God testifies in our hearts to stand in the eternal and inflexible goodwill of God, invulnerable to all storms of the world, all assaults of Satan and all vacillation of the flesh. For then indeed our salvation is assured to us, since we find its cause in the breast of God. For thus we lay hold of life in Christ made manifest to faith, so that led by the same faith, we can penetrate farther to see from what source this life proceeds. Confidence of salvation is founded upon Christ and rests on the promises of the gospel. Nor is it a negligible support when, believing in Christ, we hear that this is divinely given to us, that before the beginning of the world we were both ordained to faith and also elected to the inheritance of heavenly life. Hence arises an impregnable security. The Father who gave us to the Son as His peculiar possession is stronger than all, and will not suffer us to be plucked out of His hand.<sup>100</sup>

According to Calvin, both the promise and election are from God and therefore may serve as bases for assurance, but, in the believer's experience, the promise has temporal priority. Calvin held that "confidence of salvation is founded upon Christ and rests on the promises of the

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<sup>99</sup> *CO* 6, 17; *BLW* 39 [trans. Davies].

<sup>100</sup> *EP* 57.



gospel” and that same faith, which rests on the promise, penetrates further on and sees “from what source this life proceeds.” Far from being troubled by this, the Christian is comforted in the knowledge that his position is unassailable because of the strength of the Father. Thus Calvin conjoined again the promise in Christ with the omnipotence of the Father who “will not suffer us to be plucked out of His hand.” Luther also emphasized God’s omnipotence as a basis of assurance, appealing to the same Scriptural basis as Calvin. Luther continued his words quoted above, “I am assured and certain both that he is faithful and will not lie to me [promise], and also that he is too great and powerful (*potens*) for any demons or any adversities to be able to break him or to snatch me from him. ‘No one,’ he says, “shall snatch them out of my hand, because my Father who has given them to me is greater than all’ [John 10:28 f.] [omnipotence].”<sup>101</sup> Thus we see that for both Luther and Calvin the assurance based on the omnipotence of God is given to those who have begun by seeking assurance based on the promise of God.

Erasmus had rebuked Luther for his focus on the will. The question of the roles of the human and divine wills in salvation was a speculative one for Erasmus and was of secondary importance. But for Luther it was a matter of true religion:

Therefore, it is not irreverent, inquisitive, or superfluous, but essentially salutary and necessary for a Christian, to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters pertaining to eternal salvation.... If we do not know these things, we shall know nothing at all of things Christian.... For if I am ignorant of what, how far, and how much I can and may do in relation to God, it will be equally uncertain and unknown to me, what, how far, and how much God can and may do in me, although it is God who works everything in everyone [1 Cor. 12:6]. But when the works and power of God are unknown, I do not know God himself, and when God is unknown, I cannot worship, praise, thank, and serve God, since I do not know how much I ought to attribute to myself and how much to God (*dum nescio, quantum mihi tribuere, quantum Deo debeo*). It behooves us to be very certain about the distinction between God’s power and our own, God’s work and ours, if we want to live a godly life.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> SA 3, 351.26-30; LW 33, 289 [trans. Watson].

<sup>102</sup> SA 3, 189.15-30; LW 33, 35 [trans. Watson]. See also LW 33, 44-64.

Later on in *BLW*, Calvin made precisely the same point in similar language:

If, when the distinction between divine grace and human power is absent [as it was prior to the Pelagian controversy], clarity is easily and quickly acquired, then I admit that I was wrong. If on the other hand the reader cannot avoid being left, doubtful and anxious, in confusion about what should be ascribed to God and what should be left to man (*quantum Deo adscribere, quantum homini relinquere debeat*)—why, when I have done nothing wrong, am I so atrociously abused?<sup>103</sup>

Explicitly mentioning the matter of true religion, Calvin wrote, “Moreover since this entire teaching trains a person only to be humble, to fear God, to place his trust in God, and to ascribe glory to God, which are the chief components of true religion (*vera religio*), there is no reason why Pighius should direct so awful an accusation against us.”<sup>104</sup> Not only do both Luther and Calvin insist on the importance of knowing how much to attribute to God and how much to attribute to the self, but Calvin, like Luther, touched on the importance of this knowledge for proper worship. In *EP* Calvin wrote:

Hence if to honor the goodness of God (*ad celebrandum Dei bonitatem*) it is chiefly necessary to remember how much we are indebted to Him, they are malicious injurers of God who consider the doctrine of eternal election burdensome and vexatious. For if it is buried out of sight, half the grace of God must vanish with it. Let them clamor who will—we shall always equip the doctrine of gratuitous election as we teach it with this maxim, for without it the faithful cannot adequately apprehend how great is the goodness of God by which they are effectually called to salvation.<sup>105</sup>

In sum, Luther and Calvin opposed any independent role for free choice in salvation as detrimental to assurance and therefore undermining true religion. This opposition to medieval conceptions of contingency and free choice applied first and foremost to the *via moderna* but also to any like Erasmus and Pighius who followed in giving free choice an independent role in acquiring grace.

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<sup>103</sup> *CO* 6, 292; *BLW* 86 [trans. Davies].

<sup>104</sup> *CO* 6, 258; *BLW* 39 [trans. Davies].

<sup>105</sup> *OC* 3, 1, 20.11-18; *EP* 57-58 [trans. Reid].

### **E. Necessity Makes God the Author of Sin. Response: God Uses Wicked Instruments.**

Calvin stated the fifth argument of Pighius, “By speaking in this way we make God the author of all evil deeds, we make him who is the most just into one who is cruel and savage, and we turn his infinite wisdom into folly.”<sup>106</sup> Calvin begins by saying that human reason is impressed by this argument because it thinks that it has constructed an impossibility for God, since it would be a contradiction for his goodness to be in any way associated with evil deeds. Calvin counseled that since the carnal mind cannot access the judgments of God that we should follow “modesty and reverence” with regard to divine justice. Calvin argued that if Scripture teaches that God works evil in the wicked our wisdom should simply submit to that revelation as perfectly consistent with the justice of God. Once Calvin has again placed a nominalist bridle on human reason, he says we shall understand that God is not the author of evil deeds but is simply “a wonderfully expert craftsmen who can use even bad tools well (*eximium et mirificum artificem, qui bene etiam malis instrumentis utatur*).”<sup>107</sup> According to Calvin, God leads the ungodly where he wills them to go and works his will through them.

Lane says that while Calvin tries to maintain human responsibility in the face of God’s control, his position is weakened by certain passages where he says that the wicked are “driven and forced” to evil “by God” (*a Deo aguntur et feruntur*).<sup>108</sup> In addition to this, Calvin wrote that God “bends their wills this way and that in accordance with his choice (*voluntates flectere pro suo arbitrio huc atque illuc*), and is the director (*moderatorem*) of their actions, so that they in the end do nothing which he has not decreed, whatever they may try to do (*ut nihil tandem, nisi*

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<sup>106</sup> *BLW* 39-40.

<sup>107</sup> *CO* 6, 257; *BLW* 40 [trans. Davies].

<sup>108</sup> *CO* 6, 256; *BLW* 37 [trans. Davies].

*quod decrevit, efficiant, quidquid conentur*).<sup>109</sup> Calvin added even more explicitly, “There is no created thing which does not, either of its own accord or under coercion (*aut sponte, aut coacta*), obey his will.” Lane says that “Calvin’s language sits uncomfortably with his later more careful definitions.”<sup>110</sup> In these later definitions Calvin said that the wicked are “not compelled or violently dragged by an external impulse (*non cogatur, aut violenter trahatur externo motu*) but move of their own accord (*sed sponte agatur sua*).<sup>111</sup> Calvin also said that “there can be no such thing as a coerced will (*Coacta voluntas nulla esse potest*), since the two ideas are contradictory,” and a coerced will is one that “does not incline this way or that by its own accord (*non sponte sua...inclinatur huc vel illuc*) nor by an internal movement of decision (*nec interiore electionis motu*), but is violently driven by an external impulse (*sed externo motu violenter fertur*).<sup>112</sup> It seems from this that Calvin affirmed contradictory statements. Calvin held that God can coerce the will but then wrote that coercion is incompatible with the very concept of will. It also seems contradictory for him to say God bends the will and then deny coercion, since he maintained that any kind of action that is not located in the will itself is coercion. Thus it seems that for Calvin God can do the impossible—he can coerce what is not subject to coercion. At this point it might be tempting to throw up our hands and say, “Oh what a difference a few pages makes!” Lane comments:

Calvin largely avoids formal linguistic contradiction, but he does state both that the wicked are driven (*ferentur*) to sin by God...and that the will is not forcibly driven (*violenter fertur*) by an external impulse. It is not immediately obvious how the earlier statements that God drives, forces, bends and constrains the wicked are to be reconciled with the later denials of coercion.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> CO 6, 257; BLW 38 [trans. Davies].

<sup>110</sup> Lane, “Bondage and Liberation,” 22-23.

<sup>111</sup> CO 6, 279; BLW 68.

<sup>112</sup> CO 6, 280; BLW 69.

<sup>113</sup> Lane, “Bondage and Liberation,” 23.

While Lane is correct in saying that a resolution to this apparent contradiction is not immediately obvious, there are some important differences in the two sections.

In the first section, Calvin does not appear to be speaking about coercion in the same way as in the later section. When Calvin spoke of coercion in the first passage, he might only have had in mind those rare occurrences where God imposes his will against a human will, as when Saul of Tarsus was knocked to the ground by the vision of glorified Christ or in the case of something as simple as a judge sentencing someone to prison. In the latter section however, it is obvious that Calvin was referring to the normal course of events, and with reference to that he was careful to say that the wicked are self-determining and are not forced by an *external* impulse. It is also manifest from following words that Calvin was setting a new context for speaking about coercion: “*According to these definitions* we allow that man has choice and that it is self-determined, so that if he does anything evil, it should be imputed to him and to his own voluntary choosing. We do away with coercion and force, because this contradicts the nature of will and cannot coexist with it (emphasis mine).”<sup>114</sup>

The issue of God driving the wicked, mentioned by Lane, is another problem for Calvin’s denial of coercion. It must be pointed out however, that there is a difference between the wicked who, in the first section, are “driven” (*feruntur*) by God and the wicked who, in the latter section, are referred to as “violently driven” (*violenter fertur*) or “violently dragged” (*violenter trahatur*) by an “external impulse” (*externo motu*). The latter is Calvin’s definition of coercion and the former is not. In fact, it seems to be the *externo motu* that makes the difference to Calvin. In denying coercion Calvin clearly specified and rejected the imposition of the *externo motu* from God. Calvin’s repugnance to coercion is also found in Luther.

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<sup>114</sup> *BLW* 69.

Luther rejected the idea of the divine power coercing (*non coactionis*) and violating (*non quidem uiolentia*) the human will.<sup>115</sup> Luther wrote, “If we are under the god of this world, without the work and Spirit of the true God, we are held captives to his will.... And this we do willingly and agreeably, according to the nature of the will, which would not be a will if it were compelled (*cogeretur*); for coercion (*coactio*) is rather as they say ‘unwill.’”<sup>116</sup> When it becomes clear that for Calvin the divine power is not an *externo motu* which forces the wicked against their wills, except in rare cases, but acts upon an inborn necessity in the wicked themselves that drives them into voluntary action, the reformer of Geneva appears in the light of a rather Lutheran solution.

Luther stated in *BW*:

Since, then, God moves and actuates all in all, he necessarily moves and acts also in Satan and ungodly man. But he acts in them as they are and as he finds them; that is to say since they are averse and evil, and caught up in the movement of this divine omnipotence, they do nothing but averse and evil things. It is like a horseman riding a horse that is lame in one or two of its feet; his riding corresponds to the condition of the horse, that is to say, the horse goes badly. But what is the horseman to do? If he rides such a horse alongside horses that are not lame, this will go badly while they go well, and it cannot be otherwise unless the horse is cured. Here you see that when God works in and through evil men, evil things are done, and yet God cannot act evilly although he does evil through evil men, because one who is himself good cannot act evilly; yet he uses evil instruments (*malis tamen instrumentis utitur*).... It is the fault, therefore, of the instruments, which God does not allow to be idle, that evil things are done, with God himself setting them in motion. It is just as if a carpenter were cutting badly with a chipped and jagged ax. Hence it comes about that the ungodly man cannot but continually err and sin, because he is caught up in the movement of divine power and not allowed to be idle, but wills, desires, and acts according to the kind of person he himself is.<sup>117</sup>

Calvin’s reference to God as a “wonderfully expert craftsmen who can use even bad tools well” is parallel to Luther’s reference to the good God who cannot do evil “yet he uses evil instruments.”

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<sup>115</sup> *SA* 3, 207.11-12; *LW* 33, 64.

<sup>116</sup> *SA* 3, 207.32-35, 39-40; *LW* 33, 65. See also *SA* 3, 207.10-21, 25-29; *LW* 33, 64-65.

<sup>117</sup> *LW* 33, 176.

<i>BW</i>	<i>BLW</i>
<i>malis...instrumentis utitur</i> <sup>118</sup>	<i>malis instumentis utatur</i> <sup>119</sup>

Luther's influence on Calvin feels palpable here and sheds light on Calvin's interpretation. When Calvin wrote that God drives, forces, and bends the wicked but does not coerce them against their will, this parallels Luther's understanding of God's omnipotent power prompting evildoers to act voluntarily on their desires. The fact that Calvin also referred to this as God using wicked tools seems to be an echo of Luther. This appears to be borne out in a later passage where Calvin wrote:

That the wicked are like saws in the hand of God which moves, turns, and directs them where he wills is not derived from Luther but from the Holy Spirit—if Pighius acknowledges that it was he who spoke through the prophets. For Isaiah says concerning Sennacherib: Shall the saw boast against him by whom it is pulled? (Isa. 10). However, Luther always added this explanation: all the wicked are instruments of God (*Dei instrumenta*) in such a way that the doing of evil originates from them, remains in them, and is also to be imputed to them.<sup>120</sup>

When Luther spoke of God using wicked instruments in *BW*, he did indeed make the qualifications that Calvin mentioned. Luther said that God acts in the wicked “as they are and as he finds them,” and, “it is the fault, therefore, of the instruments,” and that the wicked person “acts according to the kind of person he himself is.” In fact, the whole point of the imagery of the rider of the lame horse and the carpenter cutting with the bad ax is to show that God is not the author of sin but the one who uses the wickedness of fallen creatures as they are swept up in his

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<sup>118</sup> *SA* 3, 278.19.

<sup>119</sup> *CO* 6, 257.

<sup>120</sup> Calvin was looking back to Pighius's accusation against Luther in the second argument. *BLW* 37-38. There Pighius had accused Luther of reducing man to a mere instrument in the hand of God but went on to accuse Luther of making God the author of the evil acts performed by the instrument. Calvin writes, “The Manichees, he [Pighius] says, invented two ultimate causes, so that they would not have to attribute the doing of evil to God. But Luther, by stating that in doing such [evil] things we are like saws pulled by [God's] power this way and that, wherever he wills, ascribes crimes and outrages to the one God, who is the most good and the most great” (*BLW* 48). See *Free Choice* 17a-17b. See also 16a.

omnipotence. Calvin might also have in mind Luther's statement from *BW* where Luther said God does not create fresh evil but uses instruments that are already evil:

Let no one suppose, therefore, when God is said to harden or to work evil in us (for to harden is to make evil), that he does so by creating evil in us from scratch (*de nouo*). You must not imagine him like an evil-minded innkeeper...who pours or blends poison into an innocent vessel, which itself does nothing but receive or suffer the malignity of the blender. That is the way people seem to imagine...when they hear it said by us that God works in us good things and bad, and that we are subject by sheer passive necessity to God's working; for they do not sufficiently consider how unrestingly active God is in all his creatures, allowing none of them to take a holiday. But anyone who wishes to have any understanding of such matters should think as follows. God works evil in us, i.e. by means of us, not through any fault of his, but owing to our faultiness, since we are by nature evil...but as he carries us along by his own activity in accordance with the nature of his omnipotence, good as he is himself he cannot help but do evil with an evil instrument (*malo instrumento maulum faciat*).<sup>121</sup>

When Calvin conceded that the impious were driven and forced into their actions by God he explained that it was "in such a way that in a single deed the action of God is one thing and their own action is another. For they gratify their evil and wicked desire, but God turns this wickedness so as to bring his judgments to pass."<sup>122</sup>

To summarize Calvin's position, we might say that God may coerce or bend the human will in some instances, but his regular course of action with respect to the wicked is to drive them into voluntarily behavior without coercion or force opposing their wills. The contradiction between Calvin's allowance of coercion and his denial of the same is only apparent from Calvin's unqualified speech about coercion in the earlier section. The key issue for Calvin was God's relationship to evil, and, like Luther, Calvin explained God's relationship to evil by distinguishing evil itself from the instigation and use of evil.<sup>123</sup> When God uses wicked

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<sup>121</sup> *SA* 3, 279.18-30; *LW* 33, 178 [trans. Watson].

<sup>122</sup> *CO* 6, 256. *BLW* 37 [trans. Davies].

<sup>123</sup> Calvin also spoke of the positive side of the *instrumentum Dei* and shed more light on his understanding: "I say that in us is fulfilled what God once promised to the people of Israel, namely that while we are at rest he fights for us. It is not that we ourselves do nothing or that we without any movement of our will are driven (*feramur*) to act



instruments he only stirs and prods them so that the wickedness is from the person and not God. What Phillip Watson wrote of Luther is applicable to Calvin as well, “God is the cause of sinful acts but not of their sinfulness.”<sup>124</sup> Watson also remarked that Luther was in line with scholasticism on this point, but this needs to be qualified as the reformers hold their own distinct position.

Biel spoke of a general concurrence (*concursum generalis*) of God in all positive actions. “When we speak of a purely natural act (*de puris naturalibus*) it does not exclude the general influence of God (*generalis Dei influentia*), which as a first cause concurs (*concurrit*) with a secondary agent, that is a created agent, in every positive act.”<sup>125</sup> Oberman shows that for Ockham the *actus positivus* did not refer to “moral goodness” but simply to the substance or actuality of the act as opposed to mere potentiality.<sup>126</sup> The goodness of the act is a separate consideration. Biel’s point was that even in purely natural acts, where special grace is not active, God concurs with the secondary agent in his action. According to Biel, this would not apply to sin however, since it would not be positive, “supposing a deformed act is permitted.”<sup>127</sup> God would not cause a person to hate him, but Oberman shows that Biel made a distinction saying that “God would not create the *intention* of such an act, but he would certainly be able to produce

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by pressure from him, but that we act while being acted upon by him (*sed quia agimus acti ab ipso*). We will as he guides (*dirigente*) our heart, we endeavour as he rouses (*excitante*) us, we succeed in our endeavour as he gives us strength, so that we are animate and living tools (*animata...et viva instrumenta*), while he is the leader and the finisher of the work” (CO 6, 337. BLW 152 [trans. Davies]).

<sup>124</sup> Phillip Watson, “The Lutheran Riposte,” in *Luther and Erasmus: Free Will and Salvation*, LCC 17, 19.

<sup>125</sup> II *Sent.* d. 28, q 1, nota. 2F, 536.45-37.1.

<sup>126</sup> Oberman, *Harvest*, 210.

<sup>127</sup> “Siquidem nullus effectus positivus (immo nec peccatum quantum ad id quod in eo positivum est, puta actum licet deformem) perfecti potest, Deo tamquam causa prima non coagente ” (II *Sent.* d. 28, q 1, nota. 2F, 537.1-5). Biel seems to be using *positivus* in two ways, i.e. for the actuality of an act as opposed to its potentiality (like Ockham) and for moral goodness, which is lacking when sin causes a deformation. The latter appears to be theologially defined in the Augustinian sense that sin is a privation of the good or a defect in a good form. See *Enchiridion* 6. Only when sin is involved does the act or effect lack of the *positivus* or *substantia*. According to Biel the act as act still retains its substance since he also referred to “the positive act which is called ‘sin’” (See reference at n. 129).

the *act* as such.”<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Biel wrote, “What it means to sin, that is the positive act which is called ‘sin,’ he is able to produce.”<sup>129</sup> Luther was in line with this understanding but as Watson also points out, “[Luther] cannot agree with the Schoolmen in attributing this to man’s free will or freedom of choice, for it is plain evidence that man is not free but in bondage to Satan.”<sup>130</sup> For the scholastics generally, God was not guilty of sin, as his omnipotence was only a general source from which all things drew their energy. The fault lay with the human will as the free and proximate cause of sin.<sup>131</sup> But Luther sees the sinner as a wicked instrument who is bound to sin and who will sin necessarily when God’s omnipotence moves him to action, not simply concurring with his action.<sup>132</sup> It is doubtful that Biel or any Ockhamist would conceive of man as a wicked instrument wielded by God,<sup>133</sup> but rather they emphasize man as a free agent who may sin or prepare himself for grace *ex puris naturalibus*. When a person sins, God is not wielding a wicked instrument but a “deformed act is permitted.” It appears to be in the very permission (*licet*) of God that the will is seen to be free and God is shown not to be complicit in sin.<sup>134</sup> Erasmus and Pighius, who followed the *via moderna* notions of freedom, certainly had a

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<sup>128</sup> Oberman, *Harvest*, 94. See I *Sent.* d. 42, a. 3, dub. 1-3E, 740.5-6, 741.44-46.

<sup>129</sup> I *Sent.* d. 42, a. 3, dub. 1-3E, 741.36-37.

<sup>130</sup> Watson, “The Lutheran Riposte,” 19.

<sup>131</sup> Oberman, *Harvest*, 48, 94, 175, 210, 463. Adams, *William Ockham*, vol. 2, 1308-10. For Ockham’s general view of causality see 770-95. See also Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1985), 76-77.

<sup>132</sup> Luther said that Judas turned traitor necessarily and “it was not in the power of Judas or any creature to do differently or to change his will, though he did what he did willingly and not under compulsion.” Luther added that Judas’s “act of will was a work of God, which he set in motion by his omnipotence, like everything else” (*LW* 33, 185).

<sup>133</sup> To my knowledge Augustine does not speak in this way either. Further research will have to determine to what extent Luther’s usage is unique in the tradition.

<sup>134</sup> In n. 124 above, Biel spoke differently about God’s influence (*influentia*) or concurrence (*concursus*) and his permission (*licet*). God concurs in the *actus positivus* and the *effectus positivus* as first cause. But Biel distinguished the *effectus positivus* from *peccatum*, which lacks the *positivus* because it is an *actus deformatis*. In that case Biel says sin is simply permitted (*licet*). When God acts as a first cause that is concurrence, but when sin occurs God has only permitted something. In fact, he has allowed a created, secondary agent to cause a deformity. Thus, according to Biel, God concurs generally with all positive acts in the *concursus generalis* but is not complicit in sin because it is only permitted.

visceral, negative reaction towards Luther’s language of the *instrumentum Dei*. Calvin however, followed Luther and not the medieval emphasis on a general concurrence of God. For both reformers God was active in wielding wicked tools that are not free but bound to sin and are nevertheless voluntarily complicit in their sin.<sup>135</sup> For Luther, God is not complicit in sin because he uses the tools as he finds them,<sup>136</sup> and for Calvin, God is not complicit, “for as the fault is ours so must the blame be imputed to us.”<sup>137</sup>

Other uncanny similarities to *BW* appear in this context. Calvin wrote of Satan and the ungodly in this respect as well, “Satan too and all the wicked are submissive to his authority, so that they cannot move beyond what he has commanded, for they are constrained by his hand as though by a bridle or a halter, so that now he restrains (*retineat*) them, since it pleases him to do so, and now he drives (*impellat*) them on and guides (*dirigat*) them to execute his judgments.”<sup>138</sup> Luther and Calvin both identify the same subject for their discussion as “Satan and the ungodly/wicked.”

<i>BW</i>	<i>BLW</i>
<i>Satana et impio</i> <sup>139</sup>	<i>Satanam et impios</i> <sup>140</sup>

Calvin’s reference to God as the one who “drives them on and guides (*impellat et dirigat*) them to execute his judgments,” while not an exact verbal parallel, is a conceptual parallel to Luther’s reference to God as the one who “necessarily moves and acts (*movit et agit*) also in Satan and

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<sup>135</sup> For Luther’s related notions of the *larva Dei* and God’s work *sub contraria specie* see Wriedt, “Luther’s Concept of History,” 35-36.

<sup>136</sup> *LW* 33, 176.

<sup>137</sup> *BLW* 41. For Luther and Calvin’s view of God’s involvement in the fall see Chapter 6 § I.

<sup>138</sup> *CO* 6, 258. *BLW* 39 [trans. Davies].

<sup>139</sup> *SA* 3, 278.11.

<sup>140</sup> *CO* 6, 258.

ungodly man.”<sup>141</sup> Calvin added that God “also uses iniquity to a good end (*quoque iniquitate utatur in bonum*).”<sup>142</sup> Luther was also quick to point out that God “makes good use of this evil” (*hoc malo...utatur bene*).”<sup>143</sup> It is also here that Calvin wrote, “everything that happens happens necessarily,” and this in verbal parallel to Luther’s “everything that happens...happens necessarily.”

<i>BW</i>	<i>BLW</i>
<i>Omnia quae fiunt...fiunt necessario</i> <sup>144</sup>	<i>Quae fiunt, omnia necessario fieri</i> <sup>145</sup>

Lane points out that Luther did not, as Calvin claimed, “always” add the explanation that the evil originates from, remains in, and is to be attributed to the instrument, for it does not appear in *Assertio*.<sup>146</sup> The conceptual and verbal parallelisms with *BW* seem to further indicate that Calvin was familiar with Luther’s more qualified statements in response to Erasmus. It is still possible that Calvin could have been drawing upon common knowledge about Luther from his circle, but the fact that this information from Luther comes from *BW* shows its influence either directly or indirectly. Lane acknowledges Luther’s more qualified statements in *BW* as a possible source for Calvin’s claims about Luther’s teaching, and he adds that Luther did not “normally...qualify his use of Isa. 10:5-6, 15.” As mentioned above, Luther did not employ that text in *BW*, but he did in the *Lectures on Romans* at 9:16 and, as we noted, he did speak there of the *instrumentum Dei*. Luther wrote that since God works all in all (1 Cor. 12:6) “the cutting of

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<sup>141</sup> *LW* 33, 176; *SA* 3, 278.10.

<sup>142</sup> *CO* 6, 258. *BLW* 40.

<sup>143</sup> *LW* 33, 178.

<sup>144</sup> *SA* 3, 191.3-4.

<sup>145</sup> *CO* 6, 258.

<sup>146</sup> *BLW* 49, n. 73.

the wood is not of the ax but of the cutter” and quoted Isaiah 10:15, ““Shall the ax vaunt itself over him who hews it, or the saw magnify itself against him who wields it? What if the rod should lift itself up against him who lifts it, or a staff should lift itself, which is surely mere wood?”” Luther was here emphasizing that, since man was a mere tool in the hand of God, he cannot do anything by himself. Luther wrote, “And later on, in Is. 41:23, He laughs at them saying: ‘Do good or do harm, if you can,’ that is, ‘Let us see if you can do good to anyone in need, without My help.’ ...On the other hand, the same applies to working evil (that is, bringing injury to others).” The example that Luther used for working evil was Pharaoh who, when he wanted to exert himself against Israel, was checked by God who would not allow Pharaoh to injure his people.<sup>147</sup> But nowhere in this did Luther qualify that the corruption of evil is only in the instrument. Lane is correct; this qualification belongs to *BW*.<sup>148</sup> In sum, Calvin was probably familiar with *BW* while his familiarity with the *Lectures on Romans* is much less likely. Regardless of whether *Romans* was a source, Calvin combined the Isaiah text and Luther’s interpretation together to defend and explain Luther’s theology and claim it as his own. Calvin simply overstated the case when he averred that Luther had always spoken in this qualified way. The most that could be said is that Luther had always assumed the qualification.

#### **F. Corruption of Nature Implies That Nature Is Evil. Response: Nature Was Originally Good.**

Calvin stated Pighius’s sixth criticism of the reformers, “We damn the whole of nature, because we say that everything that man has from his nature is corrupt.” It was here that Calvin brought in his first appeal to the authority of Augustine, saying that the church father also had to deal with those, like Pighius, who hide their enmity to grace behind the glory of nature. Calvin

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<sup>147</sup> *WA* 56, 399; *LW* 25, 388-89.

<sup>148</sup> Luther did not qualify himself in this way in his *Lectures on Isaiah* either. *LW* 16, 108-10.

added that Pighius's approach was nothing new. In response, Calvin maintained that he and Luther did not locate corruption in nature as such, saying, "Both Luther and all of us define nature in two ways: first as it was established by God, which we declare to have been pure and perfect, and second as, corrupted through man's fall, it lost its perfection. We assign the blame for this corruption to man; we do not ascribe it to God."<sup>149</sup> Luther did not defend himself this way in the *Assertio*. As Lane has pointed out, Luther specifically distinguished between created and fallen nature in the *Lectures on Romans*<sup>150</sup> and in *BW*.<sup>151</sup> Calvin's appeal to Luther is either an indication of his wider knowledge of Luther or what was generally known about Luther's theology or both. Regardless, Calvin was saying that the reformers are on the same page, the page written by Augustine whom Calvin quoted again, "Human beings are the work of God insofar as they are human, but they are under the control of the devil insofar as they are sinners, unless they are rescued from there through Christ."<sup>152</sup> Calvin added, "So from God they are good, but from themselves they are evil."<sup>153</sup> Luther had written, "For his nature is good, but his defect is evil."<sup>154</sup> Thus Calvin argued that in the same way that Pighius's objection was nothing new, so too, the reformers' response was nothing new.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *BLW* 40.

<sup>150</sup> Romans 6:6. *LCC* 15, 182.

<sup>151</sup> *LW* 33, 124, 174-75.

<sup>152</sup> *BLW* 40-41. See Luther's much more vivid account of this rescue in *LW* 33, 65-66.

<sup>153</sup> *BLW* 41.

<sup>154</sup> Romans 6:6. *LCC* 15, 182.

<sup>155</sup> Lane points out that Pighius's charge of Manichaeism led Calvin to clearly distinguish between human nature as created and fallen. Lane says that Calvin's distinction was "one of the most important distinctions of the whole work.... This distinction Calvin also uses as a tool to interpret the Fathers and the early writings of Augustine" (*BLW* xx). The distinction is also important to Calvin because as Lane has pointed out, "Pighius posited a novel theory of original sin according to which the only effects of the fall of Adam were the introduction of death and the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to all humanity. There was no talk of the corruption of human nature as a result of the fall. The lust that human beings experience derives from nature as created and was experienced by Adam before the fall" (*ibid.*, xvii). Calvin wrote, "Mortality and corruption, [Pighius] says, [derive] from the creation of our nature, not from a fault in it" (*ibid.*, 185). Calvin responded to this at length (*ibid.*, 180-201), arguing that Pighius was heretical by the standards of the Council of Orange (188). The Council of Trent (1545-1563)

While Calvin would diverge from Augustine in this very work, he saw the essence of his debate with Pighius in the same way that Luther saw his debate with Erasmus—a recapitulation of the Pelagian controversy.<sup>156</sup> In fact, Calvin distinguished himself from Augustine over the nature of justifying righteousness and isolated the issue of grace:

But Augustine reckons [people to be] holy on the basis of good works, while I deny works, whatever they may be, any power for attaining righteousness; [I deny this] to the extent that they are wicked if they have this intent. I answer that now is not the place for a discussion about how men attain righteousness before God. As far as the present issue (*praesentem quaestionem*) is concerned, that statement of the saint sides entirely with us. For whenever he wants to prove that human righteousness is of grace, he immediately has the argument on his lips that we serve the righteousness of God ‘not by free choice, which is innate in us, but through the Holy Spirit, which is given to us.’<sup>157</sup>

Calvin differentiated between the nature of justifying righteousness and how people come to receive it. Calvin knew that he differed with Augustine over whether justifying righteousness was in Christ or in “good works,” but he claimed the support of Augustine over the issue at stake in the debate with Pighius.<sup>158</sup> Calvin identified the “present question” as being over whether justifying righteousness is of grace or free choice. Calvin also characterized the Pelagian issue as the heart of the debate and quoted Augustine once more, “Again: This is the preeminent heart of the question (*Hic est praecipuus quaestionis cardo*), ‘whether this grace precedes or follows the human will.’”<sup>159</sup> Luther spoke in the same way to Erasmus about the heart of their disputation (*cardo disputationis*):

It is not irreverent, inquisitive, or superfluous, but essentially salutary and necessary for a Christian, to find out whether the will does anything or nothing in matters

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agreed, for when Pighius’s position was brought to its attention the council condemned it in canon 3. See Hubert Jedin, *A History of the Council of Trent*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: Herder, 1961, original German, 1957), 145, 153, 162. *Free Choice* was also placed on the Index of Prohibited Books (Lisbon, 1624). See *BLW* xv, xvi.

<sup>156</sup> *LW* 33, 107, 129, 268-70.

<sup>157</sup> *CO* 6, 312. *BLW* 116.

<sup>158</sup> See Lane, *BLW* 116, n. 185. Heckel, 101-02.

<sup>159</sup> *CO* 6, 354. *BLW* 176.

pertaining to eternal salvation. Indeed...this is the cardinal issue between us (*hic est cardo nostrae disputationis*), the point on which everything in the controversy turns (*hic uersatur status causae huius*). For what we are doing is to inquire what free choice can do, what it has done to it, and what is its relation to the grace of God.<sup>160</sup>

Calvin admitted that there was a diversity of expression among the reformers. “But,” he added, “that which is the chief point in this controversy (*quod summum est in hac quaestione*), and the reason for which all else that is said, we defend today just as just as it was proposed by Luther and others from the beginning (*quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Luthero et aliis*).”<sup>161</sup>

According to Calvin, the consensus with Luther on the heart of the issue is complete from the beginning of reform until the time of Calvin’s writing. Calvin’s appeal to the authority of Augustine will become much more prominent from this point on, and it is here that we begin to see his claim of consensus with Luther take full shape. We have so far seen Calvin following uniquely Lutheran concepts, using syntactical constructions equivalent to Luther’s, and employing Augustinian commonplaces from their tradition.

#### **G. God’s Law Is Unjust if Man Cannot Obey. Response: Distinguish Law and Gospel.**

Calvin stated the seventh argument as follows: “As for his final objection...that if our teaching were accepted the whole doctrine of God would be exposed to ridicule.” Pighius implied that if God is just then he would not command what man cannot do. Calvin responded by saying that man’s obligation to God is set by the law, which does not take his ability to keep it into account. Nevertheless, Calvin said, “the law...is rightly required of us, and we are not

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<sup>160</sup> SA 3, 189.15-19; LW 33, 35 [trans. Watson]. Luther exuberantly congratulated Erasmus, “You alone, apart from all the rest, have attacked the essence of the matter (*rem ipsam*), the point in question (*summam causae*)...you and you alone, have seen the heart of the matter (*cardinem rerum*), and have aimed for the jugular itself (*ipsum jugulum*)” (SA 3, 355. 5-9; LW 33, 294). There are many such *cardo* passages in *BW*. See SA 3, 231.1; LW 33, 104. SA 3, 290.12-13; LW 33, 194. Luther expressed the same sentiment in different words at LW 33, 197, 199, 200, 202, 242, 260.

<sup>161</sup> CO 6, 251. BLW 29.



excused by our weakness.... For as the fault is ours, so the blame must be imputed to us.”<sup>162</sup> By distinguishing man’s obligation under the law from his lack of ability to keep it under sin, Calvin pointed the way to the gospel promise as the solution. In so doing, Calvin appeared in the distinctly Lutheran light of law and gospel, whereby the law does not teach what we can accomplish before God but *functions* both to show the need for the gospel and then to actively drive the guilty to Christ.

According to Luther, law and gospel are not merely salvation-historical (*heilsgeschichte*), that is, the law does not belong exclusively to the Old Testament or the gospel exclusively to the New Testament. Instead, each biblical text *functions* as either law or gospel as it is applied to a person’s life and a law text may have a gospel aspect and *vice versa*.<sup>163</sup> Law and gospel are dialectical in that they are given meaning by their very contrast, so that, for instance, the gospel does not appear in all of its sweetness until the law has hammered home the bitter experience of judgment and emptied a person of self-righteousness. Luther wrote, “He who has never tasted the bitter will not remember the sweet; hunger is the best cook. As the dry earth thirsts for rain, so the Law makes the troubled heart thirst for Christ. To such hearts Christ tastes sweetest.”<sup>164</sup> The law is the cure of self-righteousness: “Therefore the proper and absolute use of the law (*proprius et absolutus legis usus*) is to terrify by lightning (as on Mt. Sinai), thunder, and the blare of the trumpet, by a thunderbolt to burn and crush that savage beast which is called the presumption of righteousness.”<sup>165</sup> After this shattering experience it serves to drive one to Christ in desperation: “The law... does contribute to justification—not because it justifies, but because it impels one to

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<sup>162</sup> *BLW* 41.

<sup>163</sup> See Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 269.

<sup>164</sup> *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), *LW* 26, 329.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, *WA* 40 1, 482.12-14; *LW* 26, 311.

the promise of grace and makes it sweet and desirable.... It is the most useful servant impelling us to Christ.”<sup>166</sup> The distinction between law and gospel is made throughout the Christian life because, according to Luther, the law always accuses. In the Antinomian controversy, John Agricola taught that the preaching of the gospel induces repentance by itself, but Luther saw contrition as the perpetual function of the law: “In this life...the law must ever be slaying, damning, and accusing (*immerdar mus sein Lex occidens, damnans, accusans*).”<sup>167</sup> In this was the law not only functions to show but to do. It not only reveals sin but slays the sinner.<sup>168</sup> Luther considered the task of distinguishing law and gospel the appropriate method of doing theology:

There is no better way of handing down and preserving pure doctrine than that we follow this method (*methodem*), namely, that we distinguish Christian doctrine into two parts, that is into law and gospel (*legem et evanadium*). So there are two things which are set before us in the word of God, that is, either the wrath or grace of God, sin or righteousness, death or life, hell or heaven.<sup>169</sup>

Luther also spoke of the law in terms of use (*usus*). While this was nothing new in the tradition, his understanding of *usus* was without precedent. Luther understood the *usus legis* also as an *officium legis*, that is an office or function of the law.<sup>170</sup> The law as function means that it is not static but is able to work its effects ever anew according to the condition of the hearer. The same passage may affect its hearers differently. If one is already full of dread, then the gospel will speak to him, but if another has fallen into presumption, then God may apply the law aspect of

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., WA 40 1, 489; LW 26, 315 [trans. Pelikan].

<sup>167</sup> *Wider den Eisleben* (1540). WA 51, 440-441. See also *Against the Antinomians*. LW 47, 99-119. Agricola was once a close friend of Luther but their association became strained at Wittenberg as Agricola claimed to be more faithful to the spirit of Lutheranism by emphasizing the gospel alone (Ibid., 103-05, 108). But Luther distinguished between the state of affairs under the papacy when the gospel found ready ears from people already terrorized by the law and those under the preaching of the Antinomians who had a false security and were in danger of falling from grace. Luther held the latter needed to be warned of their sins and brought afresh to Christ by the law. See LW 47, 104-05.

<sup>168</sup> See Robert Kolb, “God Kills to Make Alive: Romans 6 and Luther’s Understanding of Justification (1535),” *Lutheran Quarterly* 12 (1998): 33-56.

<sup>169</sup> *Disputatio prima contra Antinomos*. WA 39 1, 360.1-6.

<sup>170</sup> WA 40 1, 480.32, 481.13-14; LW 26, 309.

the text to convict.<sup>171</sup> Luther also spoke of two and once three uses of the law. The law had a civil use or function, which brought law and order to society and a kind of external righteousness that was necessary in preserving the common good. The second use of the law was the spiritual use or function that exposed sin, caused distress, and pointed to Christ.<sup>172</sup>

Erasmus and Pighius had both argued that God's laws and commands implied man's ability to keep them.<sup>173</sup> Luther had argued against Erasmus that "ought" does not necessarily imply "can."<sup>174</sup> Luther believed that Erasmus's argument was an inference of reason,<sup>175</sup> not supported by grammar,<sup>176</sup> and refuted by Scripture, especially Romans 3:20, 5:20, and Galatians 3:19.<sup>177</sup> Luther wrote of the purpose of the law:

By the words of the law man is warned and instructed as to what he ought to do, not what his is able to do (*quid debeat, non quid possit*); their purpose is that he may know his sin, not that he may believe himself to have any power (*ut cognoscat peccatum, non ut credat sibi esse aliquam uim*). Accordingly, my dear Erasmus, as often as you quote the words of the law against me, I shall quote Paul's statement against you, that through the law comes knowledge of sin, not virtue in the will. Heap up, therefore, all the imperative verbs (from the major concordances, if you like) into one chaotic mass, and provided they are not words of promise, but of demand of the law, I shall say at once that what is signified by them is always what men ought to do and not what they do or can do. This is something that even grammarians and street urchins know, that by verbs of the imperative mood nothing else is signified but what ought to be done. What is done, or can be done, must be expressed by indicative verbs.<sup>178</sup>

A whole series of conceptual similarities and common vocabulary appear in Calvin. Calvin wrote, "We ought not to measure by our own ability the duty to which we are bound (*Neque*

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<sup>171</sup> See Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 269, 271-73.

<sup>172</sup> *LW* 26, 308-10. For a discussion see Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 270-73, 275-76.

<sup>173</sup> Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, LCC 17, 54-58. *BLW* 165-68, 206-08.

<sup>174</sup> *SA* 3, 244; *LW* 33, 125. For Luther's whole argument see *LW* 33, 125-38.

<sup>175</sup> *LW* 33, 119-22, 126.

<sup>176</sup> *LW* 33, 119, 127, 136.

<sup>177</sup> Luther expounded Romans 3:20 at *LW* 33, 121, 127, 137, 261-262, Romans 5:20 at *LW* 33, 219, 262, and Galatians 3:19 at *LW* 33, 262.

*enim aut facultate nostra metiri officium oportet, cui abstricti sumus*) nor to investigate man's capabilities with this unaided power of reasoning."<sup>179</sup> Calvin argued that the law exposes sin and the need for grace:

The function of the law (*usum legis*) is different from what people commonly imagine it to be. For it cannot make the guilty good but can merely disquiet them (*Non enim bones facere potest sed reos tantum peragere*), both by taking away the excuse of ignorance and then by refuting their false opinion that they are righteous and their empty confidence in their own powers (*virium*).<sup>180</sup>

It appears that Calvin took over the Lutheran concept that "ought" does not imply "can," but Calvin had internalized the concept, so that it came out in his own vocabulary.<sup>181</sup> He used it, like Luther, to critique man's powers (*vires*). Here we also see the same warnings about the use of reason in this matter, and Calvin also appealed to Scripture at Romans 3:20 and 5:20.

Calvin argued from Romans 3:20 that we cannot keep the law since Paul said that the knowledge of sin comes through the law. The context would allow no other interpretation, since Paul was considering the very question as to whether righteousness could be attained through the law. If there was any power in the will to obey, Paul would not have said in Romans 5:20 that the law makes sin abound. Calvin added, "Anyone who knows the purpose of the law (*legis usum*) will know that human power is not at all to be calculated from its commands."<sup>182</sup> Calvin, like Luther, also referred to his opponent's accumulation of a long list of commandments in order to create the impression of overwhelming evidence for human ability. Calvin mocked his opponent

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<sup>178</sup> LW 33, 127.

<sup>179</sup> CO 6, 259. BLW 41 [trans. Davies].

<sup>180</sup> CO 6, 259. BLW 40. See also BLW 168, 206.

<sup>181</sup> Calvin wrote, "'Either,' they say, 'God is playing games with us when he gives commands, or he demands of us only those things which are within our power.' I reply that those who measure human strength by the commandments are without understanding....The law is indeed what demands our bounden duty, but we are not at all able to pay it" (BLW 165, 168). Calvin wrote in 1539, "As soon as the law prescribes what we are to do (*similac quid agendum sit nobis praescripsit*), it teaches that the power to obey (*obediendi virtutem*) comes from God's goodness" (OS 305.1-3; Inst. 2.5.7 [trans. Battles]).

in similar rhetorical fashion: “There is certainly no doubt that we have been defeated a hundred times if it is acceptable to measure human powers by the commandments of God.” While Pighius considered it madness for God to exhort inability, Calvin kept to the Lutheran approach and stifled reason by appealing to the wisdom of God: “God...can defend himself against this insult.”<sup>183</sup>

Luther asserted that Erasmus was wrong to measure “divine things and words by the usage and concerns of men” who think free will is implied by divine exhortations. In fact, Luther argued that reason cuts both ways, “How often do parents have a game with their children by telling them to come to them, or to do this or that, simply for the sake of showing them how unable they are, and compelling them to call for the help of the parents’ hand (*coganturque manum parentis inuocare*).” Luther continued, “Why does it not rather follow: ‘Therefore, God is putting us to the test so as to lead us by means of the law to a knowledge of our impotence (*ut per legem nos ad cognitionem nostrae impotentiae perducat*)?’”<sup>184</sup> Calvin likewise said that the commandments were not given so that they might teach us to supply what grace lacks, but rather “so that they may lead us by the hand to grace (*ad gratiam manu ducant*) after convincing us of our own impotence (*propriae impotentiae convictos*).” Calvin argued that the law does not bestow new ability or command what is in our power, but shows us “that we have no ability at all,” and he says again, “The law leads us by the hand to the promises (*lex ad promissiones nos manu ducit*).”<sup>185</sup> Thus, Calvin expressed the function of the law in the same way as Luther—*usus*

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<sup>182</sup> CO 6, 347. BLW 166 [trans. Davies]. See also *Inst.* 2.5.6 where Calvin also cited Galatians 3:19 and Romans 7:7-8.

<sup>183</sup> BLW 221.

<sup>184</sup> SA 3, 241.43-45, 242.14-15; LW 33, 120, 121 [trans. Watson].

<sup>185</sup> CO 6, 376, 377. BLW 207 [trans. Davies].

*legis*—and with a common vocabulary, speaking of the law as persuading us of our impotence (*impotentia*) and leading (*ducere*) us to the promises.<sup>186</sup>

With regard to free choice, Luther claimed that Erasmus was a blind guide because he did not distinguish between law and gospel. In fact, he was “bound to confound everything—heaven and hell, life and death—and he will take no pains to know anything at all about Christ.”<sup>187</sup> When Erasmus dealt with the divine exhortations in Scripture,<sup>188</sup> Luther focused his response on the passages containing the imperative “Return to me.” Luther commented, “The word ‘return’ has two uses in the Scriptures, one legal, the other evangelical. In its legal use it is an expression of exacting and imperious command.... In its evangelical use it is an expression of divine comfort and promise, by which nothing is demanded from us, but the grace of God is offered to us.”<sup>189</sup> When Erasmus appealed to Ezekiel 33:11, “As I live, says the Lord, I desire not the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live,” Luther accused Erasmus of turning a gospel passage into a law passage. Erasmus argued that if God does not will our death, but we perish anyway, then it is “to be imputed to our own will.”<sup>190</sup> Luther knew what this meant. Erasmus was saying that since God did not will the death of the sinner it was up to the sinner to will his salvation.<sup>191</sup> This was too great of a burden for Luther who confessed that he willed but could

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<sup>186</sup> See also *CO* 6, 349-50. *BLW* 170.

<sup>187</sup> *LW* 33, 132.

<sup>188</sup> *LCC* 17, 54-56.

<sup>189</sup> *LW* 33, 134-35.

<sup>190</sup> Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will*, *LCC* 17, 56.

<sup>191</sup> Luther wrote, “But our Diatribe, again making no distinction between words of law and of promise, takes this verse of Ezekiel as an expression of the law and expounds it thus: ‘I desire not the death of a sinner,’ that is, ‘I do not want him to sin mortally or become a sinner liable to death, but rather that he may turn from his sin, if he has committed any, and so may live’” (*LW* 33, 137). Watson points out that this is not a direct quotation from Erasmus but Luther’s interpretation (*Ibid.*, n.55). Regardless, Luther has properly understood Erasmus and acknowledged his gloss, “For if she [Diatribe] did not expound it so, it would not serve her purpose at all” (*Ibid.*).

never find assurance of his salvation.<sup>192</sup> Laying the work of repentance on the will without total reliance on grace, implied to Luther that the will was unaided at the decisive point. This sounded in Luther's ears like nothing but imposing and threatening law that could only expose his weakness and tempt him to despair. According to Luther, no passage could be quoted more inappropriately for free choice than one where a promise is given after the law has already struck down any hope in free choice.<sup>193</sup>

Calvin dealt similarly with law and gospel in answering Pighius. Pighius claimed that free choice could keep the law since Moses declared in Deuteronomy 30:11, 14 that the commandment was not unattainable but "beside you, in your mouth and in your heart." Calvin referred back to his *Institutes* where he said that he had shown from Paul that "it refers to the gospel and not to the law."<sup>194</sup> Pighius was protesting that very approach in the *Institutes*, and Calvin acknowledged in *BLW* that the passage did indeed refer "first to the law " but only in "so far as it is a pathway to the gospel and has the function (*officii habet*) of leading (*ducat*) to Christ by the hand." Calvin argued that this could not refer to the commandments as such, since Paul "calls the law a ministry of death and condemnation precisely because it could only kill its disciples and send them to destruction, unless it was engraved on their heart by a new covenant."<sup>195</sup> In this way, Calvin followed the Lutheran hermeneutical principle of distinguishing between law and gospel.

Calvin wrote later that the law should not be preached in a merely external fashion of the old covenant, which was continually broken by man and annulled by God with the new covenant. Calvin said that we must approach the law as a "spiritual writing" inscribed

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<sup>192</sup> *LW* 33, 190, 288-89.

<sup>193</sup> *LW* 33, 137, 138.

<sup>194</sup> *BLW* 169. See *Inst.* 2.5.12.

permanently on human hearts by the Spirit. With the advent of the new covenant, Calvin viewed the law not as externally enforced with preaching but as a natural obedience flowing from an internal inscription of the Holy Spirit. Calvin brought in support from Augustine on this point, “After hearing this [the demands of the law] we may know the inevitability of our duty and, having made trial of our own strength and having been convinced of our weakness or rather our impotence (*impotentiae*), be compelled to say to God: ‘Give what you command, and command what you will.’”<sup>195</sup> This concept is found in Luther who also quoted Augustine, “And through this law of works God says: ‘Do what I command.’ But by the law of faith we can say to God in humble prayer: ‘Give what Thou commandest.’...And in Chapter 19 Augustine says: ‘The law is given, therefore, in order that grace may be sought whereby the Law in turn may be fulfilled.’”<sup>197</sup> Luther agreed with Augustine that the righteous do what God has commanded: “All righteous works and works which are done in grace are only preparatory for the growth of righteousness that follows.”<sup>198</sup> Luther also taught that good works were as spontaneous and unbidden as normal daily activities, “Just as a living person cannot refrain from moving about, eating and drinking and laboring, it being impossible that such activities should cease while he lives, no one need command and drive to do such works.” Luther said that this is because of faith: “There is no need of your demanding good works of him who believes, for faith teaches him all that.... Hence, there is no need of asking whether good works shall be done, for they come of themselves unbidden.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> *CO* 6, 349-350. *BLW* 170. See also 206.

<sup>196</sup> *BLW* 168. For Augustine’s prayer see *The Confessions* 10, 29, 40; 10, 31, 45. *The Gift of Perseverance* 20, 53.

<sup>197</sup> *Lecture on Romans*, *LW* 25, 243.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* *LW* 25, 246. But Luther also knew of the temptation to take pride in the law and so he said that “not one of the saints thinks or says that he is righteous” and so God justifies the humble (*ibid.*).

<sup>199</sup> Sermon of 1523 on Mark 14:16-20. *Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995 [original ed. 1907]), 187-88. Luther was also fond of comparing good works to the natural growth of fruit on a tree: “But



Calvin's incorporation of Augustine's dictum, "Give what you command, and then command what you will," was probably not quite what Augustine had in mind, however, and Augustine would have recognized the young Luther more easily than the elder reformer matured on *sola fide*. Augustine saw obedience to the law in terms of his doctrine of charity in which the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts at conversion, so that as a result of this new life, faith grows and works love meritoriously.<sup>200</sup> According to Augustine, justification included both the act of conversion and the process of accruing merit, though merit was never complete in this life.<sup>201</sup> As has been noted, Calvin differed with Augustine over this and followed Luther in saying that justifying righteousness is *extra nos in Christo* rather than produced by the Holy Spirit *in nobis*.<sup>202</sup> Calvin also argued in line with Luther that the law plays a role in the Christian life, "It also comes about...that the godly, being thoroughly emptied of all misplaced confidence in themselves, [an attitude] which is true humility indeed, make room for the grace of God, from which they may draw strength."<sup>203</sup> In the 1539 *Institutes* Calvin discussed the accusatory nature of the law<sup>204</sup> and said there that the work of the law in the children of God is different than in the ungodly because it does not end in despair. The law still condemns but it compels God's children

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good works come from a person who has already been justified beforehand by faith, just as good fruits come from a tree which is already good beforehand by nature" (*LW* 34, 111).

<sup>200</sup> Augustine wrote, "By continence the scattered elements of the self are collected and brought back into the unity from which we have slide away into dispersion; for anyone who loves something else along with you, but does not love it for your sake, loves you less. O Love, ever burning, never extinguished, O Charity, my God, set me on fire! You command continence: give what you command, and the command what you will" (*The Confessions* 29, 40, *Works* 1, 1, 263). Augustine later revealed how this sparked the Pelagian controversy and how it applied to his conversion and Christian life, "What does God command first of all and most of all but that we believe in him? And he himself, then, gives us this faith if it is right to say to him, 'Give what you command.' ...But you both know and can check again when you want to know how I beseeched God concerning my growth and perseverance" (*The Gift of Perseverance* 20, 53, *Works* 1, 26, 228).

<sup>201</sup> See Alister McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge, 1998), 27-36, 180-87. Heckel, 94-112.

<sup>202</sup> *BLW* 116. See Heckel, 99-112.

<sup>203</sup> *BLW* 41.

<sup>204</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.6-9.

to “flee to his mercy, repose entirely in it, hide deep within it, and seize upon it alone for righteousness and merit.”<sup>205</sup> This appears in contradistinction to Augustine’s understanding of 1 Timothy 1:9, 8, “For the law was not established for the righteous; yet it is good, if one uses it correctly.” Augustine said that the law was for the unrighteous “since the law like a schoolmaster leads them to grace.” But once in grace Augustine said, “They no longer need it...since they have arrived” and are no longer under the tutelage of the schoolmaster. Then what is the correct use of the law? Augustine held that a righteous person uses the law correctly “when he imposes it upon the unrighteous to terrify them” that “they may take flight by faith to justifying grace.” Even though guilt and forgiveness continued to play a role, Augustine did not formally give the law an accusatory function in the Christian life. Instead Augustine emphasized the address nature of the law, saying that the righteous believe “that only God’s grace can help their weakness to fulfill what the law of works demands.”<sup>206</sup> The righteous are still weak in themselves but the law addresses the grace that is in them so that they fulfill the commands. Calvin’s adoption of Augustine’s maxim is at the same time an adaptation from the Augustinian doctrine of justification to the Protestant doctrine of the Christian life or sanctification. But by incorporating this modified Augustinian emphasis, Calvin developed an emphasis that is not as strong in Luther—the law as guide.

Calvin followed Melancthon in designating three uses of the law where Luther indicated two. Melancthon’s three-fold partition first appeared in his 1535 *Loci communes*. He designated the first use of the law as civil, which disciplines all men, the second as accusatory, which condemns all, and the third as teacher of the regenerate unto obedience.<sup>207</sup> In his 1521 *Loci*

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<sup>205</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.8.

<sup>206</sup> *The Spirit and the Letter* 10, 16, *Works* 1, 23, 159-60.

<sup>207</sup> *Loci communes*, CR 21, 405-406.

*communes* Melancthon held that the “proper function” of the law was to “reveal sin and therefore to confound the conscience.”<sup>208</sup> Calvin differed from the early Lutheran tradition on two counts. First, Calvin changed the order. For Calvin, the first use of the law was the law as mirror in which we see our sins exposed,<sup>209</sup> the second was the civil use,<sup>210</sup> and the third was the law as teaching and exhorting guide for believers.<sup>211</sup> Under the first use however, Calvin described the law in the same words as Luther, saying that the law slays (*occidat*) and that by itself it can do nothing but accuse, damn, and destroy (*accusare, damnare, et perdere*).<sup>212</sup> Thus Calvin was in agreement with Luther that the law not only functions to show sin but to do something—to slay the sinner.<sup>213</sup> Not only did Calvin change the order but, second of all, he identified the third use as primary. Calvin wrote, “The third use, which is both preeminent (*praecipuus*) and has more to do with the proper purpose of the law (*in proprium Legis finem*), finds its place with the faithful in whose hearts the Holy Spirit already flourishes and reigns.”<sup>214</sup> According to Calvin, the third and proper use of the law serves believers as both guiding teacher and arousing exhorter.<sup>215</sup> Luther identified his *usus Theologicus seu Spiritualis*, which “increases sin (*valet ad augendas transgressiones*)” and corresponds to Calvin’s first use, as the “true

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<sup>208</sup> Melancthon, *The Loci Communes*, 215.

<sup>209</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.6-9.

<sup>210</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.10-11.

<sup>211</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.12-13. Calvin discussed the nature of the law’s abrogation in *Inst.* 2.7.14-17.

<sup>212</sup> *OS* 333.9, 14; *Inst.* 2.7.12.

<sup>213</sup> See at n. 167.

<sup>214</sup> *OS* 337.22-25; *Inst.* 2.7.11.

<sup>215</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.12. Calvin said that believers already have the law engraved upon their hearts with a desire to obey it but the third use of the law benefits them further by teaching them more thoroughly and exhorting their flesh with constant stings. Calvin wrote, “The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh *the law remains* a constant sting that will not let him stand still” (emphasis mine) (*ibid.*).

function (*verum officium*)” and “chief and proper use of the law (*principalis ac proprius usus legis*).”<sup>216</sup> Werner Elert saw Calvin’s treatment as a polemic clearly directed against Luther:

He [Calvin] puts the third use of the law in the position which, according to Luther belongs to the *usus theologicus*. At this point Melanchthon sides with Luther to the very end.... The fact that Calvin uses the same expressions...for the third use of the law...hardly allows any other assumption than that he is here consciously and pungently polemicizing against Luther.<sup>217</sup>

Calvin clearly emphasized the address nature of the law more than Luther did, but Luther and Calvin are not as far apart on this issue as it might seem. While Luther did not talk about a third use of the law in his *Lectures on Galatians* he did give the law a teaching function in the Christian life that is comparable to the third use of the law:

For in the New Testament the gospel is preached, which is nothing else but a message in which the Spirit and grace are offered with a view to the remission of sins.... Then follow exhortations, in order to stir up those who are already justified...so that they may be active in the fruits of the freely given righteousness and of the Spirit, and may exercise love by good works.<sup>218</sup>

John Hesselink argues that while there was “a striking similarity in language” in how Luther attached importance to the second use of the law and Calvin to the third, “there is nothing in the context of Calvin’s remarks to suggest that he is attacking Luther or anyone else for that matter.”<sup>219</sup> Hesselink compares the two reformers on the issue of law and gospel in their Galatians commentaries and finds more common ground than not.

At Galatians 2:16, Calvin concurs with Luther that the works of the law which do not justify applies to the whole law and not just the ceremonial law.<sup>220</sup> In fact, Calvin said, “The law

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<sup>216</sup> *WA* 40 1, 480.32-33, 481.13-14; *LW* 26, 309. See also 348.

<sup>217</sup> Werner Elert, *Law and Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967, original German 1948), 44.

<sup>218</sup> *LW* 33, 150.

<sup>219</sup> John Hesselink, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel in their Galatians Commentaries,” *Reformed Review* 37 (Winter 1984): 70.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 72. See *CNTC* 11, 38-39.

slays its disciples” in contrast to Christ who brings the gospel.<sup>221</sup> At 3:19 Calvin also agrees with Luther that Paul’s statement, “Why then the law?” refers to the whole ministry of Moses and not the moral law. Even though promises were given through Moses these were only accidental to the main thrust of the prophet’s ministry as lawgiver, which was only appointed until the coming of Christ.<sup>222</sup> Thus Calvin concurred with Luther in one aspect of the law’s place in *Heilsgeschichte*.<sup>223</sup> Christ did abolish the law in terms of superceding the Mosaic ministry, but the law continued to function for both reformers in various ways, that is, in its civil, accusatory, and teaching roles. But on the continuing function of the law, Hesselink says “the issue begins to be joined” over Paul’s phrase in Galatians 3:19 that “the law was added because of transgression.” Once again Luther saw the exposure and increase of sin as the chief use of the law, but Calvin was concerned that the law not be limited to this function. Calvin asserts:

The law has many uses, but Paul confines himself to one which serves his present purpose. He did not propose to inquire in how many ways the law is of advantage to men. Readers must be put on their guard on this matter; for I see many make the mistake of acknowledging no other use of the law than what is expressed here. But elsewhere Paul himself applies the precepts of the law to teaching and exhortation (II Tim. 3:16). Therefore this definition of the use of the law is not complete and those who acknowledge nothing else are wrong.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Hesselink also suggests a verbal parallel. Luther wrote, “Thus against my death, which binds me, I have another death, that is, life, which makes me alive in Christ (Sic contra mortem meam ligantem me habeo aliam mortem, vitam scilicet, quae vivificat in Christo)” (*WA* 40 1, 278.15-18; *LW* 26, 163 [trans. Pelikan]). Calvin wrote, “The law bears within itself the curse which slays us. Hence it follows that the death brought about by the law is truly deadly. With it is contrasted another kind of death, in the life giving fellowship of the cross of Christ (*Huic opponitur altera mortis species vivifica, in societate crucis Christi*)” (*CO* 50, 198; *CNTC* 11, 42 [trans. Parker]).

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 74. Calvin spoke of the “peculiar office of Moses” which “consisted in prescribing a rule of life and ceremonies to be observed in the worship of God, and in adding promises and threats to them. That many promises concerning the free mercy of God and Christ and which belong to faith, are included here, is quite accidental and quite outside the comparison to be made between the law and the doctrine of grace” (*The Epistles*, 60). Calvin added, “The whole of that administration was temporary.... And yet I do not admit that by the coming of Christ the whole law was abolished” (*ibid.* 62). On Galatians 3:23-25, “So that the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.... But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.” Calvin commented similarly, “Paul is not speaking only of ceremonies or of the moral law, but embraces the whole economy...under the old covenant” (*Ibid.* 65).

<sup>223</sup> See also Hesselink, “Calvin and Heilsgeschichte,” in *OIKONOMIA: Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie* (Hamburg-Bergstedt: Herbert Reich, 1967), 163-70.

<sup>224</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles*, 61.

There is no way to tell who the “many” are except that they allow no other use of the law “than what is expressed here.” But for this reason alone Hesselink argues that Luther is probably not in view since at this place in his *Lectures on Galatians*, that is 3:19, Luther said, “Here one must know that there is a double use of the Law.”<sup>225</sup> Hesselink suggests that it was likely more radical groups, “perhaps the Antinomians, like Agricola,” who acknowledged no other use of the law but to “make aware of and deepen the consciousness of sin and guilt.”<sup>226</sup> Hesselink appears correct in this, for there is a parallel passage in the *Institutes* that appears immediately after Calvin’s discussion of the three uses of the law. Calvin declared, “Certain ignorant persons, not understanding this distinction, rashly cast out the whole of Moses, and bid farewell to the Tables of the Law. For they think it obviously alien to Christians to hold to a doctrine that contains the ‘dispensation of death.’”<sup>227</sup> McNeil and Battles comment, “This is probably directed not only against the Libertine sect...but also against John Agricola, who broke from Luther...denying all Christian obligation to fulfill any part of the Old Testament.”<sup>228</sup> Paul Althaus notes that “Luther structured his *Treatise on Good Works*, which was designed to describe the Christian life, as an interpretation of the Decalogue. The Ten Commandments have their place not only ‘before’ but also ‘after’ justification.”<sup>229</sup> Hesselink also comments, “In their catechisms, I have discovered their interpretations and understanding of the positive and enduring role of the ten

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<sup>225</sup> *LW* 26, 308.

<sup>226</sup> Hesselink, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel,” 75.

<sup>227</sup> *Inst.* 2.7.13.

<sup>228</sup> *LCC* 20, 369, n. 20, at *Inst.* 2.7.13.

<sup>229</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 272. Althaus added, “Thus they [the Ten Commandments] not only exercise the Christian in the theological function of the law but also lead him to a right knowledge of the good he ought to do according to God’s will” (*ibid.*). Althaus would also apparently disagree with Elert, “Luther does not use the expression ‘the third use of the law....’ In substance, however, it also occurs in Luther” (*ibid.*, 273). See also Hesselink, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel,” 82, n. 81.

commandments are strikingly similar.”<sup>230</sup> Given that Calvin modeled the first edition of the *Institutes* on Luther’s catechism, this means that he would have been knowledgeable of Luther’s approach to the law and thus it is highly unlikely that he would have accused Luther of reducing the law to its accusatory role. Thus it appears that Calvin’s own unique ordering of the uses of the law and his emphasis upon the third was a non-polemical adjustment of the Lutheran inheritance reflecting the importance he attached to the address nature of the law.<sup>231</sup> When Calvin did polemicize against “certain ignorant persons,” he did not have Luther in mind but most likely the Antinomians.

When Luther asserted that Christ “truly abolished the entire Law,” it does sound like a categorical denial of a continuing function of it for the Christian.<sup>232</sup> Calvin also appears in stark contrast to Luther when he wrote, “I do not admit that by the coming of Christ the whole law was abolished.”<sup>233</sup> But we must ask Luther in what sense or in what respect the law is entirely abolished. Lohse comments, “Due to its vicarious fulfillment through Christ, the law is abrogated as a way of salvation.”<sup>234</sup> Luther wrote, “To the extent that I take hold of Christ by faith, therefore, to that extent the Law has been abrogated for me.”<sup>235</sup> Luther also said, “According to our conscience we are completely free of the Law. Therefore this custodian must not rule in our conscience, that is, must not menace it with his terrors, threats and captivity.”<sup>236</sup> Thus Christ has abrogated the law not only in terms of closing the Mosaic administration but also in so far as the

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<sup>230</sup> Hesselink, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel,” 71.

<sup>231</sup> Neuser, “Calvin and Luther,” 94-97, follows Otto Weber in positing a historical reason for the differing emphases of Luther and Calvin. In the formative period of his theology Luther had primarily legalistic opponents and Calvin had primarily libertinistic enemies. See Chapter 2 § 1, B.

<sup>232</sup> *LW* 26, 349.

<sup>233</sup> Calvin, *The Epistles*, 62.

<sup>234</sup> Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 275.

<sup>235</sup> *LW* 26, 350-51.

<sup>236</sup> *LW* 26, 349.

law is now powerless to condemn us for not keeping it unto salvation.<sup>237</sup> Christ has abrogated the law by providing salvation by grace through faith. In other respects, as Lohse says, the law is “by no means is simply eliminated” for Luther. Lohse adds, “Alongside its accusing function it remains in effect as commandment, as admonition, as announcement of the divine will.”<sup>238</sup> Thus, Calvin’s contention for the continuing function of the law was not a contradiction of Luther. But as Hesselink notes there is a difference in emphasis: “For Luther the law tends to point back to the old man as sinner; for Calvin the law points forward to the Christian’s renewal in Christ.”<sup>239</sup> But, as is always the case in historical theology, a switch of expectations can surprise one. Hesselink, after comparing Luther’s and Calvin’s exegesis of Galatians 5:14 and other verses, concludes his study:

Interestingly, although Calvin is known as the theologian of sanctification and Luther that of justification, in their Galatians Commentaries Luther shows more concern for urging good works than Calvin.... Because of this proclivity of even evangelical Christians to abuse their freedom, Luther is convinced that “it is necessary that faithful preachers urge good works as that they urge the doctrine of faith.” Thus Luther, the theologian of grace and freedom, exhibits a special concern for good works and a holy life. Calvin, the man of law, seems more concerned in this context about freedom and peace of conscience. For “where the Spirit reigns, the law no longer has any dominion,” writes Calvin.<sup>240</sup>

In the end, despite the nuances of difference, we can see that Calvin owed a vast debt to Luther’s understanding of law and gospel just by the sheer novelty of Luther’s thought showing up in Calvin. Luther’s understanding of the distinction between law and gospel was unique. Bernard Lohse writes of the uniqueness of Luther’s view in the history of the church: “Luther’s

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<sup>237</sup> Luther wrote, “By the very fact that he permitted the law to accuse Him, sin to damn Him, and death to devour Him He abrogated the Law, damned sin, destroyed death, and justified and saved me. Thus Christ is a poison against the Law, sin, and death, and simultaneously a remedy to regain liberty, righteousness, and eternal life” (*LW* 26, 163).

<sup>238</sup> Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 275.

<sup>239</sup> Hesselink, “Luther and Calvin on Law and Gospel,” 76. Hesselink also notes that Calvin used a phrase to describe the law that Luther did not, “a rule of living well (*regula bene vivendi*)” (ibid. 75).

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 77.



distinction not only differs from the tradition insofar as it is no longer structured in salvation-historical but in dialectical fashion. What is also new is that the distinction between law and gospel cannot be made once and for all, but must be drawn ever anew.”<sup>241</sup> Lohse also notes, “Luther’s treatment of the law under the concept of *usus* was clearly a decision made without precursors in the tradition.”<sup>242</sup> Calvin’s understanding of the law in terms of function and his construct of the law in three uses owes everything to Luther and Melancthon. When Calvin discussed law and gospel Augustine was his partner, but his basic understanding mirrors Luther at every point where the German reformer was distinctive. Calvin spoke of uses of the law, spoke of law in terms of function that reveals and kills, and contrary to Augustine, emphasized its accusatory role in the Christian life that sustains dependence upon Christ. When the Lutheran distinctives appear in Calvin’s thought, his debt to Luther is once again highlighted. Luther created new tools for Calvin to use against a common enemy in the fight against free choice, and Calvin picked them up and wielded them in his own way. While Calvin was heavily indebted to Luther in his thinking about the law, Calvin did use certain emphases which were more characteristic of his other major influence—Augustine. Wherever Calvin quoted Augustine it was in support of the normative Lutheran understanding, which, as noted above, Luther was also fond of quoting in support of his understanding. Augustine was a font from which the reformers imbibed but not an exact prototype for the Lutheran distinction between law and gospel.<sup>243</sup> In the end, it was the Lutheran understanding which Luther and Calvin used to polemicize against Erasmus’s and Pighius’s notion of free choice.

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<sup>241</sup> Lohse, *Martin Luther’s Theology*, 269.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.* 270.

<sup>243</sup> Augustine distinguished between the letter of the law and the Spirit or between law and grace. See *The Spirit and the Letter*, 19, 34.

#### IV. Conclusion

In the first part of “On Book Two” of *BLW*, Calvin outlined the theological issues at stake in his debate with Pighius and made and defended his claim of consensus with Luther in the same. We see in Calvin’s responses that he related to Luther in three ways. (1) Calvin followed uniquely Lutheran concepts. (2) Calvin used syntactical constructions equivalent to Luther in *BW*. (3) Calvin employed Augustinian commonplaces that both men share from a common tradition that they adopted as their own. Calvin also followed Luther in breaking with the medieval tradition in three ways. (1) Calvin linked contingency to chance and not to free choice. (2) Calvin rejected the medieval understanding of *necessitas consequentiae* and *necessitas consequentis*. Calvin positively used the distinction between absolute and conditional necessity, but only to make the same point as Luther who conceded its relevance from the human perspective. (3) Calvin formally denied free choice. In the last way, Calvin stood with Luther in a way that he did not with Bucer and Melancthon. On the issue of free choice and the bondage of the will, the evidence shows that Calvin agreed with Luther more than anyone else, and his claim of consensus in substance was more than warranted and stands up to the charges of Pighius and the suspicions of Lane.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CALVIN'S THEOLOGICAL RELATIONSHIP TO LUTHER'S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL: BOOK TWO OF *THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL*, PART 2

It is here, in “On Book Two” of *BLW*, that we see the greatest concentration of Calvin’s explicit references to Luther. Whereas the seven arguments of Pighius dealt with in “Chapter 5” provide an orientation to the issues at stake, Calvin continues to bring other issues to the table in his defense of himself, Luther, and the Reformation cause. Again the theological relationship of Calvin to Luther is primary here, but the historical dimensions affect everything, since Calvin’s claim of consensus was a historical-theological claim. Once again the challenges of Pighius then and of Anthony Lane now will receive attention in an effort to assess the accuracy of Calvin’s claim. Also the question of Luther’s influence will continue to occupy this chapter as we look into the possible sources of Calvin’s thought on the will at the very places where he claims to be one with Luther. The Reformation was often charged with innovation in doctrine. This can be seen today in Harry J. McSorley’s claim that Luther’s necessitarian argument was without precedent in the tradition. The reformers’ claim to the fathers, especially Augustine, will also focus our attention as we assess McSorley’s charge. While the Reformation was and is often charge with innovation, Pighius charged the reformers with ancient heresy.

#### I. The Charge of Heresy

Calvin said that Pighius brought the charge of heresy, comparing the reformers with “Pricillian, Mani, Marcion, and even Simon Magus,” in order to “stir up hatred against Luther’s view and our own.” As we have seen, Calvin fully associated his position with Luther’s, and he countered by saying that Pighius lied against their position, accusing the reformers of deriving

their teaching from these heretics. Pighius had repeated the charge of ungodliness against Luther saying that Luther had surpassed the heretics in impiety. Calvin dismissed this charge with the whole accusation, writing that Pighius used a clever device but with no substance to the charge. Calvin said he did not understand what Pighius hoped to achieve by this false association, unless it was to impress those who are not exposed to reform or do not question but simply admire everything by “Pighius or Eck.”<sup>1</sup> Eck debated Luther in 1519 at the Leipzig disputation and was a representative of Rome at the colloquies of Worms (1540) and Regensburg (1541), where Calvin would have met him. It is interesting that Calvin mentioned Eck here, for, as Lane points out, Eck had also charged Luther and his followers with Manichaeism.<sup>2</sup>

Calvin responded by pointing out what Pighius had already admitted about the reformers’ teaching: they distinguish between nature as created and as corrupted. Calvin was mystified as to why Pighius charged the reformers this way, since he knew they made the distinction. Calvin replied, “Already I have it on Pighius’s own admission that we ascribe the fact that man is evil not to nature nor to the origin of the first man, but only to his wrongdoing, by which he brought this wretchedness on himself.” Calvin rebuffed the charge by insisting that the reformers taught that Adam was created with free choice but fell into bondage by the misuse of his freedom that “also involved his offspring.” Calvin argued that bondage to sin is the result of the misuse of original freedom: “We do declare that our choice is now held captive under bondage to sin, but how did this come about except by Adam’s misuse of free choice when he had it?” According to Calvin, this means that no accusation can be leveled against God since he created all things good.

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<sup>1</sup> *BLW* 42.

<sup>2</sup> Eck wrote, “Here the heretics have revived the once extinct heresy of Mani who first denied the free will functions actively on good works, because such are wholly and totally done by God; thereupon Luther, having become insane, denied free will completely, because all things happen out of absolute necessity—something once said by the stupid Stoics, Empedocles, Critolaus, Diodorus and other mistaken ones” (*Enchiridion of Commonplaces of John Eck: Against Luther and Other Enemies of the Church* [Grand Rapids: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1978],

Neither can the reformers be charged with the heresy since they do not implicate God in sin<sup>3</sup> and blame man for precipitating his own fall.<sup>4</sup> Calvin repeatedly turned to this distinction in his defense of the reformers' teaching.

Luther had been especially criticized by Pighius, and Erasmus before him, for his language about God using wicked tools. The humanists contended that this made God guilty of the sins committed through his instruments. As mentioned in the last chapter, Calvin sought to defend Luther by first establishing that he did not attribute evil to nature, but to the corruption of nature. Thus God did not create evil, since evil was the result of the fall. In response to the second issue—why does God cause more evil through wicked instruments—Calvin admitted that while God uses nature in its fallen condition like a carpenter who employs faulty tools, he does so for a higher good.<sup>5</sup> In this way Calvin's argument was two-pronged: God created all things good and uses the evil originally caused by humans for good purposes.

With respect to the charge of following ancient heresy, Calvin argued that Luther was not Manichaeism:

Mani...makes man have two natures, one good, the other evil. Of these the former cannot sin and the latter cannot do good. But Luther claims that human free choice, indeed the whole of human nature, of necessity and without ceasing, even in the case of the saints, opposes the Spirit of God and like an untamable wild animal (*feram indomitam*) constantly fights against God's grace."<sup>6</sup>

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210). Battles comments, "At the Leipzig debate...Eck in the first week argued with Carlstadt the necessity of the concurrence of grace and will for all meritorious action" (ibid. n. 1).

<sup>3</sup> *BLW* 46-47.

<sup>4</sup> Calvin wrote, "Therefore we recall that our fallenness is to be attributed to the corruption of our nature, lest an accusation be levelled against God, the creator of our nature" (*BLW* 47). Lane points out in n. 62 that Calvin was quoting a passage from his *Inst.* 2.1.10 that Pighius had paraphrased at *Free Choice* 9b-10a.

<sup>5</sup> *BLW* 40.

<sup>6</sup> *CO* 6, 264; *BLW* 48 [trans. Davies].

Calvin added that Pighius shuddered “at Luther’s saying that in the saints too the fleshly nature, like an untamed beast (*feram indomitam*), struggles against the Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup> Lane seems to imply that this language does not appear in Luther when he says that Pighius put Luther’s theology in his own words in order to criticize it. Lane compares this with Pighius attributing the analogy of the sword to Luther.<sup>8</sup> Here however, we find that Pighius was not putting words in Luther’s mouth but taking Luther’s own words from *Assertio*:

We know by abundant clarity that even the just toil against their flesh with a great struggle in order to do good and that their free choice and the wisdom of the flesh resists them.... And how is possible that without the Spirit, by its own nature, it could yearn for the Spirit or prepare itself for the Spirit by doing what is in it? While it is in a state of grace, its nature is such that it fights wildly against grace, and outside of grace can its nature be such that it can help the Spirit? Could there be anything more insane than that? For it would be a monstrosity as unheard-of as if someone who could not tame a ferocious wild animal (*indomitam feram*) while it was chained would be insane enough to boast that before it was chained or without being chained it was so calm and mild that it voluntarily tames itself or strives to be tame.<sup>9</sup>

Thus Calvin was dealing with a real Lutheran source. Calvin not only maintained that Luther was following Scripture in speaking of the *instrumenta Dei* but said that Luther “assents to the verdict of God” in condemning the “whole of human nature as it is marred and corrupted after the fall.”<sup>10</sup> With respect to Luther’s characterization of the believer as an *indomitam feram*, Calvin questioned Pighius, “When, therefore, he [Paul] complains that the remnants of the flesh resist the righteousness of God, how does he differ from Luther...?” Calvin also made use of Augustine’s statement with respect to the saints, “Let no one flatter himself; of himself he is Satan. Let man take sin, which is his own, and leave righteousness with God (*Homily on John*

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<sup>7</sup> CO 6, 264; BLW 49 [trans. Davies]. See *Free Choice* 17a.

<sup>8</sup> BLW 49, n. 81, 48, n. 71, 37, n. 8.

<sup>9</sup> WA 7, 147.14-25.

<sup>10</sup> BLW 49. Lane says that in claiming that Luther’s argument was biblical, Calvin quoted “some of the same verses” Luther used in his own defense in *Assertio* (ibid. n. 74). But of the four verses that Calvin cited to show that Luther was biblical only two, Genesis 6:5 and Romans 8:7, appear in *Assertio*.

49).” Calvin commented, “If this had been said by Luther, what an uproar Pighius would now be raising!”<sup>11</sup> While Calvin claimed that the reformers followed Scripture as their highest authority and appealed to church fathers like Augustine, there was an occasional appeal to the distinctions of Aristotle and scholastic theology. Questions then arise as to the nature of this appeal, its role in the theology of the reformers, and whether Luther and Calvin are different in their attitudes to the great pagan philosopher.

## II. Use of Aristotle

Lane makes much of Calvin employing the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents and he suggests a difference between Calvin and Luther on this point. In responding to the charge of Manichaeism, Calvin protested that the reformers did not teach that man had an evil substance but he distinguished between substance and accidents. Evil was not intrinsic to human nature but accidental. Calvin asked Pighius “What similarity...is there between substance and accident? Between God’s creation and corruption brought on himself by man?”<sup>12</sup> Lane writes, “Luther, in the early years of the Reformation, was unremittingly hostile towards the use of Aristotle in theology. Compared with the medieval scholastics, Calvin made little use of Aristotle, but was not unwilling to invoke Aristotelian distinctions when these suited his purpose.”<sup>13</sup> To assess Lane’s statement we must ask, “What was Luther’s attitude toward Aristotle in the early years of the Reformation?” At that time, Luther rejected the Aristotelian distinction of substance and accidents but only when it was used in a certain way, and that was when Thomas Aquinas explained the Lord’s Supper as a transubstantiation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. Where Aquinas held that the accidents of bread and wine

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<sup>11</sup> *BLW* 49.

<sup>12</sup> *BLW* 47. Cf. Luther in n. 16 below.

<sup>13</sup> Lane, “Introduction,” in *BLW* xxv.

remained after this change of substance, Luther held that the substances of body and blood were sacramentally added together with the substances and accidents of bread and wine.

Transubstantiation was, for Luther, an unnecessary rationalization of the mystery of Christ's presence.<sup>14</sup> Luther said this was a wrong move because Aquinas was trying to base his opinions on Aristotle in matters of faith and because Thomas had misunderstood the point of Aristotle's distinction. This led Thomas to posit something not only unnecessary but also nonsensical.<sup>15</sup> But it must be clarified that Luther did not say that this was a wrong move because the distinction could never be used to explain a point already founded in Scripture. Thus it is not clear that Luther would have rejected Calvin's use of Aristotelian language to say that sin was accidental to humanity because man was originally created good, and Luther was certainly in agreement with the idea expressed.<sup>16</sup> What is clear is that Luther "was unremittingly hostile towards the use of Aristotle in theology" with respect to explaining the relationship between the elements of bread and wine and the presence of Christ's body and blood. Given the fact that Calvin shared

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<sup>14</sup> *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, LW 36, 29, 31-35, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Luther wrote, "For Aristotle speaks of subject and accidents so very differently from St. Thomas." This was because Aristotle held them to be inseparable but Aquinas posited that the miracle of the mass was the disjunction between substance and accidents, when the substances of bread and wine were changed to body and blood while the accidents of bread and wine remained. Luther continued, "It seems to me that this great man is to be pitied not only for attempting to draw his opinions in matters of faith from Aristotle, but also for attempting to base them upon a man whom he did not understand (*Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. LW 36, 29). It seems that Luther was not opposed to the distinction as used by Aristotle but only as violated by Aquinas. The violation consisted in both a misunderstanding of Aristotle and creating an auxiliary doctrine alongside of the Scriptural data based upon Aristotle. Philosophy, by itself, was not suited to explain this unrevealed mystery of faith. Luther referred to the argument of the Ockhamist Pierre d'Ailly that real bread and wine remained as more satisfactory. Luther found this explanation simpler since it did not require "superfluous miracles" (ibid.). There was no auxiliary doctrine involved in the Ockhamist position.

<sup>16</sup> Luther said that human "nature is good, but the defect is evil" (*Lectures on Romans*. LW 25, 313). Luther does not appear to use the term *substantia* in his early reform writings, but he meant the same thing and implied the difference between that and accidental corruption when he wrote, "Without the grace of God the will produces an act that is perverse and evil. It does not, however, follow that the will is by nature (*naturaliter*) evil, that is essentially (*natura*) evil, as the Manichaeans maintain" (*Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* [1517]. WA 1, 224; LW 31, 12, theses 7-8 [trans. Grimm]). Thus we see that Luther also addressed the suspicion of Manichaeism and in the same way as Calvin, though Calvin used the common Aristotelian terminology where Luther used synonyms. While this may reveal a greater willingness on the part of Calvin to specifically employ Aristotle, it applies only to the young Luther emerging from scholastic modes, and it does not put the reformers fundamentally at odds over the philosopher.



Luther's rejection of transubstantiation but used Aristotle's distinction in other ways should give us pause in asserting that the early Luther's attitude toward Aristotle was "unremittingly hostile." It is important, as one of my teachers has aptly put it, to always "discern the with-respect-to-whatness."

Luther's early rejection of Aristotle also had to do with the principle, from his *Ethics*, that we become good by doing good deeds and evil by evil deeds. Luther despised it in theology, not in the civil realm,<sup>17</sup> because he suspected that Aristotle and "the philosophers" had influenced the assumptions of the medieval theologians about how justification worked, that is, we become righteous before God by doing righteous deeds.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, Luther considered "the whole of Aristotle" as congenial to theology "as darkness is to light." Did this mean that "the whole of Aristotle" can never be used to clarify a point in theology or that "the whole of Aristotle" is darkness to the divine and specially revealed gospel? It appears that the latter is correct, given that Luther further contextualized his remark as having to do with the scholastic problem, "This is in opposition to the scholastics."<sup>19</sup> In fact, Leif Grane says that Luther "never ceased to employ scholastic terms for his own purposes."<sup>20</sup> Calvin also found Aristotle's principle repugnant when it appeared in Pighius, "God calls the obstinacy and rebellion which are

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<sup>17</sup> "For Christians do not become righteous by doing righteous works; but once they have been justified by faith in Christ, they do righteous works. In civil life the situation is different; here one becomes a doer on the basis of deeds, just as one becomes a lutenist by often playing the lute, as Aristotle says" (*Lectures on Galatians* [1535]. *LW* 26, 256).

<sup>18</sup> "We do not become righteous by doing righteous deeds but, having been made righteous, we do righteous deeds. This is in opposition to the philosophers. Virtually the entire *Ethics* if Aristotle is the worst enemy of grace. This in opposition to the scholastics" (*Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* [1517]. *LW* 31, 12, theses 40, 41).

<sup>19</sup> *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology* (1517), *LW* 31, 12, thesis 50.

<sup>20</sup> "Luther and Scholasticism," in *Luther and Learning: The Wittenberg University Luther Symposium* (Selinsgrove, New Jersey, 1985), 52. Grane said further, "He felt free to use its intellectual achievements to sharpen his wit, to defeat less competent opponents, to argue in disputations, but above all to warn against the clever ways by which men try to destroy the gospel" (ibid. 65). D. V. N. Bagchi, "Sic et Non: Luther and Scholasticism," 3–15, concludes, "While *theologica scholastica* was always to be opposed to the *theologia crucis*, the *modus loquendi scholasticus* was not always for Luther contrary to the *modus loquendi theologicus*.... The decisive matter for Luther was consonance with Scripture" (14, 15).

implanted in human beings through the corruption of their nature a stony heart. Pighius declares that the hardness was incurred through bad habit. Just as if one of the philosophers' crew should say that by evil living a person had become hardened or callous towards evil."<sup>21</sup> Thus it does not appear that what the early Luther actually said about Aristotle can be used to draw a line between him and Calvin. The only thing that can be said is that the young Luther seemed to be categorical in his denunciation of Aristotle in a way that Calvin would not be, but, as we have shown, even this must be contextually qualified. But even if Luther's rejection of Aristotle in theology might have been categorical early on, by the time Calvin was writing, Luther was clearly using Aristotelian distinctions when they suited his purpose.

Lane illustrates Calvin's attitude to Aristotle by saying that Calvin was willing to use him "as with his 1539 discussion of the four causes of salvation."<sup>22</sup> In his *Lectures on Galatians* (1535), Luther, like Calvin, spoke of faith as the formal cause of justification. Luther wrote that faith is the "formal righteousness, on account of which a person is justified, not on account of love, as the Sophists say" (*formalis iustitia, propter quam homo iustificatur, non propter charitatem, ut Sophistae loquuntur*).<sup>23</sup> Luther could also correct a false notion about a final cause in moral philosophy from the standpoint of theology.<sup>24</sup> Luther could even use Aristotle to make his own theological point against the scholastics:

In this way you can easily stop the mouth of the sophists. For they themselves are forced to grant, as they teach on the basis of Aristotle, that every good work proceeds from choice. If this is true in philosophy, it is much more necessary in theology that a good will and a right reason based on faith should precede a work.

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<sup>21</sup> *BLW* 211-12.

<sup>22</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxv. See *Inst.* 3.14.17.

<sup>23</sup> *WA* 40 1, 229.25, 26; *LW* 26, 130, for the whole section see 225-35, 127-33 respectively. Calvin equated the formal cause of justification with faith at *Inst.* 3.14.17.

<sup>24</sup> *LW* 26, 262.

Luther accepted Aristotle's teaching here because he believed that it was assumed in and thus supported by Scripture: "This is the purport of all the imperatives and of all the statements that teach the Law, as the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews clearly explains (11:4): 'By faith Abel obtained, etc.'"<sup>25</sup>

Lane says that Calvin was generally negative towards Aristotle's use in theology but that he made repeated appeals to the distinction between substance and accidents, substance and habit, and in two places used the distinction between form and matter.<sup>26</sup> Calvin also appealed to Aristotle for the idea of "culpable impotence" since the fall.<sup>27</sup> Lane concludes, "This extensive use of Aristotle and of Aristotelian distinctions shows that while Calvin did not share the medieval scholastic enthusiasm for Aristotle, he did not share the early Luther's programmatic rejection of Aristotle."<sup>28</sup> The point about the early Luther may be well taken,<sup>29</sup> but Calvin did share Luther's selective use of Aristotle at the points where he was considered congenial to Scripture. After Luther spoke of faith as the formal cause of justification, he also employed the distinction between form and matter: "Just as the sophists say that love forms and trains faith, so we say that it is Christ who forms and trains faith or who is the form of faith."<sup>30</sup>

Lane also distinguishes between places where Calvin used Aristotle to support his point, as with the argument about culpable impotence, and where an Aristotelian distinction became

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<sup>25</sup> *LW* 26, 294.

<sup>26</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxv-xxvi.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* *BLW* xxv. This is where a person may be culpable for evil even when he is impotent to do otherwise since his impotence came about voluntarily. See *BLW* 149-50.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* *BLW* xxvi.

<sup>29</sup> Grane says, "Luther obviously felt free to return to scholastic usage whenever it could improve his arguments. This practice is quite evident in the disputations of his later years" ("Luther and Scholasticism," 65).

<sup>30</sup> *LW* 26, 130. According to the distinction matter receives shape or pattern from the form impressed upon it. For a discussion see Richard Muller, "Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology" (Grand Rapids: Baker, Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 1985), 123-124. Luther was skeptical about the value of the distinction as used by Lombard to explain the sacrament. *Babylonian Captivity of the Church.* *LW* 36, 62. This illustrates once again Luther's selective approach to the use of Aristotle for theology.

integral to the point he was arguing, as with the distinction between created and corrupted nature. This seems to be part of the wedge he is trying to drive between Luther and Calvin on the use of Aristotle. But the difference seems to be attributable to Lane's framing of the issues, not to the issues themselves. In both cases Calvin makes a point drawn from Scripture and then appeals to Aristotle as a corroborative witness and not a foundational source. Lane notes how Calvin first differentiated between nature as created and corrupted, and then, "in order to make this clearer," Lane says, "Calvin repeatedly invokes the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents."<sup>31</sup> I do not see how clarifying the original biblical distinction with the Aristotelian one makes Aristotle "fundamental"<sup>32</sup> to Calvin's argument. Calvin's case against the charge of Manichaeism would be the same even if he had never heard of Aristotle, that is, evil is not inborn from God's creative act but the result of the human fall.<sup>33</sup> Even if this did mean that Aristotle was "vital" to the argument, the same could be said of Luther's appeal to Aristotelian causality, the distinction between form and matter, or the idea that "a good will and a right reason" precede a "good work." Lane's point seems more indicative of Aquinas's teaching of transubstantiation, which appears to be an auxiliary teaching with an independent philosophical basis and authority

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<sup>31</sup> Lane, "Introduction," in *BLW* xxv.

<sup>32</sup> Lane uses the words "fundamental," "vital," and "affect the case he is arguing" to describe Aristotle's relationship to Calvin's argument (ibid. *BLW* xxv).

<sup>33</sup> The most that could be said is that the distinction between substance and accidents supports a separate argument, i.e., that evil is accidental to man and not a part of his substance. Lane seems to assume this. But this hardly sounds like a separate argument to the distinction between created and corrupted nature. The thrust of the argument is that corruption is a defect of the original good creation and thus does not sully the creator. *BLW* 40, 46, 47, 186-87. The fact that the defect can be forgiven now and will later be expunged shows that the problem is not with nature itself. Lane quotes Calvin, "Without this distinction it is not surprising if [Pighius] gets everything confused" (*BLW* xxvi). But this does not prove that the distinction between substance and accidents is fundamental to Calvin's argument. The primary referent of the word "everything" is to Scripture's account of creation and fall, which Calvin treated in the preceding context. So if it means that the distinction is fundamental, then it is fundamental to understanding the Genesis account. Thus either Calvin thinks that the distinction between substance and accidents is just common sense (he never cites Aristotle as its author) or Pighius would have saved himself from falling into Manichaeism simply by learning it. With regard to Manichaeism, Calvin contended that the shoe was on the other foot and charged Pighius with the heresy. Pighius's view, later condemned by Trent, held that the resistance man feels toward right reason and righteousness was a pre-fall condition of his flesh and not a corruption of the fall. The fall consisted in a loss of supernatural gifts. *BLW* 186-87. See also Chapter 4 n. 155.

alongside of Scripture. For Thomas, the distinction between substance and accidents is foundational to the argument, since one could not have transubstantiation without it. It seems to be an instance of reason proving what faith accepts rather than clarifying what faith accepts. In any case, Luther and Calvin see Aristotle in a supporting role, not providing extra, supplementary data beside Scripture.

Calvin, like Luther, showed himself to be generally negative toward the compatibility of Aristotle and theology in *BLW*: “The things that are attributed to Peter there [in Pseudo-Clement] are no more redolent of the apostolic spirit than is Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*.”<sup>34</sup> Calvin’s attitude to Aristotle can hardly be used to separate him from Luther as Lane implies. Even if the early Luther was categorical in his denunciation of Aristotle, Calvin encountered Luther as the exegete and theologian who, like Calvin, brought every helpful tool to bear upon his exposition of Scripture.

### III. The Whole Man Is Flesh

Not only does Calvin embrace Luther’s figure of the *indomitam feram* for the Christian’s resistance to grace,<sup>35</sup> but he also concurs with Luther that “flesh” in Scripture is used to denote the whole man under sin and in the case of the believer the “old man” who still resists grace.<sup>36</sup> First, with regard to the believer, Calvin said that there can be no doubt that remnants of the old nature remain in the Christian and resist the grace of the Holy Spirit. This is the flesh or fleshly nature that Paul defined as “whatever he has from himself.” This was what Paul meant in Romans 7:18 where he “bemoaned his wretchedness,” confessing that “in him, that is, in his

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<sup>34</sup> *BLW* 43.

<sup>35</sup> *BLW* 48-49. See at n. 6, 7, and 9 above.

<sup>36</sup> *LW* 33, 222-229.

flesh, there dwelt no good thing.”<sup>37</sup> In *BW*, Luther had applied Romans 7:14-25 to the experience of the saints who ‘battle between the Spirit and the flesh, so fierce that they cannot do what they would.’<sup>38</sup> Calvin, like Luther, interpreted Romans 7: 14-25 as referring to the Christian life: “It ought not to be in doubt that in the seventh chapter of Romans he portrays a person who is regenerated.”<sup>39</sup> Pighius had taken umbrage at Calvin speaking of the Christian soul as divided into two conflicting parts. This led Calvin to appeal to Romans 7: 14-25 as an illustration of the very point he had made. Calvin said that the apostle “bemoans the common bondage of the faithful in [speaking of] his own person” as he spoke of the frustration at desiring the good but being thwarted by a contrary desire. Then Calvin asked, “Where...does the desire come from, if not from the fact that remnants of the old man which struggle against the Spirit live on in him?” Calvin acknowledged that according to Romans 6 the “old man” was crucified with Christ but it “is not dead in such a way as to cease causing a troublesome struggle.”<sup>40</sup> Calvin inferred from “other passages” that Paul meant that the old man was whatever had not yet been renewed in the image of God. Thus the faithful struggle against the persistence of the flesh in this life. Pighius, on the other hand, understood the apostle to mean the “body” wherever he referred to the “flesh.” Calvin considered this an anemic denial of reality, “The body...had of itself no feeling of its own, and Paul does not mean just any feeling, but a deliberate desire which is opposed to the Spirit.” Thus, for Calvin, the term flesh designates not the body alone, but the whole of human nature prior to regeneration: “Before regeneration it is not the remnants of the flesh but the whole person which he [Paul] yields up to bondage.”<sup>41</sup> Calvin said this “consists in the fact that both the

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<sup>37</sup> *BLW* 49.

<sup>38</sup> *LW* 33, 288. See also *Lecture on Romans. LW* 25, 328-36, 338-43.

<sup>39</sup> *BLW* 179.

<sup>40</sup> *BLW* 179-80.

human mind and will are not yet wholly reformed” and internal warfare is the result. Calvin concluded, “Who will not allow me to say that the soul is divided into two parts? Indeed who does not both experience this and speak of it.”<sup>42</sup>

Erasmus had argued that the Scripture’s estimation of the “flesh” as the withered grass and faded flower of the field did not apply to the whole man,<sup>43</sup> since he was also made up of the component parts of “soul” and “spirit.” These were also called “reason” or the “governing part of the soul,” by which men still strive after virtue. In this respect, Erasmus spoke of the “philosophers...who taught that we should sooner die a thousand deaths than commit evil.”

Erasmus did not deny that the reason could be corrupted but that this occurred when it gave way to the “grosser affections.”<sup>44</sup> Thus Erasmus and Pighius show their classical colors in holding that “flesh,” in Scripture, is associated with body or lower desires, which, according to Erasmus, could and often did overthrow right reason. Luther, on the other hand, argued that this interpretation was not borne out by John 3:6, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Luther said that Christ divides all men into these two classes<sup>45</sup> and responded ironically to Erasmus, “Not just one portion, or the most excellent thing, or the governing part of man is flesh, but that the whole man is flesh; and not only that, but the whole people is flesh, and...the whole human race is flesh.”<sup>46</sup> Luther concurs with the classical impulse of Erasmus in praising the valor of the Romans, the wisdom of the Greeks, and the righteousness

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<sup>41</sup> *BLW* 68. In the 1539 *Inst.* Calvin wrote, “Man cannot be better known in both faculties of his soul than if he makes his appearance with those titles whereby Scripture marks him. If the whole man is depicted by these words of Christ, ‘What is born of flesh, is flesh’ [John 3:6] (as is easy to prove), man is very clearly a miserable creature” (2.3.1).

<sup>42</sup> *BLW* 180.

<sup>43</sup> Isaiah 40: 6-8.

<sup>44</sup> *LCC* 17, 76.

<sup>45</sup> *LW* 33, 223.

<sup>46</sup> *LW* 33, 224. Calvin used John 3:6 in the same way. *Inst.* 2.3.1.

of the Jews, but concludes that these honorable works are actually damnable before God who takes their motive into account. These did not act for the glory of God but for their own, and attributed his glory to themselves “so that they were never more dishonorable and base than when they were resplendent in their most exalted virtues.”<sup>47</sup> Luther added from John 3:3, 6 that since what is born of flesh cannot see the kingdom of God, there is no middle ground for the righteous pagans between the “Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.”<sup>48</sup> Calvin brought up the same issue in the 1539 *Institutes*: “But, you will say, the word ‘flesh’ pertains only to the sensual part of the soul, not the higher part.” Calvin, like Luther, appealed to John 3:3, 6, “The Lord’s reasoning is: Man must be reborn...for he ‘is flesh’.... He is not teaching rebirth as regards the body.... The Spirit is so contrasted with flesh that no intermediate thing is left.” Luther also performed a *reductio* on Erasmus’s argument saying that if there were still some soundness in man, then there would be no reason for Christ to save the whole man but only his “lower desires.”<sup>49</sup> According to Luther, Christ cannot be the savior of the whole man unless the whole man is flesh. Calvin concurred, “Now the soul is not reborn if merely a part of it is reformed, but only when it is wholly renewed.”<sup>50</sup>

Once again, Calvin agreed with Luther that “free choice” and the “whole of human nature” resisted grace even in the saints like a “ferocious wild animal.” If this was so, the reformers asked what the unregenerate could do to prepare for grace when, in their case, the whole man was flesh?<sup>51</sup> It was not without reason that Huxley called the reformers “sweaty realists.” By

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<sup>47</sup> *LW* 33, 226.

<sup>48</sup> *LW* 33, 227.

<sup>49</sup> *LW* 33, 227-28. See also 282-83.

<sup>50</sup> *Inst.* 2.3.1.

<sup>51</sup> *LW* 33, 288. *BLW* 69.



their testimony, free choice could not be salvaged from the heap of vices designated by biblical category of the “flesh.”

#### IV. Free Choice, Pastoral Concern, and Scripture

Pighius had taken offense at Calvin’s assertion that the fathers did not speak clearly or in harmony on the issue of free choice. According to Calvin’s 1539 *Institutes*, only Augustine was a reliable and consistent authority on the issue.<sup>52</sup> Pighius had argued against Calvin that the fathers were united on free choice and Calvin and the reformers were heretics for their dissent. Calvin countered that Pighius can only claim consensus by misrepresenting the issue. According to Calvin, Pighius wanted to define choice simply as the act of choosing or willing and define “free” as opposed to necessity. In this way Calvin said Pighius wanted to make freedom and necessity mutually exclusive and smuggle in the idea of autonomy so that good and evil were equally within the power of the human will. Thus, according to Pighius, the will is free in such a way that it is its own master.<sup>53</sup> Calvin made no secret about his disdain for the term “free choice,” but would not quibble over words: “If freedom is opposed to coercion I both acknowledge and consistently maintain that choice is free, and hold anyone who thinks otherwise to be a heretic.”<sup>54</sup> Calvin explained that his antipathy toward the term “free choice” was twofold—it was misleading to the point of soteriological danger and did not conform to Scriptural usage. In this way, Calvin objected to the term out of a pastoral concern that people were being deceived into thinking that the will is “free” so that “both good and evil are equally within its power.” Calvin insisted that the adjective “free” does not imply any power or ability but simply voluntary self-determination. For Calvin the will was free “in the sense of not being coerced nor forcibly

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<sup>52</sup> *BLW* 101.

<sup>53</sup> *BLW* 67-68.

<sup>54</sup> *BLW* 68.

moved by an external impulse, but moving of its own accord.” If this were plainly understood then Calvin would not object. But since the greater part of humanity stumbles at this point and “dashes itself at so great a risk,” Calvin believed that he was justified in wishing that the term would fall out of common usage. Calvin also argued that the term “free choice” does not comport with Scripture, which opposes freedom and bondage in a mutually exclusive relationship. Calvin commented, “If the human will is in bondage, it cannot be said at the same time to be free, except improperly.” Calvin returned to the argument that the flesh gives “the whole person...up to bondage” and that if Paul spoke of the saints as bound prisoners in so far as they have not yet been freed by the Spirit, then the bondage of the unredeemed is total.<sup>55</sup> Calvin asked, “If after regeneration man has only half freedom, what is to be said of those in whom their nature alone flourishes and reigns?” Calvin alluded to Romans 7:14 where Paul speaks of man as sold under sin<sup>56</sup> and concluded, “Therefore anyone who claims that choice is free uses a different expression from that of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>57</sup>

Luther spoke similarly. Luther held that Scripture attributes free choice to God alone: “Free Choice is plainly a divine term, and can be properly applied to none but the Divine Majesty alone; for he alone can do and does (as the Psalmist says [Ps. 115:3]) whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth.” Then followed Luther’s worry over the term itself:

Theologians therefore ought to have avoided this term when they wished to speak of human ability.... They should, moreover, have removed it from the lips and language of men, treating it as a kind of sacred and venerable name for their God. And if they attributed any power at all to men, they should teach that it must be called by another name than free choice, especially as we know and clearly perceive that the common people are miserably deceived and led astray by that term.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> See § III above.

<sup>56</sup> *BLW* 68.

<sup>57</sup> *BLW* 69.

<sup>58</sup> *LW* 33, 68.

Calvin's concern that people would assume that free choice is a kind of power equal toward good and evil was also expressed by Luther: "The expression 'free choice' is too imposing, too wide and full, and the people think it signifies—as the force and nature of the term requires—a power that can turn itself freely in either direction."<sup>59</sup> Luther also held that this was no minor issue because he said, "Eternal salvation is at stake." Therefore he called the term "deceptive" and "dangerous." Thus both reformers shared a pastoral antipathy towards the term "free choice" and could only conceive of allowing the term on occasions where it would be strictly defined to leave out the possibility of leaving the impression that man could contribute something of himself to his salvation. We have noted with McSorley how Luther's formal denial of "free choice" was without precedent in the tradition,<sup>60</sup> and we have pointed out the same for Calvin along with Lane.<sup>61</sup> The fact that Calvin's other Reformation influences, Melanchthon and Bucer, attempted to maintain a positive role for free choice in their theology once again points to Luther's influence on Calvin and Calvin's willingness to throw his support behind Luther's position.<sup>62</sup> It is also clear that their concern for theological understanding of the common people was part of the reason that led them to this formal denial of the term "free choice." Where other reformers might have been concerned about the accusations of determinism and novelty<sup>63</sup> or relating positively to

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<sup>59</sup> *LW* 33, 68-69. Luther added later, "The term 'free choice,' in the judgment of everyone's ears, means...that which can do and does, in relation to God, whatever it pleases, uninhibited by any law or any sovereign authority.... Here...there is a conflict between the definition of the name and the definition of the object, because the term signifies one thing and the object is understood as another" (*LW* 33, 103). Luther was also conscious of mere semantics, "But in order to not to appear to delight in quarreling about words, let us for the moment accept this misuse of terms, serious and dangerous though it is, and allow free choice" (*LW* 33, 104).

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 4 n. 84.

<sup>61</sup> See Chapter 4 at n. 82.

<sup>62</sup> See Chapter 4 at n. 86-89.

<sup>63</sup> This has been suggested in the case of Melanchthon. Clyde Manschreck believes that Luther's controversy with Erasmus was the occasion for Melanchthon to change his views. Melanchthon began to express himself differently in his in his 1527 *Commentary on Colossians* and throughout his later editions of the *Loci communes*. *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes 1555* (Oxford, 1965), xii-xiv. See also Chapter 4 at n. 87-89.

more philosophical traditions in the church,<sup>64</sup> which were not to be lightly dismissed, Luther and Calvin were more concerned about the practical effects of their teaching on the lay level.

Melanchthon was also pastorally concerned about the teaching of free choice, but for a different reason. Melanchthon believed that Calvin had stepped over the bounds of moderation into speculations about predestination that would sidetrack the preaching of the gospel.<sup>65</sup> In this way an interesting contrast appears between Luther and Calvin on one side and Erasmus and Melanchthon on the other. Erasmus had little sympathy for or understanding of Luther's concerns over free choice. He wrote, "On this matter of free choice, having learned what is needful to know about this, if we are in the path of true religion, let us go on swiftly to better things." The things that Erasmus considered needful were "penitence," attributing evil only to ourselves and good to God, and believing that all our experiences are sent by God for our betterment.<sup>66</sup> According to Erasmus "the Word," which was so precious to Luther because it contained Christ, was simply "the precepts of the good life."<sup>67</sup> Erasmus warned of an "irreverent inquisitiveness" that rushes into unknowable and unnecessary questions, such as "whether God foreknows anything contingently; whether our will accomplishes anything in things pertaining to eternal salvation; whether it simply suffers the action of grace; whether what we do, be it of good or ill, we do by necessity or rather suffer to be done to us." Erasmus believed that questions like these were not clear in Scripture, had not been and probably could not be cleared up by

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<sup>64</sup> Bucer was certainly motivated to show consensus on the issue of free choice with certain fathers, like Augustine, and medieval theologians, like Aquinas. See Chapter 4 n. 86.

<sup>65</sup> Timothy Wengert, "'We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever': The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 28-32.

<sup>66</sup> *LCC* 17, 39.

<sup>67</sup> *LCC* 17, 39-40. Erasmus was apparently paraphrasing Deuteronomy 30:11-14 when he spoke of these precepts, "This is the Word of God, which is not to be bought in the highest heaven, nor in distant lands overseas, but is close at hand, in our mouth and in our heart." But he neglected to reference Paul in Romans 10:6-10 who associated the Word with the Word of faith, which believes the gospel of Christ. Erasmus would incur Luther's sharpest criticisms at this point. See at n. 71 and 72 below.

theologians, and therefore were not vital to know.<sup>68</sup> Luther contended that the Scriptures were clear according to their very nature as revelation.<sup>69</sup> They also had much to say on the divine and human roles in salvation and this was essential to know. Otherwise, Luther said, it would be impossible to “worship, praise, thank, and serve God, since I do not know how much I ought to attribute to myself and how much to God.”<sup>70</sup> Luther added that it was “fundamentally necessary and salutary for a Christian, to know that God foreknows nothing contingently, but that he foresees and purposes and does all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will.”<sup>71</sup> Luther even identified the contents of Erasmus’s list of speculative issues as gospel issues: “You declare that those things are not necessary; whereas, unless they are necessary and known with certainty, then neither God, nor Christ, nor the gospel, nor faith, nor anything is left.”<sup>72</sup> Luther felt that the divide between himself and Erasmus could not be wider because Erasmus not only disagreed with Luther over free choice but also considered the whole question of the divine and human roles in salvation beyond finding out.<sup>73</sup> In fact, Luther was disturbed by what Erasmus found “sufficient for the Christian religion.” Luther stingingly criticized Erasmus for not mentioning Christ or saying anything distinctive about Christianity, so that any “Jew or Gentile” would find Erasmus congenial. Luther concluded with the blunt statement, “If you consider this subject

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<sup>68</sup> *LCC* 17, 39.

<sup>69</sup> Luther criticized Erasmus for implying that Romans 11:33 applied to Scripture, “Unsearchable are his judgments.” Luther pointed out that this did not speak of Scripture but of God who had many hidden aspects but his word was his revelation that he does not hide but wants to be preached and clearly understood. *LW* 33, 27. Thus Luther wrote, “The subject matter of the Scriptures, therefore, is all quite accessible, even though some texts are still obscure owing to our ignorance of their terms” (*LW* 33, 26).

<sup>70</sup> *LW* 33, 35.

<sup>71</sup> *LW* 33, 36.

<sup>72</sup> *LW* 33, 30.

<sup>73</sup> *LW* 33, 35.

unnecessary for Christians, then please quit the field; you and I have nothing in common, for I consider it vital.”<sup>74</sup>

Melanchthon had come to see Calvin as taking the issue into philosophical subtleties about predestination that went beyond the basic evangelical doctrines that people needed to hear.<sup>75</sup> While Calvin dedicated *BLW* to Melanchthon, Timothy Wengert shows that he was actually trying to reclaim Melanchthon’s waning support. Melanchthon thanked Calvin but also admonished him that it was futile to solve the mystery of contingency and providence, which reveals that Melanchthon did not rank the issue among the essential truths like justification.<sup>76</sup> Wengert says that Calvin could not have disagreed more, but did not say so since he wanted to prevent a public dispute with Wittenberg. But the issue came to a head in 1551 when their differences were publicly aired as a result of the Bolsec affair.<sup>77</sup> Jerome Bolsec had opposed Calvin on the issue of predestination, was arrested by the city council, and brought to trial, where he and a Jean Trollet were called upon to defend themselves. The latter appealed to Melanchthon’s position in the French translation of the *Loci communes*.<sup>78</sup> Calvin had written the preface for that work, and when it came to Melanchthon’s position he had tried to account for the differences between himself and his fellow reformer.<sup>79</sup> During the trial Calvin would have to

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<sup>74</sup> *LW* 33, 29. Erasmus confessed that he had distaste for assertions in matters that were not clear in Scripture or settled by the church and liked to take refuge in the company of skeptics rather than speculate. Luther found Erasmus’s skepticism contemptible since God has clearly revealed the comprehensiveness of his grace so that the troubled conscience could find repose in the answers to these questions. *LCC* 17, 37-38. *LW* 33, 19-24. For a defense of Erasmus see Harry J. McSorley, *Luther Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther’s Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 279-82.

<sup>75</sup> Wengert, “We Will Feast Together,” 28.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* 28-29.

<sup>77</sup> For the whole Bolsec affair see Phillip Holthrop, *The Bolsec Controversy on Predestination, from 1551-1555: The Statements of Jerome Bolsec, and the Responses of John Calvin, Theodore Beza, and Other Reformed Theologians*, vol. 1, 2 parts (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1993). For his account of Calvin’s relations with Melanchthon see 806-09. See also 435-37.

<sup>78</sup> Wengert, “We Will Feast Together,” 30. Holthrop shows that Bolsec also appealed to Melanchthon, was probably influenced by him, and that Bolsec also appealed to Bullinger and Brenz (435, 809).

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 29-30.

answer more directly, but he would go no further than stating, “Melanchthon, being a timid man, and not wanting to give curious folk a reason for inquiring too deeply...*accommodated himself too much to the people’s common sense*. In the present case he has...spoken more as a philosopher than a theologian” (emphasis mine). In 1552, Calvin was admonished by another to show restraint on these issues, and, in response, Calvin clearly revealed his hermeneutical differences with Melanchthon. Calvin confessed that he did not find comfort in paradoxes but in the simple teaching of the word of God.<sup>80</sup> According to Calvin, the Bible had clearly revealed the divine and human roles in salvation and the importance of predestination in preserving the total gratuity of grace. In such cases, where God had spoken clearly, moderation or bashfulness was no virtue, and Calvin, like Luther, had to assert. The similar responses of Luther to Erasmus and Calvin to Melanchthon reveal a common hermeneutical approach to free choice and how much the two reformers of Germany and Geneva had in common on this matter.

Not only did Luther believe free choice to be a misleading and dangerous term, applicable only to God, but Scripture also taught the bound not the free will even in believers who wrestle with the flesh. Based upon Romans 7:14-25 and Galatians 5:16 ff. Luther argued, “If human nature is so evil that in those born anew of the Spirit it not only does not endeavor after the good but actually strives and fights against it, how should it endeavor after the good in those who are not yet born anew but are still ‘in the old man’ and in bondage to Satan?”<sup>81</sup> Calvin wrote on the same passage, “If the saints are in bondage to the extent that they are still left to themselves and their own nature, what is to be said of those in whom their nature alone flourishes and reigns? If after regeneration man has only half freedom, what has he in the time of his original carnal

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 31.

<sup>81</sup> LW 33, 288.

generation but total bondage?”<sup>82</sup> Thus Luther and Calvin both held that bondage to sin was complete since the fall and, based upon Scriptural usage, “free choice” was not a proper term when applied to fallen man. There was a sense in which man could be said to be free, but since the term was largely misunderstood, it had become dangerous to the soul, and both reformers counseled against its use. Calvin said that if there were agreement among the learned, then they could use it even before the public if they explained it clearly.<sup>83</sup> But, once again, Calvin expressed his skepticism that this could be achieved, and emphasized the importance of paying attention to the way the term is used rather than to the term itself. This is especially so in the case of Pighius who, Calvin said, always muddies the water by confusing an important distinction—the distinction between “coercion” and “necessity.”

#### V. Coercion vs. Necessity and the Nature of Free Choice

Calvin dealt at length with Pighius over the Church fathers. The issue of their authority and their views on free choice were treated<sup>84</sup> but do not greatly concern us here as it is generally known that the reformers followed Luther in adhering to *sola scriptura*. Thus it is no surprise to hear Calvin rejecting certain fathers for their teaching on free choice and eschewing any idea of consensus on free choice in the tradition.<sup>85</sup> What is noteworthy is Calvin’s use of a distinction between coercion and necessity in the middle of his discussion of the fathers. It is noteworthy because the same distinction is in Luther, Calvin’s use parallels Luther, and the two fathers that Calvin cited in support of it do not explicitly make the distinction. Various questions arise from

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<sup>82</sup> *BLW* 68.

<sup>83</sup> *BLW* 69.

<sup>84</sup> *BLW* 50-86

<sup>85</sup> See Scott Hendrix, “Deparentifying the Fathers: The Reformers and Patristic Authority,” in *Auctoritas Patrum: Contributions on the Reception of the Church Fathers in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. Leif Grane, et al. (Mainz: Phillip von Zabern, 1993), 55-68, for a helpful treatment of the reformers’ view of the fathers and church tradition.



this section of *BLW*. What is the meaning of the distinction in Luther and Calvin? How did it affect the reformers' understanding of free choice and their claim to the support of Augustine? Can we determine whether Luther or another contemporary was a source for Calvin? And how did the reformers answer the charge that there can be no sin or value where there is necessity?

### A. The Meaning of the Distinction

Luther had distinguished between necessity and coercion in *BW*:

Now, by “necessarily (*necessario*)” I do not mean “compulsorily (*coactionis*),” but by the necessity of immutability (*necessitate immutabilitatis*) (as they say) not of coercion (*coactionis*). That is, a man without the Spirit of God does not, to be sure, do evil by force (*violentia*) or against his will (*non nolens facit malum*), as if he were taken up and twisted around by the neck, like a thief or robber carried off against his will (*nolens*) to punishment, but he does it of his own accord (*sponte*) and with a voluntary will (*libenti uoluntate*).<sup>86</sup>

Luther further defined the *necessitas immutabilitatis*: “It means that the will cannot change itself and turn in a different direction.”<sup>87</sup> If the will is sinful it is immutably so and cannot be otherwise, unless God intervenes. Luther wrote, “If God works in us, the will (*voluntas*) is changed and being softly breathed upon by the Spirit of God, it again wills and acts from pure willingness (*mera lubentia*) and inclination (*pronitate*) and self-determination (*sponte*), not from coercion (*non coacte*).”<sup>88</sup> According to Luther, man’s will is always voluntary except in those exceptional instances where he is forced like the thief “carried off against his will to punishment.” Thus, for Luther, necessity did not exclude voluntary self-determination (*lubens spontanea*). Necessity meant that God’s will would occur through man’s voluntary self-determination, in that man willingly chooses to do what God purposes to happen. Luther said that Erasmus mistakenly thought he was refuting him when the humanist wrote, “Not all

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<sup>86</sup> *SA* 3, 207.10-14; *LW* 33, 64.

<sup>87</sup> *LW* 33, 64.

<sup>88</sup> *SA* 3, 207.25-28; *LW* 33, 65.

necessity excludes free will since God the Father necessarily begets the Son, and yet begets him freely and willingly, for he is not forced to do so.”<sup>89</sup> Luther replied that he had never argued for coercion or force but his books had always made clear that he was speaking about the necessity of immutability.<sup>90</sup> To make this unmistakably emphatic, Luther posited a necessity “of force with reference to the work” and a necessity “of infallibility with reference to the time” and declared that he was speaking only of the latter. Luther consented to Erasmus’s example of the Father begetting the Son necessarily and willingly and provided another of his own with the case of Judas, openly acknowledging that Judas betrayed Christ “by an act of the will.” But Luther said this is beside the point: “That is to say, we are not discussing whether Judas became a traitor involuntarily or voluntarily, but whether at a time preordained by God it was bound infallibly to happen that Judas by an act of his will should betray Christ.” Erasmus argued that the foreknowledge of God was passive with respect to Judas and Judas “could change his mind.” Luther responded by asking, “Could he change God’s foreknowledge and make it fallible?”<sup>91</sup> Erasmus obviously would not have consented to this as God would simply have foreknown something else in Judas’s case, but for Luther this was incomprehensible since the foreknowledge of God was equivalent to foreordination. Luther asserted that God foreknows something because he determines that it will happen: “God foreknows nothing contingently, but he foresees...all things by his immutable, eternal, and infallible will.” Luther asks Erasmus, “Do you, then, believe that he foreknows without willing or wills without foreknowing? If he

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<sup>89</sup> *LW* 33, 192.

<sup>90</sup> *LW* 33, 192-93. Luther had spoken of the *necessitas immutabilitatis* in *Lectures on Romans*. In response to the objection “he who is necessarily in sin is unjustly condemned,” Luther responded, “We are all of necessity in sin and damnation, but no one is in sin by force and against his will. For he who hates sin is already beyond sin and belongs to the elect. But those whom God hardens are those to whom He gives voluntarily to will to be and remain in sin and to love iniquity. Such people are necessarily in sin by the necessity of immutability, but not by force” (*LW* 25, 376).

<sup>91</sup> *LW* 33, 193.

foreknows as he wills, then his will is eternal and unchanging (because his nature is so), and if he wills as he foreknows, then his knowledge is eternal and unchanging (because his nature is so).”<sup>92</sup> Thus, God foreknows what he wills and wills what he foreknows. The two concepts overlap coextensively, so that there is no possibility that God might passively foreknow something that he did not will in the ultimate sense that he wills everything. God’s will and knowledge are bound up together, so it was inconceivable to Luther that God might foreknow something contingently in the case of Judas. Since Luther held that “the will of God is effectual,” his foreknowledge is the same.<sup>93</sup>

Erasmus had appealed to the distinction between the necessity of consequence and the necessity of the consequence, but Luther had already dismissed this distinction as a play on words and was therefore not impressed. It was enough for him that Erasmus had admitted a necessity of consequence in the case of Judas. This meant that Judas’s betrayal would certainly happen but Luther said Erasmus had tried to console himself that it could have been otherwise because there was no necessity of the consequent. Luther saw this as double talk. If something was in any case necessary it could not be otherwise, because necessity was equivalent to immutability. Luther wanted Erasmus to speak to the difference between coercion and necessity but Erasmus argued for something Luther already conceded, that is, Judas was not “compelled to betray against his will.” According to Luther, Erasmus had equated Luther’s talk of necessity with coercion and actually confused necessity with coercion. Luther held that Erasmus did not realize that the necessity of the consequent did not apply to his view and “how completely useless that device of the necessity of the consequent is.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *LW* 33, 37.

<sup>93</sup> *LW* 33, 38.

<sup>94</sup> *LW* 33, 195.

If Erasmus would not treat the issues as Luther wanted, Calvin certainly would and did. As noted above, Calvin accused Pighius of confusing necessity and coercion as well. Calvin actually made four distinctions, saying “the will could be free, bound, self-determined, or coerced (*voluntatem aut liberam esse, aut servam, aut spontaneam, aut coactam*).” Calvin said that in one sense there could be no such thing as a coerced will because the two ideas contradict. Then, claiming to speak for the common cause (*dicimus*), Calvin said that, in another sense, the will can be said to be coerced when it “does not incline of its own accord or by an interior impulse of volition (*non sponte sua, nec interiore electionis motu...inclinatur*), but is forcibly driven by an external motion (*sed externo motu violenter fertur*).” By contrast, self-determination is when the will “directs itself spontaneously (*ultra se flectit*), in the direction in which it is led, when it is not taken by force or dragged against its will (*non autem rapitur, aut trahitur invita*).” A “bound will (*voluntas serva*)” is compatible with this as it is “held captive under the rule of evil desires because of its corruption (*propter corruptionem sub malarum cupiditatum imperio captiva tenetur*), so that it is able to choose nothing other than evil (*ut nihil quam malum eligere possit*), even though it does so of its own accord and willingly (*etiam si id sponte et libenter*), without being driven by any external motion (*non externo motu impulsa*).”<sup>95</sup> Pighius, like Erasmus, had defined free choice as the power of the will to choose between good and evil without necessity one way or the other.<sup>96</sup> This was not acceptable to Calvin given his understanding that the fall had such a corrupting affect on humanity that every choice is inclined in a sinful way. Calvin’s position was that fallen man is “self-determined (*sponte*)” and “has choice (*arbitrium*)” but he said, “We deny (*negamus*) that the choice is free (*liberum*).”<sup>97</sup> Calvin held that the will is not at

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<sup>95</sup> *CO* 6, 280; *BLW* 69. For Luther see at n. 100-13 below.

<sup>96</sup> Erasmus said, “By free choice in this place we mean a power of the human will by which a man can apply himself to the things which lead to eternal salvation, or turn away from them” (*LCC* 17, 47).

<sup>97</sup> *BLW* 69.

liberty to respond positively toward the gospel “because through man’s innate wickedness it is of necessity driven (*necessario feratur*) to what is evil and cannot seek anything but evil” (emphasis mine). At this point Calvin distinguished between “necessity” and “coercion.” Calvin’s point was that “where there is bondage, there is necessity” but not necessarily “coercion.” Calvin argued that since the reformers located necessity to sin in the corruption of man’s will, that automatically meant that man’s necessity was self-determined and not coerced. It was voluntary because its locus was in the volitional faculty. Calvin, like Luther, held that the difference between coerced or voluntary bondage was the key issue in the debate, and they both preserved the notion of *libens sponte*.<sup>98</sup> Pighius had tried to frame the issue with freedom and necessity pitted against one another, but now Calvin said, “You see how self-determination and necessity can be combined.”<sup>99</sup>

Luther’s approval of voluntary self-determination is also clear from his concession to free choice as a created endowment, and this might also be considered Luther’s concept of natural freedom. Right before Luther warned of the dire consequences of using the term “free choice” he granted a proper use for it. Luther wrote:

If the power of free choice were said to mean that by which a man is capable (*aptus est*) of being taken hold of by the Spirit and imbued with the grace of God, as a being created for eternal life or death, no objection could be taken. For this power or aptitude (*uim...aptitudinem*), or as the Sophists say this disposing quality (*dispositiuam qualitatem*) or passive aptitude (*passiuam aptitudinem*), we also admit; and who does not know that it is not found in trees or animals? For heaven, as the saying is, was not made for geese.<sup>100</sup>

Luther was willing to accept free choice in terms of a passive ability to act in response to grace when the will is first acted upon by the Spirit. This has been called natural freedom in the

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<sup>98</sup> CO 6, 280; BLW 69-70. Calvin wrote, “It makes a great difference whether the bondage is voluntary or coerced” (BLW 69).

<sup>99</sup> BLW 70.

Western theological tradition because it refers to the created faculty of the will that man has by nature.<sup>101</sup> Thus, it is exercised every time a person makes a decision regardless of whether the person is redeemed or not. It is free in that it always chooses what it wants except in the cases of true coercion mentioned by Luther and Calvin. In Luther's case, confusion arises when comparing statements from *Lectures on Romans* and *BW*. In *Lectures on Romans* Luther said of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*), "It is always naturally free (*Liberum quidem semper est naturaliter*), but only with respect to the things which are in its power (*potestate*) and are inferior (*inferiora*) to it, but not with respect to things above it, since it is captive in sins and is not now able to choose the good according to God."<sup>102</sup> Luther's reference to the *inferiora* is clear and parallels his references in *BW* to freedom *in inferioribus*. But what is curious in *Lectures on Romans* is that Luther limited natural freedom to the realm of the *inferiora*. This appears to be in conflict with *BW*, where Luther recognized freedom as an inescapable natural endowment that operates not just in the *inferiora* but even in the spiritual realm under the control of Satan. Luther said that when we are under the kingdom of Satan we follow his will "readily and willingly, according to the nature of the will (*uolentes et lubentes, pro natura uoluntatis*), which if it were forced would not be a will (*uoluntas*), for coercion is rather (as they say) unwill (*Noluntas*)"<sup>103</sup> Notice that in *BW* the will is always voluntary in the accepted sense of natural freedom, but in the *Lectures on Romans* free choice has natural freedom only in the things below it, not all the

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<sup>100</sup> SA 3, 208.28-35; LW 33, 67 [trans. Watson]. See also LW 33, 64-65, 69, 103, 176, 283 and comments below.

<sup>101</sup> With respect to free choice as a created endowment, Luther argued that Erasmus made free choice so full of "light and life" that it could neither be redeemed nor damned. Luther added that in the case of damnation Erasmus ought to separate free choice from the person who is to be judged. But if this happened Luther commented that the man would not be a man but "simply a brute and no longer immortal" (LW 33, 283). Thus Luther appeared to assume that free-choice as a created endowment was not removed by sin and could not be gainsaid without reducing man to something inhuman.

<sup>102</sup> WA 56, 385.19-23; LW 25, 375.

<sup>103</sup> SA 3, 207.39-40; LW 33, 65.

time. Luther might have changed his position on natural freedom since *Lectures on Romans* to include even what is above man in the sense that he is free to reject Christ, but it is at least as likely that Luther spoke inexactly about natural freedom in *Lectures on Romans*. When we look at the contextual meaning in both sources and allow for flexibility of expression, the passages do not appear to conflict. This apparent contradiction over whether man is naturally free in both realms or only in things below him is resolved by noticing that Luther was talking about mere willingness or voluntary action in *BW* as opposed to coercion, but in *Lectures on Romans* he was talking about where the will can have a positive effect. According to Luther the will can do good in things below it and thus it is always “naturally free” there, but it cannot do good in things above it, so freedom to do good does not apply in that direction. In talking about natural freedom in *Lectures on Romans*, Luther does not appear to be talking about natural freedom in the technical philosophical sense, but he means something like freedom to effect the good. In this way it parallels what Luther wrote about freedom *in inferioribus* in *BW*. There Luther said that humankind has been “constituted lord over the lower creatures” in the sense that he has “authority and free choice” over them “so that they...do what he wills.” Luther’s point was that this kind of efficacy or freedom of will does not pertain to God.<sup>104</sup>

There was also a difference in Luther’s ways of speaking in these two sources. In *Lectures on Romans* Luther was talking about *liberum arbitrium* and in *BW* he was speaking of *voluntas* according to its nature as *voluntas*. Thus the explanation could also lay in the distinction between the will merely as a faculty and choice as its expression or action.<sup>105</sup> Applying this distinction to Luther, his thought seems to be that the will is always free in the sense of being voluntary (*BW*), and the choice is naturally free, but only in the things below it where it can accomplish civil

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<sup>104</sup> *LW* 33, 285-86. See also 70.

good (*Romans*). With regard to divine things and salvation, the choice is not free to effect spiritual good since it is inextricably bound to the corrupted human will. Thus there is no contradiction between a will that is always naturally free in the sense of being voluntary, and the choices of the will, which are bound to sin and thus ineffective toward things above. The English translations of the *Lectures on Romans* by Wilhelm Pauck (*LCC* 15) and Jacob A. O. Preus (*LW* 25) muddle this issue by translating *liberum arbitrium* as “free will” instead of “free choice.” Thankfully, Phillip Watson (*LCC* 17, *LW* 33) distinguished between *voluntas* and *arbitrium* in *BW* (except for the title), rendering them “will” and “choice” respectively.

The natural freedom of the will is also found in Luther’s concept of *lubens spontanea*, which remains a part of man’s created nature even after the fall, since the fall did not destroy man’s volitional faculty.<sup>106</sup> Luther wrote that both “Satan and man” have a will that is “not something nonexistent” but has simply been corrupted so that it is always turned in a selfish direction.<sup>107</sup> Luther added that our wills are always willing captives either to Satan or to Christ, and that while free choice might still be a spark, it is a slave of devil.<sup>108</sup> Calvin spoke similarly of the will and its corruption as well as the role of grace and the Holy Spirit: “The will is not evil by nature (that is, by God’s creation) but by the corruption of nature, and that it cannot be otherwise until it is changed to be good by the grace of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>109</sup> Calvin’s position that a coerced

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<sup>105</sup> Erasmus also distinguished between *voluntas* and *arbitrium* as its action in his definition of free choice. *LCC* 17, 47, n. 22.

<sup>106</sup> See at n. 86-88 above.

<sup>107</sup> *LW* 33, 176.

<sup>108</sup> *LW* 33, 65, 69.

<sup>109</sup> *BLW* 210. Lane shows that Calvin appealed to Bernard’s distinction between the will itself, an evil will, and a good will to defend himself against Pighius’s charge that he taught the destruction of the will. “Bondage and Liberation in Calvin’s Treatise against Pighius,” in *Calvin Studies LX* (Davidson, NC: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), 38. See *BLW* 209. Calvin also added, in a more scholastic fashion than Luther, that the will itself refers to the substance of the will and “to will well or badly are qualities or opposed habits” (*ibid.*). Calvin concluded, “The will is perpetually resident in our nature...the evil condition of the will results from the corruption of that nature, and...by regeneration of the Spirit the evil condition is corrected and in that way the will is made good instead of evil” (*ibid.*). See also Lane’s discussion in “Did Calvin Believe in



will is a contradiction in terms was also stated previously by Luther who noted that “compulsion is rather to say ‘unwill.’”<sup>110</sup> Luther argued that there is no problem with the term “free choice” if it is limited to this willing self-determination that is a passive ability in salvation that can be redeemed by the Spirit’s act of grace. Luther would not allow a proactive power to free choice in relation to God however: “You might perhaps attribute some measure of choice to man, but to attribute free choice to him in relation to divine things is too much.”<sup>111</sup> Here we see that Luther’s position—man has choice but the choice is not free—was what Calvin claimed to be his own and that of the common cause.<sup>112</sup> Thus, Luther conceded one kind of freedom—the permanent endowment of voluntary self-determination—but rejected another—freedom in relation to God and salvation. This was in opposition to Erasmus who said that free choice can apply itself in the divine way of salvation, and Luther spoke this way because he allowed freedom in things below (*in inferioribus*).<sup>113</sup> Calvin noted Melancthon’s usage in the *Augsburg Confession* and spoke approvingly of freedom *in civilibus et externis*.<sup>114</sup> But Harry McSorley seems to assume that any denial of free choice is at odds with natural freedom, and thus sees a tension in Luther.

## **B. The Nature of Free Choice and Continuity with Augustine**

McSorley notes that Luther rejected free choice in *Assertio* as a fiction that exists in name only, since everything happens by absolute necessity. But a mere twenty-four lines down Luther says that “things appear arbitrary and accidental,” and free choice “appears in relation to us and

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Freewill?” *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981) 82. Augustine made the same distinctions in *Grace and Free Choice* 15, 31; 20, 41.

<sup>110</sup> *LW* 33, 65. Cf. *BLW* 69. See at n. 95 above.

<sup>111</sup> *LW* 33, 103. See also *Lectures on Romans*, *LW* 25, 375.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. *BLW* 69. See at n. 97 above.

<sup>113</sup> *LW* 33, 70, 285. *Lectures on Romans*, *LW* 25, 375.

<sup>114</sup> *BLW* 29. See Chapter 3 at n. 84-86.

temporal things (*temporalia*),” though it “ceases in relation to God.”<sup>115</sup> McSorley writes, “If all things happen by absolute necessity, then the assertion which Luther makes in earlier and in later writings—that man has *liberum arbitrium* ‘in inferioribus’—is meaningless.” McSorley thinks that if Luther’s concept of necessity totally excludes free will, then “he dissociates himself from... Thomas and Augustine and finds himself in the company of the fatalists, whose doctrine both Thomas and Augustine rejected.”<sup>116</sup> McSorley tries to save Luther from the fatalists and resolve the apparent tension by tempering Luther’s denial of free choice with his statement about the appearance of free choice in the *temporalia*. This seems to be another form of freedom *in inferioribus*, which had already appeared in the *Lectures on Romans*.<sup>117</sup> McSorley posits that Luther’s rejection of free choice was never meant to deny natural freedom but simply created an ambiguity.<sup>118</sup> McSorley also counsels that while Luther’s doctrine of *necessitas* seems to contradict his doctrine of *in inferioribus*, “one should not presume that a thinker of Luther’s caliber is guilty of such an obvious contradiction.”<sup>119</sup> But there is no reason to assume the incompatibility of necessity and natural freedom or freedom *in inferioribus* once Luther’s distinction between necessity and coercion is properly grasped. This is because Luther used the distinction to argue that, while every act is necessary from the divine point of view, it is also naturally free in the sense that it is willing on the part of man and not coerced. Luther’s point about freedom *in inferioribus* was a corollary intended to concede that there is a power in the human will whereby man exercises his will freely and with great efficacy and success in the civil realm. Man’s will is impaired and has no efficacy and success in matters of salvation, not

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<sup>115</sup> *WA* 7, 146.6, 30, 33.

<sup>116</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 255, 256.

<sup>117</sup> See at n. 102.

<sup>118</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 256, 260.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 259.

because it loses its natural freedom, which is what McSorley accuses Luther of saying, but because it is bound to sin. Once again, natural freedom or the *libens sponte* remains a part of the will in its very bondage to sin because man sins willingly. The voluntary character of the will is never violated by sin, but only the spiritual efficacy is totally effaced as sin directs the will towards the self and away from God. Thus, in Luther's thought, natural freedom and its willingness stem from the will as such, but necessity stems from the will's corruption. McSorley acknowledges that Luther taught that man wills "'spontaneously and voluntarily' and not by any necessity of coercion, but by the necessity of immutability," and that "man cooperates with God." "But" McSorley adds, "it is clear that Luther rejects the notion of man's freedom of election (*libertas eligendi*), that he does not take 'libenti voluntate' to mean 'by free will,' and that he does not say that man's cooperation in justification or renovation by faith is a *free* cooperation involving a decision of man's free will." Luther did in fact guard the decision character of man's response to God as we have shown above, even in the case of Judas.<sup>120</sup> The reason McSorley interprets Luther as he does here is because MsSorley assumes something more by natural freedom than Luther does. By "a *free* cooperation" McSorley means not merely that man is voluntary in his self-determination but that man's decision to respond cooperatively to grace is his own movement. Grace enables man's cooperation but does not secure it. This becomes clear when McSorley asserts that Luther is out of step with the Catholic tradition on this point:

When Luther says that the change of our wills from sin to justice depends solely on the overcoming and the defeat of Satan by someone stronger—Christ—and neglects entirely to mention that the personal, free decision of the sinner—made possible, to be sure, only by the healing and liberating grace of God—is essential to justification, then he is no longer on biblical or Catholic ground.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 333. See at n. 89-91 above.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.* 334.

To say that the change of our wills does not depend solely on Christ overcoming Satan and that grace only makes possible “the personal, free decision of the sinner” is one thing, but to assert that this is the only Catholic ground to stand on is something else. For the latter would mean that not only the catholicity of Luther would be in question but also the catholicity of the later Augustine.

It was Augustine, not Luther, who first wrote, “He brings about our willing without us.”<sup>122</sup> According to Augustine, in the later anti-Pelagian writings, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the gift of charity are not only performed by God, but our reception of these gifts is his work as well. J. Patout Burns, following Eugene TeSellee and Jean Lebourlier, has indicated that a shift is noticeable in Augustine’s thought in the 418 treatise *The Grace of Christ*. The shift demonstrated a reversal of Augustine’s earlier position taken in *Ad Simplicianum* (396) and developed in *The Spirit and the Letter* (412).<sup>123</sup> In *The Spirit and the Letter* Augustine had taught that grace works externally upon the will, eliciting faith “by the enticements of our perceptions.”

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<sup>122</sup> “Ut ergo velimus, sine nobis operator” (*Grace and Free Choice* [426/427] 17, 33. *PL* 44, 901; *Works* 1, 26, 94).

<sup>123</sup> J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine’s Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980). Burns’ approach posits a genetic development over time, rather than proposing a single underlying theory that harmonizes all the works into a grand synthesis. This approach does not pick one of Augustine’s treatises, which is supposed to distill the heart of his understanding, and then apply it as a hermeneutic upon all of the others. Burns points to examples of this in Eugene Portalie et. al. who favors *Ad Simplicianum*, Xavier Leon-Dufour et. al. and who prefer *De spiritu et littera*, and Odilo Rottmaner and A. M. Jacquin who interpret Augustine backwards from his latter anti-Pelagian thought (ibid. 10-12). Gerald Bonner also seems to favor Augustine in the earlier years of the Pelagian controversy, esp. *De spiritu et littera*. See *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 385 n. 9, see also 383-93. The problem with all these is that they see Augustine’s thought as basically static and struggle to show the consistency they assume. Burns however, seeks to demonstrate development and reversals in Augustine. While Augustine does not fundamentally change perspective after 396, Burns demonstrates how Augustine’s thinking on grace flows organically with modifications. Burns’ approach is also contextual, giving weight to the changing situations in which Augustine thought about grace. Surprisingly he sees the Donatist controversy as determinative for Augustine’s anti-Pelagian period. Both the Donatists and the Catholics assumed, with Cyprian, that there was no salvation outside the church, but the Donatists construed this salvation individualistically, whereas Augustine answered them with a corporate emphasis. God’s grace flowed from his promises to the community and did not depend on priestly legitimacy. Those inside the church have sacramental grace. As a result, they also have faith, whereby, they work love and are justified. Those outside the church have no such special grace and are condemned based on their sinful solidarity with Adam. Thus, certain ideas were in place: Charity is necessary for salvific works, inherited guilt condemns, and inherited corruption cripples. These set the stage for the Pelagian dispute and the further development of Augustine’s doctrine

While Augustine insisted that what faith has and what faith receives comes from God, he added that “the receiving and the having certainly come from the one who receives and has them.”<sup>124</sup>

But in *The Grace of Christ*, grace transitioned from being merely an outward call corresponding with the inner-self and awaiting its response, to being an inner call operating on the soul and efficaciously bestowing love. Augustine wrote:

If we are to call this grace “teaching,” we should certainly mean by it the teaching which we believe God pours out with an ineffable sweetness in the depths and interior of the soul, not merely through those who externally plant and water, but also through himself who gives the increase secretly. In that way he not merely reveals truth, but also imparts love.<sup>125</sup>

Augustine’s position, as stated in *On Grace and Free Choice* (426/427), is that God causes the will to will salvation: “It is certain that we will, when we will; but he makes (*facere*) it that we will, by granting a fully efficacious (*efficacissimas*) strength of the will.”<sup>126</sup> This is also seen in Augustine’s distinction between operative and cooperative grace: “Without his either working (*operante*) in order that we will (*ut velimus*) or cooperating (*cooperante*) with us when we will (*cum volumus*), we can effect nothing with respect to good works of piety.”<sup>127</sup> According to Augustine, this internal operation of grace is first operative in producing a good will and then cooperative in actually willing so that without this no pious works can be done. Thus we see that Luther (and Calvin’s) position on the effectual nature of grace in directing the will toward God was not as uncatholic as McSorley supposes. McSorley could question the catholicity of the

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of human free choice and predestination (13-14). See also “Grace,” in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 391-98, esp. 193-94.

<sup>124</sup> *The Spirit and the Letter* 34, 60, *Works* 1, 23, 192. It must be pointed out that Augustine’s position in *Ad Simplicianum* and *De spiritu et littera* was also a reversal of an earlier position comparable to the semi-pelagian teaching that man takes the initiative but salvation can only be completed by grace. See Burns, *Development*, 8, 18-44. James Wetzel “*Ad Simplicianum*,” in *Augustine through the Ages*, 798.

<sup>125</sup> *The Grace of Christ and Original Sin* 13, 14, *Works* 1, 23, 410.

<sup>126</sup> “Certum est nos facere, cum facimus: sed ille facit ut facimus, praebendo vires efficacissimas voluntati.” *Grace and Free Choice* (426/427) 16, 32, *PL* 44, 900-1; *Works* 1, 26, 93.

<sup>127</sup> *Grace and Free Choice* (426/427) 17, 33, *PL* 44, 901; *Works* 1, 26, 94.

latter anti-Pelagian writings of Augustine but he rejects the idea that Augustine changed his earlier position.<sup>128</sup>

McSorley does work with Augustine's *On Grace and Free Choice* at length and has a curious take on his statement, "We always have free will, but it is not always good."<sup>129</sup>

Augustine's complete thought runs as follows:

He gives what he commands when he helps [the one he commands] so that he does what he commands. We always have free will, however, but it is not always good. For it is either free from righteousness when it is enslaved to sin, and then it is evil, or it is free from sin when it is enslaved to righteousness, and then it is good. Truly, the grace of God is always good and makes a human being who first had an evil will to have a good will.<sup>130</sup>

Augustine was surely saying that humans always exercise free will, regardless of whether they are in a state of sin or justice, and that grace causes a person's will to be transformed into the latter good condition. But McSorley says that this statement, "We always have free will, but it is not always good," is "not really a proof that Augustine teaches free will." McSorley says this is so because Augustine uses *libera voluntas* in a different sense here, but McSorley never explains the sense intended beyond pointing to Augustine's allusion to Romans 6:16-22, where one "is either free from sin and a slave of justice or he is free from justice and a slave of sin." Whatever Augustine meant, McSorley is sure that the church father did not deny natural freedom (as defined by McSorley), since, he says, Augustine spoke in the same paragraph "of *liberum arbitrium* in the sense of natural freedom" and cited Psalm 95:8 and Ezekiel 18:31-32.<sup>131</sup> These passages say, "do not harden your hearts" and "make for yourselves a new heart" respectively,

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<sup>128</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 105-106.

<sup>129</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 100. McSorley gives the wrong reference though. It is not 10, 22 but 15, 31.

<sup>130</sup> "Dat quod jubet, cum adjuvat ut faciat cui jubet. Semper est autem in nobis voluntas libera, sed non semper est bona. Aut enim a justitia libera est, quando servit peccato, et tunc est mala: aut a peccato libera est, quando servit justitiae, et tunc est bona. Gratia vero Dei semper est bona, et per hanc fit ut sit homo bonae voluntatis, qui prius fuit voluntatis malae" (*Grace and Free Choice* [426/427] 15, 31, *PL* 44, 899; *Works* 1, 26, 92).

<sup>131</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 100.

but then Augustine went on to quote Ezekial 36:26, “I shall give you a new heart.” Augustine asked, “How, then, does he who says, ‘Make for yourselves,’ say, ‘I shall give you?’” Augustine responded with his well-known line quoted above, “He gives what he commands.”<sup>132</sup> Then follows the statement McSorley says does not apply to natural freedom: “We always have free will, but it is not always good,” to which Augustine immediately added, “Grace must make a human being...have a good will.”<sup>133</sup> What else did Augustine mean here but that we always have free will, as the commandments show we must will something, but the will is not always good, as is shown by the fact that a good will is a gift of grace. When Augustine says that the will is always free, could he mean anything other than that natural freedom McSorley says we have by virtue of being human?<sup>134</sup> That Augustine did understand this in terms of natural freedom is confirmed by a parallel passage, “I think that I have argued enough against those who violently attack the grace of God which does not destroy the human will (*voluntas humana*), but changes it from an evil will to a good will and, once it is good, helps it.”<sup>135</sup> Augustine’s earlier reference to the will that was changed from evil to good and was called the “free will” is now simply called the “human will.” Like the earlier reference, this will is always at work whether man is a sinner or converted by grace. Thus, while McSorley tries to differentiate “free choice” as natural freedom from “free will” as something else, it is clear from the context that Augustine was talking about the same thing. This is also confirmed by the parallel passage where “human will” signifies natural freedom and is described in exactly the same way as the “free will” in the earlier passage. McSorley’s reasoning remains in question and his division appears artificial. While

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<sup>132</sup> *Grace and Free Choice* 15, 31. *PL* 44, 899; *Works* 1, 26, 92. Augustine taught that the command preserves free choice but the giving of obedience and merit preserves grace. See *Grace and Free Choice* 5, 10; 6, 13-15; 7, 17; 8, 19-20.

<sup>133</sup> See at n. 129 and 130 above.

<sup>134</sup> For McSorley’s definition of natural freedom see at n. 138 below.

<sup>135</sup> *Grace and Free Choice* 20, 41, *PL* 44, 905; *Works* 1, 26, 99 [trans. Teske].

McSorley's assertion does not seem to hold up, the question remains as to how Augustine interpreted the text of Romans 6:16-22. Once again, Augustine used it to exposit his statement, "We always have free will, but it is not always good." In this context, it means that the will is always free since when it is enslaved to sin it is free in an evil way, that is, free in the direction away from righteousness, and when it is enslaved to righteousness, it is free in a good way, that is, free in the direction away from sin.<sup>136</sup> Thus, according to Augustine's understanding of the text, freedom and slavery coexist whether a person is in sin or is righteous. It appears that McSorley wants to avoid this conclusion since the idea of voluntary slavery limits natural freedom in sinners to mere willingness or, as Luther and Calvin spoke, to voluntary self-determination (*libens sponte*).<sup>137</sup> Whatever the case may be, it is clear that McSorley is operating with an understanding of natural freedom that goes beyond mere human willingness.

McSorley quotes Mortimer Adler, "Whoever is a man, and simply in virtue of being a man, is always and actually in possession of an ability to determine for himself what he wishes to do or become."<sup>138</sup> McSorley says that Scripture, without actually using the term, assumes this understanding of natural freedom for man everywhere.<sup>139</sup> Based on what we have seen from Luther (and Calvin) above, they would be in cautious agreement, and would quickly add that fallen man would never wish to receive the gospel or become a Christian if grace did not so

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<sup>136</sup> This interpretation is attested elsewhere by Augustine: "It is far from being true that free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) perished in the sinner. In fact, all people (*omnes*) sin by free choice, but in particular all those who sin with a delight in and with a love for the sin and who choose to do what pleases them. For this reason the apostle says, *When you were slaves of sin, you were free of righteousness* (Rom 6:20)... They are free (*liberi*) from righteousness only by the choice of the will (*arbitrio voluntatis*), but they do not become free from sin except by the grace of the savior" (*Answer to the Two Letters of the Pelagians* 2, 5, CSEL 60, 426. 4-10; *Works* 1, 24, 118 [trans. Teske]). Here Augustine equated "free choice" with Romans 6:20, and he saw it as the natural freedom all sinners have when they sin. He even combined this freedom with choice and will, saying that they have this freedom at the point that the will chooses.

<sup>137</sup> McSorley could have benefited from Calvin's interpretation of the distinctions between the will itself, an evil will, and a good will. See n. 109 above. Cf. McSorley, *Luther*, 107-8.

<sup>138</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 26.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* 31.



transform his nature so as to bring about this response. As noted above, McSorley adds that while grace makes the reception of Christ possible, man must decide to receive him, and this goes beyond the reformers' notion of mere human willingness.<sup>140</sup> While natural freedom is simply the power to choose between alternatives or to self-determine, McSorley smuggles in another assumption. According to McSorley, Luther was in the wrong for making man's will depend on forces solely outside of him, but he does not address the question whether this would apply to the power of grace as well. McSorley maintains that the will must not merely consent to grace but grace is not effectual until he does. McSorley writes, "It is true that, according to the New Testament, the sinner cannot free himself from Satan's power. It is also true, however, that there is no liberation from the power of Satan without man's free decision."<sup>141</sup> It is clear from the context of the first statement that the second statement means that liberation awaits man's decision; it does not bring it about, in the later Augustinian sense. In the first statement McSorley is talking about what cannot happen to man—liberation—because of what he *cannot* do. In the second statement, he is talking about what can happen to man—liberation—but will not unless he does the receiving. Thus the issue at stake between McSorley and the reformers is whether man does the receiving or the receiving is worked in him by grace alone. McSorley holds, contrary to Luther, that man's will does have some say in whether or not it is controlled by Satan or God. Luther was positively uncatholic for failing to say that free will "is capable of freely deciding to follow Satan or of freely following God under the action of grace." McSorley says "the biblical categories...presuppose the possibility that man can disobey God or can, with God's help, turn from sin to God (not simply be turned)."<sup>142</sup> McSorley quotes but does not treat the

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<sup>140</sup> See at n. 121 above.

<sup>141</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 334.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.* 338.

statement of Augustine quoted above, “He brings about our willing without us.”<sup>143</sup> But rather than explaining the distinction between operative and cooperative grace in light of it, McSorley assumes that Augustine did not gainsay his position in the earlier anti-Pelagian writings.

McSorley says this is because Augustine did not explicitly retract that position in his *Retractationes*. Before dealing with Augustine’s *The Predestination of the Saints* and *The Gift of Perseverance* (428/429),<sup>144</sup> McSorley “poisons the well” against the reformers’ interpretation of Augustine:

A final question remains. Did Augustine in his final writings—those written after *De gratia et libero arbitrio*—retract his earlier clear teaching that man possesses natural freedom of the will before and after the fall? *A priori* one might rule out such a possibility on the grounds that such an about-face would have so shaken Augustine’s doctrine of grace, sin and law that he would have had to make a special, *ex professo* retraction.... In the *Retractationes* of 426/7 there is no indication of such a drastic departure from his earlier teaching.<sup>145</sup>

This assumes that Augustine’s new interpretation was a complete reversal so different from before that he would have explicitly noted it, but Burns argues that this was not a fundamental change but a modification to the new position held since 396 and *Ad Simplicianum*.<sup>146</sup> If Burns is correct then it is not certain that Augustine would be aware of the change in 426/427. It is clear that grace moves to an internal operation in 418 with *The Grace of Christ* and it is in this period that Luther and Calvin focus their claim upon Augustine in terms of the bound will.

Augustine referred to the “bound will” in his *Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians*, which appeared in 420. McSorley tries to avoid the association with the reformers’ doctrine by appealing to what he calls the Augustinian context, “From the texts examined in this excursus, considered in the light of the whole Augustinian context that we have already studied, we may

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<sup>143</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 101-2.

<sup>144</sup> It is in these works that Augustine applied his understanding of grace to the beginning and end of salvation.

<sup>145</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 106.

<sup>146</sup> See n. 124 and 125 above.

draw the following conclusions....”<sup>147</sup> The Augustinian context is the writings that McSorley had dealt with to this point, and only one belongs to the period of later development noted by Burns. The one that does fall into that category is *The Grace of Christ* and McSorley does not bring out the relevant passage.<sup>148</sup> McSorley plays down Augustine’s reference, quoted by Luther and Calvin, to the “bound will,” or more properly, the “enslaved choice (*servum arbitrium*).”<sup>149</sup> He notes that Augustine said this in the heat of the Pelagian controversy,<sup>150</sup> said it only once,<sup>151</sup> and says it means nothing more than Augustine’s other term—the “captive free choice (*liberum arbitrium captivatum*).”<sup>152</sup> While this is true, even the latter statement limits natural freedom to the voluntary self-determination of the sinner. The sinner is a captive of his own freedom and thus only free because he wants to be a prisoner of his sin. His freedom is in the willing nature of his captivity and thus he is freely in bondage to sin. All McSorley’s protestations about Augustine not wanting to get rid of natural freedom in his later works are beside the point since Augustine was only arguing that the sinner sins voluntarily. The whole dichotomy wedged between Augustine and Luther falls flat when it is seen that Luther admitted the same. Luther similarly described the continuity of the will in its transition from sin to salvation. As we saw above, Luther said the will follows Satan “willingly, according to the nature of the will.... But if a Stronger One comes who overcomes him...then through his Spirit we are again slaves and

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<sup>147</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 91. In fact, McSorley says that it is easy to misrepresent Augustine at this later point of the Pelagian controversy if one isolates certain statements from the Augustinian context. *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> See n. 125.

<sup>149</sup> Augustine wrote, “You want human beings to attain perfection in this life, and I wish you wanted this from God’s gift and not from the free—or rather the enslaved—choice of their own will” (*Answer to Julian, Works 24, 8, 23*. See *LW 33, 108. BLW 89*).

<sup>150</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 90.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.* 91. But we have already seen Augustine speaking of enslavement to sin (*servit peccato*) and to righteousness (*servit justitiae*) in connection with Romans 6:16-22. See at n. 131 and 136.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* 92.

captives—though this is a royal freedom—so that we readily will and do what he wills.”<sup>153</sup>

McSorley says that Luther does not speak of free will or freely deciding in this section, but only of “a will (*velle*) to do what Satan or God wills.” In fact, he says Luther’s conception of willing here “is explicitly opposed to a free willing.”<sup>154</sup> But in this section Luther spoke of “royal freedom (*regia libertas*)” that “wills and does what he wills willingly (*ut uelimus (et) faciamus lubentes quae ipse velit*).”<sup>155</sup> Approximately one page over Luther wrote, “If the power of free choice (*liberum arbitrium*) were said to mean that by which a man is capable of being taken hold of by the Spirit and imbued with the grace of God...no objection could be taken.”<sup>156</sup> Thus we see that Luther did speak in this context of free choice and this was entirely compatible with the traditional notion of natural freedom and Luther’s own conception of necessity. J. B. Mozley concluded his study in the following way:

All that the Augustinian and Jansenist admission with respect to freewill amounts to, is the admission of a *will* in man; and this admission Calvin is equally ready to make. The position condemned by the Council Trent, as that of the Reformers, that man was moved by Divine grace like an inanimate thing, was not their position; they fully acknowledged a will in man, that he acted willingly and without constraint; they acknowledged all the facts of our consciousness; and, admitting them, they admitted all that S. Augustine and his school admitted.<sup>157</sup>

While Luther’s position did not discount natural freedom, it does contradict McSorley’s own understanding of natural freedom.<sup>158</sup> McSorley’s strategy to save the catholic Luther from

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<sup>153</sup> *LW* 33, 65.

<sup>154</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 338, 340. McSorley defines the section in *WA* 18 as 634.37-635.17. McSorley, *Luther*, 335.

<sup>155</sup> *SA* 3, 208.1-2. It occurs in *WA* 18 at 635.16. See also *SA* 3, 208, n. 229 and “*königliche Freiheit*.”

<sup>156</sup> Luther begins speaking of free choice in the proper sense at *WA* 18, 636.15; *LW* 33, 67. See at n. 103-14 above.

<sup>157</sup> J. B. Mozley, *A Treatise on the Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: John Murray, 1878), 409, see also 266-67, 393-409.

<sup>158</sup> McSorley’s further assertion that “Nowhere in *DSA* [*De servo arbitrio*] does Luther call man’s willing a *free willing* or a *free consensus*” (McSorley, *Luther*, 340) is at least conceptually false.

association with fatalism consists in bracketing away his necessitarian argument from his biblical case. Kathryn Kleinhans comments on this:

McSorley objects to Luther's necessitarian argument for the bondage of human free choice because it is incompatible with McSorley's—not Luther's!—understanding of faith as “personal, free decision.” McSorley's language clearly shows that his understanding of faith is a preconception he brings with him to the Luther text. At various points, McSorley describes Luther as depriving and robbing faith of its character as free personal decision, of eliminating, excluding, and neglecting these aspects of faith. McSorley identifies this as “a serious doctrinal deficiency in Luther's teaching on the unfree will.” With Luther's definition of faith already weighed in the scales and found wanting by a prior standard, it is no surprise that McSorley finds it easy to dispense with Luther's doctrine of necessity as extraneous to the main issue. The paradox of faith in the God who “makes us necessarily damnable” is resolved by substituting an understanding of faith already defined with free choice as an essential component, thus relegating necessity to the scrap heap of spare theological parts.<sup>159</sup>

Gerrish notes that “it was in the Bible, not just in the philosophers, that Luther found a necessitarian strain.”<sup>160</sup> Kleinhans sees the problem with McSorley as one caused by

Enlightenment presuppositions about freedom. She writes:

Less critical readers of Luther have read back into the Reformer's work their own understanding of individual freedom, heralding Luther as one of the fathers of modernity.... McSorley is not only, like Erasmus, an heir of Roman Catholicism but is also, like us, an heir of the Enlightenment. It is as heirs and partakers of the particularly modern, post-Enlightenment notion of human freedom that we find Luther so offensive and unreasonable. [Robert] Bellah describes this modern understanding as an “ontological individualism,” in which the individual's reality,

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<sup>159</sup> Kathryn Ann Kleinhans, “Necessity, Sin, and Salvation: Luther's Critique of Reason in The Bondage of the Will,” Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Emory University (UMI, 1995), 10-11.

<sup>160</sup> Brian Gerrish, Review of *Luther: Right or Wrong?* By Harry J. McSorley, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 7 (1970): 574. Gerrish deserves to be quoted at length, “Luther's critique, in my judgment, cannot be so easily disposed of. It is good catholic doctrine that (if I dare give it in words of the Westminster Confession) God orders things to fall out ‘either necessarily, freely, or contingently.’” And yet Luther obliges us to ask with reference to this very respectable proposition: How can it seriously be maintained that God predetermines some events to occur contingently? We may say that Judas' betrayal was voluntary, in that he willed it; that there is nothing in the nature of things which makes betrayal of one man by another absolutely necessary; that God's purpose could have been achieved some other way; and that before it happened the betrayal remained an unforeseen contingency to the disciples. But what can be meant by the further assertion that Judas had ‘a *real* alternative’ (p. 320) if in actual fact God had immutably willed the betrayal? This is Luther's question. In his own words: ‘How, I ask you, can these two propositions be reconciled: “Judas can will not to betray” and “It is necessary that Judas will to betray”?’ (*W.A.* 18.722.21). The most elegant scholastic distinctions in the categories of contingency and necessity, so Luther believed, cannot allow us to speak of a real alternative” (Ibid. 575-76).

and in particular the individual's freedom to choose, are assumed to be prior to any social (let alone theological) context, claim or obligation.<sup>161</sup>

The problem with McSorley's exposition of Augustine is that he attempts a grand synthesis of Augustine's writings on free choice by imposing an earlier development upon a later one and then plays up a tension between this interpretation of Augustine and Luther, neither of which squares with all of the evidence. Brian Gerrish comments, "The definition of freedom in Augustine seems to be more problematic than McSorley allows."<sup>162</sup> Burns' approach to Augustine is more satisfying historically in that it does not attempt the grand synthesis but tries only to show development through stages of the Donatist and Semipelagian controversies.<sup>163</sup> While McSorley questions the Scriptural basis of Luther's doctrine of grace, Burns indicates that Augustine's development occurred as he wrestled with Scriptural texts in his fight against opponents:

Repeated consideration of Paul's reflection of God's preference of Jacob over Esau in Romans 9 finally moved Augustine to the further realization that the merits of human willing and working—prior, contemporary, or subsequent—are irrelevant to the granting of divine assistance. He then abandoned the explanation that human cooperation depends upon prior, unearned divine assistance. Instead he accepted the Pauline teaching that the initial movements toward salvation are utterly gratuitous because they actually produce human cooperation.<sup>164</sup>

Burns comments that Augustine came to the position that the effectual nature of grace is a corollary of the selective nature of grace, known in Scripture as predestination or election. The difference between those who have never heard and those who are unmoved by the gospel on the one hand and the elect on the other is that the latter are struck by the preaching of the gospel

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<sup>161</sup> Kleinhans, 14-16.

<sup>162</sup> Gerrish, Review of *Luther*, 574.

<sup>163</sup> See at n. 123-27 above and esp. n. 123.

<sup>164</sup> Burns, "Grace," 395. Burns comments further on Augustine, "While graciously bestowing the gift of conversion upon Jacob and the other elect without any reference to their works, God justly withholds that same grace from Esau and the others who are condemned for the sins committed in Adam and those added by their individual desires and choices" (*ibid.*). See also Mathijs Lamberigts, "Predestination," in *Augustine through the Ages*, 678.

because grace moves effectually within them. Burns says of Augustine’s position, “The divine call does not wait upon an autonomous human choice; it evokes and secures the response of faith, so that the salvific result must be attributed to divine mercy alone, according to Romans 9:16 and Proverbs 8:35 (LXX).”<sup>165</sup>

Another problem with McSorley’s exposition of Augustine is that he wants to avoid another Reformation claim to Augustine—the doctrine of an effectual or irresistible grace. Augustine spoke of operative grace working upon the human will so that it becomes “fully efficacious (*efficacissimas*)” for willing the good.<sup>166</sup> It is precisely this efficacy or irresistibility of grace that McSorley sees in Luther and rejects in Augustine. McSorley rejects Walther Von Loewenich who sees in Augustine a paradoxical formula in line with Luther rather than an *additionsschema* where grace is added to the will and which schema was finally settled on by the Catholic tradition.<sup>167</sup> McSorley says F. Loofs is wrong in characterizing the *gratia irresistibilis* as the divide between Augustinianism and Semipelagianism. McSorley adds that the controversy did not consist in Augustine’s attribution of salvation to grace alone against the Semipelagian belief that man controlled his own destiny. Thus McSorley continues:

The essence of the Semipelagian doctrine which was attacked by Augustine...and later condemned by the Second Council of Orange (529) was, rather, the idea that it belongs to the natural power of the free will to initiate belief and salvation, to accept the gift of faith once it was offered by God. Augustine—and the Church—insisted...that God’s grace precedes the act of the will and prepares it for the acceptance of faith.<sup>168</sup>

While McSorley sees Orange as faithful to Augustine, he also seems to see Augustine in light of the council.<sup>169</sup> While this may fit Augustine in the years prior to *De gratia Christi* (418), Burns’

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<sup>165</sup> Burns, “Grace,” 397.

<sup>166</sup> See at n. 126 above.

<sup>167</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 102-3.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.* 104.

<sup>169</sup> See also *ibid.* 244, 368.

insight into the later Augustine shows that Augustine did affirm that operative grace makes the will “fully efficacious (*efficacissimas*)” in choosing the good.<sup>170</sup> McSorley admits that Augustine “seems to speak of the irresistibility of grace” and calls certain references in Augustine “controversial” but says they do not deny free will, which, by McSorley’s definition, is liberated so that it can consent to the work of grace.<sup>171</sup> But the references that McSorley himself cites are so clear that his efforts to keep up the division between Augustine and Luther on grace are revealed as largely artificial. Augustine wrote, “The infirmity of the human will is assisted, so that it is moved by divine grace unfailingly and invincibly (*ut diuina gratia indeclinabiliter et insuperabiliter agetur*).”<sup>172</sup> Augustine went on to say, “Human wills cannot resist (*humanas uoluntates non posse resistere*) in such a way that God cannot do what he wills, since he does what he wills, when he wills, even through human wills themselves (*quandoquidem etiam de ipsis hominum uoluntatibus quod uult cum uult, facit*).”<sup>173</sup> If grace is irresistible, then grace does not simply enable the will to freely respond but brings about a free reception of the good, and McSorley’s scenario disappears in the light of an Augustinian Luther who said, “The will of God is effectual,” and, “If God works in us the will is changed.”<sup>174</sup> Calvin appealed several times to

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<sup>170</sup> See at n. 126 above.

<sup>171</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 93. See also 85 and n. 141 and 142 above.

<sup>172</sup> *Rebuke and Grace* 12, 38, *CSEL* 92, 266.16-18; *Works* 1, 26, 136. Augustine also wrote that God helps the weak “so that by his gift they invincibly will (*inuictissime uellent*) what is good, and invincibly refuse (*inuictissime nollent*) to desert it” (*ibid.*).

<sup>173</sup> *Rebuke and Grace* 14, 45, *CSEL* 92, 273.3-5; *Works* 1, 26, 139-40. Augustine also wrote, “God works in the hearts of human beings to incline their will to whatever he wills, whether to good actions in accord with his mercy or to evil ones in accord with their merits” (*Grace and Free Choice* 21, 43, *Works* 1, 26, 102).

<sup>174</sup> “Voluntas... Dei efficac est” (*SA* 3, 191.5; *LW* 33, 38). “Si Deus in nobis operatur, mutata ... uoluntas” (*SA* 3, 207. 25; *LW* 33, 65). In conjunction with the latter statement, Luther also emphasized that the will is “gently breathed upon by the Spirit” so that “it again wills and acts from pure willingness and inclination (*mere lubentia et pronitate*) and of its own accord” (*SA* 3, 207. 25; *LW* 33, 65). Luther said that the will “is passive; otherwise all is not ascribed to God” (*LW* 33, 35). See also 154-155. For Calvin see n. 175 below. McSorley cites Portalie et. al. in defense of his interpretation (*Luther*, 93), but see n. 123 above.



Augustine's statement that the will is given "fully effective powers" which "causes it to act."<sup>175</sup>

Both Luther and Calvin speak, like Augustine,<sup>176</sup> of grace as an inner call that brings a willing surrender to the gospel. Luther wrote:

The ungodly does not come even when he hears the Word, unless the Father draws and teaches him inwardly, which He does by pouring out the Spirit. There is then another 'drawing' than the one that takes place outwardly; for then Christ is set forth by the light of the Spirit, so that a man is rapt away to Christ with the sweetest rapture, and rather yields passively (*patitur*) to God's speaking, teaching and drawing than seeks and runs himself (*potius quam ipse quaerat et currat*).<sup>177</sup>

Calvin even appealed to Augustine's *Rebuke and Grace* in support of this point,<sup>178</sup> and Luther acknowledged Augustine's saying, "God works in us good and evil."<sup>179</sup> Calvin also acknowledged that Augustine's view was not consistent over his lifetime but developed to maturity during the Pelagian controversy. In fact, Pighius's interpretation, like McSorley's, recognized apparent inconsistencies in Augustine's position but favored certain earlier writings and appealed to *Retractions* to support the idea that Augustine did not actually change his

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<sup>175</sup> *BLW* 142. See also *BLW* 123, 132. The reference is to Augustine's *Grace and Free Choice* 16, 32. See n. 126 above.

<sup>176</sup> See n. 125.

<sup>177</sup> *SA* 3, 350.2-6; *LW* 33, 286 [trans. Watson].

<sup>178</sup> *BLW* 163. See also 33, 104, 114 (Calvin speaks here for the common cause), 164-165. *EP* 57-58. *Inst.* 3.24.1-2, 8. Bonner tries to drive a similar wedge between Augustine and Calvin that McSorley does with Augustine and Luther. Bonner's view of Augustine is conditioned by *The Spirit and the Letter*, he notes other interpreters, and then argues for a "gulf which yawns between the bases of Augustinian and Calvinistic thought" (389). Bonner's separation comes from a perceived difference in the decree of predestination. He says Augustine was "infralapsarian: we are condemned because we fell in Adam," and he asserts, but does not show, that Calvin was "supralapsarian...holding that God's decrees of election and reprobation are not due to the Fall but were made before it and without regard to it" (386-387). Calvin never addressed these issues but Bonner makes this the difference between the two theologians. Bonner concludes that if Augustine said that the reprobate "were rejected before the creation of the world, as he specifically says that the elect were chosen, then we should have no alternative but to regard his theology as predestinarian in the same sense that Calvinism is predestinarian. However, this is not the case." It turns out, according to Bonner, that Augustine was "speaking loosely" when he wrote in his *Enchiridion* "of some being predestined to wrath because they have not been chosen" (388). Bonner says that Augustine was only trying to avoid Universalism (389). But the semi-Pelagians of Hadrumentum were not Universalists, and Calvin's way of speaking about predestination was the same that Bonner identified for Augustine—some are chosen while the rest are left in their sin (388). Cf. *Inst.* 3.23.1, 3 to Bonner's citation from *The Gift of Perseverance*. 8, 35, and cf. *Enchiridion* 100 as well.

<sup>179</sup> *LW* 33, 58.

views.<sup>180</sup> Pighius grouped Augustine's writings into three groups corresponding to the Manichaean controversy, the heat of the Pelagian controversy, and later reflections upon the controversy. Pighius said that Augustine's writings during the heat of the Pelagian controversy should not be given decisive weight since Augustine was carried beyond moderation.<sup>181</sup> Calvin finds this ridiculous since during the Manichaean controversy Augustine was inexperienced in these matters, still influenced by "profane learning," and it was the Pelagian controversy itself which caused Augustine to know his mind on the issue.<sup>182</sup> Calvin argued that if mere controversy drove Augustine to exaggerate, then the anti-Manichaean writings, which Pighius was so fond of, would also be suspect.<sup>183</sup> A young Luther responded to this charge in a similar way: "To say that Augustine exaggerates in speaking against heretics is to say that Augustine tells lies almost everywhere... It is the same as permitting Pelagians and all heretics to triumph."<sup>184</sup> Calvin was also eager to let Pighius appeal to the latest writings of Augustine, believing that they would decide the issue in favor of the Reformation. Calvin dealt with these writings at length,<sup>185</sup> even quoting *Grace and Free Choice* to Pighius, "He works without us to cause us to will."<sup>186</sup> Another Roman Catholic perspective, that of Roland Teske, takes a different view than Pighius and McSorley, a view that would validate the reformers' claim to the later Augustine:

In *The Predestination of the Saints* Augustine defends the thesis that the beginning of faith is a totally gratuitous gift of God—a teaching which was later declared a matter of faith for the Catholic Church—but he also maintains that the grace to believe is not offered to all human beings and that grace not merely enables one to believe, but

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<sup>180</sup> *BLW* 90, 94-95, 100-2. Pighius treated Augustine in "Book Three" of *Free Choice*, see esp. 38a-53a. He accused Augustine of immoderation and appealed to *Retractiones* at 47a-b. Lane notes are helpful in *BLW* 90, 100-1, and see *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 174-75.

<sup>181</sup> *BLW* 90, 100-1.

<sup>182</sup> *BLW* 90, 100, 101-2.

<sup>183</sup> *BLW* 101-2.

<sup>184</sup> *Disputation Against Scholastic Theology*, theses 1-2. *LW* 31, 9.

<sup>185</sup> *BLW* 116-36.

<sup>186</sup> *BLW* 122.

makes one believe. Neither of the latter views has been accepted as official Church teaching.<sup>187</sup>

Richard Muller asserts that Augustine had a decisive influence on the reformers in their battle against nominalist semi-Pelagianism:

The most profound influence of Augustine on the Reformation certainly lay in his doctrines of sin, grace, free choice, and election. Augustine stood as a profound counter to the synergistic theology of the later Middle Ages; indeed, one that could be cited as a churchly authority in debate between the Reformers and their opponents. Luther brought forward a thoroughly Augustinian view of original sin and predestination in his early polemic against Erasmus, *De servo arbitrio*. Luther's views on predestination arguably look to statements of the late Augustine, who in a few places, did affirm a double predestination of both the elect and the reprobate.... In this Luther was followed by Calvin.<sup>188</sup>

Calvin and Luther not only reject the term “free choice” out of pastoral concern and devotion to Scriptural usage, but also out of a concern to preserve grace as the sole converting power in salvation. While it is clear that Augustine influenced Luther and Calvin in their approach to grace, there is still the issue that Pighius liked to draw attention to—Augustine retained the term “free choice” while Luther and Calvin did not. Once again, Calvin did not try to hide this fact but said it was necessary “to bear in mind what its sense was.”

Calvin posited that Augustine retained the term “free choice” because the “expression had already gained a hold in common speech.” Thus, according to Calvin, Augustine yielded to custom and explanation rather than going to the trouble of trying to eliminate the term.<sup>189</sup> While Calvin sided with Luther in preferring to eliminate a misleading term, he had to go to great lengths to demonstrate that the positions were the same. Lane sees this as problematic for Calvin in his debate with Pighius:

Much of the battle revolved language. Augustine, when his views changed, continued to affirm both free will and free choice, but redefined them. This enabled

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<sup>187</sup> Roland J. Teske, S.J. “General Introduction,” in *Works* 1, 26, 25.

<sup>188</sup> Richard Muller, “Augustinianism in the Reformation,” in *Augustine through the Ages*, 706.

<sup>189</sup> *BLW* 102.

him to claim considerable continuity both with earlier writers and with his own early writings, as in the *Retractationes*. Calvin, like Luther, adopted a different strategy. Already in the 1539 *Institutio* he affirmed that he believed in the freedom of the will as it was understood by Augustine, but did not wish to retain the term. Calvin repeats this in his response to Pighius, defining precisely the senses in which the will is and is not free. But Pighius treats passages where Augustine affirms free choice as refutations of Calvin and the latter has to devote much energy to refuting this. There might have been less heat and more light had Calvin been willing to follow Augustine's approach and to affirm free choice, while defining it carefully.<sup>190</sup>

As we saw above, Calvin took Luther's approach for the same reasons cited by Luther—pastoral concern over misunderstanding and Scriptural usage. Both reformers believed this enabled them to speak more clearly about the total efficacy of grace. In one sense, the reformers seem to be upheld by the testimony of Pighius and McSorley who hung their arguments on Augustine's retention of the term but who were not confused by the reformers' even clearer position.

Regardless of which approach Calvin took, there was a trade-off, but Calvin chose to go with Luther's position and attempt to show the harmony between Augustine and Luther and himself. Calvin said that Augustine's position was consistent with the reformers because he meant by free choice only that man uses his freedom to sin. "Therefore it is free not because it can turn itself in either direction by its own power, but because by a voluntary movement it proceeds to evil." Calvin quoted from *Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians* (420), "But this will which is free in the wicked, because they enjoy evil, is not free to do good, because it has not yet been liberated." Calvin added that these words were so unmistakably in concert with the reformers ("our teaching") that "you would think that they had been written in support of it."<sup>191</sup> Calvin's summary of Augustine's *Grace and Free Choice* contends, "He himself makes it sufficiently clear all through the book that his meaning is only that it is with a will that is self-determined

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<sup>190</sup> Lane, *John Calvin*, 175.

<sup>191</sup> *BLW* 103.

(*spontanea voluntate*) that people act both well and badly, but by nature they can only sin, while it is by grace that they begin to do what is good and persevere in it.”<sup>192</sup>

### C. Calvin’s Source for the Distinction

Calvin attached great importance to the distinction between coercion and necessity because it helped him show that voluntary self-determination and necessity were not at odds. Necessity did not violate the willingness of the will, only coercion did that. This also led Calvin to say that while the reformers’ rejected “free choice” as a term, their position was in full agreement with Augustine because Augustine saw free choice only in terms of mere willingness that was compatible with necessity but not coercion. Thus Calvin would argue that Augustine held to the distinction between coercion and necessity. But was Augustine the source of the distinction as such?

On the subject of necessity, Pighius argued, like McSorley does today, that necessity violates the decision character of human choices. According to this position, necessity means coercion and is incompatible with voluntary self-determination or natural freedom. Calvin defended himself once again with the shield of Augustine, saying that we desire happiness of necessity but “we none the less [do so] with our will.” Pighius had dismissed this as sophistry on Calvin’s part, since Augustine had said so much about free choice in his anti-Manichean writings. Pighius took Augustine to mean that something could not be voluntary and necessary at the same time. Calvin responded that this could only be the case since Pighius confused necessity and coercion, but Calvin claimed, “It is clear that [Augustine] distinguishes one from the other.”<sup>193</sup> Calvin wrote that the distinction was “clear,” but he did not say that it was explicit. Lane points out, “In the passage...Augustine does not explicitly distinguish between necessity

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<sup>192</sup> *CO* 6, 329; *BLW* 140 [trans. Davies].

<sup>193</sup> *BLW* 101. See also *BLW* 88, 101, 140. *Inst.* 2.3.5.

and coercion, but rather shows the compatibility of necessity and will.”<sup>194</sup> Calvin merely shows that necessity does not violate the will according to Augustine. The distinction between necessity and coercion is a further refinement added by Calvin, but from where? If this distinction was not used by but only implied in Augustine, can we determine where the usage originates? Calvin claims that Bernard assumed it, but, as in the case of Augustine, this does not help us track the distinction itself to Calvin. Calvin faulted Lombard for failing to make the distinction but said nothing more about the usage or otherwise in the tradition.<sup>195</sup> The distinction is explicit in Aquinas, who spoke of a preparation for grace that is necessary because of God’s ordination, but it is necessary “not coercively but infallibly.”<sup>196</sup> But Calvin seems to be unaware of this, as he did not appeal to Thomas on this issue. The fact that Calvin knew of no explicit use of the distinction by an authority in the tradition points to the possibility that he is following a contemporary. As noted above, Luther distinguished between *necessitas immutabilitatis* or *infallibilitatis* and *necessitas coactio* or *violentia*. Calvin also used necessity in conjunction with *immutabilitas*, saying:

Let us define necessity. Now will Pighius not allow me that it is a fixed, steady state in which a thing cannot be otherwise than it is? In Aristotle at any rate the existence of alternative possibilities is always the opposite of necessity. And common sense lays down that we should regard as necessary whatever has to be as it is and cannot be otherwise. In this way unchangeability is included in necessity (*immutabilitas sub necessitate continebitur*).<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> *BLW* 103, n. 93.

<sup>195</sup> *Inst.* 2.3.5. “Lombard, since he did not know how to distinguish necessity from compulsion, gave occasion for a most pernicious error” (Ibid.). Gerrish writes, “Bernard invites misunderstanding when he defines the inalienable freedom of the will as freedom from *necessity*: rather, it is freedom from *coercion*.... Although he [Calvin] did not invent the distinction between necessity and coercion, his use of it introduced greater conceptual clarity and consistency into the understanding of the term ‘free will’ in the Augustinian tradition” (“The Place of John Calvin in Christian Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2004), 294-96. Gerrish fails to mention that Luther introduced that clarity first.

<sup>196</sup> “Alio modo potest considerari secundum quod [preparatio] est a Deo movente; et tunc [preparatio] habet necessitatem ad id ad quod ordinatur a Deo, non quidem coactionis, sed infallibilitatis, quia intentio Dei deficere non potest” (*Summa* 1a2ae.112, 3). See also 1a.19, 3, 8; 25, 4, 5.

<sup>197</sup> *CO* 6, 335; *BLW* 149 [trans. Davies].

While this could be another likely instance of Luther influencing Calvin, Martin Bucer is another possibility, especially given Calvin's history in Strasbourg (1538-1541). Bucer had used the distinction between necessity and coercion in his 1536 Romans commentary: "There is freedom of choice (*Libertas...arbitrii*) in as much as the faculty of one's own choice is seen acting without any coercion (*sine ulla coactione*). I say without any coercion, but not without necessity (*sine coactione inquam, non sine necessitate*)."<sup>198</sup> Luther and Calvin used the distinction between necessity and coercion to say that man has a will that is not violated by force, but the will is not free either, since it operates according to its necessities. Because of necessity, both Luther and Calvin preferred to speak consistently of the bound will and only concede the Augustinian sense of free choice. But notice that Bucer used the distinction to affirm and positively use the Augustinian notion. Whereas Pighius argued that something could not be voluntary and necessary at the same time, Bucer said, in effect, that something could not be voluntary and coerced at the same time. As long as the choosing faculty is not coerced there is *Libertas arbitrii*, according to Bucer. Once again this is what Luther and Calvin only conceded but would not use positively. Bucer contended that a people have "free choice" not matter what state they are in, but Luther and Calvin preferred not to speak of free choice when talking about man in his sinful state or in relation to the will of God. Calvin would at least have been exposed to the distinction from reading Bucer's commentary, but he certainly used it like his other mentor Martin Luther. Given the prominence of Luther's *BW* and the proximity of Bucer it is probable that Calvin was familiar with the way both of his mentors argued, and that he simply preferred Luther on this point. L. F. Schulze's writes, "Calvin also knew Luther's *De servo arbitrio*; his distinction of

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<sup>198</sup> Martin Bucer, *Metaphrases et enarrationes perpetuae epistolarum D. Pauli Apostoli...tomus primus ad Romanos* (Strasbourg, 1536), 360b. See also François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997; First ed., 1950), 190-91, n.19.

*necessity* and *constraint*, taken from Luther, testifies to this.”<sup>199</sup> While we cannot determine that Calvin received this distinction directly from the pages of *BW*, it is appears that Luther at least influenced Calvin in the application of the distinction.

#### **D. Necessity, Sin, and the Value of Good Works**

Calvin and Luther were also concerned to answer the charge that there could be no merit or reward if grace was effectual and thus imposed necessity. Pighius appealed to Augustine’s work *Free Choice*, saying that “what cannot be avoided is not a sin,” and “where nature or necessity has the upper hand, there he teaches that no basis for blame can be found.” Calvin pointed out that Augustine himself noted that he was a young man when he wrote this, and it was precisely for this reason that he undertook his *Retractions*.<sup>200</sup> Calvin claimed that Augustine was confronted by the very problem that Pighius was raising against Calvin: “Once sin is of necessity, it ceases to be sin; if it is voluntary, then it can be avoided.”<sup>201</sup> Calvin pointed Pighius back to his 1539 *Institutes*: “Sin is no less rightly imputed to us for being necessary.”<sup>202</sup> This is because, Calvin argued, necessity itself is the fault of man, who fell into it voluntarily through the sin of the first man. Adam was free because he was not in bondage to sin and could have done otherwise. His punishment became a sinful necessity that he passed on to his descendents. Not only did necessity come about in a voluntary way but humans have remained voluntary in their servitude.<sup>203</sup> In this way Calvin held that what is voluntary is culpable or blameworthy. If man were forced against his will he would not be held responsible. Thus Calvin held to what had

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 167. Schulze makes the same point in “Calvin’s Reply to Pighius – A Micro and a Macro View,” in *Calvin’s Opponents*, vol. 5 of *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: A Fourteen-Volume Anthology of Scholarly Articles*, ed. Richard C. Gamble (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992), 78.

<sup>200</sup> *BLW* 139-40.

<sup>201</sup> *BLW* 143.

<sup>202</sup> *BLW* 144. Calvin’s reference was from *Inst.* 2.5.1, but see *BLW* 144 n. 47-49.

<sup>203</sup> Calvin spoke of “voluntary servitude” in *BLW* 78. *Inst.* 2.3.5.



been called a “culpable impotence,”<sup>204</sup> so that though man is now impotent, he is culpable since his desire and its origin were voluntary. Calvin pointed to Scripture, Augustine and the fathers, and to Aristotle for support of this idea.<sup>205</sup> Calvin claimed that Augustine was a sure interpreter of the teaching of the early fathers in his battle against the Pelagians. Calvin wrote:

Human beings are subject to necessity, but that necessity which the first man by a voluntary fault brought upon them. The punishment, he [Augustine] says, has become our nature. And the penalty of the first man which was [for him] a punishment is our nature. Since therefore the necessity is a punishment for sin, the sins which derive from it are deservedly blamed (Ps 37), and the blame for them is deservedly imputed to us, since their origin is voluntary.<sup>206</sup>

Calvin not only rejected Pighius’s claim that necessity is not sin, but he also disagreed with the idea that if sin is voluntary it can be avoided. Calvin rejected the argument because “from ‘voluntary’ it infers ‘free.’” Once again Calvin prefers to speak of the “voluntary will” and not the “free will.” While Calvin knew that Augustine’s approach was different, he held that their positions were essentially the same, since Augustine held that sin could not be avoided by human power. Though sin could not be avoided, Augustine taught that it was nonetheless sin that could only be avoided through the healing of grace.<sup>207</sup>

Calvin also referred to God and Satan as examples of how necessity may coexist with the value of good works and culpability for sin. God is good of necessity, cannot be otherwise, and yet this does not at all remove the virtue of his works. The devil is also evil of necessity, cannot be otherwise, and yet this does not remove his culpability for evil works.<sup>208</sup> Lane comments, “Calvin’s ultimate defence of human responsibility is the fact that man sins voluntarily. He

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<sup>204</sup> See marginal note *BLW* 150.

<sup>205</sup> *BLW* 139-40, 144-50. See also *Inst.* 2.5.1-2.

<sup>206</sup> *BLW* 145. See n. 54 concerning Calvin’s Scriptural reference. Calvin also referred to Hosea 13:9, “Ruin is yours O Israel; in me only is your hope” (*ibid.*).

<sup>207</sup> *BLW* 146.

<sup>208</sup> *BLW* 147. Calvin claimed Augustine and Bernard in support of this point. See *BLW* 147 n. 69 and 70.

denied that responsibility requires that man should have the power to avoid sin. Such an argument would deprive the devil of responsibility.”<sup>209</sup> Calvin also argued that the necessity of God’s goodness does not remove the voluntary nature of his acts either. Being necessary and being voluntary are not opposites, as Pighius asserted, but “both are combined together in the goodness of God.” This can be seen in the fact that God’s goodness is necessary because he is good by nature, and his good actions are voluntary since no outside force compels him to do them. Calvin thus applied the distinction between coercion and necessity, to show how a willing subject, like God, can also be under necessity without coercion.<sup>210</sup> Calvin argued that God is in “a state which is so far from coercion that...he is to the greatest degree willing. I would say ‘free’ if it were agreed between us that this should be understood as ‘self-determined.’”<sup>211</sup> Thus, Calvin maintained that God’s works are still good though necessary, and he is still self-determined though he necessarily wills them.<sup>212</sup> In the case of the devil, Calvin said he is both “evil and acts in an evil way necessarily, but no less willfully.” Calvin takes it as proven that “what is voluntary (*voluntarium*) is not so different from what is necessary (*necessario*) that they cannot

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<sup>209</sup> Lane, “Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?” 80.

<sup>210</sup> Calvin said that the distinction between necessity and coercion is that upon “which this argument primarily hangs” (*BLW* 146).

<sup>211</sup> *BLW* 148.

<sup>212</sup> Pighius sought to diminish Calvin’s argument by appealing to the nominalistic distinction between the *potentia dei absoluta* and the *potentia dei ordinate*: “God does not do or will of necessity anything at all which is outside himself” (*BLW* 147). In other words, God, in his absolute power, may will any number of things and is not therefore bound by any necessity. God in his ordained power wills something in fact, but the result was not absolutely necessary but only necessary as a consequence of God willing it. We have already noted Calvin’s disdain for certain applications of the distinction between the *necessitas consequentis* and the *necessitas consequentiae* (Chapter 4, see at n. 50-53), and here we see his repugnance toward Pighius’s application of the distinction between the powers of God. Calvin refers to this as “philosophizing” and “trifling, petty inquisitiveness,” but his main reason for rejecting it is that it “introduces a blasphemous separation between the righteousness of God and his works” (*ibid.*). According to Calvin God’s nature and his will are “united” in a “circular connection” so that “it is the work of a devilish imagination to break this bond apart” (*ibid.* 148). Calvin wrote, “He wills the good as necessarily as he does it” (*ibid.* 148). Like Luther, Calvin was a critical of but also congenial towards certain aspects of scholastic nominalism. See David Steinmetz, “Calvin and the Absolute Power of God,” in *Calvin in Context*, 40-52. See also Chapter 4 n. 64 for an overview of the issue and the literature.

sometimes coincide,”<sup>213</sup> and then moves to apply this directly to the case of man and his culpable impotence.

Calvin maintained that human nature is evil not because it was created that way but because human beings are, in their present condition, “from an evil descent.” As long as people remain in this condition they “cannot will and act except in an evil way,” and so they are bound to a sinful necessity. Now that Calvin has shown that necessary acts can be self-determined with either culpability or virtue attending, he moves to consider how man can be considered culpable for acts he cannot avoid. According to Calvin, Aristotle asserted in the *Nicomachean Ethics* that in some cases “the unjust and weak are such of their own accord, just because at the beginning it was possible for them not to be so, even though they now cannot be anything else.” Aristotle gave the example to Calvin of a sick person who cannot get better but is still culpable for his present state because his own dissipation landed him there. Calvin appealed to Aristotle in this respect to show that even a pagan philosopher recognized this principle: “It is not always in man’s power to be good, indeed that he can be nothing but evil, and yet he is what he is wilfully, and not by force, because at the beginning the free decision by which he gave himself over to obedience and bondage to his desires was within his own power.” Here Calvin sought to show how man was culpable for his present impotence and further establish that “sin, which it is not in our power to avoid, is nonetheless voluntary.”<sup>214</sup> Calvin was saying that mankind is guilty because it became sinful by a free act of the will and remains in this condition voluntarily so that man has no excuse.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *CO* 6, 335; *BLW* 149 [trans. Davies].

<sup>214</sup> *BLW* 149-50.

<sup>215</sup> Calvin, quoting from the 1539 *Institutes*, wrote, “‘Whence the corruption if not because man rebelled against his Maker? Since we are all guilty of this rebellion, I say that it is in this necessity which restricts us that there lies the clear cause of our condemnation,’ and therefore it is far from having any force as an excuse” (*BLW* 144).

Calvin also seemed to be addressing, without directly saying so, how man is culpable for his impotence even though it is inherited. Calvin argued that man is culpable for his sin since it came voluntarily from Adam and persists voluntarily in us, but a further question persists. Can man be held responsible for his sinful condition in the first place? In other words, how can the children be held responsible for sin of their parents? Calvin's answer assumes that we are not dealing with just any parent but the first parent. Elsewhere Calvin wrote, "Adam was not only the progenitor but...the root of human nature."<sup>216</sup> As noted above, Calvin followed Augustine in positing for Adam a free choice that was capable of turning from sin. Adam became culpable for not turning away and was justly punished with his own corruption. Adam's descendents also receive Adam's punishment, and they are now guilty for their sins, which flow from their inherited corruption.<sup>217</sup> Thus capable did not only mean culpable for Adam, but capable for Adam also means culpable for us, since we are descended from him. Calvin did not defend but simply assumed the justice of this federal headship established by God.<sup>218</sup> While Calvin was clear that all mankind received Adam's punishment and corruption and thus "perished in Adam,"<sup>219</sup> Calvin never actually said that this happened because all sinned in Adam and that all, as a result, share equally in the guilt of the first sin. In fact, in the *Institutes*, while Calvin said that we justly inherit the sinful nature from the root of Adam, we are not guilty of the first sin but only of the subsequent sins. Calvin posited that our destruction did not come from the guilt Adam, "which

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<sup>216</sup> *Inst.* 2.1.6.

<sup>217</sup> See n. 206 above.

<sup>218</sup> In the 1543 *Institutes* Calvin asserted that Adam was "the root of human nature; and that therefore in his corruption mankind deserved to be vitiated" (2.1.6). Calvin also argued that if we receive "righteousness and life" through Christ's headship then this assumes, against the Pelagians, that these were lost through the headship of Adam. *Ibid.* Calvin's implication is that if the Pelagians were correct in saying that nothing can be communicated from a federal representative then our salvation would be in question.

<sup>219</sup> *BLW* 145. See also 150, "It is the native philosophy of Christians that our first ancestor corrupted not only himself but all of his offspring at the same time, and that it is from this that we derive the habit which resides in or nature."

did not pertain to us at all,” but from his corruption. Infants carry condemnation from their mother’s womb but they “are guilty not of another’s fault but of their own.”<sup>220</sup> Calvin was saying that we are not guilty because of Adam’s sin, but we are guilty by virtue of the depraved condition that we justly inherit from his headship. Lane comments:

Calvin seems here to be avoiding Augustine’s teaching that all men sinned ‘in Adam’ and are therefore guilty of the Fall. But his change exacerbates rather than relieves the problem of responsibility. For Augustine, we *are* responsible for our present plight because in some mysterious way we sinned in Adam. Our ultimate responsibility is maintained, albeit by a mystery. For Calvin, we are guilty because we are in a depraved condition which is explicitly *Adam’s* fault *not* ours. Calvin removed the mystery but appears also to have removed any ground for our responsibility for our present plight.<sup>221</sup>

Calvin tried to qualify Augustine on this point by saying that “he often calls sin ‘another’s’ to show more clearly that it is distributed among us through propagation,” but his position does differ from Augustine’s. Calvin’s position was that Adam sinned for us but we did not sin in him. Our corruption is just because of headship, and we are justly punished for the voluntary origin of sin and our voluntary persistence therein.

Luther also treated the question of whether necessity has merit or reward. Erasmus had made the same objection to Luther’s position that Pighius later levelled at Calvin. Erasmus said, “If the will had not been free, sin could not have been imputed, for sin would cease to be sin if it were not voluntary.”<sup>222</sup> Erasmus added, “There is nothing meritorious about nature or necessity.”<sup>223</sup> Luther said that if Erasmus were thinking about a necessity of compulsion this is true, since no one would reward an involuntary worker. But if the necessity of consequence is in mind then “those who voluntarily do good or evil” are in view, and “even though they cannot

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<sup>220</sup> *Inst.* 2.1.6, 8.

<sup>221</sup> Lane, “Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?” 81. See also *idem.*, “Bondage and Liberation in Calvin’s Treatise,” 34-35.

<sup>222</sup> *LCC* 17, 50; Walter 25.

<sup>223</sup> *LCC* 17, 60.

alter their will by their own powers” they receive reward or punishment. Luther said this is because “reward or punishment follows naturally and necessarily, as it is written: ‘Thou wilt render to every man according to his works.’”<sup>224</sup> According to Luther, if the agent is not forced but is voluntary, then reward or punishment follows simply according to the nature of the act: “If you consider consequence, there is nothing either good or evil that does not have its reward.” Luther also contended that necessity or the fact that they cannot alter their own will does not detract from this. Luther’s position is thus akin to Calvin’s in that necessity is compatible with what is voluntary, and if something is done willingly it is either culpable as sin or valuable as a good work. The further question arises, “Did Luther also seek to ground human culpability for sin in the free will representation of Adam?”

In *BW*, Luther did not speak, like Calvin, of free will before the fall, but he did say that man had a “new will.” Luther added that “the first man was not impotent,” but he would have been, even then, without the presence of grace.<sup>225</sup> Thus Luther seems to believe in a creaturely impotence, so that grace is needed for every movement towards God. Luther did have in mind a contrast similar to Calvin’s between pre-fall and post-fall man. Luther wrote, “But if that man, even when the Spirit was present, was not able with a new will to will a good newly proposed to him, what should we be able to do without the Spirit in respect of a good that we have lost?”<sup>226</sup> Thus for Luther as well as Calvin, man’s will had a certain rectitude that could move freely toward God with the aid of grace. But this freedom-through-grace was lost by the fall so that man needs to be healed by grace before he can recover that gift. The further question is, did Luther, like Calvin, locate culpability now in the free exercise of Adam’s will then? Did Luther speak to the issue of culpable impotence? The answer appears to be “Not really.” Luther, like

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<sup>224</sup> *LW* 33, 152.

<sup>225</sup> *LW* 33, 124.

Calvin, acknowledged that all mankind was connected to Adam's transgression so that "we are all under sin and damnation." If this is true, considers Luther, "How can we attempt anything that is not sinful and damnable?" The fall for Luther means a total loss of freedom-through-grace. Luther also assumed that mankind was done no wrong in the headship of Adam. But Luther appears to be thoroughly Augustinian on this point, saying, "Not that we should sin or be damned through that one transgression of Adam if it were not our own transgression." Luther believed that Adam's sin is ours not because of imitation, like the Pelagians hold, but because both he and we committed it, and "it becomes ours the moment we are born."<sup>227</sup> While Luther and Calvin were one on the sinful necessity imposed by the fall and that man is still culpable because he is willing, Luther did not, in *BW*, argue for culpable impotence according to the voluntary character of Adam's sin. In fact Luther seemed to cut off any attempt at theodicy here: "Why he imputes this defect to man, when man cannot help having it, we have no right to inquire."<sup>228</sup> While Calvin was not grasping for the why, he was seeking to explain the how. But Luther simply used the fall as another opportunity to reject the idea of free choice, saying that the new will was simply a good that was lost through sin. It was not impotent before the fall, since grace was present, but it became so after the fall, since grace was lost. Luther went no farther than saying that since the loss of the good will it is ridiculous to think of freedom for man now. This is another example of Calvin either furthering Luther's position or simply going in his own direction in his battle with Pighius.

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<sup>226</sup> *LW* 33, 288.

<sup>227</sup> *LW* 33, 272.

<sup>228</sup> *LW* 33, 140.

## VI. Two Kinds of Necessity?

While Luther and Calvin differed over the usefulness of the medieval distinction between the two kinds of necessity—the *necessitas consequentiae* and the *necessitas consequentis*—they both rejected the medieval parsing of it, and it becomes apparent that they held to at least two distinguishable kinds of necessity of their own. For both reformers there is necessity imposed by sin and necessity imposed by God’s sovereignty. Luther distinguished the two in the same passage:

Free choice, in the judgment of everyone’s ears, means (strictly speaking) that which can do and does, in relation to God whatever it pleases, uninhibited by any law or any sovereign authority. For you would not call a slave free, who acts under the sovereign authority of his master; and still less rightly can we call a man or angel free, when they live under the absolute sovereignty of God (not to mention sin and death).

According to Luther, the will chooses but is not free because of necessity imposed by human sin and divine sovereignty. Everything happens by divine necessity since the will of God is effectual and man himself is necessarily in bondage to sin and a slave of the devil.<sup>229</sup> Calvin also located “the necessity to sin precisely in corruption of the will”<sup>230</sup> but he also located it in the will of God whose providence and predestination determine all things.<sup>231</sup>

## VII. Conclusion

Throughout “Book Two” of *BLW*, we have seen Calvin defend both himself and Luther on a number of points. This chapter has argued that their approach to Aristotle and the scholastics is basically the same as is their anthropology that the whole man is flesh. Calvin’s rebuttal to the heresy accusation focused on the teachings of Augustine to which Luther also laid claim. We found both reformers to be thoroughly Augustinian with respect to Augustine’s final position on

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<sup>229</sup> *LW* 33, 37-38, 69.

<sup>230</sup> *BLW* 69-70, 148.

<sup>231</sup> *BLW* 28, 32.



grace, contra McSorley, and that they only differed with Augustine over the value of the term “free choice.” Calvin appears to be not only following Luther in rejecting the usefulness of the term “free choice,” but also in his application of the distinction between coercion and necessity. In the end, Calvin and Luther not only rejected the term “free choice” out of the same pastoral concern, devotion to Scriptural usage, a concern to preserve grace alone, but also because of bondage to sin and divine sovereignty. According to both reformers, sin imposes a sinful necessity and God’s will imposes a sovereign necessity on all creation. Calvin lined up with Luther more consistently on these issues of grace and free choice than with any other contemporary. That is a key reason why Pighius launched his attack directly at both. A well-aimed thrust of the spear, Pighius thought, could do them both in.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **CALVIN BEYOND LUTHER: *THE BONDAGE AND LIBERATION OF THE WILL, CONCERNING THE ETERNAL PREDESTINATION OF GOD, AND THE INSTITUTES***

As we have noted previously, the greatest concentration of Calvin's references to Luther on the subject of the will occur in the first two books of *BLW*. In Calvin's other works on this issue we find he teaches and defends the same doctrines that he attributed to Luther but he does not refer to Luther by name. This is not surprising given the fact that sixteenth-century Protestants usually did not mention each other in formal theological treatises, especially polemical ones with Roman Catholics, since the authority of contemporaries did not matter.<sup>1</sup> Calvin explicitly defended Luther because Pighius tried to, as Calvin said, drive his spear through both, and this is what makes the first two chapters of *BLW* stand out. Thus we have Pighius to thank for affording Calvin the opportunity to articulate his view of Luther on the doctrine of the will. While Calvin moved beyond his defense of Luther, the question has been raised as to whether Calvin also moved away from Luther's position. Anthony Lane has answered in the affirmative, saying that Calvin felt freer to distance himself from Luther later when solidarity was no longer an issue. While it is clear that defending Luther was no longer a priority for Calvin after *BLW*, he did not shy away from these issues nor, I argue, from the agreement that he originally claimed with Luther. Thus Lane's argument will concern us in this chapter, as will Calvin's statements on Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper. Calvin claimed to have essential agreement with only minor differences regarding Luther's view of the sacrament. This provides a parallel case by which to test the sincerity of his other claim to total

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 1 at n. 69, 70.

solidarity with Luther on the will. It must also be remembered that though Calvin did not mention Luther by name after Book Two of *BLW*, he kept Luther in view throughout the rest of the treatise constantly employing the first person plural pronoun to refer to their common cause.<sup>2</sup> Thus even when Luther was not specifically referred to, he and the party to which Calvin belonged were in view. In assessing Calvin's claims in the first two books of *BLW*, we have also looked at other texts to flesh out Calvin's stance in relation to Luther. It is precisely this "we" mentality that invites further comparisons on issues where Calvin was still claiming a common cause with Luther. There are more striking similarities in *BLW*, *EP*, and the *Institutes* that call for comparison. These have to do with the reformers' views on God's role in the fall, the hidden will of God, and how the reformers used the stock metaphor of the will as beast of burden.

### I. God's Role in Man's Fall

The only place where Luther is specifically referred to in *BLW* after Book Two is in a discussion of the fall. Many issues came out in this work and in the reformers' other discussions of the fall. These issues relate to their teaching that everything happens by necessity and might be stated in the following ways: Does divine necessity apply to the fall? Does the necessity of the fall make God unjust? Does necessity work according to God's foreknowledge?

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<sup>2</sup> This seems to be self-conscious in *BLW*, since Calvin limits himself to the singular when defending the *Institutes* (e.g. *BLW* 142-49) and then returns to the plural when speaking of the common cause that he referred to at the beginning. We see an example of this at *BLW* 149, "Now I come (*venio*) to man, lest anyone should think that I am incorrectly drawing a parallel.... We say (*dicimus*) that he is evil because he comes from an evil descent.... We deny (*negamus*) that it is in his power to abandon his wickedness.... Since, then, he can of himself be nothing but evil, we determine (*constituimus*) that there is necessity." Then on 150 we see the plural first person pronoun used in the general collective sense, "We see (*Videmus*) here a pagan philosopher acknowledge that it is not always in man's power to be good."

## A. Does Divine Necessity Apply to the Fall?

Pighius had quoted Augustine's definition of sin from *Two Souls*, a work from Augustine's anti-Manichaean period.<sup>3</sup> The point was that sin was an action of the will "to hold on to or pursue that which righteousness forbids." Augustine added that the will was free to refrain from sin or else it was not will. Calvin quoted from *Retractions* to show that Augustine interpreted his earlier statement in such a way that it only applied to Adam before the fall. Augustine wrote, "It is a true definition because what is defined there is sin alone, not also the punishment for sin. For when sin is such that it is also the punishment for sin, how much strength does the will then have when it is dominated by passion...? For it is free only to the extent that it has been liberated." Pighius also quoted from this work by Augustine saying, "Nobody deserves criticism or punishment who does not do what he cannot do." Once again Calvin pointed out that this did not, according to Augustine's later interpretation, apply to all sins: "For he meant only that man could not be deservedly condemned if he had not sinned with a free will. But that bondage in which we are held captive in mind and in will is now part of our condemnation until we are liberated."<sup>4</sup> This means that even though man cannot now change his disposition toward God, he is still culpable since it came about voluntarily. Calvin's understanding of "culpable impotence" says that the "necessity with which we are burdened today originated precisely from the voluntary fall of the first man."<sup>5</sup> In claiming Augustine's support, Calvin shot back at Pighius that there was nothing left for him but to disown Augustine, since he clearly opposed Pighius's interpretation of his words. This was because Pighius had already put in writing that if Augustine had opposed this interpretation elsewhere, then he "would reckon him with Luther's people, and say that he

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<sup>3</sup> J. Kevin Coyle dates *Two Souls* from 391 to not later than 395. "*Duabus animabus, De*" in *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, gen. ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 287-88.

<sup>4</sup> *BLW* 96. In this latter quote it sounds as if Calvin is in agreement with Augustine's notion that all mankind sinned in Adam. See "Chapter 6," n. 220-22.

had degenerated into a brute beast.”<sup>6</sup> Calvin and Luther understood sinful necessity as an unchangeable condition that still carried culpability. Calvin said that this is because it originally came about with culpability. Luther did not disagree or say anything contrary, but simply emphasized that, as long as the act was voluntary, sin was punishable according to the nature of the act as sin.<sup>7</sup> Calvin repeatedly said that man fell by his own fault.<sup>8</sup> But what of God’s relationship to his creatures’ fall? This was a question that the reformers were not afraid to address.

Calvin quoted Augustine’s teaching that Adam “had the ability [to resist sin] if he willed, but not the willing to make him able; to us are given both to will and to be able.”<sup>9</sup> According to Calvin, God made Adam in innocence and with remarkable gifts<sup>10</sup> but did not give him the will and thus the ability to remain in this condition. If Adam did not have the will to make him able, it might be asked, “What kind of ability did he have?” Addressing this, Calvin added Augustine’s explanation of two kinds of aid:

There is one kind of aid without which something does not happen and another by which something happens. Thus the first man, who in that good [gift] by which he had been made righteous had received the ability not to sin, the ability not to die, and the ability not to forsake the good, was given the aid of perseverance. This was not such as to cause him to persevere, but such that without it he could not, by means of free choice [alone], persevere.<sup>11</sup>

Thus Adam had free choice, but this was not enough for him to persevere. To Adam was added a gift that made perseverance possible, and this entailed an ability so that, if he were willing, he

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<sup>5</sup> *BLW* 94. See Chapter 5 n. 214-21.

<sup>6</sup> Lane notes that Calvin was quoting Pighius loosely. *BLW* 96, n. 58.

<sup>7</sup> See “Chapter 6,” n. 223-29.

<sup>8</sup> *BLW* 46-47, 96, 172, 240-43. See also Lane, “Bondage and Liberation in Calvin’s Treatise against Pighius,” in *Calvin Studies LX* (Davidson, NC: Davidson College and Davidson College Presbyterian Church, 1998), 25-26. “Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?” *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981): 75-77.

<sup>9</sup> *BLW* 240.

<sup>10</sup> *BLW* 46-47.

should persevere. Augustine added, by way of contrast, that the saints not only have a gift “without which they could not persevere, but also a gift by means of which they could not but persevere.” With regard to Adam, he was given a gift that was necessary but not sufficient for perseverance. Perseverance was possible but not a certainty in his case, since this gift of grace was not effectual. Since this was according to God’s design, Calvin hinted that God’s purpose was behind Adam’s voluntary fall. Adam was given enough ability to persevere, but God withheld the will so that the fall would be inevitable. Lane says that in *BLW*, “The Fall is not exempt from the general statement that ‘everything that happens, happens of necessity, as [God] has ordained....’ ‘God causes everything and of necessity, that is, in accordance with his providence.’” While Lane notes that Calvin did not specifically apply these statements to the fall the logic is present for doing so, since what is true of all events would also be true of the fall. Calvin was not flinching on this point.

As Lane points out, Calvin’s failure to apply necessity to the fall was in *BLW* was simply a matter of proper teaching order, since this subject belonged not so much to the doctrine of the human will but God’s purposes of predestination. Calvin promised to deal with this in a second response to Pighius, which became *EP*.<sup>12</sup> But Calvin had already applied the principle of sovereign necessity to the fall in the 1539 *Institutes*. Calvin had written, “It is not in itself likely that man brought destruction upon himself through himself, by God’s permission without any ordaining (*nulla ordinatione*). As if God did not establish the condition in which he wills the chief of his creatures to be! I shall not hesitate, then, simply to confess with Augustine that ‘the

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<sup>11</sup> *BLW* 242-43.

<sup>12</sup> *BLW* 244. See Lane, “Introduction,” in *BLW* xiv-xv.

will of God is the necessity of all things (*voluntatem dei esse rerum necessitatem*).<sup>13</sup> Not only did Calvin employ Augustine's formula of necessity, but he taught that man fell according to God's will, not just God's permission. To be sure, Calvin quoted Augustine with approval where he spoke of God permitting the fall, but, like Augustine, he also dismissed the distinction between will and permission as meaningless, since what God permits he also wills to permit.<sup>14</sup>

Calvin preferred to speak of God's will, expressed in his decrees, as imposing necessity on all things. Luther too, spoke in this way. Concerning Jacob and Esau he said, "They have not yet done anything either good or bad, and yet by divine decision one is decreed (*sententia divina...decernitur*) to be the master and the other the servant."<sup>15</sup> When speaking about the first sin, Calvin said, "No one can deny that God foreknew what end man was to have before he created him, and consequently foreknew because he so ordained by his decree (*quia decreto suo sic ordinarat*)."<sup>16</sup> Calvin spoke of the fall of Adam and all mankind with him as both ordained by God, not just foreknown. Calvin said that those who would appeal to foreknowledge forget "that omnipotence of God...whereby he regulates all things according to his secret plan (*arcanum concilium*)."<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Luther's view of omnipotence did not correspond to the *potentia dei absoluta* but to the *potentia dei ordinata*: "By the omnipotence of God...I do not mean the potentiality (*potentiam*) by which he could do many things which he does not, but the active

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<sup>13</sup> *OS* 4, 402.15-19; *Inst.* 3.23.8 [trans. Battles]. Augustine's quote is from *On Genesis in the Literal Sense* 6, 15, 26, *PL* 34, 350. See at Chapter 4 at n. 144 and 145 to compare with Luther's construction in *BW* and Calvin's in *BLW*.

<sup>14</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.8. Augustine wrote, "Nothing, therefore, happens but by the will of the Omnipotent, He either permitting it to be done, or himself doing it" (*Enchiridion* 95). Thus there is a difference between God permitting something and doing something but the difference does not hinge upon will. Augustine said that God did good and permitted evil, but his permission is none-the-less a willing permission. "For in the very fact that they [God's creatures] acted in opposition to his will, His will concerning them was fulfilled. And hence it is that 'the works of the Lord are great, sought out according to all His pleasure,' because in a way unspeakably strange and wonderful, even what is done in opposition to His will does not defeat His will. For it would not be done did He not permit it (and of course His permission is not unwilling, but willing)" (*ibid.* 100).

<sup>15</sup> *SA* 3, 292.11-12; *LW* 33, 197. See also at n. 111 below.

<sup>16</sup> *OS* 4, 401.28-31; *Inst.* 3.23.7 [trans. Battles].

power by which he potently works all in all [cf. I Cor. 12:6].”<sup>18</sup> Instead of detracting from God’s omnipotence to rescue man’s culpability, Calvin said they should simply stop their loquacious tongues and become mute before God’s good pleasure.<sup>19</sup> Luther likewise said that those who follow natural reason invented the distinctions “between the ordained and the absolute will of God, and between the necessity of consequence and consequent” in order “to excuse the goodness of God and accuse the will of man.” Luther countered that if one accepts the omnipotence of God, then necessity is inescapable.<sup>20</sup> According to Calvin, God does not just foreknow, he decrees, and those decrees are the basis of his foreknowledge.<sup>21</sup> When Calvin applied this necessity to the fall of Adam and all humankind with him he wrote, “The decree is dreadful indeed, I confess (*Decretum quidem horribile, fateor*).”<sup>22</sup> Obviously, Calvin did not mean that the decree was unworthy of a righteous God. Calvin always maintained that God was just even as he admitted that it was not fully revealed how.<sup>23</sup> Calvin could be confessing that the

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<sup>17</sup> *OS* 4, 401.13-14; *Inst.* 3.23.7 [trans. Battles].

<sup>18</sup> *SA* 3, 287.2-4; *LW* 33, 189 [trans. Watson]. Hermann Barnikol characterizes Luther’s doctrine as metaphysical determinism because of his emphasis on omnipotence. “Luthers Neigung zum metaphysischen Determinismus kommt zunächst in der Begründung der Willenslehre durch den göttlichen Allmachtsgedanken zum Ausdruck” (Die Lehre Calvins vom unfreien Willen und ihr Verhältnis zur Lehre der übrigen Reformatoren und Augustin [Neuwied, 1927], 44). Barnikol asserts that Calvin differed with Luther in totally replacing metaphysical determinism with Luther’s other emphasis on anthropological determinism located in the corruption of original sin. “Auch für ist die erbsündliche Verdebnis in der Gefolgschaft Luthers nach der ethisch-religiösen Wirkung auf Verstand und Willen hin eine totale; auch er findet in ihr nicht nur die Begründung für die völlige ethische-religiöse Unfreiheit des menschlichen Willens, sondern auch für die Behauptung des sittlich-religiösen Determinismus.... Die theologischen Voraussetzungen des lutherischen Determinismus in Allmacht, Vorsehung und Vorherbestimmung Gottes sind in der calvinischen Darstellung völlige beseitigt.... Immerhin läßt sich sagen, daß das, was Luther in der Behauptung seines metaphysischen Determinismus wollte, in Calvin den trefflichen und geschickteren Darsteller gefunden hat. Indem Calvin die theologischen Voraussetzungen des lutherischen Determinismus und damit dessen metaphysische Wurzel abschnitt, die anthropologische Begründung der Unfreiheit des Willens in der Erbsündenlehre vertiefte und die Ansätze bei Luther für ein spontanes Handeln des Menschen ausgestaltete” (ibid. 56, 57-58). While Calvin did not talk about omnipotence as much as Luther in this respect, we have seen that he also held to the omnipotence of God as the executor of God’s secret plan. See at n. 17 above. Calvin also spoke of God’s omnipotence as God’s hand that brings everything to pass. See Chapter 4 at n. 99.

<sup>19</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.7.

<sup>20</sup> *LW* 33, 190.

<sup>21</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.6, 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.7.

<sup>23</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.9. See also 3.23.2-7, 10-11. *BLW* 191-92, 199, 220.



knowledge of God's decree fills one with fear and terror, and Luther's experience, acknowledged by Calvin in *BLW*,<sup>24</sup> embodied this dread. How did the reformers cope with their perception of the *decretum horribile*? This question must wait until Calvin has fully expounded his understanding of God's role in man's fall and this has been compared to Luther.

Concerning the cause of the fall, Calvin said simply, "Man falls according as God's providence ordains, but he falls by his own fault." Whereas the fall happened in the providence of God the purpose behind the providential happening belonged to predestination, "Their perdition depends upon the predestination of God," but Calvin remarked, "in such a way that the cause and occasion of it are found in themselves."<sup>25</sup> Did God do anything to cause Adam to sin and incur guilt? What does it mean that God ordained the fall? Calvin would not conscience the idea that God could be the author of sin,<sup>26</sup> but God created the circumstances that led to sin. Calvin said Adam's will "was capable of being bent to one side or the other, and was not given the constancy to persevere (*nec data erat ad perseverandum constantia*)." Because of this "he fell so easily" but God was not unjust since "no necessity was imposed upon God of giving man other than a mediocre and even a transitory will, that from man's fall he might gather occasion for his own glory."<sup>27</sup> When we put Calvin's statements together we see that God not only created the circumstances that led to the fall but he foreordained it so that his purpose would be fulfilled. According to Calvin, God did not sin but he willed that Adam would sin, and he willed this with necessity. Did Calvin get any more specific than this? Yes. Calvin not only taught that the will of God was behind the fall of Adam, but with respect to the fall of the angels he spoke to how this happens? "Paul calls the angels who stood in their uprightness 'elect' [I Tim. 5:21]; if their

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<sup>24</sup> *BLW* 21-22. See Chapter 3, § III.

<sup>25</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.8.

<sup>26</sup> *BLW* 40.

<sup>27</sup> *OS* 3, 186.6-8; *Inst.* 1.15.8 [trans. Battles].

steadfastness was grounded in God's good pleasure, the rebellion of the other proves the latter were forsaken (*derelictos*).<sup>28</sup> Calvin says that God forsook the angels so that they rebelled.

Luther, too, spoke in terms of God deserting Adam and Satan so that they fell.

Luther said that in Genesis 3 we see "how man became evil when he was deserted by God and left to himself (*quomodo sit homo factus malus, desertus a Deo ac sibi relictus*)."<sup>29</sup> Luther explained, "God did not create sin" but our "nature has been vitiated by sin through the withdrawal of the Spirit (*naturam peccato, subtracto spiritu, uitiatam*)."<sup>30</sup> Satan is evil, not because he was created that way by God, but he became so through "God's deserting and Satan's sinning."<sup>31</sup> It is puzzling then when Harry J. McSorley, in an otherwise thorough study of *BW*, says, "That man and Satan have fallen is accepted by Luther as an unquestionable biblical truth. But *how* they have fallen he does not say."<sup>32</sup> It is equally inexplicable how he can say that in Luther's writings there is no way to determine whether God causes sin "not only permissively, but also properly and by himself."<sup>33</sup> McSorley does not accuse Luther of "something Manichaeian," and wants to give him the benefit of the doubt, but Luther left no doubt, when he clearly disallowed the notion that God creates evil from scratch or *de novo*. God, according to

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<sup>28</sup> *OS* 4, 398.20-22; *Inst.* 3.23. 4 [trans. Battles].

<sup>29</sup> *SA* 3, 277.15; *LW* 33, 174 [trans. Watson].

<sup>30</sup> *SA* 3, 277.23-25; *LW* 33, 175.

<sup>31</sup> "Sic Satanae uoluntatem malam inueniens, non autem creans, sed deserente Deo, (et) peccante Santana malam factam" (*SA* 3, 279.31-32; *LW* 33, 178).

<sup>32</sup> Harry J. McSorley, *Luther Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical-Theological Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will* (New York: Newman Press and Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1969), 342. See McSorley's whole discussion 340-44. McSorley also says, "He will not say clearly with all previous theological tradition that they have fallen by a misuse of their free will" (*ibid.*). But if we remember Luther's concession to free choice as self-determination it is clear that Adam sinned with his will and chose voluntarily and thus freely according to Luther's definition. The problem is, once again, McSorley's definition, which does not accept mere spontaneity as freedom but requires an independent action of the will. See Chapter 5, §V, A-B. This is even clearer where Luther spoke of Adam's new will not choosing obedience since the Spirit did not add it to him. In the absence of grace Adam misused his will. See at n. 36 below and Chapter 5 at n. 225-26.

<sup>33</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 261. But McSorley says that he cannot be as generous toward Luther's *BW* as he was toward *Assertio*, since in *BW* Luther seems to implicate God in the origin of evil (*Ibid.* 343-44).

Luther, uses wicked tools.<sup>34</sup> With respect to Adam's fall from a pristine condition, Luther wrote, "*Deus peccatum non faciat.*"<sup>35</sup> If we ask the same question of Luther that we did of Calvin, "Did God cause Satan to sin?" we get the same answer. For Luther, God's will extends to Satan's fall, but his relationship to it is different than Satan's. God does not sin. In fact, there is no sinful quality in any of his actions since "one who is himself good cannot act evilly,"<sup>36</sup> and he will use the fall for a greater good.<sup>37</sup> Thus, God does not sin, but he withdraws and Satan sins. Once again, we might say that for Luther, God caused the sinful act but not the sinful quality in the act, for that came from Satan's motivation to rebel.<sup>38</sup> Calvin appealed to God's good motive in allowing evil that "he might gather occasion for his own glory,"<sup>39</sup> and Luther also spoke of evil in this way saying, "He makes good use of this evil in accordance with his wisdom for his own glory and our salvation."<sup>40</sup> Luther, like Calvin's appeal to Augustine, also spoke of God not adding obedience to Adam: "Man, even when the Spirit was present, was not able with a new will to will a good newly proposed to him (that is, obedience), because the Spirit did not add it to him (*quia spiritus illam non addebat*)."<sup>41</sup> Luther spoke of God permitting the fall as well, but he added that God could have preserved Adam. To those who would ask why God did not preserve Adam, Luther responded, "He is God, and for his will (*cuius voluntatis*) there is not cause or

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<sup>34</sup> SA 3, 279.18-31; LW 33, 178. See Chapter 5, § III, 5.

<sup>35</sup> SA 3, 277.23; LW 33, 175. See also n. 29 above

<sup>36</sup> LW 33, 176.

<sup>37</sup> See n. 30 below.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 5 at n. 125. McSorley notes that Luther's construction in *Assertio* and *BW* was similar to that of Thomas, "'God also works evil deeds in the ungodly' (Luther); 'the action of sin is from God (Thomas, *De Malo*, q. 3, a.2) and 'God is the cause of the act of sin (Thomas, I-II, q. 79, a. 2)" (*Luther*, 261). But McSorley says that in *BW* we cannot be sure that Luther means the same thing, since his necessitarian argument forced him to avoid explaining the origin of sin in terms of free will (Ibid. 344). McSorley is misguided by his definition of free will, which does not allow Luther's understanding of free choice as voluntary self-determination (see n. 30 above). He also misses mark in suggesting that Luther might have believed that God causes sin "not only permissively, but also properly and by himself." See at n. 31 and 29 above.

<sup>39</sup> *Inst.* 1.15.8. 3.23.7, 8. *BLW* 39, 40.

<sup>40</sup> LW 33, 178.

reason that can be laid as a rule or measure for it.”<sup>42</sup> As with Calvin later and Augustine before, Luther believed that what God permitted in the fall was also what God willed. While Luther and Calvin were showing their Augustinian colors, they also seemed more frank in their confession that God’s justice is not fully defensible by human reason. This is not because God might harbor injustice somewhere in his being, but because how he is just is not yet fully revealed.

### **B. Does the Necessity of the Fall Make God Unjust?**

Luther confessed that God’s actions toward the “children of wrath” are difficult to defend:

Now, if you are disturbed by the thought that is difficult to defend the mercy and justice of God (*aequitatem Dei*) when he damns the undeserving (*immeritos*), that is to say, ungodly men who are what they are because they were born in ungodliness and can in no way help being and remaining ungodly and damnable, but are compelled by a necessity of nature to sin and perish (*coganturque necessitate naturae peccare [et] perire*) (as Paul says: “We were all children of wrath like the rest” . . . corrupted by the sin of the one man Adam)—rather must God be honored and revered as supremely merciful toward those whom he justifies and saves . . . and there must be a least some acknowledgment of his divine wisdom so that he may be believed to be righteous where he seems to us to be unjust.<sup>43</sup>

Luther appealed to faith to resolve this problem: “This is the highest degree of faith to believe him merciful when he saves so few and damns so many (*Hic est fidei summus gradus, credere illum esse clementem, qui tam paucos saluat, tam multos damnat*), and to believe him righteous when by his own will he makes us necessarily damnable (*credere iustum, qui sua voluntate nos necessario damnabiles facit*).”<sup>44</sup> Luther also said that God’s righteousness is not always what we consider just, and if it could be fully explicated in terms of what human reason can discover about justice then “it would clearly not be divine and would in no way differ from human

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<sup>41</sup> SA 3, 243.40-43; LW 33, 124.

<sup>42</sup> LW 33, 180-81.

<sup>43</sup> SA 3, 352.4-12; LW 33, 289 [trans. Watson].

<sup>44</sup> SA 3, 206.22-24; LW 33, 62 [trans. Watson].

righteousness.”<sup>45</sup> Calvin also spoke about those who “seem to...have reason to expostulate with God if they are predestined to eternal death...apart from their own merit (*citra proprium meritum*).”<sup>46</sup> Calvin wrote:

The reprobate wish to be considered excusable in sinning, on the ground that they cannot avoid the necessity of sinning (*peccandi necessitatem*), especially since this sort of necessity is cast upon them by God’s ordaining (*ex Dei ordinatione sibi iniiciatur huiusmodi necessitas*). But we deny that they are duly excused, because the ordinance of God, by which they complain that they are destined to destruction, has its own equity (*aequitas*)—unknown (*incognita*) indeed to us but very sure.<sup>47</sup>

While Calvin maintained that the reprobate cannot be excused, he admitted the difficulty of shutting their mouths: “Perhaps someone will say that I have not yet brought forward evidence to silence this wicked excuse. But I admit this cannot be so done that impiety will not always growl and mutter.”<sup>48</sup> Luther said the *aequitatem Dei* is difficult to defend and Calvin acknowledged that God’s justice has its own *aequitas* that is unknown to us now. Luther further expounded this with the traditional “three lights” figure.

Luther said that what was inexplicable by the light of nature—why the ungodly prosper and the righteous suffer—was explained by the light of grace, which showed that the godly prosper in their souls while the ungodly lose their souls. But by the light of grace it appears an “insoluble problem how God can damn one who is unable by any power of his own to do anything but sin and be guilty.” Luther argued that the light of glory will reveal that God “is a God of most perfect and manifest righteousness. In the meantime we can only believe this, being admonished and confirmed by the example of the light of grace.”<sup>49</sup> Rather than reason proving

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<sup>45</sup> *LW* 33, 290.

<sup>46</sup> *OS* 4, 395.27-29; *Inst.* 3.23.2 [trans. Battles].

<sup>47</sup> *OS* 4, 403.19-25; *Inst.* 3.23.9 [trans. Battles]. For the incomprehensibility of God’s justice in this life see also *Inst.* 3.23.4, 5, 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.9.

<sup>49</sup> *LW* 33, 292.

what faith accepts, in the tradition of Thomas, this is an instance of faith believing what reason cannot explain, in the tradition of Ockham. Luther and Calvin did not hold that this belief was irrational, however; it was simply a mystery since its logic is hidden to us and is not discoverable until later revealed. For the reformers, God is not arbitrary; his justice is only hidden. Here we see Luther and Calvin upholding the nominalist principle that God's will is the unquestionable norm of righteousness. The nominalistic principle means that God does not will what is right by an outside standard, but what he wills is right because he wills it. Luther wrote:

He is God, and for his will there is not cause or reason that can be laid down as a rule or measure for it, since there is nothing equal to it, but it is itself the rule of all things. For if there were any rule or standard for it, either as cause or reason, it could no longer be the will of God. For it is not because he is or was obliged so to will that he wills is right, but on the contrary, because he himself so wills, therefore what happens must be right (*quia ipse sic uult, ideo debet rectum quod fit*). Cause and reason can be assigned for a creature's will, but not for the will of the Creator.<sup>50</sup>

Calvin wrote:

His will is, and rightly ought to be, the cause of all things that are. For if it has any cause, something must precede it, to which it is, as it were, bound; this is unlawful to imagine. For God's will is so much the highest rule of righteousness that whatever he wills, by the very fact that he wills it, must be considered righteous (*ut quicquid uult, eo ipso quod uult, iustum habendum sit*). When, therefore, one asks why God has so done, we must reply: because he has willed it.<sup>51</sup>

According to both reformers, this rule must be upheld by faith, especially when doubt cannot be totally silenced. While Luther said that a full answer cannot be given, he did at least give a partial answer to silence reason's complaint. When dealing with Romans 9:18, "So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills," Luther assured his readers that God was not unjust. Expositing Paul in 9:14-15,<sup>52</sup> Luther remarked, "Not that any injustice is done to us, since God owes us nothing, has received nothing from us, and has

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<sup>50</sup> SA 3, 281.13-18; LW 33, 181 [trans. Watson].

<sup>51</sup> OS 4, 395.34-396.4; Inst. 3.23.2 [trans. Battles].

promised us nothing but what suits his will and pleasure.” Luther points to Paul’s simile of the potter and the clay to show that reason cannot complain, “Why are you making me so?” Luther said that God bids those who murmur and question to “be silent and revere the majesty of the divine power and will, in relation to which we have no rights, but which in relation to us has full right to do whatever it pleases.” Reason must admit, said Luther, “that the living and true God must be one who by his freedom imposes necessity on us.”<sup>53</sup> It seems Luther was saying that while the reason for and the justice of damnation will not be seen until the full light of glory, reason cannot complain of God’s injustice even now. This is because God as God possesses all rights over his creatures. In fact, Luther said, “Faith and the Spirit...believe that God is good even if he should send all men to perdition.”<sup>54</sup> Calvin’s made this part of his response as well:

If anyone approaches us with such expressions as: “Why from the beginning did God predestine some to death who, since they did not yet exist, could not yet have deserved the judgment of death?” let us, in lieu of reply, ask them, in turn, what they think God owes to man if He would judge him according to His own nature. As all of us are vitiated by sin, we can only be odious to God, and that not from tyrannical cruelty but by the fairest reckoning of justice.<sup>55</sup>

While Luther said that God owes us nothing because we are his creatures, Calvin focused on the fact that we are odious to God as sinful creatures, who are in this state “by the fairest reckoning of justice.” How is this so? Calvin said the potter has the right over the clay. God is not subject to the charge of injustice since Paul said, “Who are you, O man, to argue with God? Does the molded object say to its molder, ‘Why have you fashioned me thus?’ Or does the potter have no capacity to make from the same lump one vessel for honor, another for dishonor? [Rom. 9:20-21].” Calvin tells his readers that we are simply “bidden to ponder who God is.” He is the

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<sup>52</sup> Paul wrote, “Is there any injustice on God’s part? By no means! For he says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy’” (ESV).

<sup>53</sup> *LW* 33, 188, 189. Luther also works with the potter simile as a reply to “‘human’ reason” at 204-05.

<sup>54</sup> *LW* 33, 174.

<sup>55</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.3.

just judge and it is actually foolish for reason “to reduce God’s works to such a law that the moment we fail to understand their reason, we dare to condemn them.”<sup>56</sup> Calvin pointed out that Paul also said, “‘God has shut up all things under sin that he may have mercy on all’ [Rom. 11:32,...Gal. 3:22], at the same time it should be added that he is debtor to no one, for ‘no one has first given to him, that he should demand something back’ [Rom. 11:35 p.]” According to Luther and Calvin, since God does not owe anything to humankind, it is not unjust for him to ordain the fall and then condemn the fallen. It is sheer mercy however for him to save any of the fallen ones. Calvin quoted Augustine, “‘The Lord can therefore give grace...to whom he will...because he is merciful, and not give to all because he is a just judge. For by giving to some what they do not deserve...he can show his free grace.... By not giving to all, he can manifest what all deserve.’”<sup>57</sup> According to Luther’s application of the “three lights” metaphor, once we see in the light of glory we will understand that there is no injustice in God, only grace to the elect and justice toward the rest.<sup>58</sup>

Today Lane puts the question to Calvin’s interpretation in a similar way, “Is the degree of freewill that Calvin conceded to fallen man sufficient to uphold his responsibility?”<sup>59</sup> It must be remembered that Calvin’s concession to free choice was voluntary self-determination (*lubens spontanea*) not a power to choose between good and evil. Luther conceded the same, and Harry J. McSorley accuses him of negating human responsibility so as to implicate God in the blame: “Luther seems to make God the actual originator of sin.”<sup>60</sup> Luther and Calvin interpreted the fall as a divine withdrawal or a withholding of perseverance. Is the spontaneity of the human act

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<sup>56</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.4.

<sup>57</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.11.

<sup>58</sup> *LW* 33, 292. See also 208.

<sup>59</sup> Lane, “Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?” 80.

<sup>60</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 343. See the whole section 340-44.



enough to condemn man for his sin and acquit God of causing the fall? Calvin felt the weight of this and gave a reply:

Whence, then, comes that wickedness to man, that he should fall away from his God? Lest we should think it comes from creation, God had put his stamp of approval on what had come forth from himself. By his own evil intention, then, man corrupted the pure nature he had received from the Lord... Accordingly, we should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity—which is closer to us—rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God’s predestination.<sup>61</sup>

Calvin held that the evident cause of the fall belongs man’s own evil intention to disobey and this is what corrupted him, not God. We should look there and not to “seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause.” In *EP*, where Calvin addressed the last four books of *Free Choice*, Calvin responded to Pighius’s objection, “If...those who perish are destined to death by the eternal good pleasure of God...then they are not found but made worthy of destruction.”<sup>62</sup> Calvin wrote, “The proper and genuine cause of sin is not God’s hidden counsel but the evident will of man.... Since a man may find the cause of his evil within himself, what is the use of looking round to seek it in heaven?”<sup>63</sup> Luther also spoke of God’s hiddenness that is beyond finding out.<sup>64</sup> When it came to Scripture, “He wills all men to be saved [1 Tim. 2:4],”<sup>65</sup> Luther qualified that this is true when speaking of “God as preached...seeing he comes with the word of salvation to all,” thus, “The fault is in the will that does not admit him.” To the further question of why God imputes this defect to man’s will and does not remove it in all men “we have no right to

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<sup>61</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.8.

<sup>62</sup> *EP* 121.

<sup>63</sup> *EP* 122.

<sup>64</sup> See § II below.

<sup>65</sup> For Luther’s varied interpretation of this verse see Lowell C. Green, “Luther’s Understanding of the Freedom of God and the Salvation of Man: His Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 87 (1996): 57-73.

inquire.”<sup>66</sup> Calvin emphasized that “God knowingly and willingly suffers man to fall; the will may be hidden, but it cannot be unjust.” Calvin said that Pighius has no right to attack him since “removing from God all proximate causation of the act, I at the same time remove from Him all guilt and leave man alone liable.”<sup>67</sup> L. F. Schulze points out a seemingly double standard in Calvin. This is because Calvin does not allow the sinner to “look for remote causes, blaming heaven for his evil.” But when it comes to salvation Schulze points out, “Here the sinner should not look to his own good deeds as Pighius tries to do. Calvin complains—very unlogically [*sic*] indeed!—that Pighius sees only the proximate cause and not the remote!”<sup>68</sup> While Schulze claims that Calvin was inconsistent, a resolution appears in Calvin’s and Luther’s conception of the fall as a divine withdrawal or withholding of perseverance.

According to Luther and Calvin, God was not proactive in bringing the fall in the same way that he is in bringing salvation. In the fall, God withdrew so that man fell on his own, but in salvation, God intervenes so that man believes because of God’s action. In one case he withholds and in the other he applies. Could it be that the reason Calvin appealed to the hidden will of God in salvation is that there God is proactive toward the elect so that all glory goes to him? But then is the reason Calvin excludes consideration of the hidden will with respect to damnation because God was not proactively the author of sin but simply withdrew and left man to his own capabilities? So in salvation all glory goes to God because he actively intervened, but in damnation all blame goes to man who sinned of his own accord. This could indeed be Calvin’s logic.

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<sup>66</sup> *LW* 33, 140. Luther also said that since God uses evil instruments, “It is the fault, therefore, of the instruments,” since God “acts in them as they are and as he finds them” (*LW* 33, 176).

<sup>67</sup> *EP* 123-24.

<sup>68</sup> L. F. Schulze, “Calvin’s Reply to Pighius – A Micro and Macro View.” In *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism* (New York, London: Garland, 1992), 80.

Luther also took this same tack, saying that while God's justice is hidden, man will not be able to blame God standing in the light of glory, nor can the clay have a say over the potter even now. With regard to Lane's question as to whether Calvin conceded enough free will to Adam to support his culpability, Calvin acknowledged that Adam "could not evade what God had decreed." Calvin's response was simply that "his voluntary transgression is enough and more than enough to establish his guilt." Calvin also appealed to the testimony of conscience, which condemns man for his own sin.<sup>69</sup> Regardless of how convincing Luther and Calvin's position seemed to opponents then and to commentators now, both reformers believed that the reason behind the fall is hidden and just, and thus it would be foolish for reason to reject what is clearly revealed based upon what is still secret. Before we compare the reformers' thought on the hiddenness of God, the question of God's foreknowledge must be addressed.

### **C. Does God's Foreknowledge Impose Necessity?**

Luther and Calvin did not attempt to escape the quandaries of divine necessity and human responsibility by resorting to the explanation of passive foreknowledge, as, according to Calvin, so many fathers and scholastics had done.<sup>70</sup> According to the reformers, God did not merely permit man to shape his own fortune or to will whatever happens, while God left himself only to foresee and then choose to respond or not. Calvin tied foreknowledge to God's decrees: "He foresees future events only by reason of the fact that he decreed that they take place."<sup>71</sup> This was similar to Luther who saw the two as coextensive and approved of Erasmus's admission, "For God to will and foreknow are the same thing." But Luther did not quit there, and added that because "the divine will is fulfilled by necessity on our part," foreknowledge also imposed

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<sup>69</sup> *EP* 122.

<sup>70</sup> *Inst.* 3.22.8. 3.23.6.

<sup>71</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.6. See also 3.23.7.

necessity.<sup>72</sup> In the case of Judas, Luther wrote, “If God foreknew that Judas became a traitor, Judas necessarily became a traitor, and it was not in the power of Judas or any creature to do differently or to change his will.”<sup>73</sup> This was in contrast to Erasmus who did not believe that God’s foreknowledge imposed necessity as if to take away free choice. Erasmus wrote:

Some necessity can also be posited of human affairs which nonetheless does not exclude a liberty of our will. God foreknew (and what he foreknew he in some way intended) that Judas would betray the Lord. Thus if you look at the infallible foreknowledge of God, and his immutable will, Judas was necessarily going to turn traitor to his Lord, and yet Judas could change his intention, and certainly he had it in his power to refuse.... You say, “What if he had changed his mind?” The foreknowledge of God... would have foreknown and intended before hand that Judas would change his mind.<sup>74</sup>

Luther acknowledged that from the human point of view “an eclipse does not occur because it is foreknown, but is foreknown because it is going to occur.” Divine foreknowledge, however, “carries with it the necessary occurrence of the thing foreknown.”<sup>75</sup> Luther said that Paul’s introduction in Romans 9:19 of those who complain that “God’s will cannot be resisted (*non posse resisti*)” clearly implies “that a necessity is imposed upon us by the divine foreknowledge (*necessitatem nobis impone praescientia diuina*).”<sup>76</sup> Luther concluded, “Thus God’s foreknowledge and omnipotence are diametrically opposed to our free choice.”<sup>77</sup> Calvin wrote, “What he has willed will of necessity come to pass, as those things he has foreseen will truly come to pass.”<sup>78</sup> While Calvin’s view was far from Erasmus, it was not identical to Luther’s, because Calvin distinguished more clearly between foreknowledge and foreordination. Calvin wrote, “Indeed, I freely admit that foreknowledge imposes no necessity upon creatures, yet not

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<sup>72</sup> LW 33, 186.

<sup>73</sup> LW 33, 185.

<sup>74</sup> LCC 17, 68.

<sup>75</sup> LW 33, 186.

<sup>76</sup> LW 33, 187. See also 36-38, 42-43, 191.

<sup>77</sup> LW 33, 189.

all assent to this. For there are some who wish it also to be the cause of things.”<sup>79</sup> Calvin could have Luther in mind in the latter sentence. François Wendel notes that both Luther and Bucer viewed foreknowldge and predestination as identical, so Bucer could be in mind as well.<sup>80</sup> Wendel also notes that Calvin may have been following his mentors in the 1536 *Institutes*<sup>81</sup> only to distance himself from their position by distinguishing the two concepts in the 1539 *Institutes*. Calvin wrote, “When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things were, and perpetually remain, under his eyes, so that to his knowledge there is nothing future or past, but all things are present.... We call predestination God’s eternal decree, by which he compacted with himself what he willed to become of each man.”<sup>82</sup> Calvin was, however, completely in agreement with Luther over the more fundamental question of whether or not foreknowledge was the basis of predestination.

Calvin said of those who appealed to passive foreknowledge as the ground of predestination, “They vainly quarrel over foreknowledge, when it is clear that all things take place rather by his determination.”<sup>83</sup> Wendel summarizes Calvin’s position, “Foreknowledge has for its object the decisions of the divine will; predestination is identical with that will.”<sup>84</sup> Calvin did not differ with Luther over the basis of predestination. Both agreed that it was not based on foreseen merit. Erasmus had claimed that when Scripture spoke of God loving Jacob and hating Esau before they were born it did not oppose free choice. Erasmus contended, “He hates the

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<sup>78</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.8.

<sup>79</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.6. See also *Inst.* 3.23.7.

<sup>80</sup> François Wendel, *Calvin: Origins and Development of His Religious Thought* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), 141, 271. See Chapter 1 n. 41.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* 266, n. 108.

<sup>82</sup> *Inst.* 3.21.5.

<sup>83</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.6.

<sup>84</sup> Wendel, 272, n.122.

unborn because he surely knows that they will commit deeds worthy of hatred.”<sup>85</sup> Luther said, “God called Jacob before he was born because he loved him, not because he was first loved by Jacob or moved by any merit of his.”<sup>86</sup> Luther argued that the reason why the declaration “The elder shall serve the younger [Gen. 25:23],” was given when “they were not yet born, and had done nothing good or bad [Rom. 9:11]” was that God did not have their merits or demerits in view.<sup>87</sup> With respect to the statement, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated,” Luther commented, “This fact makes complete nonsense of free choice, because God’s love toward men is eternal and immutable, and his hatred is eternal, being prior to the creation of the world, and not only to the merit and work of free choice.” To this Luther added, “Everything takes place by necessity in us, according as he either loves or does not love us from all eternity (*omniaque necessario in nobis fieri, secundum quod ille uel amat uel non amat ab aeterno*), so that not only God’s love but also the manner of his loving imposes necessity on us.”<sup>88</sup> Thus Luther indicated that God’s love or hatred, not man’s free choice merits or demerits, is the basis of God’s choosing or rejecting people for salvation. Luther referred this to the *loci* of predestination and reprobation as he continued his response to Erasmus’s section on the potter and the clay. He said that Erasmus wanted to play down Paul’s usage of those figures because “Paul applies them to eternal election and reprobation (*Paulus autem utitur ad electionem [et] reprobationem aeternam*).”<sup>89</sup> Thus, for Luther, the basis of predestination was God’s own will to love and not the will of human beings, which could accomplish nothing. The same was true for Calvin.

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<sup>85</sup> LCC 17, 70.

<sup>86</sup> LW 33, 199. See also 197.

<sup>87</sup> LW 33, 197.

<sup>88</sup> SA 3, 293.4-9; LW 33, 199 [trans. Watson].

<sup>89</sup> SA 3, 295.24-25; LW 33, 203. Luther added, “As there are elect and reprobate, so there are vessels for honor and dishonor (*ut electi [et] reprobi, ita uasa honoris [et] ignominiae sunt*)” (SA 3, 297.25; LW 33, 205). See also SA 3, 258.1-2; LW 33, 146. SA 3, 275.28; LW 33, 172.

Calvin formally rejected foreknowledge as the ground for predestination saying, “When Paul teaches that we were chosen in Christ ‘before the creation of the world’ [Eph. 1:4a], he takes away all consideration of real worth on our part...since among all the offspring of Adam, the Heavenly Father found nothing worthy of his election.” Calvin added that Paul sets ‘God’s good pleasure’ over against any merits of ours.”<sup>90</sup> Calvin saw Paul’s usage of the potter and the clay in the same light as Luther:

We have by now been taught that hardening is in God’s hand and will, just as much as mercy is [Rom. 9:14ff.]. And Paul does not, as do those I have spoken of, labor anxiously to make false excuses in God’s defense; he only warns that it is unlawful for the clay to quarrel with its potter [Rom. 9:20].... If they say that this is no sign of reprobation (*reprobati*), there is nothing so clear that it can be proved to them.<sup>91</sup>

Calvin was not shy about speaking of the will of God to reprobation as a fact, though he abhorred speculation into its causes and did not take any joy in the destiny of the non-elect but only in the glory of God’s justice.<sup>92</sup> While foreknowledge was not, for Calvin, the basis of predestination, it also was not, however, identical to God’s effectual will like it was for Luther. Luther held that God foreknows as he wills but Calvin held that God foreknows what he wills.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly for Calvin, foreknowledge is not identical to predestination as Luther had it, nor was it the basis of predestination as Erasmus and Pighius argued, and but predestination is the basis of God’s foreknowledge into eternal destinies. God foreknows what his decrees ordain for salvation. For Luther, both God’s will and knowledge are proactive, but for Calvin God passively foreknows what his will actively ordains. In Luther’s thought, God’s foreknowledge imposes necessity in election, since God’s foreknowledge is proactive in favoring the elect. For Calvin, foreknowledge does not impose necessity since foreknowledge is non-causal, but

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<sup>90</sup> *Inst.* 3.22.1. See 3.22.1-11.

<sup>91</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.1 [trans. Battles]. See 3.23.1-6

<sup>92</sup> *Inst.* 3.23.4, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. *LW* 33, 37 and *Inst.* 3.23.6 quoted above at n. 71.

necessity is imposed and functions according to God's decrees and these are the objects of God's foreknowledge. This is another example of our finding different nuances between Luther and Calvin within fundamental agreement.

## II. The Hiddenness of God

Calvin's statement that we should seek the evident cause of our condemnation in ourselves "rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible (*absconditam ac penitus incomprehensibilem*) cause in God's predestination,"<sup>94</sup> brings to the fore a subject very well known in Luther studies but almost nonexistent in Calvin studies—the hiddenness of God. There seems to be a growing consensus among Luther scholars that the concept of hiddenness contained two ideas for Luther.<sup>95</sup> These ideas are closely related but have been distinguished by a careful reading that seeks to parse the nuances in the Reformer's thought. First, *God is hidden in his revelation* under a contrary appearance and can only be grasped by faith. Luther wrote:

Faith has to do with things not seen [Heb. 11:1]. Hence in order that there may be room for faith it is necessary that everything which is believed should be hidden (*abscondantur*). It cannot, however, be more deeply hidden than under a contrary (*sub contrario*) object, perception, or experience. So when God makes alive he does

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<sup>94</sup> OS 4, 403.9-10; *Inst.* 3.23.8 [trans. Battles].

<sup>95</sup> Brian Gerrish, "'To the Unknown God' Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: Univ. Chicago, 1982), 131-49, see esp. 131-41, 145-49, Gerrish identifies Theodosius Harnack "Gott der verborgene und geoffenbarte," in *Luthers Theologie mit besonderer Beziehung auf seine Versöhnungs- und Erlösungslehre* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1927 [originally Verlangen, 1862]), 84-97, as the first interpreter of Luther to posit two kinds of hiddenness. Gerrish surveys the secondary literature since Harnack and critiques latter scholarship which tried to conflate the two ideas into Luther's first kind of hiddenness. For recent interpreters who follow Harnack see also David Steinmetz, "Luther and the Hidden God," in *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 23-31; Marcus Wriedt, "Luther's Concept of History and the Formation of an Evangelical Identity," in *Protestant History and Identity in Sixteenth-Century Europe: Vol. 1, The Medieval Inheritance*, ed. Bruce Gordon (Aldershot Hants, England: Scholar Press; Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate, 1996), 36-37; Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 276-77, distinguishes the two kinds of hiddenness, but his assertion that *BW* speaks only to the hiddenness of God outside of his revelation overlooks the evidence presented below. Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 215-18, distinguishes the two uses and says that Luther employed them differently against Erasmus. In light of statements below from *BW* concerning hiddenness of God under the contrary, it is perhaps more accurate to say that Luther did not use them differently but was forced by Erasmus's polemic to further develop his ideas about God's hiddenness in majesty.



it by killing, when he justifies he does it by making men guilty, when he transports to heaven he does it by leading to hell.<sup>96</sup>

This is hiddenness in its paradoxical form and belongs to Luther's theology of the cross where Christ is hidden under suffering.<sup>97</sup> Second, *God is hidden behind his revelation* in majesty.<sup>98</sup>

Luther wrote, "God hidden in his majesty (*Deus absconditus in maiestate*)... works life, death, and all in all (*sed operatur uitam, mortem, omnia in ominibus*)."<sup>99</sup> In *BW*, Luther's most common designation for God in this capacity was "majesty," and he also referred to that "awful will."<sup>100</sup>

This second kind of hiddenness is in contrast to the revealed God who is the object of saving faith. Luther contended:

We have to argue in one way about God or the will of God as preached, revealed, offered, and worshipped, and in another way about God as he is not preached, not revealed, not offered, not worshipped (*non praedicato, non reuelato, non oblato, non culto*). To the extent, therefore, that God hides himself and wills to be unknown to us, it is no business of ours.<sup>101</sup>

Since God, in this second kind of hiddenness, wills to be unknown to us he is not the object of faith and is clearly distinguishable from God in his revealed capacity. God, in the first kind of hiddenness, is revealed preeminently in Christ, and it is precisely here that Luther says we have to do with God and he with us. Luther said that "human temerity... must be called off and restrained from occupying itself with the scrutinizing of these secrets of majesty (*secretis maiestatis*).... Let it occupy itself instead with God incarnate, or (as Paul puts it), with Jesus crucified, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, though hidden (*sed*

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<sup>96</sup> *SA* 3, 206.14-18; *LW* 33, 62.

<sup>97</sup> Gerrish, "To the Unknown God," 134. See Chapter 3 n. 30.

<sup>98</sup> I am following Gerrish's order of delineating the two kinds of hiddenness in "To the Unknown God," 134.

<sup>99</sup> *SA* 3, 253.31-32; *LW* 33, 140.

<sup>100</sup> There are 26 references to *maiestas*. *WA* 18, 631 (3), 636, 684, 685 (3), 686, 689 (5), 690 (2), 706, 712, 714, 717, 718, 725, 729 (2), 784, 785. For God's "awful will" see 684, 690.

<sup>101</sup> *SA* 3, 253.15-16; *LW* 33, 139.

*absconditi*) (Col. 2:3).<sup>102</sup> What are these treasures hidden in Christ? Luther goes on, “God incarnate (*Deus...incarnatus*)...has been sent into the world for the very purpose of willing, speaking, doing, suffering and offering to all men everything necessary for salvation.”<sup>103</sup> After speaking in the way of the first kind of hiddenness, Luther immediately shifted back to the second kind of hiddenness: “Yet he offends very many, who either abandoned or hardened by that secret will of majesty (*qui secreta illa uoluntate maiestatis uel relictis uel indurati*) do not regard him as he wills, speaks, does, suffers, and offers.”<sup>104</sup> According to Luther, some do not receive the revealed will of God, expressed in Christ, since by the “secret will of majesty” they are passed over. As we have noted, Luther was clear that necessity applied to everything—“every everything that happens...happens necessarily”—and, like Calvin after him, he did not shrink from applying this to the fall and even final damnation. Luther wrote, “The will of the Divine Majesty abandons and reprobates some to perish *ex proposito*.”<sup>105</sup> God’s purpose is behind this tragedy, and yet it prompts “God incarnate to weep, wail, and groan over the perdition of the ungodly.” Luther’s contrast between the hidden and revealed God is stark, so stark indeed that there appears to be conflict in God. In fact, Luther remarked that in this hidden capacity God “has not bound himself by his word, but has kept himself free over all things.” Luther did not intend to cast doubt on the divine word since he immediately counseled, “We must be guided by the word.”<sup>106</sup> Luther emphasized that God in his freedom is not obligated to save any man so that “it is not for us to ask why...but to stand in awe of God.”<sup>107</sup> Luther clearly

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<sup>102</sup> SA 3, 257.23-27; LW 33, 145-46.

<sup>103</sup> SA 3, 257.29-30; LW 33, 146 [trans. Watson].

<sup>104</sup> SA 3, 257.30-33; LW 33, 145-46.

<sup>105</sup> “Uoluntas maiestatis ex proposito aliquos relinquit (et) reprobatur, ut pereant” (SA 3, 258.1-2; LW 33, 146).

<sup>106</sup> LW 33, 140. Luther probably meant to indicate nothing beyond his other statement, “God does many things he that he does not disclose to us in his word; he also wills many things which he does not disclose himself as willing in his word” (ibid.).

<sup>107</sup> LW 33, 146.

rejected any dichotomy between the revealed and hidden God in his *Lecture on Genesis* (1541-42): “From an unrevealed God I will become a revealed God. Nevertheless I will remain the same God (*Ex Deo non revelato fiam revelatus, et tamen idem Deus manebo*). I will be made flesh or send My Son.”<sup>108</sup> There is another apparent conflict but this time it is in the human experience of God. The conflict is over whether a person is condemned by the hidden God or saved by the revealed God. This is resolved in the believer’s experience of faith where he finds himself predestined by the hidden God in Christ. Prior to that realization however, it is the function of the hidden God to make Christ existentially imperative.

God, in the second kind of hiddenness, afflicts the conscience with fear and dread because his decision concerning the person’s eternal destiny is unknown, i.e. hidden. Luther did not know his status before the God who, “by his own sheer will should abandon, harden, and damn men (*mera uoluntate sua homines deserat, induret, damnet*),” but being “brought to the depths and abyss of despair” over this, he reflected that he was brought “near to grace (*gratiae propinqua*).”<sup>109</sup> Luther had been looking for assurance in the wrong place—the hidden will of God (the second kind of hiddenness)—but this was leading him to the proper place—Christ in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge (the first kind of hiddenness).<sup>110</sup> While the second kind of hiddenness does not arise from the christological center of Luther’s thought, it emphasizes it through contrast, since it drives one to claim the promise in Christ. Luther argued that “no man can be thoroughly humbled until he knows that his salvation is utterly beyond his powers...and depends entirely on the choice, will, and work of...God alone.” When this happens

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<sup>108</sup> *Lectures on Genesis*, WA 43, 459.24-26; LW 5, 45 [trans. Schick].

<sup>109</sup> SA 3, 287.10-18; LW 33, 190 [trans. Watson].

<sup>110</sup> See Watson’s comments LW 33, 190, n. 36.

Luther said a person “completely despairs of himself...then he has come close to grace (*is proximus est gratia*), and can be saved.”<sup>111</sup> Gerrish comments:

Luther’s faith struggled constantly with strange assaults which he called his “attacks” (*Anfechtungen*). At such moments, he discovered that the gracious God cannot be taken for granted. This experience undoubtedly shaped the form of his faith.... The hidden God is never the object of faith. But faith nonetheless takes on an urgency, perhaps even a passion, because the hidden God, who prevents faith from becoming complacent. Faith, in Luther’s sense, was a dare, a risk, or—in one of his favorite words—a “flight.” Under *Anfechtung*, a man must dare against God to flee to God (*ad deum contra deum*). Faith is not repose, but movement.... It is movement *away* from the hidden God.<sup>112</sup>

In Luther’s thought, the second kind of hiddenness is not reducible to human ignorance about God, since the fact of it is not unknown. God exists in this capacity and his power over human destiny is no secret. Luther said that while God “does not will the death of the sinner according to his word, he does will it according to his inscrutable will,” and, “It is sufficient to know simply that there is a certain inscrutable will in God (*Satis est, nosse tantum, quod sit quaedam in Deo uoluntas imperscrutabilis*).”<sup>113</sup> In short, the “that” of the situation is known, but not the “who” or the “why,” and Luther refused to go beyond the “that” in his discussion of the hidden God. On the other hand, because these things beyond were acknowledged though not probed, Erasmus criticized Luther for teaching things that even if they could be known, would be improper for common ears to hear. This would include ideas such as: “Whatever is done by us is not done by free choice but by sheer necessity.... And Augustine’s saying, that God works in us good and evil, and rewards his own good works in us and punishes his evil works in us.”<sup>114</sup>

Luther agreed with Erasmus about distrusting speculation into divine mysteries, but he maintained that Erasmus had identified the wrong things as mysterious. Luther said that these

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<sup>111</sup> *LW* 33, 62.

<sup>112</sup> Gerrish, “To the Unknown God,” 148.

<sup>113</sup> *SA* 3, 254.2-3, 6-7; *LW* 33, 140.

<sup>114</sup> *LW* 33, 58. For the full context of Erasmus’s words see *LCC* 17, 41.

very teachings are openly published in Scripture “in the freest manner and in even the harsher terms... ‘Whom he will he hardeneth,’ and, ‘God, willing to show his wrath,’ etc. [Rom. 9:18, 22].”<sup>115</sup> According to Luther it is not hidden that God chooses some and not others; this is part of the data of the Bible. Luther pursued Erasmus: “When we were dealing with the dogmas of Scripture, which there was no need to reverence as things abstruse and hidden, since they are nothing of the kind, you warned us so very solemnly against rushing inquisitively into the Corycian cavern, that we were almost frightened off the reading of Scripture.” When it came to what is truly hidden—“the awful secrets of the divine majesty”—Luther told Erasmus, “Here you smash through...as indignant as possible with God because you are not allowed to see the meaning and purpose of such a judgment as his.”<sup>116</sup> What is hidden, according to Luther, is the answer to the further questions, “Who is predestined?” and “Why some and not others?” When Luther responded to Erasmus’s interpretation of Ezekiel 18:23, 32: “I desire not the death of the sinner,” he said that this concerns “the preaching and offering of divine mercy throughout the world.” Luther continued:

But why some are touched by the law and others are not (*Cur alij lege tanguntur, alij non tanguntur*), so that the former accept and the latter despise the offered grace, is another question and one not dealt with by Ezekiel in this passage. For he is here speaking of the preached and offered mercy of God, not of that hidden and awful will of God (*de occulta illa (et) metuenda uoluntate Dei*) whereby he ordains by his own counsel (*ordinantis suo consilio*) which and what sort of persons he wills to be recipients and partakers of his preached and offered mercy. This will is not to be inquired into, but reverently adored, as by far the most awe-inspiring secret of the Divine Majesty (*secretum... maiestatis diuinae*), reserved for himself alone and forbidden (*prohibitum*) to us much more religiously than any number of Corycian caverns.<sup>117</sup>

According to Luther, God keeps his hidden will secret and gives us only what we need to know for salvation. With regard to the “Why” question Luther responded: “But why that majesty of his

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<sup>115</sup> LW 33, 59.

<sup>116</sup> LW 33, 60.

does not remove or change this defect of our will in all men, since it is not in man's power to do so, or why he imputes this defect to man, when man cannot help having it, we have no right to inquire; and though you may do a lot of inquiring you will never find out."<sup>118</sup>

Luther acknowledged that the fact of predestination and reprobation and the mysteries of "Who" and "Why" create anxiety, but this is a healthy fear of God that spurs the elect to hold on to Christ for dear life. Assurance anxiety is part of true religion for Luther and must be used to unsettle those who wrongly take salvation for granted. This is a law message that must be preached since God has revealed these truths for the sake of the preserving the elect, but the proper focus for Luther ought to be primarily on the cross, not on deciding whether a person is one of the elect. Luther gave no credence to Erasmus's fears that this would open the door to impiety or to hopeless anxiety. Luther wrote, "As to your saying a window is opened for impiety, let it be so; such people belong to the above mentioned leprosy of evil that must be endured." While Luther would always struggle with doubt, the decisive battle with his conscience had been fought and won with his gospel breakthrough. The second kind of hiddenness had worked in his life as law which opened the way to grace, and he sought to perpetuate this experience on a less intense scale with the preaching of law and gospel. While Erasmus was concerned to keep these issues out of the public square, Luther saw them as salutary law and gospel. Luther added that if Erasmus's advice were followed, people would be "deluded by a false assurance of salvation" and no one would "learn to fear God and be humbled, so as to come through fear at length to grace and love, then...we should be opening great chasms and gulfs, not only to impiety, but to the depths of hell."<sup>119</sup> As noted above, this second kind of hiddenness is distinct from the first

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<sup>117</sup> SA 3, 253.3-11; LW 33, 139 [trans. Watson].

<sup>118</sup> LW 33, 140.

<sup>119</sup> LW 33, 61. In *The First Disputation Against the Antinomians* (1537), Luther said, "God in his nature and majesty (*Deus in natura et maiestate*) is our adversary. He demands the fulfilling of the law (*exigit legem*) and

because God is not the object of faith, but “wills to be unknown to us (*ignorari a nobis uult*)” so that we can only “fear and adore (*timere [et] adorare*).”<sup>120</sup> Through this fear we then come to Christ who possesses the treasures of salvation “in a hidden way (*absconditi*).”<sup>121</sup> According to Luther, Christ hides himself *sub contrario* in order to rebuff reason and to make faith necessary.<sup>122</sup> The second kind of hiddenness makes faith necessary in terms of an imperative response to anxiety caused by the mystery of predestination and reprobation, and faith is always renewed over against this awareness. Gerrish comments:

The forbidding figure waits on the edge of faith, and, for this reason, determines (in some measure) the content of faith, which has the character of a turning from the hidden God. The luminous object of faith is set against a dark, threatening background. Awareness of the hidden God, therefore, qualifies faith in Christ. How, indeed, could it be otherwise if, as Luther tells us, we should adore the hidden God?... Faith returns constantly from the God on the perimeter of human experience to the incarnate God whom it makes its center.<sup>123</sup>

Luther’s idea that God looks most like himself when he looks least like himself (the cross) is a central idea to Luther’s understanding of the gospel. With respect to Calvin studies, T. H. L. Parker has recognized that “the concept of *Deus absconditus* is as native to Calvin’s theology as it is to Luther’s,” but Parker only touches upon Calvin’s understanding.<sup>124</sup> Gerrish, however, gives an insightful comparison of Luther and Calvin in “‘To the Unknown God’ Luther and Calvin on the Hiddenness of God,” though admittedly he reflects the state of scholarship as the article is heavily weighted toward Luther, but is light on Calvin.<sup>125</sup> Muller gives more detail on

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threatens the transgressors with death. But when he associates with our infirmity, takes out nature, our sins and death, then he is not our adversary” (*WA* 39 1, 370.14-16).

<sup>120</sup> *SA* 3, 253.16-17, 254.9; *LW* 33, 139, 140.

<sup>121</sup> *LW* 33, 139-40.

<sup>122</sup> *LW* 33, 62. This kind of hiddenness is ultimately about the theology of the cross.

<sup>123</sup> Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God,’” 138.

<sup>124</sup> T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin’s Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959), 11.

<sup>125</sup> See n. 95 above.

Calvin's view in *Christ and the Decree*.<sup>126</sup> In his *Unaccommodated Calvin*, Muller comments on recent research into Calvin's view on the hiddenness of God and its background: "Actual sources have remained obscure, while, at the same time, a predominantly 'Scotist-nominalist background to Calvin's assumptions concerning divine transcendence and hiddenness has been identified alongside what can be called the 'Thomistic' trajectory of literal exegesis."<sup>127</sup> As we have already noted, Calvin's proclivity to certain nominalistic principles aligned him with Luther. This is evident when dealing with the issue of the hiddenness of God. John Dillenberger summarizes the earlier scholarship on the background of Luther's thought, showing a general consensus that Luther's concept of hiddenness owes something to Augustinianism, nominalism, and mysticism though these are recast by Luther's emphasis on faith, through which the hidden becomes known in Christ.<sup>128</sup> We shall see below that Calvin either simply followed Luther in this, or that he recast the mold himself and ended up with much the same thing.

Like Luther, Calvin also had a *modus loquendi* for the two kinds of hiddenness.<sup>129</sup> Calvin spoke of the mysteries of "law and gospel... which he has deigned to reveal by his word" with the result that "now no abyss is here." "Yet," Calvin qualified, "his wonderful method of governing the universe is rightly called an abyss (*abyssus*), because while it is hidden (*latet*) from us, we ought reverently to adore it (*reverenter adoranda est*)." As with Luther, we find

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<sup>126</sup> Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), 18-27.

<sup>127</sup> Muller, *Unaccommodated Calvin*, 41. See also 205 n. 11 for bibliography of recent research of this theme coming primarily from Susan E. Schreiner's work on Calvin's Job commentary.

<sup>128</sup> John Dillenberger, *God hidden and Revealed: The Interpretation of Luther's Deus Absconditus and Its Significance for Religious Thought Today* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), 37-47. Lohse emphasizes the newness of Luther's conception, "The distinction between the *Deus absconditus* and the *Deus revelatus* may be Luther's most important contribution to the tradition of the Christian doctrine of God. It is, of course, correct that since Neoplatonism the theme of God's hiddenness or unknowability continually occupied Christian theology, and that it was Nicholas of Cusa in particular who was of some importance to Luther. Luther, however, gave further point to these statements about the hidden God" (*Martin Luther's Theology*, 217).



Calvin indicating two wills in God: “Moses proclaims that the will of God is to be sought not far off in the clouds or in abysses, because it has been set forth familiarly in the law [Deut. 30:11-14],” but, Calvin added, “He has another hidden will (*aliam voluntatem absconditam*) which may be compared to a deep abyss.” Calvin said that Moses distinguished the hidden and the revealed, “‘The secret things (*occulta*),’ he says, ‘belong to the Lord our God, but what is here written, to you and your children’ [Deut. 29:29 p.]” For Calvin, the secrets of God pertain to “providence, that determinative principle of all things, from which flows nothing but right, although the reasons have been hidden (*absconditae*).”<sup>130</sup> While these statements refer to God’s governance of the world, Gerrish notes that for Calvin, “The profoundest depths of hiddenness are located in the problem of double predestination, in which the will of God appears divided against itself and the individual is threatened with the possibility of rejection and loss. Here Calvin, no less than Luther, finds himself on the brink of an ‘abyss of sightless darkness.’”<sup>131</sup> The determinative principle of salvation and damnation was, for Calvin, predestination and reprobation. Reprobation is the will of God not just to the fall, called the *decretum horribile* by Calvin, but it is the will of God unto final damnation, as a consequence of the *decretum horribile*. One can almost feel Calvin trembling before the decree as he spoke of predestination anxiety afflicting one’s consciousness, “The mind could not be infected by a more pestilential error than that

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<sup>129</sup> Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God,’” 143. Luther’s new approach to speaking theologically is documented by Leif Grane, *Modus loquendi theologicus: Luthers Kamp und die Erneuerung der Theologie (1515-1518)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

<sup>130</sup> *OS* 3, 204.13-30, 205.17-19; *Inst.* 1.17.2 [trans. Battles]. John T. McNeill comments, “Calvin does not delineate two wills in God, but thinks of the inaccessible abyss of God’s inner being...and the mysteries of revelation itself.” He then quotes Calvin, “But even though his will is one and simple in him, it appears manifold to us” (Ibid. n. 4, McNeill cites “sec. 3” for Calvin’s quote but it does not appear in 1.17.3. It is found in 1.18.3). It should be pointed out that Calvin was talking specifically about how God’s secret will of governance can be reconciled with his will of precept found in the law, which forbids evils that God has secretly ordained for ruling his creation. With respect to God’s hidden will of predestination and revealed will in Christ, neither Luther nor Calvin believed that the wills are divided by conflict. They seem to be in divided by human perception until they are resolved into one when predestination is seen to be in Christ.

<sup>131</sup> Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God,’” 141.

which overwhelms and unsettles the conscience from its peace and tranquility toward God.”<sup>132</sup>

Calvin consistently taught that the decrees themselves were hidden from human sight.

Concerning the angels’ fall: “No other cause of this fact can be adduced but reprobation (*reprobatio*), which is hidden in God’s secret plan (*quae in arcano Dei consilio abscondita est*).”<sup>133</sup>

With respect to Ezekiel 33:11 where “God declares that he does not will the death of one who dies, but that he should turn and live,” Calvin identified the same concepts as Luther.<sup>134</sup> Erasmus had argued, based on the Ezekiel text, that if God does not will the death of the wicked, then “it is to be imputed to our own will.”<sup>135</sup> Luther responded, “It is right...if you speak of God as preached,” since “he comes with the word of salvation to all, and the fault is in the will that does not admit him.” But for Luther there was also that hidden, secret, inscrutable, unknowable will of majesty that “neither deplores nor takes away death, but works life, death, and all in all.”<sup>136</sup> Calvin identified the same elements in his reply to Pighius, “Here certainly is the Gordian knot, if you take the saying of Ezekiel, that God does not will the death of him who dies, to refer to his secret plan (*de arcano consilio*).” Calvin said that the verse referred to “all [kinds of] support” that God provides which would, as Augustine taught, lead people to salvation “if only they were in a healthy condition.”<sup>137</sup> This is the outward means of the gospel that Luther called “everything necessary for salvation.”<sup>138</sup> Calvin strengthened the distinction by returning again to God’s hiddenness: “Meanwhile God’s secret plan (*arcanum...consilium*) by which he passes

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<sup>132</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.4.

<sup>133</sup> *OS* 4, 389.22-24; *Inst.* 3.23.4 [trans. Battles].

<sup>134</sup> *BLW* 198.

<sup>135</sup> *LCC* 17, 56.

<sup>136</sup> *LW* 33, 140.

<sup>137</sup> *CO* 6, 371; *BLW* 198-99.

<sup>138</sup> *LW* 33, 146.

over one and chooses another, remains his own, and one should not inquire too curiously into it if one does not want to be overwhelmed by [God's] glory."<sup>139</sup> The structure of Calvin's argument was the same as Luther's: there are statements of universal offer in Scripture that pertain to the calling of the gospel, but according to his secret plan God only chooses some to accept the offer, and inquiring into God's hidden will is dangerous, so that humans should be content to remain in awe of it. The response of both reformers to the hidden will was the same: Luther said *timere (et) adorare* and for Calvin that will *reverenter adoranda est*.<sup>140</sup> Calvin said that Pighius did not grasp the distinction between God's outward support and his secret plan and mistakenly held to the notion of "the equal distribution of grace."<sup>141</sup> Luther also faulted his opponent: "Diatrobe...deceives herself...by not making any distinction between God preached and God hidden."<sup>142</sup> According to Luther, Erasmus's other problem was that he did not allow God to be God.<sup>143</sup> Calvin similarly scolded Pighius: "Pighius...does not allow God to be wiser than he with his foolish brain can comprehend."<sup>144</sup>

Calvin's position also agrees with Luther in that he does not question the fact of predestination and reprobation, and he added that since the identities of these two groups are hidden, this can lead to uncertainty and fear apart from the knowledge of Christ. Calvin wrote:

Rare indeed is the mind that is not repeatedly struck with this thought: whence comes your salvation but from God's election? Now, what revelation do you have of your election? This thought, if it has impressed itself upon him, either continually strikes him in his misery with harsh torments or utterly overwhelms him.<sup>145</sup>

Calvin, like Luther, also saw this fear as having a salutary effect on the elect:

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<sup>139</sup> *BLW* 199.

<sup>140</sup> See at n. 120 and 130 respectively.

<sup>141</sup> *BLW* 199.

<sup>142</sup> *LW* 33, 140.

<sup>143</sup> *LW* 33, 59, 180.

<sup>144</sup> *BLW* 191.

In the very darkness that frightens them not only is the usefulness of this doctrine made known but also its very sweet fruit. We shall never be clearly persuaded, as we ought to be, that our salvation flows from the wellspring of God's free mercy until we come to know his eternal election, which illuminates God's grace by this contrast: that he does not indiscriminately adopt all into the hope of salvation but gives to some what he denies to others.<sup>146</sup>

Election for Calvin threw God's grace into sharp relief by the fact that it meant some were not chosen. Thus there also appears in Calvin's thought a stark contrast between God's hiddenness and his revelation. This made man's need for grace all the more acute. What was Calvin's solution to the "harsh torments" and the "darkness that frightens?" He answered, "To be assured of our salvation we must begin with the Word."<sup>147</sup> Calvin outlined the two approaches to election and their consequences, "For just as those engulf themselves in a deadly abyss who, to make their election more certain, investigate God's eternal plan apart from his Word, so those who rightly and duly examine it as it is contained in his Word reap the inestimable fruit of comfort."<sup>148</sup> By going to the Word Calvin said that one could find relief from predestination anxiety and he also said that election comes to taste like "very sweet fruit." Luther, in his *Lectures on Genesis* at 26:9, asserted that through the revealed God we can know the predestinating will of the hidden God towards us:

Accept the present promise and the predestination, and do not inquire too curiously about the secret counsels of God (*de arcanis Dei consiliis*). If you believe in the revealed God (*Deum revelatum*) and accept His Word, He will gradually also reveal the hidden God (*paulatim etiam absconditum Deum revelabit*); for "He who sees me also sees the Father," as John 14:9 says.... If you cling to the revealed God with a firm faith, so that your heart is so minded that you will not lose Christ even if you are deprived of everything, then you are most assuredly predestined, and you will understand the hidden God (*tum certissime praedestinatus es, et absconditum Deum intelliges*). Indeed, you understand Him even now if you acknowledge the Son and His will, namely, that He wants to reveal Himself to you, that He wants to be your

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<sup>145</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.4.

<sup>146</sup> *Inst.* 3.21.1.

<sup>147</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.3.

<sup>148</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.4.

Lord and your Savior. Therefore you are sure that God is also your Lord and Father.<sup>149</sup>

Luther came to the second kind of hiddenness through the first: “This is how He set forth His will and counsel: ‘I will reveal My foreknowledge and predestination to you in an extraordinary manner, but not by this way of reason and carnal wisdom, as you imagine. This is how I will do so: From an unrevealed God I will become a revealed God.... I will be made flesh or send My Son.’” Luther then said that by taking hold of Christ through word and sacrament, “You may know that you are predestined (*ut possis scire, an sis praeordinatus*).<sup>150</sup> Calvin grounded assurance in the same approach—coming to the hidden through the revealed. To those who said that election is ineffectual until confirmed by faith, Calvin said that faith merely brings one’s election to light. Calvin maintained:

The secret plan of God (*arcanum Dei consilium*), which lay hidden (*latebat*), begins to come to light (*elucescere*)...that what was unknown (*incognitum*) is now confirmed.... Temerity must be restrained by the soberness of faith in order that God, in his outward Word, may sufficiently witness his secret grace to us (*ut Deus occultae suae gratiae nobis testis sufficiat in externo verbo*).<sup>151</sup>

Calvin also identified Christ as the one who supremely reveals our eternal destiny:

If we have been chosen in him, we shall find assurance of our election not in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive of him alone and apart from the Son (*si nudum illum absque Filio imaginamur*). Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election (*Christus ergo speculum est in quo electionem nostram contemplari convenit, et sine fraude licet*).<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> *WA* 43, 460.26-35; *LW* 5, 46 [trans. Schick]. In *Table Talk*, Luther was quoted as saying, “Begin from below, from the incarnate Son.... Christ will bring you to the hidden God.... If you take the revealed God, he will bring you the hidden God at the same time” (trans. Gerrish, “‘To the Unknown God’,” 140).

<sup>150</sup> *WA* 43, 459.22-34; *LW* 5, 44-45 [trans. Schick].

<sup>151</sup> *OS* 4, 413.16-19. 414.1-3; *Inst.* 3.24.3. See also 3.24.4.

<sup>152</sup> *OS* 4, 415.39 – 416.4; *Inst.* 3.24.5. Luther used the same figure of Christ a mirror of our election, “The highest of all God’s commands is this, that we hold up before our eyes the image of his dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Every day he should be our excellent mirror (*Spiegel*) wherein we behold how much God loves us and how well, in his infinite goodness, he has cared for us in that he gave his dear Son for us. In this way, I say, and in no other, does one learn how to deal properly with the question of predestination” (Letter to Barbara Lisskirchen, April 30, 1531. *WA Br* 6, 87; *LCC* 18, 116 [trans. Tappert]). I. John Hesselink, “Calvin’s Theology,” in *The Cambridge*

Election for Calvin does not depend on faith but it becomes known through faith, faith looking into the mirror of Christ who reflects God's good will. Calvin called "communion with Christ" "sufficiently clear...testimony that we have been inscribed in the book of life." Like Luther, Calvin also emphasized that there can be no disjunct between the will of the Father and his revelation in Christ: "Rather he faithfully reveals to us that will as it was from the beginning and ever shall be." Thus Calvin concluded, "The fact that...the firmness of our election is joined to our calling is another means of establishing our assurance." Calvin asked, "How insane are we to seek outside him what we have already in him obtained, and can find in him alone." We must "embrace Christ, who is graciously offered to us, and comes to meet us. He will reckon us in his flock and enclose us within his fold." Calvin entertained whether the need to persevere cast doubt on the certainty of election? As he said, "Christ has freed us from this anxiety, for these promises surely apply to the future."<sup>153</sup> While Calvin and Luther saw persistence as essential to claiming assurance, as long as the person was holding firm to the promise they may be assured of their election and that, according to Luther, "If the ungodly are scandalized and depart in great numbers [John 6:66], yet the elect will remain (*Electi tamen manebunt*)."<sup>154</sup>

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*Companion to John Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ., 2004), 84, says that Augustine also spoke of Christ as the mirror of election.

<sup>153</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.5.

<sup>154</sup> *LW* 33, 180. See also 60-62, 65, 85, 99, 172. Randall Zachman, *The Assurance of Faith: Conscience in the Theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), argues that Luther and Calvin broke with the Augustinian tradition by grounding assurance in an objective righteousness in Christ rather than locating it in God's gracious work within the *viator*. Zachman says that the reformers were successful in establishing an objective ground for assurance insofar as they directed their hearers to Christ and the promise, but they stumbled into subjectivity when they required the conscience to confirm this by the testimony of sincere faith. According to Zachman, this element of subjectivity undermines the objectified assurance given in Christ. While Zachman's position could be pressed further in the direction of Universalism, Luther and Calvin saw the struggle for faith and assurance as part of the Christian life that drove Christians to the word and sacraments. While Luther's testimony on this is well known, Calvin was clear that the Lord's Supper was given to nourish faith and console troubled consciences so that "to fortify our faith...and to further us in all sanctity of life...we ought to make more use of it, the more we feel oppressed by the disease" (*Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper* (1541), *TT* 152, see 143-153). Thus the reformers did not want to eliminate all subjectivity but give it an objective basis of appeal to which it would continually return for assurance of faith. Zachman also posits that Luther's *theologia crucis* allowed for the church to be hidden under the contrary appearance, while Calvin's view of the fatherhood of God, though it was grounded

Luther and Calvin both seemed to identify the hidden God, in the second kind of hiddenness, with God the Father. As we saw above, Luther said, “If you acknowledge the Son,” then “you are sure that God is also your Lord and Father.” This assumes that the will of the Father cannot be known apart from Christ. We also saw Calvin saying assurance cannot be found if we imagine the Father “alone and apart from the Son (*nudum...absque Filio*).”<sup>155</sup> Muller seems to miss this when he says, “Calvin does not project here an image of the Father as *deus nudus absconditus*.”<sup>156</sup> But Muller points out that Calvin identified the Son with the second kind of hiddenness. Calvin wrote: “Although Christ interposes himself as mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose (*ius legendi communiter vindicat cum Patre*). ‘I am not speaking,’ he says, ‘of all; I know whom I have chosen.’ [John 13:18.]” Calvin then referred to Christ as “the Author of election (*Christus electionis...authorem*).”<sup>157</sup> Muller comments, “Calvin insists that the Son is more than a means to the end set forth by the Father.... This formulation points to the distinction between the second person of the trinity considered as God and the person of the Son in his mediatorial office, in union with the flesh.”<sup>158</sup> Thus, for Calvin, the hidden God is not identical to or exclusive of the Father. The Son participates in the hidden decree as Son and functions outside of the incarnation in this capacity, but in the capacity of mediator the Son is *Deus revelatus in carne*. The next question is whether Luther also conceived of the Son as part of the hiddenness of God. Luther quoted John 13:18 in *BW* but he did not expound upon it so that the question might receive a clear answer.<sup>159</sup> In the *Lecture on*

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in Christ, required the externals to match the profession in a heightened way and thus created a higher standard for assurance.

<sup>155</sup> See at n. 146 and 149 respectively.

<sup>156</sup> Muller, *Christ*, 25.

<sup>157</sup> *OS* 4, 387.27-30; *Inst.* 3.22.7.

<sup>158</sup> Muller, *Christ*, 25.

<sup>159</sup> *LW* 33, 25, 59.

*Genesis* however, Luther did indicate that he viewed the Son in this capacity. When he wrote of the hidden becoming revealed he put these words in the mouth of the divinity, “I [the hidden God] will be made flesh or send my Son.” Here we see Luther putting the Son, who was made flesh, and the Father, who sent the Son, together in the same hiddenness that becomes known in Christ. Luther was showing that the intent of the hidden God, whether it be the Father’s hiddenness or the Son’s, is to be revealed in salvation and become a source of assurance.

In *Lectures on Genesis* Luther was more explicit than in *BW* in resolving the tension between the revealed and hidden God so that they clearly appear as aspects of one and the same God. The questions might be asked, “Why this is so?” and “Could the *Lectures on Genesis* have influenced Calvin?” In *Lectures on Genesis*, Luther was responding to “the nobles and persons of importance” who were using predestination to say, “If I am predestined, I shall be saved whether I do good or evil. If I am not predestined, I shall be condemned regardless of my works.”<sup>160</sup> Luther saw this as either leading to “despair...or contempt for God, for the Holy Bible, for Baptism, and for all the blessings of God through which he wanted us to be strengthened over against uncertainty and doubt.” Luther also saw an antinomian danger which would lead people to “say with the Epicureans: ‘Let us live, eat, and drink; tomorrow we shall die’ (cf. 1 Cor. 15:32).” In the course of his argument against this error Luther noted that he had taught previously on these issues in *BW*, and he implied that these abuses might have been avoided if more attention had been given to what he had written about the revealed God. Luther wrote: “This is how I have taught in my book *On the Bondage of the Will* and elsewhere, namely, that a distinction must be made when one deals with the knowledge, or rather with the subject, of the divinity. For one must debate either about the hidden God or about the revealed God.”<sup>161</sup> One

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<sup>160</sup> *LW* 5, 42.

<sup>161</sup> *LW* 5, 43.



gets the impression that Luther's response to Erasmus, with its emphasis on necessity, might have been used by the "persons of importance" to support their error. Luther said:

I have written that everything is absolute and unavoidable (*esse omnia absoluta et necessaria*); but at the same time I have added that one must look at the revealed God.... But they will pass over all these places and take only those that deal with the hidden God. Accordingly, you who are listening to me now should remember that I have taught that one should not inquire into the predestination of the hidden God but should be satisfied with what is revealed through the calling and through the ministry of the Word (*quae revelatur per vocationem et per ministerium verbi*). For then you can be sure about your faith and salvation.... But I have publicly stated these same things elsewhere in my books.<sup>162</sup>

While Luther did emphasize the importance of focusing on the revealed God in *BW*, he did not point out as clearly as he did in the *Lectures on Genesis* that this is the means of finding assurance. In *BW*, Luther said, "We must be guided by the word and not that inscrutable will," but he did not specify what the word guides us into.<sup>163</sup> There are myriad warnings against the temerity of human reason that seeks the knowledge of predestination according to the hiddenness of God.<sup>164</sup> Luther said he was once so despairing over this that he "wished he had never been created a man" but he had come "near to grace" through this experience. While these statements do show that Luther was speaking about finding assurance in the revelation of Christ, it must be noted that unsophisticated readers could miss the point, especially as Luther's greater emphasis in *BW* was on divine necessity as the negation of free choice. Thus the different contexts of *BW* and the *Lectures on Genesis* must be taken into account in assessing their different emphases. In *BW* Luther's opponent emphasized human freedom, but in the *Lectures on Genesis* Luther was concerned that people not take the doctrine of necessity to mean a fatalistic despair or moral license. The antinomians had surfaced between the writing of these two. In view of the

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<sup>162</sup> *WA* 43, 463.5-17; *LW* 5, 50 [Schick]. Calvin said that, "Let this therefore, be the way of our inquiring: that we obtain the beginning [of comfort] by the call of God (*a Dei vocatione*) and we end with the same" (*OS* 4, 415.3-4; *Inst.* 3.24.4.)

<sup>163</sup> *LW* 33, 140.

antinomian error, Luther laid greater emphasis upon Christ and the sacraments as a way into the knowledge of the hidden God who chooses his people in Christ. But as we have said, this emphasis was not missing from *BW*. In fact, Luther's own personal testimony rings with this knowledge of the hidden God now revealed through faith. While Luther did not use the hidden God of predestination as the starting point of assurance, he did appeal to predestination as a basis for assurance once faith was grounded in Christ. Luther wrote that he was "assured and certain" once he realized that "God has taken salvation out of my hands into his, making it depend on his choice and not mine."<sup>165</sup> Luther now knows hidden predestination as the reality behind his faith that stabilizes it and makes it unshakable.<sup>166</sup> While some misconstrued Luther's view of predestination, Calvin, the astute theologian and fellow sufferer, saw predestination in the same comforting light. Given Calvin's explicit use of Luther's commentary for his own Genesis commentary, it would be tempting to assume that Luther's clearer statements in the *Lectures on Genesis* influenced Calvin's conception of hiddenness and revelation. But it does not appear that volume three, where Luther's exposition occurs, and was available to Calvin before 1554, when his own commentary was published,<sup>167</sup> and Calvin's conception of the hidden and revealed

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<sup>164</sup> *LW* 33, 60, 62, 138-40, 145-47, 289-90.

<sup>165</sup> *LW* 33, 289. Fredrik Brosché, *Luther on Predestination: The Antinomy and the Unity between Love and Wrath in Luther's Concept of God* (Uppsala Univ., 1978), sees predestination anxiety relieved in Luther's theology as "The hidden God which faith must grasp is Christ." For Luther's understanding of predestination as comfort see *ibid.* 158-207. Gerrish says, "He [Luther] insists that faith in Christ is knowledge of the hidden God" ("To the Unknown God," 140).

<sup>166</sup> *LW* 33, 65.

<sup>167</sup> Lane's research on Calvin's Genesis commentary is most helpful here, "Calvin names four contemporary authors, three of them only once. Most significant is Luther, who is named no less than five times.... Calvin confirms this when he states, with reference to this commentary, that out of respect for Luther he had abstained more than a hundred times from naming him. Calvin's first hand knowledge of Luther is therefore certain. This does not mean, however, that Calvin had access to *all* of Luther's lectures on Genesis. These were published in four volumes, from 1544 to 1554. The first predates Calvin's exegesis of Genesis; the last volume clearly appeared too late to be used. What of the other two? First, of Calvin's four references to Luther, three appear in the first volume, the fourth in the second volume, which ends at 25:10. Secondly all of Calvin's citations after 25:10 have been sought in Luther. This search has yielded all but nothing, which suggests that Calvin had just the first two volumes before him and therefore had access to Luther's exposition of chapters 1-25:10" ("The Sources of the Citations in Calvin's Genesis Commentary," in *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999], 211).

aspects of God appears in the 1539 *Institutes*.<sup>168</sup> Thus, if Calvin had been influenced by Luther on this issue, he would most likely have been echoing Luther's *BW*. If Calvin was not directly influenced by Luther, he might have been taking his lead from Augustine and the same medieval influences that shaped Luther. If that was the case, then we may say that Calvin gravitated toward the same thought processes as Luther on the topics of predestination and assurance with respect to hiddenness and revelation. More definite conclusions await further research into exactly where the novelty of Luther's understanding lies and whether or not Calvin reflects uniquely Lutheran ideas or simply Augustinian ones.

### III. The Charge of Disunity and the Significance of Calvin's Eucharistic Statements

Lane has argued that Calvin wanted to distance himself from Luther's doctrine of "absolute necessity" and did so in *EP*, where he employed the medieval distinction that Luther rejected in *BW*—the distinction between the necessity of consequence and the necessity of the consequent.<sup>169</sup> Calvin opened *EP* writing of Pighius's previous attack against him: "He attacked me by name, so as to stab at pious and sane doctrine through my side (*per cuius latus piam sanamque doctrinam confoderet*)."<sup>170</sup> This is parallel with Calvin's statement in *BLW* that Pighius did "indeed frankly declare that he is doing this with the specific intention of (as it were) driving his spear through my side into Luther (*Lutherum et alios omnes nostros per latus meum confodiat*)."<sup>171</sup> Since Calvin's statement in *EP* hearkens back to Luther as the original referent, it does not appear that Calvin wanted to distance himself from Luther, but rather he continued to associate Luther with the "sane doctrine" he was still defending. It might be asked however, "To what extent did Luther represent sound doctrine to Calvin," since in *EP* Calvin had made

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<sup>168</sup> *Inst.* 3.24.3, 5.

<sup>169</sup> *EP* 170. *LW* 33, 40.

<sup>170</sup> *OC* 3, 1, 13.4-8; *EP* 53 [trans. Reid].

positive use of the medieval distinction that Luther rejected? We have already argued that this difference does not put the reformers' systems at odds, but only shows Calvin rescuing a distinction he thought had been too quickly discarded by Luther and using it to support a point that Luther had conceded: things appear contingent from the human perspective.<sup>172</sup>

Lane, however, suggests another reason for Calvin's acceptance of the scholastic distinction. Lane sees Calvin's adoption of the two kinds of necessity as aligning him with the medieval scholastics opposite to Luther. Lane writes:

Calvin's acceptance of this scholastic distinction set him apart from Luther and aligned him with the medieval scholastics. Why did Calvin here embrace the distinction when he more often rejected such scholastic distinctions as sophistic subtlety? Furthermore, why should Calvin use the distinction when his expressed concern was "lest any subtlety should prevent even the most simple of my readers from understanding what I say"? In 1543 Calvin had promised an answer to the charge that he agreed with Luther in asserting absolute necessity. In 1550 [Sic.] he answers the charge—rejecting the idea of absolute necessity, by means of the scholastic distinction. The simple were indeed in danger of being confused—by Luther's position. It was in order to rescue the simple from Luther's unsubtle but extreme view that Calvin resorted to the uncharacteristic use of scholastic distinctions. Calvin is careful not to name Luther when tackling the issue in 1550 [sic], which would have been harder had he followed Pighius's agenda and tackled it in 1543.<sup>173</sup>

Lane prefaces this by saying, "Pighius assumed that Calvin agreed with Luther's teaching that 'nothing happens to us contingently, but everything by sheer necessity.'"<sup>174</sup> Calvin answered this by distinguishing the divine and human points of view. When speaking about the divine perspective Calvin agreed there was no contingency but from the human point of view there was. We demonstrated that Luther accepted the contingency that Calvin tried to prove with his distinction. We also showed that Calvin actually agreed with Luther's position against the

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<sup>171</sup> *CO* 6, 334; *BLW* 8 [trans. Davies].

<sup>172</sup> See Chapter 1, § I, A. Chapter 4, § III, C.

<sup>173</sup> Lane, "Bondage and Liberation," 25. The publication of *EP* was 1552.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.* 24. See *BLW* 171.

medieval scholastics who taught that contingency did not apply to God at all.<sup>175</sup> So, far from being embarrassed by Luther's position and agreeing with the scholastics, Calvin actually disagreed with them over the applicability of contingency to the divine and used one of their favorite distinctions to support Luther's opposition to them. And it is clear that Luther's view was not extreme once it is realized that he was not reducing everything to "absolute necessity" in the scholastic sense of "absolute necessity."<sup>176</sup> It only seems extreme if taken at face value (rather than provocatively) or according to the presuppositions of McSorley.<sup>177</sup>

Lane says, "In 1543 Calvin had promised an answer to the charge that he agreed with Luther in asserting absolute necessity." But Pighius never directly charged Calvin with this. The charge was not agreement with Luther, but disagreement because, to Pighius's mind, the reformers had backed away from Luther's teaching on "absolute necessity" by positing human freedom "in external matters and in public affairs."<sup>178</sup> While Pighius suspected division in the ranks, he did not accept their retraction as sincere. The reformers could not be trusted on this point since, according to Pighius, they advocated using tricks to advance the gospel, they did not formally reject Luther, and they did not condemn their earlier books. Thus the formal charge before Calvin was one of disagreement with Luther, but if the allowance of free choice in the civil realm was not sincere, then the Pighius's criticisms against Luther's position would stick to Calvin as well. To which charge did Calvin respond? In *BLW*, Calvin replied to the charge that allowance for freedom in the civil realm was stepping back from Luther's position on necessity.<sup>179</sup> He never promised to answer the charge as to whether or not he agreed with

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<sup>175</sup> See Chapter 4, § III, C.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> See Chapter 5, § V, B.

<sup>178</sup> Calvin had conceded freedom in the civil realm in the 1539. *Inst.* 2.4.6-8.

<sup>179</sup> See Chapter 3, at n. 79-93.

Luther's doctrine of necessity. Agreement was assumed by Calvin! Lane also implies that Calvin did not follow Pighius's agenda in speaking to necessity, but Calvin delayed his treatment of providence and predestination so that he would not have to disagree with Luther by name. While Calvin said these subjects would be dealt with formally in a second work, this did not stop him, as we have seen, from asserting himself on these issues in *BLW*. In fact, whenever he does treat these issues, he defends his solidarity with Luther and our analysis has born out his claim to essential agreement. The reason given by Calvin for postponing the formal discussion of providence and predestination was his rush to get his book into the printers before the Frankfurt book fair. There is no reason why this should not be taken at face value, as it is the only credible historical reason we know for the postponement of Calvin's discussion.<sup>180</sup>

There is, however, another reason for accepting the complete sincerity of Calvin's claim to full agreement with Luther. While Calvin did not explicitly defend his solidarity with Luther on the doctrine of the will in *EP*, this does not mean that Calvin was indifferent about his relationship to his Reformation forefather. In fact, in the subsequent controversies over the Lord's Supper with the Lutherans Joachim Westphal and Tileman Hesshusius, Calvin was forced to defend his solidarity with Luther again; although this time he conceded differences between himself and Luther. In his *Second Defense Against Westphal*, Calvin frankly acknowledged his differences with Luther over bodily presence. Calvin wrote: "Luther disagreed with us in regard to substantial eating, and when carried by the heat of controversy beyond the limits of just moderation, uttered several things from which I dissent."<sup>181</sup> He maintained that Luther was reactionary and too extreme with other Protestants who differed with him. Luther went beyond the heart of the matter, which was merely the efficacy of the sacramental signs not also their

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<sup>180</sup> *BLW* 244.

mode of efficacy.<sup>182</sup> Calvin also attributed errors to Luther because of his position as an early pioneer who was unable to fully extricate himself from the medieval mindset.<sup>183</sup> In the *Last Admonition to Westphal*, Calvin argued that Luther was an Elijah of God, though not the last Elijah as some had claimed, and thus more progress needed to be made.<sup>184</sup>

Calvin also made a distinction among Luther's disciples. There were genuine disciples who followed their master down the path he cleared and then there were "apes" who, after their teacher had passed, dug in their heels and refused to go on any further.<sup>185</sup> Calvin showed that he was not afraid to admit where Luther was wrong. Calvin believed it was the disciple's job to develop beyond his master if necessary or to refocus the heart of the matter and reject unfortunate extensions or exaggerations. But this was not necessary on the issue of the will. On the Lord's Supper, however, Calvin knew he disagreed with Luther on the mode of Christ's presence and he openly admitted it. Someone might object that this was because Calvin was more mature in the later Eucharistic controversies and could admit cracks in the cement of reform that the young reformer was eager to whitewash. But already in the early Eucharistic discussions, before *BLW*, Calvin had maintained a basic agreement with Luther while also keeping "clear water" between himself and some of Luther's expressions. He wrote:

When Luther began to teach, he regarded the matter of the Supper in such a way, that, with respect to the corporeal presence of Christ, he appeared to leave it as the world generally conceived it. For while condemning transubstantiation, he said the

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<sup>181</sup> *Second Defense of the Faith Concerning the Sacraments in Answer to Joachim Westphal*, T&T 2, 306, 307. See also 277, 308, 327.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.* 253, 276, 306-08. In the dispute with Hesshusius Calvin wrote, "The dispute is not about presence or substantial eating, but about how both these are to be understood" (*The clear explanation of sound doctrine concerning the true partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper*, TT 270).

<sup>183</sup> *Second Defense to Westphal*, T&T 2, 318, 323.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*, T&T 2, 477.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, T&T 2, 323, 325.

bread was the body of Christ.... Further he added some similes which were a little harsh and crude.<sup>186</sup>

Calvin and Luther on the Lord's Supper were not like Calvin and Luther on the will. Some might argue that the context made all the difference. Calvin was trying to maintain a united front against Rome on the issue of the will, but he would gladly distinguish himself from Luther on those points where he disagreed with the Lutherans on the Lord's Supper and was not concerned with unity. But the contexts were not fundamentally different, as Calvin desired to show unity in both instances. Calvin's purpose in the Lutheran treatises was to show basic unity with Luther on the Lord's Supper for the sake of reclaiming Protestant unity with his followers, despite what he considered secondary differences. The second generation of Lutherans came to suspect Calvin of being a closet Zwinglian who revealed his true identity in signing the *Consensus Tigurinus* with the Swiss in 1549. This led Calvin to recall his strong ties and intimate relations with Luther's circle, Luther's own estimate of him, and his unwavering commitment to substantial feeding on the flesh and blood of Christ. His epistolary appeals to Melanchthon also demonstrated his desire to keep unity with the followers of Luther as well as his appeal to Archbishop Thomas Cranmer for an international conference of theologians to unify the evangelical churches for posterity.<sup>187</sup>

Moreover, in the case of the Lord's Supper Calvin showed that he could disagree with Luther

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<sup>186</sup> *Short Treatise*, TT 164, was written in 1540 and published in 1541. See the whole section 163-66. See also Calvin's letter to Bucer of January 12, 1538 (CO 10 137-138 [no. 87]), where Calvin feared that Luther would impose his notion of the infinite flesh of Christ (*infinitum... Christo corpus*) and local presence (*localem praesentium*) on the Concord of Wittenberg (1536) and thus make it impossible for the Swiss to join. While Calvin desired unity with Luther he said emphatically, "He is not the only one in the church of God whom we have to consider," and "there is a bit of obstinacy mixed with his firmness" (trans. Brian Gerrish, "The Pathfinder: Calvin's Image of Martin Luther," in *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on the Reformation Heritage* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1982), 30-31).

<sup>187</sup> For Calvin's appeal to Luther and the first Lutherans see *Second Defense to Westphal*, T&T 2, 253. Specifically for Melanchthon see Timothy Wengert, "We Will Feast Together in Heaven Forever": The Epistolary Friendship of John Calvin and Philip Melanchthon," in *Melanchthon in Europe: His Work and Influence beyond Wittenberg* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 36-42. For Calvin's appeal to substantial feeding see *The true partaking of the flesh and blood* (1561), TT 264, 267, 270, 276. *Short Treatise* (1541), TT 166. *Inst.* 4.17.12. Calvin's letter to Thomas Cranmer, April 1552, mentions Melanchthon and Bullinger and of his own concern that if he could be of any service to the cause of evangelical unity he "would not grudge to cross even ten seas, if need were on account of it" (*Letters of John Calvin*, vol. 2 [Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858], 348).



and argue for Protestant unity at the same time. So while Lane could be right in saying that Calvin was motivated to keep up the illusion of solidarity in the debate over the will, there is at least a burden of proof to be met, since Calvin freely disagreed with Luther throughout their careers when solidarity was at stake over the Lord's Supper and when Lutheran suspicions of him were running high.<sup>188</sup>

Calvin does appear to have adopted the distinction between two kinds of necessity out of a desire to protect the simple who were in danger of being confused by Luther, and this part of Lane's thesis seems to be sustainable. Calvin did not want people to equate the reformers' understanding of necessity with the medieval concept of "absolute necessity," and so he demonstrated what he believed to be the proper use of the distinction. This was not a retraction of Calvin's earlier support of Luther, but only a clarification of what was helpful to the original argument. The distinction did help Calvin formally preserve what Luther merely conceded—contingency. So it appears that Calvin was indeed trying to safeguard Luther's position in 1552, and show that the Reformation did not reject contingency.

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<sup>188</sup> Calvin's statement to Westphal about Luther's Genesis commentary further corroborates this position. Calvin said that he did not mention Luther by name out of respect more than a hundred times so as not to seem disagreeable. But Calvin's respect for Luther did not mean that he never mentioned Luther in disagreement. In fact, of the five times he mentions Luther's interpretation of Genesis he voices both agreement and disagreement. He praises Luther at Genesis 6:3 for something "ingeniously spoken" yet "we must not seek the sense of Scripture in uncertain conjectures," but then, "I do not entirely reject the opinion of Luther" (*Commentaries on the Book of Genesis* [1554], vol. 1 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948], 241). Then at 11:26, "Luther very properly compares the incredible torments, by which they were afflicted, to many martyrdoms" (ibid. 334). At 11:27, "The conjecture of Luther, that God buried that time in oblivion, in order to hide from us the end of the world, in the first place is frivolous, and in the next, may be refuted by solid arguments" (ibid. 335-36). Finally at 13:11, "The speculation of Luther here (as in other places) has no solidity" (ibid. 375). Calvin spoke to the charge of harshly criticizing Luther, "One of his companions...ventured to give out, among other follies, that my Commentary on Genesis is filled with fierce invectives against Luther, though there, from respect to him, I refrained a hundred times from mentioning his name; and if anywhere I do allude to him, there is so far from any thing like contumely in my censure, that I am confident all sound and pious readers will give me credit for having treated him with no less honour than was due to an illustrious servant of Christ" (*Second Defense to Westphal, T&T 2, 256*).

#### IV. Luther and Calvin on the Will as Beast of Burden

Luther and Calvin both compared the human will to a beast of burden ridden either by God or Satan. While the figure was a common one, traceable back to Origen, it appears to have been picked up by Luther and Calvin in its Augustinian form, though the actual source was *Hypognosticon* a Pseudo-Augustinian work.<sup>189</sup> The author wrote: “For I think free choice is rightly compared to a beast of burden (*jumento*). As it has been said, ‘I have become as a beast of burden to you’ (*Psal.* LXXII, 23): truly grace is the rider (*gratiam vero sessori*).”<sup>190</sup> Pighius had quoted the passage against Calvin, and Calvin then explicated the passage in order to show that it did not conflict with his teaching. Calvin commented, “Whoever is the author of that book teaches that good works are done by means of grace and free choice, just as a journey is completed both by a horse and by its rider, as the horse indeed does the running, but does it while being guided by the hand of the rider to keep to the correct way.” Free choice, by itself, “wanders in worldly vanities, like a beast that has strayed...until the Spirit of God comes to dwell in it and lead it...back to the way of righteousness.” Calvin’s conclusion on the text is that “free choice does ‘run,’ but it is God who makes it run on the right course.” Calvin countered that this is nothing more than saying “the will has from nature the ability to will, but that to will well is a favour of grace.”<sup>191</sup> While Calvin was aware of *Hypognosticon* and Luther praised it as well, their usage of the figure of the will as beast of burden went well beyond it. Luther wrote:

In short, if we are under the god of this world, away from the work and Spirit of the true God, we are held captive to his will...[II Tim. 2:26], so that we cannot will anything but what he wills. For he is the strong man armed, who guards his own palace in such a way that those whom he possesses are in peace (*in pace*) [Luke 11:21].... And this we do readily and willingly, according to the nature of the will, which would not be a will if it were compelled.... But if a Stronger One comes who

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<sup>189</sup> See McSorley, *Luther*, 335-40, where McSorley traces the history of the image and gives an overview of the secondary literature.

<sup>190</sup> *Hypognosticon* 3.11.20; *PL* 45, 1632.

<sup>191</sup> *BLW* 226.

overcomes him and takes us as His spoil, the through his Spirit we are again slaves and captives—though this is royal freedom (*regia libertas*)—so that we readily will and do what he wills. Thus the human will is placed between the two like a beast of burden (*iumentum*). If God rides it, it wills and goes where God wills, as the psalm says: “I am become as a beast [before thee] and I am always with thee” [Ps. 73:22f.]. If Satan rides it, it wills and goes where Satan wills; nor can it choose to run to either of the two riders or to seek him out (*nec est in eius arbitrio, ad utrum sessorem currere aut eum quaerere*), but the riders themselves contend for the possession and control of it.<sup>192</sup>

When Luther taught that God, in his omnipotence, “necessarily moves and acts also in Satan and the ungodly,” he compared God’s action to “a horseman riding a horse that is lame in one or two if its feet; his riding corresponds to the nature of the horse, that is to say, the horse goes badly.”

Notice that here God and not Satan is the rider of the horse that goes badly. In fact God is Satan’s rider, so that Satan is one of the *instrumenta Dei*.<sup>193</sup> Luther criticized Erasmus saying:

You, who imagine the human will as something standing on neutral ground and left to its own devices, find it easy to imagine also that there can be an endeavor of the will in either direction, because you think of both God and the devil as a long way off, and as if they were only observers of that mutable free will (*mutabilis illius (et) liberae uoluntatis*); for you do not believe that they are the movers and inciters of a servile will (*impulsores uero (et) agitadores illius servae uoluntatis*), and engaged in most bitter conflict with one another (*mutuo bellacissimos*).... If his kingdom is as Christ describes it [at peace], free choice must be nothing but a captive beast of burden for Satan (*liberum arbitrium nihil nisi iumentum captiuum Satanae*), which can only be set free if the devil is first cast out by the finger of God [Luke 11:20].<sup>194</sup>

McSorley says that Luther’s usage differs from the tradition in four ways. Luther, he says: “(1) likened the animal not to the free will but to the *uoluntas*; (2) denied that man’s will has any free choice as to who will “ride” and dominate it; (3) made God himself and not grace the rider of the good will; (4) made Satan the rider of the evil will.”

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<sup>192</sup> SA 3, 207.33 – 208.8; LW 33, 65-66 [trans. Watson].

<sup>193</sup> LW 33, 176.

<sup>194</sup> SA 3, 318.12-22; LW 33, 237 [trans. Watson].

McSorley misses the fact that here Luther did call “free choice” the “beast of burden for Satan.” While this does not fit McSorley’s definition of free will, it would be perfectly consonant with Luther’s idea of voluntary self-determination (*lubens spontanea*), and because Luther affirmed that it was *captivum Satanae*, McSorley’s second point is accurate. When Luther calls this free choice “a captive,” this perfectly illustrates his view. According to Luther, a person chooses “willingly according to the nature of the will,” but the individual is motivated by sin and dominated by Satan so that he always chooses sinfully. Thus, given that the will is *captivum Satanae*, it is better described as *serva voluntas*. This is the state of affairs in man until God intervenes and casts Satan off. But even before God becomes the rider, he is, according to Luther, riding Satan like a horseman rides a lame horse. Thus, God is in control of Satan in Satan’s domination of sinful man. In this way, we see that Luther did not conceive the fight between God and the devil dualistically, as if equal and opposite forces were struggling. In line with Luther’s own experience we might say that the struggle is experienced in the human soul as the former “*pax*” of Satan’s kingdom is disrupted when “the devil is first cast out by the finger of God.”

Calvin used a variation of the image in the *Institutes*: “Somewhere Augustine compares man’s will to a horse awaiting its riders command, and God and the devils to its riders.” Calvin explains that, “The will of the natural man is subject to the devil’s power and is stirred up by it (*agitetur*).”<sup>195</sup> Calvin qualified by adding this does not mean these are “unwilling slaves” forced against their will but “rather that the will, captivated by Satan’s wiles, of necessity obediently submits (*se...obsequentem necessario praeberere*) to all his leading.”<sup>196</sup> McSorley contends that Calvin’s statement that man obeys his rider, missing from Luther’s account, “makes it easier to

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<sup>195</sup> Cf. to Luther at n. 191, *agitatores*.

<sup>196</sup> *OS* 3, 291.22-27; *Inst.* 2.2.4.1 [trans. Battles].

find a place in Calvin's theology for free will."<sup>197</sup> Luther's statement that we will what Satan wills "readily and willingly (*uolentes [et] lubentes*)" and "not under compulsion (*non coacte*)" shows that Luther believed that man obeyed his rider.<sup>198</sup> Calvin's statement that man obeys his rider *necessario* indicates that he, too, was only speaking of voluntary self-determination and not McSorley's idea of free will. In fact, as we have seen, Calvin was equally firm in resisting the implications of the term "free choice."<sup>199</sup> Calvin added, "Those whom the Lord does not make worthy to be guided by his Spirit he abandons, with just judgment, to Satan's action." Rather than speaking of a struggle over the soul as Luther did, Calvin simply refers to a divine abandonment, another image Luther used. Calvin did not speak in this context of God's "overthrow of Satan" and his imagery is less developed and imaginative than Luther's. McSorley is correct however, when he acknowledges that "Calvin employs the image for a purpose similar to Luther's," and he adds, "The image as it is used by Luther and Calvin cannot be found in Augustine." McSorley does show however, that Augustine spoke of a struggle between God and Satan in *Epistle 217*, but he says that this did not mean Luther received this part of the image from there. Since it also shows up in Aquinas, this demonstrates that "certain elements of Luther's image were widespread in the post-Augustinian period."<sup>200</sup> Not only is McSorley correct in identifying Calvin's usage as similar to Luther's but, dismissing the first point of difference from the tradition, Calvin's usage parallels Luther's in every place where he was historically unique. While there are other sources, the unique uses suggest Luther preeminently as an influence. Even if the reference to man's will as a horse was not directly prompted by Luther's image, Calvin developed and applied the imagery of the will as beast of burden in the

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<sup>197</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 338.

<sup>198</sup> *SA* 3, 207.39, 27 respectively; *LW* 33, 65.

<sup>199</sup> See Chapter 6, § I, V.

<sup>200</sup> McSorley, *Luther*, 336.

characteristically Lutheran way. Thus, Luther seems to be at least an internalized influence for Calvin's use of the image in the *Institutes*.

## V. Conclusion

Calvin defended Luther on many issues concerning the doctrine of the will: the bondage of the human will, necessity imposed by the divine will, grace, and predestination. In this chapter we have looked at Calvin's treatment of the issues especially when he did not feel compelled to defend Luther. In other words, this was Calvin beyond Luther. We have seen the same issues appear in their treatment of the fall and the hiddenness of God, and we have discovered that while Calvin may have gone beyond his defense of Luther, he did not substantially differ with him on these issues in other contexts. Lane's thesis is that Calvin did part company with Luther once he was at a safe distance from him in *EP*. In reconsidering this, we have argued that far from distancing himself from Luther, Calvin still identified his Reformation father with sound doctrine. Though he adopted the medieval distinction that Luther rejected in *BW*, he actually used it to support his original position in *BLW* where he agreed with Luther. That means that Calvin's claim to full solidarity with Luther in *BLW* was not discredited later in *EP*. Calvin's eucharistic position both before and after the debate with Pighius supports this argument by showing through a different yet parallel theological issue that Calvin had long been a critical disciple of Luther and was not afraid to contradict him when disagreement was present and unanimity was at stake.

## CONCLUSION

Studies that have compared Luther and Calvin on the will have so far been content either to assume Calvin's claim of full agreement with Luther at face value or to challenge Calvin with supposed tensions between his thought and Luther's. The tendency to affirm continuity was needed at a time when the Reformers were portrayed as locked in theological combat by their later confessional followers. These confessional accommodations distorted historical reality and needed to be corrected by appeal to primary texts and original contexts. The more recent tendency has been to emphasize Calvin's discontinuity with Luther, a tendency that has had the side effect of tempering the older excessive ecumenical enthusiasm that has tended to miss or downplay the tensions between the two figures and their reform movements. But discontinuity cannot be assumed automatically on the basis of *prima facie* differences. Historians must delve deeper into backgrounds and primary sources to see if the differences might in fact be variations on a commonly held belief. Showing that Calvin used a scholastic distinction that Luther rejected is not necessarily the same as Calvin rejecting Luther's position. So we have looked at the distinction between the necessity of consequences (*necessitas consequentiae*) and the necessity of the consequent (*necessitas consequentis*) as it functioned in its medieval context, and we have seen how it was rejected by Luther and appropriated by Calvin. Scholars have taken the difference in approach as a difference in substance and have said Calvin diverged from Luther on the nature of necessity in *The Eternal Predestination of God*. But a careful comparison of texts in light of their historical background has shown that Calvin only differed with Luther over the value of the medieval distinction for the Reformation cause. Calvin did not use the medieval distinction in the traditional way but used it to support Luther's position that contingency or the necessity of consequence is only useful when talking about the limitations of the human

perspective. Calvin might not have been at odds with the *medieval schools* over the value of this distinction, but his purpose in using it could not have been more at odds: the rejection of contingency from the divine perspective. As Luther employed “absolute necessity” in his own way, so Calvin followed his own instincts in applying the distinction. His limitation of contingency and the *necessitas consequentiae* to the human perspective is completely in harmony with Luther’s concession to contingency from the human point of view in *The Bondage of the Will*. Thus Calvin followed Luther on the doctrine of the will, but not with mindless repetition. Instead he salvaged the distinction his predecessor had left on the scrap heap of worthless medieval hair-splitting. According to Calvin, all things work by necessity of one kind or the other, but the necessity of consequence preserves contingency in the world so that human expectations, anticipation, and plans are usually either dashed or fulfilled in surprising ways. Luther’s concession to this in *The Bondage of the Will* and his rejection of the distinction according to its medieval usage was the same pose struck by Calvin in rejecting the term “free choice.” For Calvin, contingency does not preserve free choice, but only speaks of chance happenings and unpredictability, and neither man tried to prop up free choice by appealing to it as the medieval schools of the *via antiqua* and *via moderna* had. Luther and Calvin only allowed for contingency and chance in the finite realm, and Calvin saw that the two kinds of necessity could be retained and adapted to clarify the Reformation meaning of necessity. Necessity was absolute when imposed by the nature of things and this eliminated contingency, but it usually stemmed from an imposition of the will of God upon events that could go in different directions and this allowed the human-perspective notion of contingency.

In trying to settle the historical question of Calvin’s theological relationship to Luther’s doctrine of the will, this study has looked for both continuity and discontinuity without assuming



the priority of either. This has brought a rapprochement between the two approaches: former tendency to take commonalities at face value and focus on similarities and the contemporary, critical approach, that assumes hidden tensions and emphasizes dissimilarities. It has been my contention that a critical approach need not begin with a skeptical stance toward Calvin's claim of solidarity with Luther. Starting with that assumption makes it too easy to be cynical toward the historical subjects and their claims. Agreement might be just as real as disagreement and the evidence must be allowed to lead the historian in either direction. When their positions are compared, Calvin's claim is found to be warranted by the evidence. The positions agree fundamentally and stand up to the charges of disunity from Pighius and suspicions of the same from Anthony Lane. Calvin did not retract his full support of Luther's position on necessity by accepting freedom in the civil realm as Pighius and Lane have argued. We have seen that Luther held to freedom in things on and below the plane of humankind and when looking from a human perspective without compromising the greater divine necessity over all things. As we have seen, Calvin did not side with the scholastic doctors in distinguishing between two kinds of necessity. Both Reformers rejected free choice out of pastoral concern yet believed in human freedom over creation, though not human freedom from divine providence or omnipotence, which works through human agency but may overrule it. The reformers' claims to Augustine are also vindicated despite the objections of Pighius and Harry J. McSorley that the church father's doctrine of grace was essentially different from that of the reformers. While Calvin acknowledged that he differed with the later Augustine over the value of the term "free choice," he argued along with Luther that Augustine was in full agreement with their understanding of the bound will and monergistic and efficacious grace.

In pursuing the question of Luther's influence, this study has also put forward a particular method. The hermeneutic of suspicion is an ultra-critical approach useful in determining which sources a particular author had at his disposal and might have used in composing a work, but it does not take into account evidence for other sources internalized by the author but not necessarily open on his desk. So this study has also brought to bear another hermeneutic that looks for distinctive elements of Lutheran thought in Calvin. While this approach does not usually "prove" a thesis beyond all doubt, it is not the same thing as constructing a theory that cannot prove anything. It proves that some possibilities are more likely than others as it argues from available historical and textual evidence for the likelihood of reliance upon certain source material. In pursuing possible or probable sources we have followed what we have termed the "hermeneutic of the preponderance of the evidence." There are some interesting "fits" in the comparisons as Luther appears to have supplied Calvin some uniquely Lutheran ways for talking about the issue of the divine and human wills. Preeminent among them is Calvin's teaching that God controls sinners like wicked tools that he uses for his own ends. Calvin associated this position with Luther and does not quote other predecessors on this point. There are also verbal parallelisms with Luther in Calvin's language. Calvin's understanding of necessity without coercion, and his view of God not just permitting sinful acts but prompting them are both in line with Luther. According to Luther, God's omnipotence causes sinful acts in sinners without forcing them against their wills or causing the sinful property of the act. Fault lies with the *instrumentum Dei*, not God himself. While there are other verbal parallels to Luther, Calvin appears to have, at this stage, digested Luther into the very fabric of his approach, so that he can communicate his Lutheran inheritance in his own vocabulary. There is a common vocabulary as when, for instance, they both associate *lubens* and *sponte* together to express how the bound

choice may also be self-determined. But the conceptual parallels to uniquely Lutheran ideas are often expressed in different words. Examples of this are seen in Calvin's insistence that knowing the difference between the divine and human roles in salvation is essential for a proper disposition in worship. Luther also had argued this in the face of Erasmus's warnings of danger to the common man.

Other parallels exist between Luther and Calvin in the way they used inherited distinctions and thought forms. The distinction between *coactio* and *necessitas* may have come directly from Luther or through Bucer or directly from both, but Calvin employed it like Luther in denying free choice. Though Luther and Calvin both conceded that free choice could properly be defined as the mere voluntary exercise of the will, Calvin stood with Luther on the rejection of "free choice" as a misleading term. Both depart from the tradition in this respect and Calvin's teaching aligns with Luther rather than Bucer and Melancthon on this issue. While Bucer and Melancthon did not agree on the nature of free choice, they both saw a positive place for it in theology, while Luther and Calvin did not. Luther and Calvin certainly stand apart from the tradition and their contemporaries but with each other in putting a negative connotation to the term, so that it seems like no stretch to say that Calvin followed Luther in this. Calvin also reworked the stock metaphor of the will as a beast of burden in Luther's unique way as a denial of free choice. It also seems that the reason that Calvin used thought forms and distinctions to the same end as Luther is because both agreed that free choice was the enemy, and that part of their mission was to remove its ill effects from their parishioners and to abolish it as a constructive category for theology. The rejection of free choice was certainly an organizing principle for their thought on the will. Their stance on such topics as law and gospel, Word and Spirit, justification by faith, predestination, and the hiddenness of God are all meant to deal death to their opponents'

notions of free choice. Putting revelation over reason in Calvin's epistemology also agreed with Luther. Their approach to Aristotle and the scholastics is basically the same when it comes to rejecting philosophical starting points for theology, and they share an anthropology that says the whole man is flesh. These are broader categories that are brought into the Reformers' discussion of the will, but they further corroborate Calvin's claim of continuity. They also support the conclusion that Calvin agreed with Luther more than anyone else on the will: even more than Augustine whom he quoted time and again in support of their position, and that he reflected Luther more closely than any other contemporary Reformer. Luther was not only a general influence on the Reformer of Geneva but he appears to have been the most decisive influence in forming his doctrine of the will. In considering Calvin outside the context of his defense of Luther, we have seen that far from distancing himself from Luther, he still considered him the source of sound doctrine in *EP* and remained within the parameters of Luther's theology. Calvin's stance on the Protestant Eucharistic controversy before and after the debate on the will showed that while he was a lifelong disciple of Luther, he was not shy about disagreeing with him when it would have been more advantageous to do otherwise for the Protestant cause. Thus, Calvin's claim to agree fully with Luther on the will must be given great weight because of his critical approach to Luther's theology. With regard to Luther's books and texts, none of the evidence leads to the definite conclusion that Calvin had an open copy of *The Bondage of the Will* much less the *Lectures on Romans* before him when he composed *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will*, *The Eternal Predestination of God*, and the *Institutes*. There is proof however, that Calvin's knowledge of Luther goes beyond *Assertio* and reflects close awareness of Luther's teachings in *The Bondage of the Will*. So when responding to Pighius, Calvin could have imbibed directly from a copy of *BW* or recalled it from his highly accurate memory of

reading Luther or hearing his ideas discussed. In either case, there was far more than casual acquaintance between Calvin and Luther, but a historical-theological relationship that could not have been detected by relying solely upon the hermeneutic of suspicion.

While a strict application of the hermeneutic of suspicion tends to throttle historical intuition, the second hermeneutic helps greatly. By blending and balancing both, cautious but promising results have been reached with this circumstantial approach that yields probable conclusions based upon a preponderance of the evidence. These kinds of conclusions will always be open to review by new research, but they are helpful for the very reason that they point in the direction of that future research. What about the reception of Luther's doctrine of the will among Calvinists and fellow Lutherans? What about Calvin's reception among these same groups? While these are legitimate questions, they have been excluded from the narrow focus of this study, which was not aimed at the larger traditions of these Reformers but rather upon them in their own creative contexts. And where the ideas flowed from here would stretch into the next generations of theologians and can be taken up by other studies. The ecumenical implications for today are left to the reader with one exception. It seems that the route to ecumenical advances between Lutheran and Calvinistic traditions lies in their founders and not in the traditions themselves since Luther and Calvin are closer on the doctrine of the will than their followers tended to be. I have tried to shed light on the medieval discussions of *necessitas consequentiae* and the *necessitas consequentis* and other related ideas of the *facienti quod in se est, preparatio* for justification, and predestination, but turning over more stones will unearth more that could redirect research as well as modify conclusions. Along the way we have indicated that research is needed into the originality of Luther's thought on the hiddenness of God. Research into Augustine's understanding of the *Deus absconditus* may also shed light on Calvin's view as well

as research into whether Augustine or other of Calvin's influences ever spoke of the *instrumentum Dei*. At this point it only seems safe to say that that Calvin either did not appeal to Augustine and other authorities on these issues, or that he did not make them central supporting figures for his statements on them. This study has so far concluded that, in trying to follow the Scriptures, Calvin echoed Luther in those biblical interpretations that are uniquely Lutheran, and he was usually Lutheran when applying patristic and medieval forms that they shared in common. There are some differences such as Calvin's view that foreknowledge is separate from foreordination. While this kind of distinction is important for highlighting Calvin as a thinker in his own right, the conclusion remains that Calvin's claim to solidarity with Luther was more than warranted, and his thought on the will more closely reflects Luther's interpretation than the interpretations of any of Calvin's predecessors, contemporaries, or known influences.

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### Previous Theses and Publications

#### Article:

“Is R. C. Sproul Wrong About Martin Luther? An Analysis of R. C. Sproul’s *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* with Respect to Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Catholic Luther Studies.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 47 (2004): 89-120.

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