



Let's Read *The Institutes* of the Christian Religion, Class 12

Book 3: Of the Knowledge of God the Redeemer
Chapters 21-24 (cont.)



Election/Predestination

I. History of the Doctrine

Paul, Augustine, Augustinians, Luther, Melanchthon, Bucer, Zwingli

Separation of Providence and Predestination in 1559 edition

linking it with soteriology – the way we receive the grace of salvation in Christ

“When you teach free grace and mean it, You are a predestinarian.” (Warfield)

“Election precedes faith as to its divine order, but it is understood by faith.” (Calvin)

“Where did my faith come from?”

Predestination answers these questions:

- “Where did my faith come from?”
- “Why do some respond to the gospel and others do not?”
 - “Free will” explanation is easier to hear
 - but it does not give a sufficient answer.

• Definitions

- Absolute – God is the author
 - A decree by which he determines what he will for each man
- Particular/Individual – a general (covenantal) election (Israel) vs. a specific, enduring election (individuals)
- Double –
 - Calvin uses “reprobation” - “Even of the posterity of Abraham some elected and others rejected by special grace.”
 - Ishmael vs. Isaac; Jacob vs. Esau
 - Calvin is clear, does not revel in this, feels the force of it
 - Cause
 - Proximate (evident) cause – man’s sin
 - Ultimate cause – God’s good pleasure

- Means
 - Election
 - Elect from all eternity
 - Called/justified at a certain point in time/life
 - Outward call of the gospel (proclamation)
 - Inward call of the gospel (movement of the Holy Spirit)
- Goal
 - Election – the glory & the grace of God & our sanctification
 - Reprobation – the glory & the righteousness of God & their receiving justice

Objections to Predestination

- It makes God a tyrant
- It takes responsibility/guilt away from man
- It teaches God as being partial
- It destroys all zeal for living an upright life
- It makes response to all admonitions meaningless

Uses of Predestination

- Improper
 - Curiosity
 - We can (& must) state the doctrine as what we know to be true
 - We cannot explain it or go beyond what Scripture reveals to us about it (Dt. 29:29)
 - Defiance

“People want to know why God chose some and passed by others. Don’t ask me. Don’t ask John Calvin. Don’t ask any man, but ask God. God chose some to holiness and sonship because it pleased him to do so. Why it pleased him to do so it has not pleased him to reveal.”

(J.B. Green)

Uses of Predestination

- Proper
 - There is a sweet fruit here
 - It gives all glory to God
 - It humbles all men.

“Predestination undercuts all confidence in work righteousness and lays bare the source of human salvation. It is the negation of all merit and places salvation solely in the mercy of God. It means that salvation is rescue and not achievement. ... Predestination was Calvin’s most emphatic way of saying that justification is the work of God’s grace. Just as justification by faith through grace was Luther’s most emphatic way of saying the same thing.”

(J. Leith)

Uses of Predestination

- Proper

- Election encourages confidence
 - Roman Catholicism – “do what is within you.” Purgatory will finish the work.
 - Anabaptists – good works must be sufficient
 - Calvin – assurance is found in the promises of God and not in ourselves
- Election creates worship/reverence
 - “I see the depth but do not reach the bottom. Paul rested where he found wonder.” (Augustine)

“In being quite abased in ourselves let us seek that we may be so renewed in the image of God that it may shine perfectly in us until we are made partakers of the glorious immortality that he has so dearly bought for us. Also, that it may please him to grant this grace not only to us but to all peoples and all nations.”

(J. Calvin)

Uses of Predestination

- Proper

- God’s revealed will
 - Election/Reprobation
 - Love for the lost
 - May not sound logical but it is biblical.
 - Gives us impetus to pray for and seek the lost.

The Final Resurrection

- A majestic summing up of all things
- Warning against curiosity/speculation
 - “Let us be satisfied with the mirror and its dimness until we see him face to face.” (Calvin)
 - No commentary on the book of Revelation

The Final Resurrection

- Some themes/topics:
 - Last days – the entire NT period through the last judgment
 - The gospel advances internally (sanctification) and externally (evangelistically)
 - Even as evil is also working and advancing
 - Antichrist –
 - Not one, specific, historical person (a.k.a., the pope)
 - A summary word for whatever the source of opposition may be at the time
 - Millennium –
 - Calvin opposes those who press for a literal 1000 year reign of Christ on earth
 - Calvin sees Christ reigning now (Augustine)

The Final Resurrection

- Some themes/topics:
 - Intermediate state –
 - Believer's soul taken to heaven & enters into blessed, conscious rest (not "soul-sleep" (Anabaptists))
 - Reprobate's soul held in chains and the suffering of such torments as they deserve until the time of the full punishment appointed for them.
 - Purgatory – rejected as a harmful and unbiblical blasphemy against Christ
 - 2nd coming of Christ –
 - A literal, physical return to majestically display Christ's glory & vindicate the church.
 - No interest in date-setting (Anabaptists)
 - This promise serves to keep us alert and stimulate us to Christian living/service with a continual expectancy of patience/diligence

The Final Resurrection

- Some themes/topics:
 - Nature of the resurrection body
 - Same yet different (ill.s: human vs. animal flesh (?), dim vs. bright stars)
 - Importance of the body illustrated by the Bible's various rites demonstrating that Christ did not come to destroy but to save the world.
 - Final judgment
 - Present exercises of judgment illustrate the judgment yet to come
 - Final judgment deferred allowing for repentance
 - Believers will be judged as acquitted in Christ
 - Heaven/hell –
 - Real, literal, eternal
 - Avoids trifling/harmful questions and probing
 - Calvin feels physical descriptions are figurative "as far as language can go pointing to reality".