

The Life of John Calvin

JOHN CALVIN'S EARLY YEARS: BIRTH AND PREPARATION (1509-1531)

IN PARIS: HIS THEOLOGICAL TURNING-POINT (1531-1533)

IN FLIGHT: ON THE ROAD AS A FUGITIVE (1534)

IN BASLE: WRITING THE IMMORTAL "INSTITUTES" (1535-1536)

IN GENEVA: THE FIRST REFORMATION (1536-1538)

IN STRASBOURG: PASTOR, TEACHER, WRITER (1538-1541)

BACK TO GENEVA: THE YEARS OF STRUGGLE (1541-1548)

IN THE CRUCIBLE: SEVERE TRIALS IN GENEVA (1549-1555)
1553 - John Knox arrives in Geneva

IN GENEVA: THE YEARS OF TRIUMPH (1555-1564)

by Dr. Marcus J. Serven, ThM and DMin published by Genevan Foundation for Cultural Renewal

The Doctrine of Justification

Zwingli and Vadian - chose to place their emphasis not on the individual but on the moral consequences of the gospel. Priority of moral renewal over forgiveness.

Zwingli tends to view Christ as an external moral example.

Calvin - Faith unites the believer to Christ in a 'mystic union'. Calvin reclaimed Luther's emphasis on the real and personal presence of Christ within believers, established through faith.

"Double Grace"

1. Justification - Through Christ, the believer is declared to be righteous in the sight of God.
2. Regeneration or Sanctification - On account of the believer's union with Christ. Not on account of his or her justification, but because of the union begins the process of becoming like Christ.

Both justification and regeneration (sanctification) are the results of the believers' union with Christ through faith.

The Doctrine of Predestination

Calvin understands his conversion to be due to divine providence. He reflects on the impotence of humanity and the omnipotence of God.

Augustine: God does not actively decide some will be damned; he simply omits to save them.
Calvin: Logical rigor demands that God actively chooses to redeem or to damn. Because God is active and sovereign in his actions.

“Predestination is the eternal decree of God, by which he determined what he wished to make of every individual. For he does not create all in the same condition, but ordains eternal life for some and eternal damnation for others.”

Emphasis on the graciousness of God. For Calvin, demonstrated by his decision to redeem individuals irrespective of their merits (not despite as for Luther).

It is not the product of human speculation, but a mystery of divine revelation.

Begins from observable facts: some do and some do not believe the gospel. *A Posteriori* reflection

There is no weakness or inadequacy on the part of God or the gospel; the observable pattern reflects a mystery by which some are predestined to respond to, and others to reject, the promises of God.

Total Depravity

Unconditional Election

Limited Atonement

Irrresistible Grace

Perseverance of the Saints