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IJ 120420 I'm not 100% satisfied with my treatment of the final one or two sections

PREPARATION

1. This chapter is divided into 11 sections, grouped under 2 headings. What are the two headings?
 - a. 1-6 Election is not from foreknowledge of merit but is of God's sovereign purpose.
 - b. 7-11 Answers to opponents of this basis of election, which also is reprobation.

2. M

3.

EXPLORATORY

1. In this chapter, Calvin responds to - whom? (932, 7ff)
 - a. Those who, *consider that God distinguishes among men according as he foresees what the merits of each will be.*
 - b. *...he adopts as sons those whom he foreknows will not be unworthy of his grace.*
 - c. *...he appoints to the damnation of death those whose dispositions he discerns will be inclined to evil intention and ungodliness.*

What does God's foreknowledge, used in this way, become in relation to election, and with what effects? (932, 13f)

- a. A, *veil.*
- b. Election is obscured;
- c. *...they feign that its origin is elsewhere.*

Ambrose, Origen and Jerome, included among the, *important authors of all ages*, according to section 8, are joined in their assault on the view that God, *chooses some, and passes over others according to his own decision*, by others less qualified, whose motivation is - what? (932, 21)

- a. *...insolence*

Calvin feels that he can demonstrate the error of this position from experience. What experiences does he bring forward in support of his position? (933, 1ff)

- a. *...in what respect [did] the descendants of Abraham excel other men?*
- b. Let Calvin's objectors, *answer why they are men rather than dogs or asses?*
- c. Why did God, *form them into his own image?*

If Calvin's opponents will not permit members of the animal kingdom to protest that they are animals and not men made in God's image, what is it then incumbent on them to explain? (933, 7f)

- a. How they have come to obtain - without merit - the privilege of being made in God's image.

If God is free to bestow this privilege on whom he will and withhold it from others, what does this imply about his other freedoms, particularly the freedom to save whom he wills and reject others? (933, 7ff)

- a. *Surely, it is not fairer for them to possess a privilege that they have obtained without merits than for God variously to dispense his benefits according to the measure of his judgment!*

Coming now to the election and rejection of people, whom does Calvin bring forward as the supreme example of an election, in which his own merits could have played no part at all? (933, 13)

a. *Christ*

What privileges were granted to Christ - while he was yet in the womb - privileges so lofty that no human being could merit them, particularly someone as yet unborn? (933, 15ff)

- a. Being made, *the head of the angels*
- b. Being made, *the only-begotten son of God*
- c. Being made, *the image and glory of the Father*
- d. Being made the, *light, righteousness and salvation of the world.*

Logically, what stance should the insolent (932, 21) take in relation to the free election of Christ to these privileges? (933, 23ff)

- a. They, *should ask why others were not as [Christ] was - or why all of us are separated from him by such a long distance - why all of us are corrupt while he is purity itself...*

What would such a questioner display? (933, 26f)

- a. *...not only his madness but with it also his shamelessness.*

What benefit does Augustine note that arises from Christ, who is the Church's head, being, *the clearest mirror of free election*? (933, 20f)

- a. *...that we who are among the members may not be troubled about it.*

What further aspect of Christ's election does Augustine note? (933, 21ff)

- a. Its ground and its purpose: *he was not made Son of God by righteous living but was freely given such honour so that he might afterwards share his gifts with others.*

933, 38: *...he turned his eyes upon his Anointed, to choose from that body as members those whom he was to take into the fellowship of life...* To whom does the second, *he*, refer?

- a. *...his Anointed, ie Christ.*

In the same passage, to whom does, *that body*, refer? (933,35)

- a. *...the offspring of Adam.*

Taking Calvin's explanations of Col 1:12 and Eph 1:4 together, what two things only happen because of God's choice of us? (934, 4ff)

- a. *...that we should be holy and spotless and irreproachable in his sight.*
- b. Our being made, *fit to share the inheritance of the saints.*

To what extent do our own merits play a part in God's choice of us that brings about our holiness in this life and entrance into glory? (934, 14f)

- a. *...Paul sets, God's good pleasure, over against any merits of ours*

2. This section analyses the implications of Paul's statements in Eph 1:4f for the question in hand, which is...? (934, 34f)

- a. To what extent are, *the means of election*, to be found in ourselves?

What word and phrases, found in Eph 1:4f does Calvin comment on in particular, in support of his argument that election is not a response on God's part to merit foreseen in us? (934, 18ff)

- b. *...elect*
- c. *...elect before the creation of the world*
- d. *...elect in Christ*

- e. *...they were elected, to be holy*
- f. *...according to the good pleasure of his will*

Taking these phrases one by one, what does Calvin deduce from...elect? (934, 18f)

- a. *...it cannot be doubted that he is speaking to believers.*

What does he deduce from...elect before the foundation of the world?

- a. *...he takes away all regard for worth. For what basis for distinction is there among those who did not yet exist?*

What does he deduce from...elect in Christ?

- a. *...it follows that not only is each man elected without respect to his own person but also certain ones are separated from others, since we see that not all are members of Christ.*

What does he deduce from...they were elected, to be holy?

- a. *It, plainly refutes the error that derives election from foreknowledge, since Paul declares all virtue appearing in man is the result of election.*

What does Paul deduce from, according to the good pleasure of his will?

- a. *By these words he does away with all means of their election that men imagine in themselves. For all benefits that God bestows for the spiritual life, as Paul teaches, flow from this one source: namely, that God has chosen whom he has willed, and before their birth has laid up for them individually the grace that he willed to grant them.*

3. If we, say: *Since he foresaw that we would be holy, he chose us*, what are we doing to 2 Tim 1:9 and Eph 1:4? (935, 10)

- a. Inverting Paul's order.

Note the quotation from Thomas Aquinas in footnote 8.

What does, *he purposed in himself*, imply with regard to election? (935, 26)

- a. *...he considered nothing outside of himself with which to be concerned in making his decree.*

What phrase, added by Paul, implies the same thing? (935, 28f)

- a. *...to the praise of divine grace.*

Why does this phrase imply that the cause of an individual's election lies wholly within God? (935, 29ff)

- a. *Surely the grace of God deserves alone to be proclaimed in our election only if it is freely given. Now it will not be freely given if God, in choosing his own, considers what the works of each shall be.*

What does Christ's statement, recorded in John 15:16 imply with regard to the causes of election? (935, 34ff)

- a. *...he...rules out past merits...also indicates that his disciples had nothing in themselves for which to be chosen if he had not first turned to them in his mercy.*

With what statement does Paul teach, that God's goodness so anticipates men that among them either past or future to win them his favour? (935, 38f)

- a. *Who has first given to him and he shall receive recompense, Rom 11:35*

4. To which two entities does Paul refer in Romans 9-11 to demonstrate that election is without reference to merit in those elected? (936, 6&25)

- a. Israelites
- b. Jacob & Esau

What privilege did the Jews possess because they were Abraham's descendants? (936, 13f)

- a. *...by virtue of the covenant, the offspring of Abraham are holy.*

If that is the case, why is it, according to Paul in Romans 9-11, that, *many among them are outside of it*? (936, 16f)

- a. *...God's special election towers and rules over all, alone ratifying his adoption.*

What situation does this create? (936, 6f)

- a. *...even though all had been blessed by hereditary right, the succession did not pass to all equally.*

From 936, 17 to 24 Calvin applies the above observations to the question at hand: Is election based on God's foresight of good qualities in us or is the cause to be found solely in him?

When considering the cause of the election of individual Israelites and the rejection of others, what two possible alternatives does Calvin state? (936, 17&20f)

- a. *...their own piety;*
- b. *...the will of God, the cause of which neither appears nor ought to be sought outside of himself.*

In explaining individual election and rejection, Paul, *lifts his readers to secret election*. If the cause was elsewhere, *ie*, in, *their own piety*, what would Paul's method be? (936, 19)

- a. *...quite absurd.*

Turning to Jacob and Esau, *Paul then develops the matter further*. What specific factor, mentioned by Paul in Romans 9:11-13 demonstrates that God's election is independent of considerations of human merit or demerit? (937, 2)

- a. *...time.*

(As you read these paragraphs be careful to distinguish between Calvin's own arguments and those he articulates on behalf of his opponents.)

The time when Jacob's election became apparent (*ie* while both brothers were still in the womb and had not yet done anything either good or bad) would not have been significant if Jacob's election had been based on foreseen merit. Why is that? (937, 9ff)

- a. *If works obtain grace, God's reward for them ought rightly to have been already established before Jacob's birth.*

What makes this so? (937, 8f)

- a. *...nothing is hidden from God, and so Jacob's godliness was [ie, would have been, whether Jacob had yet been born or not] present before him...*

How does Paul so very decisively exclude Jacob's works from contributing to his election? (937, 13ff)

- a. *In treating of works he does not bring in future or past time;*

- b. *...he decidedly sets them [ie, works] over against God's call, **wishing by establishing the one skilfully to exclude the other.***

937, 17ff: *Finally, from the words, election, and, purpose, it is certain that all causes that men commonly devise apart from God's secret plan are remote from this cause. Causes, of what?*

- a. Causes of election.

What is, *this cause, ie*, the one and only cause of the election of some and the rejection of others? (937, 16)

- a. *...what God pleased*

5. 937, 26, *their subtlety*... Whose subtlety?

- a. Calvin's opponents, *who assign some place in election to works.*

What, *absurd disorder*, is apparent in the position that Calvin is opposing? (937, 31)

- a. *...putting good works before their cause.*

To what three sets of siblings does Calvin refer as examples of the rights of primogeniture being overturned by God's free election? (937, 35ff)

- a. Jacob & Esau;
- b. Isaac & Ishmael;
- c. Ephraim & Manasseh.

6. In what way is Paul alleged by some to have, *twisted scripture to a foreign meaning*? (938, 8ff)

- a. According to those who make this accusation, Paul was wrong to assert that Jacob's elevation, *to the honour of the first-born*, which (according to Calvin's opponents) conferred blessings for this life only, happened because Jacob had been, *adopted into the inheritance of heaven.*

How does Calvin sum up Paul's interpretation of Genesis 25:23? (938, 15ff)

- a. *God willed by an earthly symbol to declare Jacob's spiritual election, which otherwise lay hid in his inaccessible judgment seat.*

What evidence is there to support Paul's interpretation? (938, 17ff)

- a. *...unless we refer the right of primogeniture granted [to Jacob] to the age to come, it would be an empty and absurd kind of blessing, since from it he obtained nothing but manifold hardships, trouble and exile.*
- b. *...the pledge of a heavenly dwelling place was attached to the land of Canaan.*

Why did God make this choice of Jacob and reject Esau, when there was no more merit in Jacob? (938, 32ff)

- a. God says to Moses, *I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.*

Why does God take his reason to have mercy and compassion on some individuals and not on others from his mercy alone? (938, 36)

- a. *...he finds in men themselves no reason to bless them.*

What does Calvin conclude from this? (938, 37f)

- a. *...the salvation of his own is his own work.*

In the third paragraph in this section Calvin turns to foreknowledge, what it isn't and what it is.

How do those whom Calvin opposes characterise God? (939, 8&12)

- a. As an idle watcher.

How does Peter's use of, *foreknowledge*, in Acts 2:23 counter the idea that it simply indicates that God knows things that he does not cause? (939, 11)

- a. Peter links God's, *foreknowledge*, with his, *definite plan*.

In this paragraph how many scripture passages does Calvin cite that link God's foreknowledge with his being the cause of what is foreknown?

- a. Three, Acts 2:23; 1 Pet 1:2 & 1 Peter:1:19-20.

If God's foreknowledge means watching only, what would be the implication of that for 1 Peter 1:19-20? (939, 23ff)

- a. *For what is more absurd or meaningless than for God to look down from on high to see whence salvation was to come to mankind!*

In line 25, *The people foreknown*...Calvin returns to Romans 11:2 and the thought with which he opened this paragraph.

How does Paul define, *the people foreknown*? (939, 26f)

- a. *...only a small portion mixed with the multitude, which falseley claims the name of God.*

The phrase, *that word* (939, 30f) seems to refer to 2 Timothy 2:19. I don't think that is the case because Paul doesn't seem to have Israel and the election of the remnant in mind in 2 Timothy. It seems to me, in view of Calvin's explanation of the meaning of, *that word*, that it must refer to Romans 11:2. Also bear in mind that he is still clarifying the meaning of, 'know', and with the topic of foreknowledge in scripture.

What are the two kinds of people whose existence Paul points out in Rom 11:2? (939, 31f)

- a. *...one, from the whole race of Abraham;*
- b. *...the other, separated from it.*

Outwardly, what was the condition of both peoples? (939, 37)

- a. Equal

What distinguishes the two peoples? (939, 41ff)

- a. *...he, willing to make himself the free dispenser and judge of this matter, summarily declares that only as it so pleases him will he be merciful to one rather than to another.*

How do we know that those who receive mercy do so only because of God's favour towards them? (940, 2)

- a. *God claims the praise unto himself.*

7. In this section Calvin adds the unambiguous testimony of Christ himself to the point he has been making throughout - that election arises solely from God's pleasure and will and does not take into account our merits or demerits.

What is the basis of our, *reception into the surety and protection of Christ*? (940, 9)

- a. *...the Father's gift*

Who receives the gift? (940, 7)

- a. Christ - *the Father gives me*

What does the father give to Christ? (940, 6)

- a. *All [who] come to me.*

How does Christ's High-Priestly prayer (Jn 17) show that it is free election that divides men and women into believers and unbelievers? (940, 28f & 34ff)

- a. *I am not praying for the world but for those whom thou hast given me, for they are thine.*
- b. *...although Christ interposes himself as mediator, he claims for himself, in common with the Father, the right to choose. I am not speaking, he says, of all; I know whom I have chosen [Jn 13:18]*

By what is the, *particular species* (made up of those who are chosen by Christ) **not** distinguished from mankind in general? (941, 3)

- a. *...not by the quality of its virtues*

As a result of what is the, *particular species*, distinguished from mankind in general? (941, 3)

- a. *...by heavenly decree.*

Christ's choice of Judas shows that while election is always to one or more spiritual privileges it is not necessarily to salvation.

How does Calvin sum up the point he has been making about election so far? (941, 19ff)

- a. *...by free adoption God makes those whom he wills to be his sons; the intrinsic cause of this is in himself, for he is content with his own secret good pleasure.*

8. What two things does Augustine note about Paul's response to the question with which he confronted himself in Romans 9:14? (941, 33ff)

- a. *...here was the place for him to answer that God foresaw the merits of every man.*
- b. *Still he does not say this but takes refuge in God's judgments and mercy.*

How does Augustine sum up the difference between the two opposing positions? (942, 5ff)

- a. *A defence of, God's foreknowledge against God's grace.*

Turning to specific assertions, what statement does Augustine put in the mouths of those who mount this defence? (942, 6ff)

- a. *...we were chosen before the establishment of the world because God foresaw that we would be good, not that he himself would make us good.*

What further factor about the position that Calvin has been advocating and that he has demonstrated to be true from scripture, is an argument for its authenticity? (942, 28ff)

- a. *Its difficulty, which Paul could have overcome easily by adopting the position advocated by Calvin's opponents - if their position was true.*

Calvin closes this section with another to the point quotation from Augustine, that helpfully polarises the two positions. What, according to Augustine, does God's grace do and not do? (943, 1f)

- a. *It, **makes** those fit to be chosen.*
- b. *It does not, **find** those fit to be chosen.*

9. According to Calvin's summary of Thomas Aquinas's position, what, in Thomas's view, is the order of events whereby a sinner ends up experiencing heavenly glory? (943, 6ff)

- a. God decrees to bestow grace upon an individual;
- b. That grace produces, in that individual, merit;
- c. Glory is bestowed on that individual as a consequence of his merit.

How is Thomas able to maintain that this does not violate God's sovereignty in election? (943, 8f)

- a. *...because he (ie, God) has decreed to bestow upon him grace by which to merit glory.*

What, then, for Thomas, is the fundamental predestination on which salvation rests? (943, 8f)

- a. The bestowal of grace.

Now, let us contrast Calvin's position with Thomas's.

How does Calvin conceive of the order of God's decrees that result in the salvation of the individual? (943, 16ff)

- a. The individual is predestinated to glory;
- b. Predestination to grace arises from predestination to glory because, *it pleases the Lord to bring his children from election (to glory) to justification.*
- c. Predestination to grace is therefore, *like a handmaiden, to election to life (ie, glorious heavenly life)* and is subordinate to it.

What scriptural objective does Calvin's understanding serve and Thomas's understanding fail to assist? (943, 9f & 22ff)

- a. *...the Lord wills that in election we contemplate nothing more than his mere goodness.*
- b. *...farewell to these contentions, as they are superfluous among those who consider that there is enough wisdom for them in the Word of God.*

10. What do, *some moderate men*, say because of their, *laudable intention*, to, *bar thorny questions and to bridle the curiosity of many*?

- a. *...the universality of the promises (ie, gospel invitations, addressed to all) removes the distinction of special grace (ie, election)*

Given these men's laudable motives and objectives, should we be guided by them? (944, 2)

- b. *...evasion is never excusable.*

In what two ways are their claims false? (944, 9ff)

- c. God's differing treatment of people on a natural level shows that he is not bound, *by a set law to call all men equally.*
- a. Through Isaiah he still more openly shows how he directs the promises of salvation specifically to the elect.

What example does Calvin give to support the assertion that God, *has the right to distribute this treasure to whom he pleases*? (944, 13ff)

- d. *...forbidding Paul to speak the word in Asia and drawing him aside from Bithynia, draws him aside into Macedonia...*

To which passage in Isaiah does Calvin refer? (944, 20)

- a. 8:16

What, according to Calvin, does Isaiah 8:16 teach? (944, 16ff)

- a. *Isaiah 8:16, still more openly shows how he directs the promises of salvation specifically to the elect, for he proclaims that they alone, not the whole human race without distinction, are to become his disciples.*

In this paragraph Calvin states two principles that we need to bear in mind and apply to the free offer of the gospel. What are they? (944, 6f & 20ff)

- a. *...all are called to repentance and faith by outward preaching...*
- b. *...the doctrine of salvation, which is said to be reserved solely and individually for the sons of the Church, is falsely debased when presented as effectually profitable for all.*

If Isaiah identified the cause of the rejection of the gospel as human stubbornness, what conclusion could legitimately be drawn from the fact that the gospel is offered to all? (944, 29)

- a. *...perhaps this aspect of universal calling would have force.*

Preaching is, for many, ineffectual, yet salvation continues to be offered to all - is this an argument for election or against it? (944, 33f, 25ff)

- a. *...because faith is a special gift, the ears are beaten upon in vain with outward teaching.*
- b. *...the gift of faith is rare. Isaiah sets forth the cause: that, the arm of the Lord, has not, been revealed, to all.*
- c. *If he had said that the gospel is maliciously and wickedly despised because many stubbornly refuse to hear it, perhaps this aspect of universal calling would have some force.*

Is Isaiah teaching that it is God's fault that some (most?) people do not believe? (944, 30)

- a. *...it is not the prophet's intention to extenuate men's guilt*

True believers are identified by their faith (ie, trust in and submission to) Christ. What does Calvin point out with regard to the source of that trust? (945, 4f)

- a. *Those who possess it, were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God.*

Does Calvin disagree with the assertion that, *there is a mutual agreement between faith and the Word*? (945, 8)

- a. No, but he will admit it in a qualified way only: *This is so **wherever there is faith**.*

What does this qualification imply that Calvin's opponents mean when they assert that, *there is a mutual agreement between faith and the Word*? (944, 35)

- a. *...preaching alone...makes God's sons*

How does Calvin show this is not true, in the sense in which his opponents mean it? (945, 8ff)

- a. *...for seed to fall among thorns or on rocky ground is nothing new, Matt 13.*

Why do the thorns and the rocky ground exist? (945, 10ff)

- a. *...not only because the greater part indeed show themselves obstinately disobedient to God, but because not all have **been supplied with** eyes and ears.*

What comes first, election or faith? (945, 16f & 946, 6f)

- a. *...election...is the mother of faith.*
- b. *...faith is fitly joined to election, provided it takes second place.*

11. The thorny subject of reprobation.

Calvin has established that the cause of an individual's election is to be sought and found in God's free decision alone. Does he trace rejection to the same source? (the whole of section 11)

- a. *Yes. ...as Jacob, deserving nothing by good works is taken into grace, so Esau, as yet undefiled by any crime, is hated. If we turn our eyes to works we wrong the apostle, as if he did not see what is quite clear to us!*
- b. *...when he raised the objection, whether God is unjust, he does not make use of what would have been the surest and clearest defence of his righteousness: that God recompensed Esau according to his own evil intention.*
- c. *Instead, he contents himself with a different solution*
- d. *Paul attributes both to God's decision alone.*

What position does this leave us in as far as our understanding is concerned? (947, 9ff)

- a. *...we cannot determine a reason why he vouchsafes mercy to his own, except that it so pleases him, neither shall we have any reason for rejecting others, other than his will.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. Does it matter if we are Thomist or Calvinistic in our understanding of God's decrees? If so, why? What difference does it make?
2. 944, 27ff What does Calvin mean by: *If he (ie, Isaiah) had said that the gospel is maliciously and wickedly despised because many stubbornly refuse to hear it, perhaps this aspect of universal calling would have force?*
3. What does Calvin mean by the phrase (which he puts as a question on 944, 35, unmistakably disagreeing with it) *preaching alone...makes God's sons?* Is he suggesting that people become sons of God by other means or does he mean something else entirely.
4. Does Calvin's presentation of election and reprobation in this chapter promote the reaction that the apostle Paul had in mind when he exhorted his readers to, be not high minded, but fear?