

Calvin and the Order of God's Decrees

Concerning John Calvin and the order of the decrees of God , Moses Amyraut (1596-1664), eminent theologian of the Academy at Saumur , makes the following incisive judgement :

.....I am well aware that Calvin has said many things relating to the “ impulsive” causes of the decrees of God, but as their order I do not see that he has ever said a word . Why God has created man for hope of perpetual blessedness, he states that the only reason for this was His goodness. Why, man having fallen into sin and condemnation, God willed to send His Son into the world to redeem men by His death , Calvin states that the only reason for this is an admirable love of God for mankind. Why He has elected some and passed by others in imparting the grace of faith , Calvin states that the only reason for this is the mercy and severity of God. Why God has preferred one individual to another in the distribution of this grace, Calvin does not recognize any other reason than solely the perfectly free will of God. Why He has willed to save believers and condemn unbelievers unto eternal punishment , Calvin has thought that the reason for the latter must be taken from the justice of God whereas the reason for the former must be taken from His mercyBut what has been the order according to which God has arranged all these things in His eternal wisdom , when it is a question of His having proposed of thinking or willing what comes first or last, Calvin has never explained this nor has he had the least interest in doing so. “

Amyraut goes on to say that this order in the decrees is a matter in which the “secrets are so profound , and the abyss so impossible to explore , that whoever will undertake to know them would necessarily be swallowed up by them or will necessarily remain eternally deluded as being in a completely inexplicable labyrinth.” Nor, he continues, has the Spirit of God furnished any light on this matter in the Word .

(Defense de la doctrine de Calvin. Sur le sujet de l’élection et de la reprobation , pp.579-80. Saumur : Isaac Desbordes ,1644).