

divine wisdom, and goes back even to the remotest eternity, in order that he may understand what final determination God had made with regard to him. in this way he plunges headlong into an Immense abyss, involves himself in numberless inextricable snares, and buries himself in the thickest darkness. For it is right that the stupidity of the human mind should be punished with fearful destruction, whenever it attempts to rise in its own strength to the height of divine wisdom. And this temptation is the more fatal, that it is the temptation to which of all others almost all of us are most prone. For there is scarcely a mind in which the thought does not sometimes rise, Whence your salvation but from the election of God? But what proof have you of your election? When once this thought takes possession of any individual, it keeps him perpetually miserable, subjects him to dire torment, or throws him into a state of complete stupor. I cannot wish a stronger proof of the depraved ideas, which men of this description form of predestination, than experience itself furnishes, since the mind cannot be infected by a more pestilential error than that which disturbs the conscience, and deprives it of peace and tranquillity in regard to God. Therefore, as we dread shipwreck, we must avoid this rock, which is fatal to every one who strikes upon it. And though the discussion of predestination is regarded as a perilous sea, yet in sailing over it the navigation is calm and safe, nay, pleasant, provided we do not voluntarily court danger. For as a fatal abyss engulfs those who, to be assured of their election, pry into the eternal counsel of God without the word, yet those who investigate it rightly, and in the order in which it is exhibited in the word, reap from it rich fruits of consolation. Let our method of inquiry then be, to begin with the calling of God and to end with it. . . ."

And in Section 5 Calvin says,

"But if we are elected in him, we cannot find the certainty of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we look at him apart from the Son. Christ, then, is the mirror in which we ought, and in which, without deception, we may contemplate our election. For since it is into his body that the Father has decreed to ingraft those whom from eternity he wished to be his, that he may regard as sons all whom he acknowledges to be his members, if we are in communion with Christ, we have proof sufficiently clear and strong that we are written in the Book of Life."

in these quotations from the Associated Publishers and Authors, inc. edition of the institutes (Grand Rapids, 1970), numbered footnotes to Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter 24 were indicated. These footnotes (by an unidentified author) are sufficiently brief and relevant to warrant quotation.

Footnote 1 (to Section 3) states:

"Here is an important distinction between the objective fact of election and our subjective knowledge of it. Election as an objective fact always precedes faith, whereas our subjective knowledge and assurance of election always follows faith."