

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

THE pastors of the Church, to whom is entrusted the administration of the Word both in town and country, pray that God may grant to those most excellent men, their supreme lords, and to the Syndics and Senate of Geneva, a just and holy administration of the State and good success.

The same motive that impelled us to write this book, most excellent Sirs, constrained us also to dedicate it you, that it might go out under your name and auspices. The free election of God, by which He adopts for Himself whom He will out of the lost and damned generation of men, has hitherto been declared by us with reverence, sobriety, sincerity and frankness and has been peacefully received by the people. But now recently Satan, the father of all strifes, has introduced a widespread error, which attempts to destroy our doctrine which is drawn from the pure Word of God and to shake the faith of the whole people. But since this hungry hunter after vain-glory wishes to gain notoriety out of the very flame of the temple of God, lest he should gain the reward of his sacrilegious audacity for which he lies in wait, let his name remain buried in our silence. For the rest, since the harm he tried to do us was equally done to you, it is right that any fruit arising out of the matter should be applied to you also. And as we have found you vigorous and prudent judges in a worthy cause, we have thought it our duty for our part to testify our gratitude as we are able. The discharge of this duty will also clearly show what kind of doctrine it is that you have defended by your favour. For though it befits neither the noble rulers of the State nor the ministers of Christ to pay anxious heed to rumours, so that many perverse disparagements, which little by little collapse into the uproar they occasion, be despised by both with courage and dignity, yet it is of the greatest importance that the sum of the matter should remain in the hands of all and kept before their eyes, as though engraved on public notice-boards, to convict the false voices of the foolish, the vain or the wicked and at the same time to repress the frivolous whispers of the crowd. A rumour was spread around in many places that he

was closely imprisoned, whereas he was free to fly about the city openly every day. You yourselves are the best witnesses with what malignity certain virulent people pretended that we demanded death as his punishment. Dignity and prudence can only refute such calumnies with contempt and quiet magnanimity, until they disappear. But on the other hand, it is both expedient and obligatory for us to set out the state of the case, lest the many unstable people, who must be reckoned with, should waver. Impiety creeps in like a cancer, as St Paul says, unless it be opposed. Now this defence, offered in your name to all the godly, will we hope be a strong and effectual remedy for healing those that are curable as well as a wholesome antidote for the healthy and sound. The subject is worthy of study by the sons of God, lest they neglect their heavenly origin and birth. For because the Gospel is called the power of God unto salvation to all who believe, some have made this a pretext for obliterating the election of God. But it ought to have occurred to them to ask whence faith arises. Scripture everywhere declares that God gives to His Son those who were His, calls those whom He elects, and begets again by His Spirit those He had adopted as sons; and finally that those men whom He teaches inwardly and to whom His arm is revealed believe. Hence, whoever holds faith to be earnest and pledge of grace confesses that it flows from divine election as its eternal source. Yet knowledge of salvation is not to be demanded by us out of the secret counsel of God. Life is set before us in Christ, who not only makes Himself known in the Gospel but also presents Himself to be enjoyed. Let the eye of faith look fixedly in this mirror, and not try to penetrate where access is not open. Since this is the way, let the sons of God walk in it, lest, by flying higher than is right, they plunge themselves into a deeper labyrinth than they had wished. For the rest, as there is no other gate into the kingdom of heaven than faith in Christ contained in the promises of the Gospel clearly set before us, it is the most crass stupidity not to acknowledge that the eyes of our mind are opened by God, since, before we were conceived in the womb, He chose us to be faithful. But it was the object of this impure and worthless fellow not only to destroy all knowledge of God's election from the mind of men, but also to overthrow His power completely. This is clear from those mad dreams of his which you have, written by his own

hand, in your public records. There he affirms that faith does not depend on election, but rather that election rests upon faith; that none remain blind on account of innate corruption of nature, since all are really illumined by God; and that we do God injustice in saying that those whom He does not condescend to illumine by His Spirit are passed by. He affirms that all men in general and equally are drawn by God, and that distinction only begins with obstinacy; and that when God promises to make hearts of flesh out of hearts of stone, all that is meant is that we are to be capable of receiving the grace of God, this being promiscuously offered to the whole human race; though Scripture clearly declares it to be the singular privilege of the Church. As for the providence of God by which the world is ruled, the godly should confess and hold to this, that there is no reason why men should make God associate in their sins, or in any way involve Him with themselves as participant of the blame. Scripture teaches that the reprobate are also instruments of God's wrath, for by some He instructs His faithful in patience, and on others He inflicts the punishments which as enemies they merit. But this profane trifler contends that no act of God is just unless its plain reason lies before our eyes. Thus he removes the distinction between remote and proximate causes. He will not allow the sufferings imposed on the saintly Job to be considered the work of God, lest He should be made equally guilty with Satan and the Chaldaean and Sabaeen robbers.

But we pass him by and come to grips with the other two, Albertus Pighius and Georgius the Sicilian. There is a double reason for this, as we shall explain. This ignorant pettifogger was able to offer nothing but what he drew from these two sources, thus making what was badly said worse. Dispute with him would accordingly have been profitless. To be content with one example: how Pighius and Georgius obscure the first chapter of Ephesians by their sophistries has been shown in its proper place. This was absurd enough. But still more disgraceful was this man's folly; for he did not blush to babble it all in your court and venerable assembly, and stubbornly to defend what he had babbled, maintaining that Paul in the passage is treating not of the common salvation of the godly but of his own and his colleagues' election to the apostolic office. To refute such a futile suggestion at once while<sup>1</sup> still fresh in memory was

<sup>1</sup> *exemplo*; Beza, Amst. and Niem: *exemplo*; French has: openly.



easy. If any attach themselves as disciples to such a master, they will certainly learn unfortunate theology, such as would deprive us all<sup>1</sup> of confidence in eternal life, since only the apostles would be partakers of divine election, reconciled to God through Christ and, blessed, or numbered in the society of the saints. The time to do all this was when the matter arose; it is not very appropriate to refute so foolish a fellow in a published book. We are indeed not unaware how much it would please him; nor would it be surprising to find so much audacity in one who throws off a monk's cowl and forthwith assumes the role of a physician. But to play the fool and nauseate many by gratifying him would be foreign to my usual moderation. Further, since those two are known and professed enemies of the Gospel, and one of them in attacking Calvin by name has declared war on us and on this Church, it seemed wiser to purge in printed books the poison of impious doctrine disseminated publicly, than by publishing dirges better left unsung to weary importunately the ears of men which have been already more than sufficiently vexed by superfluous contentions.

May the Lord God grant, noble and excellent Sirs, that, as you have hitherto done with the highest praise, you may continue by your faith and authority unwearingly to defend to the very end the pure doctrine of the Gospel, which is everywhere so agitated by the hostile violence of the world; and that you may not cease to receive hospitably all the godly who flee to your protection; so that your city may be a safe sanctuary amid these horrid tumults and a faithful asylum for the members of Christ. So may it be that you find Him a perpetual protector of your salvation; for the dwelling-place that is dedicated to Him is safe by His power and will never fall.

1st January 1552

<sup>1</sup> *nos omnes; ib: non omnes.*