

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE *De aeterna Praedestinatione Dei* was published at Geneva by John Crispin in 1552; but the intention which led to its appearance has its roots nine years earlier. Calvin's work *De libero Arbitrio* is dated 1543. As he himself states in the present work, the earlier book aimed at the refutation of the doctrine concerning Free Will put forward by Albert Pighius. This implacable disputant had no less vigorously contended against Calvin's doctrine of Predestination; but Calvin's undertaking to deal with this second part of his attack was delayed because of other pressing concerns. But the controversy about Predestination, so far from subsiding, broke out afresh, and Jerome Bolsec, formerly a monk and now a Protestant physician (though afterwards he reverted to Rome), repudiated Calvin's doctrine. Calvin rose in its defence. In October 1551, he charged Bolsec before the Genevan City Council (see *Actes du Procès* intenté par Calvin et les autres Ministres de Genève à Jérôme Bolsec de Paris, preceding the *De aet. Praed.* in the same volume of *Corpus Reformatorum*), with some difficulty won his case, and secured the banishment of Bolsec and the vindication of his own doctrine. But Calvin judged that the harm done to the doctrine, and perhaps also to his own position, by Bolsec's criticism was not sufficiently remedied by the judicial condemnation of one chief opponent. There were besides him others, among them Georgius the Sicilian, named and briefly characterised in the present work. Moreover, behind these present opponents, Calvin saw the malign influence of Pighius with whom he had never fully dealt. It is this combination of circumstances that occasions the composition of the *De aeterna Praedestinatione*. In this one work, Calvin redeems an earlier promise to refute the views of Pighius about Predestination, though their exponent was no longer alive; he engages a living antagonist in the person of Georgius; and he deals with the continuing influence of Bolsec, though he is not named in the treatise. For the rest, the historical circumstances of the writing are sufficiently expounded in the course of the argument.

The passage of the work towards authorisation was, apparently, not entirely simple. Correspondence with Beza and Bullinger shows that advice was offered about its composition, and it looks as though the advice was taken. On 21st January 1552, the archives of the Genevan Senate record that the work was submitted to them, with the request for its authorisation in printed form. After scrutiny, the request was granted, and, as the introduction provided by *Corpus Reformatorum* maintains, a private writing of Calvin became an authentic document of Genevan orthodoxy, though it never enjoyed magisterial approval in the other Swiss states.

It appears that the French version followed the Latin original almost immediately—a translation which permitted itself a certain amount of freedom. The judgment expressed in *CR* is that it is not by the hand of Calvin himself, but by an amanuensis whose work Calvin invigilated and polished. Only one copy of this was accessible to the compilers of *CR*, and this is referred to in the footnotes as “the French copy” or more briefly as “French”. The footnotes also record variations in the Latin text occurring in the reprints of Gallars (latiné Gallasius), Beza, Stoerius, Amsterdam and Niemeyer. Of these a little more information is obtainable in *CR*, vol. XXXVI (of Calvin’s Works, vol. VIII), from which the translation that follows is made.