

THE "POOR SINNERS" IN CALVIN'S LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

In life, Calvin himself wrote about predestination: "The human mind, when it hears this doctrine, cannot restrain its petulance, but boils and rages as if aroused by the sound of a trumpet." *Institutes* III:23:1. While dying, Calvin dictated and Chenelat then wrote down: "I confess to live and die in this faith which He has given me, inasmuch as I have no other hope or refuge than His predestination, upon which my entire salvation is grounded.... I humbly beg Him to wash me and cleanse me with the blood of our great Redeemer as it was shed for us poor sinners, so that I, when I appear before His face, may bear His likeness."

There are at least two variant copies of Calvin's Testament. As to the last-mentioned sentence, one copy reads as above, and the other reads "for all poor sinners" *etc.* The question has been raised: Which of these copies agrees with the original? On this, we make the following observations.

1) What Biblical inerrantist would ever insist that Calvin's lawyer Pierre Chenelat even in the original (yet still-uninspired) Testament of the Reformer, infallibly wrote down absolutely all of the exact words which the then-bedridden and dying Calvin so painfully dictated -- or meant to dictate?

2) As regards the doctrine of the specific or limited atonement of Christ, it is irrelevant whether the dying Calvin actually dictated or meant to dictate either the words "*pour nous*" or alternatively "*pour tous*" -- in the statement that "the blood of our great Redeemer as it was shed for us (*nous*) poor sinners"; or alternatively "for all (*tous*) poor sinners" *etc.* For some sinners were never human. (See our last point below.)

3) In any case, the above words -- whether *pour nous* or *pour tous* -- still do not sustain the hypothetical universalism of Amyraldianism. For even if the weak and dying Calvin had here actually dictated and meant to dictate "for all poor sinners" -- he was not here claiming that Christ shed His blood only unto justification. Indeed, Calvin well knew that the shed blood of the Saviour secured also non-justifying by-products even for reprobate human beings. See his comments on Gen. 3:15f with 4:20 and Ps. 36:6 and I Tim. 2:3f with 4:10 and II Pet. 2:1 *etc.*

4) Even to argue that Christ's blood does nothing else but justify, will still not prove Amyraldian or hypothetical universalism. For if Christ's shed blood had indeed justified all men, then: (a) no man would stay lost; (b) the atonement would be absolutely universal; and (c) also the "perseverance of the saints" would largely mean the "perverseness of the ain'ts" alias the advancement of Antinomians.

5) Also Satan and his demons are "sinners." They were and are even "poor sinners" -- and indeed the very poorest of all sinners hamartiologically (John 8:44 and II Pet. 2:4 & 2:12). Yet they are not "poor" economically (Matt. 4:8f); and they are certainly not just "poor" but indeed utterly and unrehabilitatively bankrupt soteriologically (Matt. 5:3). For Christ is the only Redeemer of God's elect, and not of those whom God has reprobated from all eternity (Prov. 16:4 & Rom. 9:22f & I Pet. 2:8 & Jude 4-6). So, even if Satan and all his demons were to sign Arminian or even Amyraldian "decision cards for Jesus" -- all of them would still be damned forever (Matt. 25:41).

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