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I – Introduction

ἦλει ἦλει λεμὰ σαβαχθανεὶ;

Jesus' cry of dereliction becomes more heart-wrenching the more we understand the doctrine of the Trinity. For how can Jesus, the eternal Son of God, be abandoned by Father and Spirit? The sentiment of this cry is confounding. But we cannot ignore it. If we must preach Jesus Christ crucified, then we must also preach him in relationship with the Father and Spirit who abandoned him on the cross. This essay will examine how the Reformed theologians Calvin and Turretin handle Jesus' cry of dereliction in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 2:14 and *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* 13:14. Their approaches will be contrasted to find divergences. These divergences will then be used to suggest some implications regarding Calvin and Turretin's respective views of the Trinity.

II – Calvin in Context

Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* are not a systematic theology in the currently prevailing sense. They were intended to give the foundation and framework of the faith, to be a textbook for the student of Reformed theology, and to explain doctrines which ought not be rehearsed in his commentaries. The section of *Institutes* under consideration – book two chapter sixteen – should therefore be understood as connected to Calvin's other works – particularly his commentaries. Turretin agrees that Calvin's apparent unorthodoxy in his *Harmony*, though obviously a rhetorical device even in its immediate context, can be further defended by reference to *Institutes*.¹

It will therefore be useful to briefly explore how Calvin reconciles the trinity with Jesus' dereliction in, firstly, the *Harmony*; and, secondly, in the Genevan catechism. The former work he expected to be read alongside *Institutes*, each work framing and developing the other, and so an exploration of Calvin's view on this matter should include its insights. The catechism, though by nature compressed and skeletal, will indicate what Calvin saw as essential teaching on this matter. But first the *Harmony*.

The *Harmony's* explanation of Matthew 27:46 stresses that in order to make satisfaction for us, Jesus went through the experience of being judged guilty and devoted to destruction by God. This was not mummery but a real experience of utmost sorrow. Calvin immediately raises the christological (and Trinitarian) question:

But it appears absurd to say that an expression of despair escaped Christ. The reply is easy. Though the perception of the flesh would have led him to dread

¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger (New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 13:14:14 p356.

destruction, still in his heart faith remained firm, by which he beheld the presence of God, of whose absence he complains. We have explained elsewhere how the Divine nature gave way to the weakness of the flesh, so far as was necessary for our salvation, that Christ might accomplish all that was required of the Redeemer.²

The above quotation gives us two insights. The first is regarding Calvin's understanding of Christ's human experience in the dereliction. When Calvin speaks of the “perception of the flesh” here, he means the weak flesh to which the divine nature has yielded. But in his commentary on the previous verse he refers to this concealment of the divine nature occurring “in the death of Christ.”³ This particular aspect of Jesus' human experience is not inherent to the incarnation but is particularly a function of his death – which from context seems to mean the whole process of his death from Gethsemane onwards. Here in the *Harmony*, we see that Jesus' experience of desertion is not the experience of his incarnate human nature, but that nature as affected by the concealment of God's presence from him. This will be explained in *Institutes* as the temporary assumption of fallen human experience.

Our second insight from the above quote concerns the purpose of this concealment of Jesus' divine nature. Calvin limits this primacy of flesh in the dereliction to the degree necessary for redemption: that is, the divine nature withdrew “that he should be placed as a guilty person at the judgement-seat of God.”⁴ The withdrawal of the divine nature is to create in Jesus the experience of a rightly condemned man. This strengthens our earlier assumption that Calvin is describing the assumption of our fallen human experience, but adds an

2 Jean Calvin, *Harmony of Matthew, Mark and Luke*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 318-319.

3 Calvin, *Harmony*, 316.

4 Calvin, *Harmony*, 318.

important qualification: Jesus assumes our experience with respect to the justice of God.

He does not assume fallen nature as humanity generally experiences it, but instead the experience of being brought to crisis point and set before God's justice to be condemned. Jesus can be said to experience the abandonment by God which fallen humanity will eventually receive, without the blindness which presently gives them false comfort. This limit to Jesus' assumption of fallen human experience will assist us when Calvin develops the reality of Jesus' spiritual suffering in *Institutes*. Because we know that Jesus is not taking on a fallen nature, but the experience of that nature when judged by God, it will be no contradiction when Calvin shows that Jesus did not succumb to sinful despair.

We now move to the catechism of Geneva, which illuminates two topics: firstly, how Calvin relates Christ's human nature to his work to save us; and secondly, how he relates the two natures to each other within the dereliction. This flows out of the broader significance of the incarnation to Calvin's soteriology: not as an active part of redemption, but as a necessary precursor to and instrument of it. When the master of the catechism asks whether Christ had to assume our nature, the student answers:

Very much so; because it was necessary that the disobedience committed against God should be expiated also in human nature. Nor could he in any other way be our mediator between God and man. ... For we must borrow of him whatever is wanting in ourselves: and this cannot be done in any other way.

Christ's work to redeem us from sin required a human nature and our reception of his benefits also requires such a nature. When we see Calvin's concern in *Institutes* to establish Christ's human experience of suffering, it is linked to this belief that Christ must be human to

convey any benefit to us. One of the chief benefits Calvin sees in Christ's dereliction is that he overcomes the fear of desertion and death for us. But this means nothing to Calvin unless Christ has done this as a human being. Christ's human nature, and the operation of that nature in the dereliction, will be central to Calvin's view of the dereliction.

His view of the relationship between Christ's two natures is more complex. It arises as a response to the Trinitarian question posed by Jesus' inward suffering:

M: But seeing he is God, how could he be seized with any such dread, as if he were forsaken of God?

S: We must hold that it was in respect to the feelings of his human nature that he was reduced to this necessity: and that this might be, his divinity for a little while was concealed, that is, did not put forth its might.⁵

This distinction between human and divine nature will become familiar in section IV. What the answer clarifies is the operation and purpose of this distinction within the dereliction. The concealment of his divine nature is for the purpose of Christ being reduced to a state of dread. Now the catechism only deals with topics which are linked to our salvation, and Christ would not reduce himself in such a way unless it was necessary, and in section IV we will see the benefits Calvin derives from Christ's dread. In order that we might receive these benefits Christ's divinity was concealed and “did not put forth its might.”

Here we have a development from the incarnation, for here Christ does something which is not a natural consequence of his two natures – for if it was, it would have been the case since his birth. Here his divinity is concealed from himself. But it does not cease to exist or cease to be united to the human nature. It ceases to supply might – that is, its energies cease

5 Jean Calvin, *Catechism of the Church of Geneva in Treatises on the Sacraments* trans. Henry Beveridge (Ross-shire and Grand Rapids: Christian Focus and Reformation Heritage, 2002), 47.

to be appropriated by Jesus' human nature. This parallels a previous answer regarding how the Son of God could be subjected to a curse: "...by undergoing he abolished it, and yet meanwhile he ceased not to be blessed in order that he might visit us with his blessing."⁶ Calvin is happy to describe Jesus experiencing one state (dread or a curse) while continuing in its opposite (relationship with God or blessedness). Jesus' essential state does not vary but his human nature undergoes the experience of damnation.

We should pause and summarise the insights these works have given us for reading the *Institutes*. Calvin consistently responds to the Trinitarian problem by distinguishing between Christ's two natures and limiting the dereliction to his human nature. We can therefore expect this again in *Institutes* and look for how he handles the distinction when given more space to apply it. These works have also shown us Calvin maintaining that on the one hand, Jesus truly experienced human damnation; and on the other, that his experience was different from that of the damned in ways which stem from his identity. When we see Calvin relate Jesus' human nature to our human nature we should be attentive to how he expresses both similarity and difference.

We now move to the immediate context of the chapter from *Institutes* with which we are concerned – 2:XVI. Calvin touches on Jesus' dereliction in the course of his section on God the Redeemer, which is structured as an exposition of the Apostles' Creed. He is not only developing doctrines but presenting them as part of the essential faith of the catholic church. We should therefore expect this chapter to be strongly connected to the foundations of Christian belief. As this article of the Creed only appears late in the church's documents and has a varied history of interpretation, Calvin defends both its retention and his interpretation

6 Calvin, *Catechism*, 46

of it. Turretin does not have this additional burden of arguing that his view of Christ's dereliction is the natural sense of an article of the Creed. In Calvin we may expect an emphasis on the importance of Christ's spiritual suffering and some reference to the phrasing of the Creed.

III – Turretin in Context

Turretin's *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* is substantially different in approach to Calvin's major work. Turretin is not giving a framework for the faith, but detailed responses to controversies between the Reformed view and other theologies: Roman, Socinian, Libertine, and at times Lutheran. Where Calvin laid down a plan for Reformed theology's citadel, Turretin gives a precise map of the disputed border regions. Polemic was by no means a foreign mode to Calvin's *Institutes*. It flares as he rules out certain approaches to scripture and it sparks during the positive exposition of doctrines. But there remains a substantial contrast between Calvin and Turretin. *Elenctic* is disputational in structure and method rather than occasionally in mode. Every positive exposition of Reformed doctrine is given in opposition to another view. As a consequence, in *Elenctic* we should not seek fully orbed doctrinal exposition surging with vital connection to Christian piety and life. Instead we find doctrines presented with not only a Genevan firmness but a scholastic precision; with detailed argumentation from scripture and philosophy; and with close attention to the internal logic of opposing views.

But the paragraph just given is rather simplistic in its literary judgement. The relationship between the thought-worlds of Calvin and Turretin contains both continuity and discontinuity. Between the time of Calvin and that of Turretin, vast changes occurred in every sphere of human activity in Europe – and much remained the same. Calvin and Turretin interact with the same pre-Reformation body of theological works. Both authors use scholastic terminology as they find appropriate, both reference the church fathers liberally, and most significantly they expound the same Bible. Turretin is also writing in light of Calvin's explanation of the descent into hell, which Turretin incorporates into his own

explanation of that article.

In the passage of *Elenctic* under consideration, Turretin is responding to the Roman position that Christ suffered in his lower part – both body and soul – but not in his superior part. This position reconciles the humiliation of Christ with the Roman view that his soul was perfectly happy. This question touches on the Trinity, Christology, the nature of the satisfaction, and to some degree on anthropology. The disputational character of *Elenctic* can be seen in how Turretin lays the groundwork before beginning to develop the Reformed position from scripture. He first of all rules out certain positions which are no longer being advanced, and then works through several possible Roman positions and the various distinctions they draw within Christ.

When Turretin turns to defend Calvin, he does so using not only strict logic but also more polemic devices: levelling the same charge at opponents, and identifying language similar to Calvin's in respected authorities. He has a concern not only for what can be demonstrated from scripture but for what is persuasive. In this case he is probably not attempting to persuade Roman opponents. The tone is not one of debate. Though Turretin shows a good understanding of the Roman view, he does not direct his arguments against it or at contradictions within it. He expounds his doctrine entirely from scripture which is not likely to convince those with a very different approach to scripture and to theological authority.

Though not persuading Roman opponents the chapter is nevertheless an exercise in persuasion as well as theological development. He is attempting to persuade the Reformed that Calvin is innocent of unorthodoxy. Turretin's goal is to preserve on the one hand Calvin's

authority as a trusted theologian, and on the other the foundation which Reformed theology inherited from him. *Elenctic's* theological goals are deeply connected to the pedagogic concerns of Turretin's day.

In summary, then: the relevant chapter of Turretin is refuting a wide band of Roman positions on Christ's suffering. It mainly uses argument from scripture and its logical implications, but is also comfortable with more probing and polemic devices. Turretin is concerned with grounding his own view in scripture, but he does not stop when his view is developed: the chapter's momentum carries him towards using his view to expose errors and hypocrisy in his opponents.

The tone and purpose of *Elenctic* shows us that Turretin is not necessarily concerned with balancing the different emphases of the satisfaction. He may not provide a complete positive explication of the question. Though he does spend the majority of this question in *Elenctic* developing his own thought, he begins and ends with negation of the Roman view. Concepts and categories found elsewhere in his writings may be omitted or de-emphasised whenever they are not useful in refuting the Roman view. A lack of balance between emphases in this chapter may not reflect the fullness of Turretin's view. However, we can consider what is present in his approach for the purposes of comparison with Calvin.

IV – Calvin on the Descent

“Descended into hell” is treated in five paragraphs of chapter XVI: (8) a defense of the article's retention, (9) argument that the article does not refer to Jesus entering the place of the dead, (10) explaining the article as referring to Christ's spiritual torment for us, (11) scriptural defense of that position, and (12) defense against misunderstandings and errors. Paragraphs 10 to 12 are of greater relevance to the interaction of Trinity and satisfaction.

The sense of paragraph 10 is that Jesus put himself forward in our place as accused – a place which receives not only bodily punishment but the full weight of God's wrath. Jesus' sense of dereliction is a natural result of his status as our surety and guarantee. Calvin expands this in paragraph 11 by linking Jesus' fear to the human fear of death and hellish desertion by God. If he was to free us from these fears he had to enter into them. Jesus was not himself rejected by God but his experience was constituted by all the signs of God's wrath. Calvin paints Christ's experience of dereliction as an intimate combat which he fought for our sake; and he adds the important note that Christ's sorrow was extraordinary in some way.

In paragraph 12 Calvin responds to the trinitarian question which he similarly raised in both *Harmony* and the Genevan Catechism. Calvin apparently has in view a position that Christ's person was free from actual suffering; Turretin refutes a similar argument limiting Christ's suffering to the inferior parts in *Elenctic*. Calvin's response moves through four stages. Firstly, he argues that Christ's sorrow is an integral part of the cross; secondly, that as the uncorrupted Son of God Jesus could suffer like us without disobedience or sin; thirdly, that the weight of Jesus' sorrow requires that it include divine wrath else he would be inferior to other men; and fourthly, that though the power of the Spirit was hidden and he felt forsaken

he did not stop trusting God. Following this he draws out some implications regarding various Trinitarian heresies.

Apollinaris and the Monothelites are tangential to our topic. But the Christological implications Calvin draws out to refute these positions are vitally important. In this final stage of the paragraph, we see that Calvin reconciles Christ's forsakenness with his eternal participation in the Trinity through the incarnation. Christ's continued trust of the Father while suffering on the cross is, for Calvin, sufficient evidence against these two heresies. Against Apollinaris, he argues that Christ made atonement through obedience which necessitates a soul to will. He reinforces this logic by recalling the point made in paragraph 11, that Christ's perturbation grants us peace. The implication is that Christian confidence in the face of God's wrath against sin is only valid insofar as Christ experienced the same. The full humanity of Christ is here made essential to our confidence in his satisfaction of divine wrath.

Calvin sees Jesus' full humanity in his dereliction, but sees the distinction between his human and divine natures just as clearly – contra the Monothelites. Being a true man Jesus does not desire death; but he is obedient to his Father's will. As the eternal Word his divine will is harmonious and consonant with the Father. But as a man he puts himself under the Father's will in obedience through “a great paradox”.

In closing paragraph twelve Calvin mentions that this paradox is resolved in Christ without “extravagant behavior”. This apparently random remark references the second stage of Calvin's argument in this paragraph. Christ's ability to suffer without disobedience was there attributed to his incorruptibility as the Son of God. So Jesus' ability to humanly suffer dereliction without disobedience has been linked to the divine perfection of his person.

Christ's obedience to the Father through the experience of human suffering is enabled by his divinity.

The manner in which Calvin leverages his view against Apollinarian and Monothelite positions shows that the concept of Jesus' two natures is significant to his understanding of the descent. His use of the distinction has been so strong that, at times, it has sounded like Jesus is not one whole person but two natures which happen to occupy the same point in space-time. But Calvin's use of the two-natures distinctions has also indicated some logical connections between them. In the previous paragraph we detailed the necessity of Jesus' divine nature for Calvin's view of Jesus' human obedience. The divine nature assures Jesus' perfect human nature. Jesus' human obedience is truly human, but for Calvin it is also logically dependent on union with the divine nature. The reason and method of this is beyond the scope of this paper – it is not clear whether Calvin sees this as a communication of properties or a consequence of Jesus assuming a human nature made in the image of God.

What is clear is that the distinction Calvin repeatedly draws between the natures does not reflect an underlying disjunction between them in his christology. He confidently bases the moderation of Jesus' human nature during the dereliction upon Jesus' divine incorruptibility. This shows that one nature can be pertinent to the operation of another. Calvin's Trinitarian view of the dereliction is built upon both a distinction between Jesus' two natures, and the existence of logical connections between them.

V – Turretin on the Descent

Turretin's main goal in this chapter is to argue that Christ suffered in both body and soul, both inferior and superior parts. He presents four arguments for this position in sections IV to VII: (iv) scripture describes Jesus suffering in his soul and the soul is indivisible, (v) to ransom those who had sinned in soul and body Jesus had to suffer in soul and body, (vi) Jesus' dereliction by the Father was a spiritual experience of divine wrath, and (vii) Christ was made a curse for us, and this affects both body and soul. Turretin then moves on to defend his view against various objections which might be raised from scripture and to state what his view does not entail. These defenses are too diverse to be usefully summarised here.

The key paragraph for our present topic is VI which presents Turretin's third argument: Christ's desertion was the spiritual torment of feeling God's wrath upon him. Turretin immediately explains this desertion as temporal and relative. The qualifications he makes are revealing of both his goals and his theological approach to the topic. We will consider both in order.

Turretin's goals in this chapter can be seen when these qualifications are considered in a polemic context. The use of Scholastic terms like “affection of righteousness” - which we will define shortly – provide support for Turretin's methodology from the work of medieval theologians. This is a source of insight and authority common to Turretin and his Roman opponents. He does not need to defend the Scholastics in the way he later defends Calvin.

Turretin's theological method is also revealed by these qualifications. Turretin has just rejected the Roman distinction between Jesus' superior and inferior parts. He now makes a

precise distinction of his own, between the aspects of Jesus' relationship with the Father which are involved with the dereliction and those that are not. He is clearly not opposed to fine distinctions and precise terminology in general. But throughout this chapter he consistently rejects the idea of Jesus suffering in body and not soul, or in flesh and not spirit. We should therefore note that there is something about the relationship between “affection of righteousness” and “affection of advantage” which makes Turretin see it as an appropriate distinction to draw within the dereliction.

Turretin describes Jesus' desertion as “temporal and relative,” and then clarifies this relativity by describing several unions with which the desertion has no connection. He thus rules out understanding the desertion as a break between Jesus' human and divine natures, or as Jesus himself sinning, or as the Father ceasing to be with him. This last point clarifies Turretin's thought immensely by showing that the dereliction is not a variation in the Father's communion with the Son but in the Son's experience of that communion.

This work with the various unions of Jesus leads into the Scholastic distinction we referenced earlier. This distinction is not an exact parallel to Turretin's use of the unions but clarifies Jesus' perfect obedience while forsaken. Turretin clarifies that the dereliction could not have altered the affection of righteousness, because Jesus “felt nothing inordinate in himself.”⁷ If inappropriate response to God's will would break the affection of righteousness, we can infer that it is God's delight in a righteous man's response to him. This contrasts with the affection of advantage which Jesus does lose on the cross. Turretin notes that this second affection comprises comfort, apprehension of God's love, and sight of God's face. These are not properties of God, but of the effect which relationship with God has upon humanity.

7 Turretin, *Elenctic*, 13:14:6 p354.

An example of the distinction in action may help. Insofar as he was a type of Christ, David generally enjoyed the affection of righteousness as he served God faithfully. He was a man after God's own heart and anointed as king over God's people. But through both Samuel and the Psalms we see that the affection of advantage was sometimes absent from him. Although he remained God's servant, his circumstances at times made him wonder whether God had abandoned him. We see this at the beginning of Psalm 22, which Jesus appropriates on the cross and which Turretin sees as prefiguring Christ's internal suffering.⁸

The application of this to the dereliction is that Turretin can explain Christ's desertion in terms of God's relationship with humanity in general. He shifts the focus from the interaction of Christ's two natures to the relationship between Christ's humanity and the Father. The Father's love for Jesus can cease to be apparent to his human nature because God's affection for the righteous can be inconspicuous. This means that Turretin does not need to import Calvin's use of the relationship between the two natures.

In summary, we have seen that Turretin sees the dereliction as a change in Jesus' experience of relationship with God. This change relates to the perspicuity of God's love for him. By using a Scholastic distinction within affections which can be applied to humanity in general, Turretin understands the dereliction as primarily occurring between Jesus' humanity and God rather than between Jesus' divinity and humanity.

8 Turretin, *Elencic Theology*, 13:14:9 p355.

VI – Divergence

We have considered how our two subjects deal with Christ's dereliction. We have seen both Calvin's dogged insistence on Christ suffering the withdrawal of God in a truly human way, and Turretin's focus on a variation in Jesus' experience of communion with the Trinity. Calvin and Turretin develop the topic of Christ's dereliction in very similar ways. The contrasts between their thought are not major variations. The purpose of examining these contrasts in minute detail is not to suggest that Calvin and Turretin are further apart than they appear, but only to fully explore the theological implications of small divergences in presentation.

The main divergence is in which doctrines are used to describe the experience of Christ. Calvin explains Christ's dereliction as “the divine power of his Spirit remained hidden for a moment to give place to weakness of flesh.” This conveys a sense of Christ's human nature becoming temporarily ascendant over his divine nature. This cannot mean a change in the essential union of the two natures; we have already discussed that Calvin does not see the dereliction as a break between Christ's two natures. Calvin must therefore be discussing a change in the human nature's experience of union with the divine nature: a concealment of the divine nature's resources of power and knowledge from the human nature's experience.

Calvin's emphasis upon the human nature in the dereliction now poses a problem for Jesus' obedience on the cross. Does Jesus' humanity get along without his humanity in this experience? This would endanger both the unity of Jesus' person and the necessity of the incarnation. Turretin links Jesus' obedience to the incorruptibility of Jesus as the Son of God – and interestingly, so does Calvin:

But since he was uncorrupted, a moderation that restrained excess flourished in all his emotions. Hence, he could be like us in sorrow...yet in such a way as to differ from us by this characteristic.⁹

Here Calvin references Jesus' incorruptibility to nuance his understanding of how Jesus assumes our fallen human experience. This clarifies his view of the dereliction: Jesus takes on a fallen human experience, but experiences it with uncorrupted and incorruptible humanity. It is important for Calvin that Jesus is like us in that he bears our experience, but unlike us in how he bears it. The concealment of Jesus' divine nature must apply only to the human nature's perception of the union and not to the union itself.

Calvin's approach emphasises Christ's full and real assumption of damnation. He is concerned to show that Jesus bore God's wrath on fallen man as a man, and that he had not simply endured an alien experience but gone through one which overwhelmed all his faculties and passions. By explaining that Christ's experience of hellish death was entirely real and immediate, he defuses our own fear of such death. Thus Calvin says in paragraph 11:

Therefore, by his wrestling hand to hand with the devil's power, with the dread of death, with the pains of hell, he was victorious and triumphed over them, that in death we may not now fear those things which our Prince has swallowed up.

Calvin is concerned with relating Jesus' desertion to us. On the one hand, it is his assumption of our fallen nature which places him under a sense of the Father's wrath – so our deserved punishment has been borne. On the other hand, he also overcomes the fear of death and desertion which are common even to redeemed humanity. He passes through the perception of divine opposition without abandoning relationship with the Father, so that he is

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:16:12 p518-519.

truly subject to all of our temptations without sinning. Calvin's understanding of Jesus as being like us, but not the same as us, allows Jesus to pass through the experience of damnation without despair or actual damnation.

Turretin's approach to the satisfaction would emphasise the movement or action of the trinity, that they are a community doing something. The trinity is defined in our conception of it by its relationships. The bond of felicity, the suspension of which Turretin uses to exhibit Christ's suffering to the reader, is not a relationship. Nor is it a property. Turretin describes it and its loss by Jesus:

...the favorable presence of grace and the influx of consolation and happiness...as to withdrawal of vision, not as to a dissolution of union; as to the want of the sense of the divine love, intercepted by the sense of the divine wrath and vengeance resting upon him, not as to a real privation or extinction of it.¹⁰

Turretin is at pains to distinguish between Jesus losing his sense of the Father's love, and the impossible scenario of Jesus actually losing the Father's love. As with Calvin's expression, something interferes with Jesus' sense of communion with the Father and Spirit; but rather than being the human experience of the damned, here it is the sense of divine wrath which interferes. This is not a vast difference as of course it is divine wrath which initiates and constitutes the experience of the damned. Calvin approaches it from below while Turretin from above. He conceives of Christ's experience as a variation within the economic Trinity.

Economic trinity is not a term Turretin uses. But earlier in *Elenctic* he does make a great number of bipartite distinctions within the will of God.¹¹ He relates each of these distinctions back to God's decretive and preceptive wills: what he pleases to do and what

¹⁰ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 13:14:6 p354.

¹¹ Turretin, *Elenctic Theology*, 3:15 p220-225.

pleasing acts he commands of us. The two may be congruent and they may not be. Turretin is comfortable with God willing something that does not please him, though he pleases to will it. What is good for God to decree is not always what he decreed as good. The Trinity can together ordain Jesus to suffer desertion, which is hardly pleasant, without Turretin seeing any conflict within the triune divine will.

This is relevant to our topic because Turretin is not discussing the Trinity in itself. More accurately we might speak of the experience of the Trinity which Jesus realises in his person, with both natures and wills being relevant to his person. Consider Figure 1 as a diagram of human experience:¹²

God's preceptive will (P) is directed to the person while his decretive will (D) is directed to the person's experience. In a parallel way the affection of righteousness is directed to the person while the affection of advantage (A) is directed to their experience. For a sense of divine wrath to interfere with Jesus' human experience only requires an alteration in the affection of advantage, or God's decretive will. Making this distinction regarding God's will and humanity's consequent experience of God means that Turretin, though not necessarily objecting to Calvin's use of fallen human experience, does not require it.

¹² Figure 1 represents Turretin's view of human experience in general. It is not a representation of the relationship between Jesus' two natures.

It is not appropriate to say that Jesus experiences forsakenness only on the grounds of or through his human nature – for example, that the Father appears to reject only the human nature. Both natures are what make it proper and effectual for him to be forsaken for the sake of redemption. His divine nature and origin make him an acceptable human sacrifice, and originates the perfect image of God in his human nature. When Turretin talks about the affection of advantage being withdrawn from Jesus he does not abandon the single personhood of Jesus – both natures and wills are in play regarding the affection of advantage, though perhaps not in the same way.

Of course Calvin equally affirms that Jesus' spiritual torment is real and not play-acting. But he draws upon ideas of accommodation and faith-interpreted appearance which are less present in Turretin. Elsewhere in *Institutes* Calvin distinguishes between the matter and the sign of the sacraments,¹³ and this distinction will help us understand how Calvin sees Jesus as truly distraught but not factually rejected by God. Bear in mind that Calvin uses “sign” differently between the two sections. The logical distinction he makes regarding is sacrament is useful. It shows us how Calvin can consider Christ's real and true experience of our desertion to be only part of his personal experience of the cross.

Calvin quotes a number of places where Augustine argues that both matter and sign are contained within the union of the sacrament, but a distinction must be made between the two categories.¹⁴ The goal of this is to establish that the sacraments must be received in faith to be effective.¹⁵ But Augustine's distinction can be paraphrased in this way: human experience of relationship with God may contain physical events which only mediate

¹³ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:14:3 and 4:14:15-16.

¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:14:15.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes*, 4:14:17.

relationship with God when received in faith. This is precisely what occurs to Jesus on the cross. As he has assumed the experience of fallen human nature, Jesus' human experience presents no evidence that he remains beloved by the Trinity. He does not appear to be the Son of God, just as bread does not inherently represent Jesus' body or wine his blood. But Jesus apprehends the meaning of this matter through relationship with the Father and Spirit. The sign of the Father's continued communion with him is present by faith. And therefore, as Calvin points out, Jesus continues to give the relational cry of "my God."

Jesus receives matter (in the sense of the actions by which temporal relationships are constituted) of God's wrath towards him in his matter as he suffers and dies. But the sign (in the sense of essence or formal nature) of Jesus' existence is as the consubstantial Son of the Trinity. As discussed earlier in this section, communion with the Trinity remains clear to Jesus' divine nature but is occluded to his human nature as a result of the assumption, during the satisfaction, of the just experience of fallen humanity. The sign does not lose its truth and faith-based apprehension even as the matter is destroyed. If we consider Figure 2:¹⁶

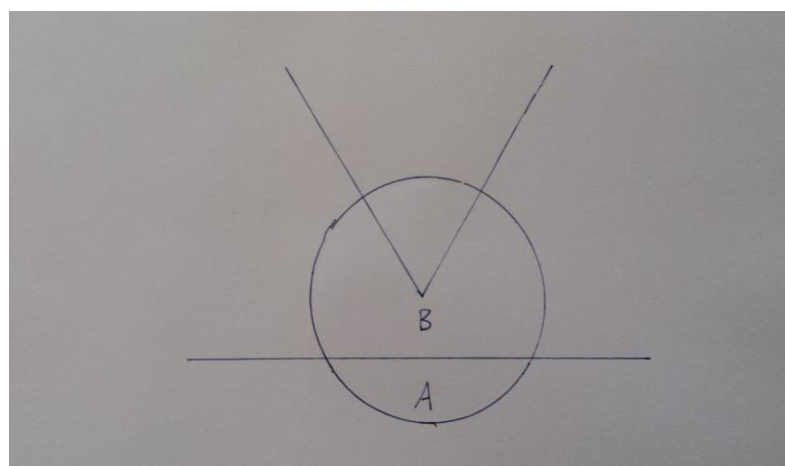


Figure 2: Calvin's understanding of Jesus' human experience

¹⁶ Figure 2 is a representation of Christ's human experience. It is not a representation of the relationship between his two natures.

B refers to Jesus' experience by virtue of his human nature, with the wedge representing his divine nature. Below the line is the experience of fallen human nature. On the cross Jesus ceases to experience B and enters the experience of A. Jesus has entered the experience of fallen humanity by going below the line – but all of this is his experience with respect to God's justice. It is not his own nature which alters.

In summary, although there is not a vast difference between Calvin and Turretin's teaching on Christ's dereliction, we have articulated some divergences in approach. Calvin's expression of the dereliction uses the two natures of Jesus to focus the dereliction on Christ's assumption of fallen human experience. Calvin sees this experience as one of true dereliction according to normal human perception, while he knew he was not abandoned by the apprehension of faith. Jesus has come so low as to apparently bear our desertion by God; and this appearance is not only to our eyes, but to Jesus' natural perception as well. The accommodation of the incarnation is so central to Calvin's understanding of the cross, that he sees it as actually affecting Jesus' experience of relationship with God.

The intensity of Calvin's accommodatory language is partly a function of the context of his chapter. As mentioned in section II, he is defending his inclusion and interpretation of this article of the Creed as central to the faith. He needs to demonstrate the dereliction's concrete benefits to the Christian. And he does this by linking Christ's desertion with our fear of desertion by God. Though the two are not exactly the same, due to Christ's true humanity and divine nature, Christ has truly endured fallen humanity's death and desertion and so they hold no fear for the believer.

Calvin's context drove him to show his view's benefits, but his method of doing so also

shows something of his understanding of the Trinity in the satisfaction. By virtue of the incarnation, he sees Christ as stooping so far down into humanity that he can truly experience our desertion. And his understanding of faith being essential to human perception of relationship with God allows him to see Christ as experiencing human desertion while knowing that he was not deserted. God's condescension to human limits, particularly as expressed in the incarnation, is central to Calvin's view of the Trinity in the satisfaction.

In contrast, Turretin makes much less of a distinction between Jesus' human and divine natures. For Calvin the desertion was primarily in respect of human nature, both Jesus' and ours. But for Turretin the desertion is primarily in respect of Jesus' experience of the Trinity. And he generally speaks of this experience in an holistic way without separating out Jesus' divine nature from his human nature. As with Calvin's drive towards his view's spiritual benefits, Turretin's emphasis on the one person of Christ is partly a function of context. Turretin is refuting the Roman view which confines Jesus' suffering to his body or his inferior parts. If his own view made a strong distinction between divine and human natures it would look a great deal like the Roman view to the careless reader, much as Calvin appeared Nestorian in some respects. Turretin deals with Jesus' whole person to put as much theological water between him and the Roman view as possible. His theological approach has a polemic edge – which should hardly surprise us in a book of *Elenctic Theology*.

Turretin can emphasise the single person of Jesus because his view of the dereliction focuses on the interaction of that one person with the Trinity. When arguing that Jesus' suffering did not induce despair, Turretin defends and quotes Calvin to the effect that Jesus knew by faith that he was not abandoned. But Calvin's framework of incarnation and human nature is not referenced, nor has anything like it been developed by Turretin. He presumably

has no major issue with Calvin's view or he would not reference both the *Harmony* and *Institutes*. But for the matter at hand Turretin and Calvin use different tools.

VII – Implications for their doctrine of the Trinity in the satisfaction

Firstly and briefly, in the area of methodology, both Calvin and Turretin expound Christ's dereliction through the Trinity and the dual natures of Christ. This does not mean only a concern to stay within the bounds of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. Both writers use the doctrines of Trinity and christology as sources of concepts with which to explain Christ's dereliction. They are not content to let the classical theistic doctrines sit on the shelf and look pretty: they are articles of faith but also concepts through which Calvin and Turretin understand their faith. There is a difference between using the Trinity and Christ's two natures as a fence to prevent theological roaming, and appropriating these two areas of doctrine as the home which Christian theology loves to dwell within from start to finish.

Secondly, for Calvin the doctrine of the Trinity and the satisfaction are connected by the incarnation. His understanding of the dereliction must consider the relationship between God and humanity which God expresses in the incarnation: both in the *ordo salutis* sense of the Father sending his Son in the power of the Spirit, and in the specific Christological sense of Jesus' twofold natures. The satisfaction on the cross is part of a work which began when Mary conceived. Calvin does not understand the incarnation as the Son's unalloyed solidarity with us. The Son assumes true human nature in the image of God. His humanity is real and true. This necessitates that it is not the same as ours in all respects. Jesus did not come as fallen man but in the likeness of fallen man.

Thirdly, for Turretin the dereliction is less closely tied to the incarnation and occupies more of its own distinct position within the satisfaction. He sees the Trinity's variation of operation in the dereliction as an act of will rather than the completion of Jesus' incarnational

trajectory. Turretin pivots away from the relevance of the incarnation towards Jesus' ongoing relationship with God. He thus makes the dereliction an act which directly involves the whole Trinity rather than primarily the incarnate Son.

Fourthly, both our subjects are silent on the Spirit's involvement in Christ's desertion. This does not necessarily signify that they forgot to be Trinitarian for one chapter each. It does signify that by discussing Jesus' relationship with reference to God, they considered the Spirit to have been adequately included. This appears to amalgamate the economic relationship of the Father and the Spirit to the Son; that is, it considers them acting together (or refraining from action) with respect to the Son. The implications of Christ's desertion for the relationship of the Spirit to Christ and the Father would make a fine line of inquiry.

Finally, we turn to the implications for our own understanding of the dereliction. A constellation of doctrinal points have emerged which, like stars in a constellation, must be present and apprehended together in order to be comprehensible. A sufficient articulation of Jesus' inward suffering on the cross must present the weight of sorrow which our salvation cost our saviour; and the confidence in the fact of death and abandonment which he has won for us. It must see Jesus as an utterly unique and incorruptible man suffering the common fate of fallen humanity. It must see the real human loneliness of Jesus but also his unbreakable bond with the Trinity. Nuanced and precise christology and Trinitarian theology must be the grounding and backdrop of any Christian understanding of the dereliction. We can only see the depth of the shadow over Golgotha when we have seen the light of Jesus' baptism and transfiguration.

As well as the constellation of doctrine, there are some aspects of Calvin and Turretin's

approach which we should appropriate. Turretin uses the concept of affection of advantage to illuminate the agency and impact of the whole Trinity in the dereliction. The cross can become so christologically focused that it seems almost as if the Trinity does not perform this act together. Turretin's approach is helpful in seeing the Trinity as exercising divine will in their lack of apparent involvement with the cross. We want to maintain this view of the Trinity acting in the cross, and supplement it with Calvin's fervently pastoral application of Christ's human suffering to our experience.

To do this without contradiction will require us to work through the relationship between humanity and God. It will not be easy to think of the dereliction as an action on the one hand between Jesus' humanity and fallen humanity, and on the other between Jesus and the Father. If these are complementary aspects of the one act then we will have to explore relationship with the Father as an embedded part of human nature. How has the Fall affected this part of human nature? What is the relationship between divine Sonship and human sonship? These are the areas of doctrine we will have to develop to appropriate the best of Calvin and Turretin's work here.

VIII – Conclusion

Calvin and Turretin's articulations of Christ's dereliction diverge in small ways. Calvin sees an assumption of our fallen human experience, and Turretin an action within Jesus' experience of the Trinity. These differences are rooted in the connections of the dereliction to their broader doctrines of incarnation, satisfaction, and Trinity; and in the contexts and purposes which shape their respective works. We should borrow much of their material and approach, and carefully think through the tensions this creates within our anthropology and christology.

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