John Calvin’s reception of the necessitarian concepts of the early Reformation in his defense of Martin Luther’s early Reformation doctrine of the bondage of human will had a significant and complex impact on his reformulation of the human will, providence, and predestination. 1 On the one hand, with his contemporary Reformers, Calvin reverses Luther’s practice, adopts the scholastic distinctions concerning necessity, affirms the genuine contingency of human will, and discontinues the necessitarian argument for the bondage of human will. 2 On these issues, Calvin seems to safeguard the classical Augustinian affirmation of the genuine integrity of secondary causality. On the other hand, though he does not repeat the necessitarian argument Luther used in the early Reformation, Calvin does adopt key necessitarian concepts and expressions taught by Luther and other early Reformers. 3 While Luther (following Augustine) basically set the discussion of active presentation of divine willing of

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hardening in a post-fall framework, Calvin was unique among his peers in applying the necessitarian concepts and language to the divine ordination of the fall. This constitutes a major characteristic in Calvin's formulation of the relationship between primary causality and second causality.

**Calvin’s Reception of the Necessitarian Concepts of the Early Reformation**

Even though Calvin does not employ the necessitarian arguments of the early Reformation, he does adopt various necessitarian concepts advocated in the early Reformation. Hence, we shall find that in at least five aspects of the necessitarian concepts there are essential continuities between early Reformation necessitarian concepts and Calvin's doctrines of providence and predestination.

First of all, Calvin adopts some of the active concepts of divine omnipotence advocated by the reformers in the early Reformation. In the defense for the bondage of human will, Luther set the precedent to use an active concept of divine omnipotence to defend the idea of “sheer necessity.” Anthony Lane points out that “Pighius assumed that Calvin agreed with Luther’s teaching that ‘nothing happens to us contingently, but everything by sheer necessity.’ Calvin’s embarrassment was that he did not agree—but could not say so openly without displaying Protestant disunity.”

In addition, Ulrich Zwingli set an important, but perhaps notorious precedent for applying the necessitarian concepts to divine providence. Zwingli explicitly minimizes the integrity of second causality: “Secondary causes are not properly called causes. This is of fundamental importance for the understanding of Providence.” Zwingli also uses pantheistic language to characterize the nature of the creation, “everything that is, is in Him and through Him and a part of Him.” And “there is nothing which is not of the Deity.” In addition, Zwingli emphasizes that divine providence is active and never idle: “For this also is altogether incontrovertible, either Providence cares for all things and is

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