



An Exploration of God’s Love in John Calvin’s Theology: Does God Love Everyone or Only the Elect?

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Abstract

The love of God is a central topic in Christian theology. However, views on the love of God are not always consistent in Christian theology. One well-known theologian who is considered inconsistent in his theology of God’s love is John Calvin. Calvin believed that God chose some people to be saved, which raises questions about whether Calvin truly believed in God’s universal love, since there are those who are not chosen. T.H.L. Parker argued that although Calvin spoke a lot about God’s love, his views often contained inconsistencies in his theology, leading to questions about whether Calvin truly believed in God’s universal love. On the other hand, Richard A. Muller stated that the concept of God’s love in Calvin’s theology is very consistent and not ambiguous. According to him, Calvin viewed God’s love as a love that is not dependent on humans and not limited to those who receive it. God’s love in Calvin’s view is a praiseworthy and noble love because it encompasses all of humanity, both the elect and the non-elect. This article is written to explain the misunderstanding about John Calvin being inconsistent in his theology of God’s love. To answer the above issue, the author will use the literature method. The author will examine all of Calvin’s writings to explain that Calvin is very consistent in his theology of God’s love, so those who consider the theology of God’s love to be inconsistent can clearly see that what is accused of Calvin is not true.

Article History:

Received: November 25, 2024

Accepted: January 20, 2025

Published: January 30, 2025

Keywords:

Love of God

Christian Theology

John Calvin

Predestination

INTRODUCTION

John Calvin is famous for his view of predestination however, many scholars debate about the concept of God’s love in Calvin’s theology which is considered inconsistent because of how God can choose some people to be saved but still love people without exception. Among them is T. H. L. Parker said, although Calvin talked a lot about God’s love, his views often seemed contradictory, and inconsistent in his theology which raised questions about whether Calvin really

believed in God's universal love.¹ This is supported by David R. Law who says that Calvin's view of predestination affects his view of God's love, so there are inconsistencies in Calvin's thinking about God's love, especially in how that love applies to those who are not saved. Furthermore, Christopher Elwood also supports Parker and Law by saying that, Calvin's views on God's love often seem ambiguous and contradictory so that they are inconsistent, because on the one hand Calvin asserts that God loves all people without exception, but on the other hand, Calvin's views on predestination and hereditary sin sometimes imply that God chooses not to save some people..²

In contrast, Richard A. Muller disagrees with Parker. Muller explains that the concept of God's love in Calvin's theology is very consistent and unambiguous. According to him, Calvin views God's love as a love that does not depend on humans and is not limited to those who receive that love.³ God's love in Calvin's view is a praiseworthy and glorious love because it encompasses all of humanity, both the elect and the non-elect. Muller emphasizes that Calvin always viewed God's love in relation to God's sovereign will and His decision in predestination.⁴ This is also supported by Paul Helm, who says that Calvin's view of predestination does not mean that God has no love for the unsaved. Rather, predestination shows that God has greater love because God chooses to save some people from the sin and destruction they deserve.⁵

Calvin believed that God's love is the central concept in Christian theology. In his sermons and books, Calvin emphasized that God's love goes beyond the concept of predestination. According to Calvin, God loves all people without exception, and this love is expressed in the existence and providence of humanity. Among others in his sermon on 1 John 4:8, Calvin emphasized that God is love and love is an integral part of His essence. He writes: "God's love is inseparable from Him. For love is His very essence"⁶ In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin asserts that God's love transcends the concept of predestination and demonstrates an infinite love for all people without exception. He writes: In infinite love, God cares for all people,

¹ T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Love of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 149-167.

² Christopher Elwood, *Calvin for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 76-77.

³ Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York-Oxford, 2000), 113-114.

⁴ Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition*, 113-114.

⁵ Paul Helm, "Calvin and the Doctrine of Predestination," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36, no. 2 (1983): 171.

⁶ John Calvin, *Sermons on the Epistles of John, Part 1: Chapters 1-3, Diterjemahkan Oleh Robert White* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth, 2012), 119.

not only those whom he chooses to save, but also those whom he rejects. God's love shines through in the existence and providence of mankind.⁷ In his sermon on John 3:16, Calvin emphasized that God loves the whole world, even those who are not saved. He wrote: "When God expresses His love for the world, He means the whole human race, and not just some of them. His love radiates in the very being of mankind, and pervades the whole of His creation."⁸

RESEARCH METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative methodology, focusing on an extensive literature review. The author systematically explore, evaluate, and integrate existing academic works, theological writings, and historical records concerning Calvin's interpretation of God's love. By conducting this thorough literature review, the study seeks to enhance our comprehension of Calvin's views on divine love and its significance for Christian theology and practice.

The author will investigate primary sources, including Calvin's own writings, commentaries, and sermons, as well as secondary sources that have to do with Calvin's concept of God's love. The author will also explore the historical context in which Calvin developed his understanding of God's love. A critical analysis of these sources will be conducted to identify the main themes, key concepts, and development of Calvin's thought on God's love.

Through this comprehensive literature review, this study aims to contribute to the debate on Calvin's concept of God's love. The findings of this study are expected to clear up misunderstandings about Calvin, who is often thought that his concept of God's love is not addressed to all people, but only to those who have been chosen.

DISCUSSION

Calvin is very consistent in teaching God's love for all people including those who are not chosen to be saved, the author will present some evidence that Calvin has a consistent teaching about God's love so that Calvin has a teaching that God loves all people without exception. Calvin's consistency is seen where he makes God's love the central concept in all his theology,

⁷ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), III,xxii,8.

⁸ John Calvin, *Sermons on the Gospel of John, Part 1, Trans. by Robert White* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth, 2011), 149.

the recognition that God loves all people universally and God's love in Calvin is applied to all people without exception.

1. *God's love is a central concept in John Calvin's theology*

God's love is a central concept in Calvin's theology so it is very difficult to say that Calvin is inconsistent in the theology of God's love. In his writings, it is seen that God's love is a central concept in his theology, for Calvin whatever God does is based on His love seen in his book he said, therefore, God does not know us except from His love, or, in other words, we are not considered His children unless He loves us, even when He created man all done by God based on His love.⁹ Since God created all human beings out of love, God loves all human beings without exception, and to this day, God cares for all human beings, protects all human beings, and provides various enjoyments to all human beings without exception.¹⁰ Against those who accused Calvin of inconsistency and God's love only for those who are chosen, he said, God's love refuses to distinguish between one human being and another, except in the special cases we have spoken of. His will, therefore, is that the life and death of men should continue to depend on His own decision. We have no right to demand anything of Him.¹¹ When speaking of salvation Calvin says that God's love for us, however, not only humbles us before Him, but also gives us the certainty of true salvation. He introduces us into His own fellowship, showing us that He regards us as His children.¹² So how can Calvin be inconsistent in the love of God, since in all things Calvin bases his theology on the love of God, it is because for Calvin, the love of God is the central concept in his theology.

Calvin goes on to say, that God is the source of goodness demonstrated by love, First of all, let us fully recognize that the only source of all goodness is God, who without exception expresses himself as love.¹³ Calvin believed that God's grace for humanity through Christ is guaranteed by God's love, he said, but all grace, both within us and outside us, comes to us through Christ and in Christ. Thus, we are strengthened and assured in God's eternal love, where we are

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xxvi,1.

¹⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV,i,1.

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiii,6.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV,i,1.

¹³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I,i,1.

awakened to eternal life.¹⁴ So Calvin is very consistent in his teaching of God's love, because everything God does is done in love.

Calvin explicitly states that God's love extends to everyone without exception, not just to the chosen few., "Since we know that God loves us with an infinite love not only to the elect but to all men, we should never doubt that He always accompanies all men with His goodness."¹⁵ When talking about faith, Calvin also says that the faith that connects us to Christ also comes from God's love, "That is why we say that faith is the medium that connects us to Christ. By faith, we receive Him as our Savior and obtain all His benefits. And all this comes from His infinite love for us."¹⁶

In the discussion of relationships with others, Calvin exhorted everyone to study the love of God in order to be the basis for relating to all people on the basis of God's love, as seen when he discussed the understanding of God's love which is the basis of brotherly love among us, where he said in his sermon on 1 John 4:8, "Therefore, we must study the love of God itself, which is the basis of all that is good among us, so that we may understand how we ought to love one another."¹⁷ So the concept of God's love is a central concept for Calvin, even when talking about relationships with others, Calvin wants to base relationships between humans from God's love. Including the inclusion of God Calvin also said that everything comes from God's love, seen when he discussed John 15: 9-12 he explained, "We must realize that God always accompanies us with His love, and that this love is the basis of all goodness."¹⁸

Why does Calvin make God's love the central concept? Because for Calvin, God's love is the source of all the goodness and grace that He has poured out on us through Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Even when talking about sacraments Calvin also links sacraments to God's love, "We feel the love of God when we are mindful of his grace and inclusion, which he shows us in his Word and in his sacraments."²⁰ Even more clearly as evidence that God's love is a central concept in his theology, when speaking about the forgiveness of sins, he also links God's love to seeing forgiveness as

¹⁴ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I,xvi, 2.

¹⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xviii,55.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,ii,12.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Khotbah-Khotbah John Calvin Tentang Kitab 1 Yohanes, Diterjemahkan Oleh Andar Ismail* (Surabaya: Momentum, 2016), 69.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Sermons on the Gospel of John: Chapters 12-21, Translated by T.H.L. Parker*, ed. Jean-Daniel Benoit (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 258.

¹⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,2.

²⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,ii,24.

based on God's love, "We must recognize that God's love is the basis of the forgiveness of our sins, and that we can only receive this forgiveness through faith in Christ."²¹ More interestingly Calvin explains that while being God's enemy, God's love was already given to sinful man, because God's love is the root of all things, "The love of God is the foundation of our salvation. God loved us even when we were His enemies. It was this great love that moved Him to give His Son as a ransom for our sins."²² The love of God is the root of all virtues, and all the goodness within us comes from the love of God.²³ God shows His love for us by giving His only Son to die for us, so that we can receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.²⁴ Christ is the perfect Redeemer, who in His infinite love, took our place before God and suffered for our sin so that we could be accepted as His children.²⁵

Alister E. McGrath sees that because God's love is the central concept of Calvin's theology, he succeeds in describing God's extraordinary love, which shows how much He cares for mankind, so that He provides a way of salvation for us through His own Son.²⁶ We must recognize that it was God's love that motivated Christ's redemption and that this love is for all people without exception. Christ came to save the lost, not just the elect but Jesus died for everyone.²⁷ In his essay entitled "Calvin on the Love of God and Predestination", Paul Helm discusses the concept of God's love in John Calvin's theology and how this concept influenced Calvin's views on predestination. According to Helm, Calvin saw God's love as the foundation of all Christian theology and that predestination must be understood in the context of God's love. Helm emphasizes that Calvin sees God's love not only as a general love given to all human beings, but also a special and specific love given only to those chosen for salvation. In Calvin's view, this special love is closely linked to predestination, which is also an integral part of salvation.²⁸

Likewise for Graham A. Cole, the love of God is a central concept in Calvin's theology. When speaking of Christ's redemption based on the love of God, Cole emphasizes that for Calvin,

²¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV,viii,54.

²² John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), Roma 5:8.

²³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,15.

²⁴ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,15.

²⁵ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,4.

²⁶ Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 173.

²⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,2.

²⁸ Paul Helm, "Calvin on the Love of God and Predestination," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 181-197.

Christ's redemption must be understood in the context of God's love that covers all of humanity. Calvin sees Christ's redemption as a concrete and real act of God's love, in which Christ takes the place of man as the payer of sin and enables man to live in fellowship with God. Cole emphasizes that for Calvin, Christ's redemption must be understood in the context of God's love that encompasses all of humanity. Calvin sees Christ's redemption as a concrete and tangible act of God's love, in which Christ takes the place of man as the payer of sin and enables man to live in fellowship with God.²⁹

2. John Calvin Recognizes that God's Love is Universal

God's love in Calvin's theology is not limited to the elect but to all people, so the accusation that the concept of God's love in John Calvin's theology is inconsistent is untrue. Even though Calvin believed that God chose some people to be saved, it does not mean that God does not love those who are not chosen. David W. Hall in his article entitled "The Love of God in Calvin's Institutes" explains that Calvin views that God's love that accompanies Christ's redemption includes all humanity, not just some. Calvin believed that God chooses people to be saved based on His own love and mercy, not because of what people do or who they are.³⁰

Calvin fully believed that God's love is universal and encompasses everyone without exception. Although there are those who will perish because of their sin, God's love still covers them in a way that man does not fully understand. In Calvin's view, even those who are not chosen by God can still experience His love through the graces bestowed upon them during their lives in this world. They are not chosen not because God does not love them, but because of their sins. Calvin emphasized that God's love is not limited to His chosen ones, but also encompasses all of humanity. God, with His love, created the world and provided sustenance to everyone.³¹ Hall believes that understanding that God chooses people to be saved based on His own love and mercy, not because of what people do or who they are.³² We must recognize that we were chosen in Christ before the world was formed; that we who are lost and going astray will not be found in Him; that

²⁹ Graham A. Cole, *Calvin's Theology of the Word and Sacrament: A Festschrift for Ronald S. Wallace*, ed. dan Douglas F. Kelly. Carlisle Graham A. Cole, Sinclair B. Ferguson (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 76.

³⁰ David W. Hall, "The Love of God in Calvin's Institutes," *Presbyterion: Covenant Seminary Review* 22, no. 1 (1996): 22-23.

³¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I,xvii,10.

³² Hall, "The Love of God in Calvin's Institutes," 22-23.

we who are broken and flowing into perdition will not be redeemed by Him. It all depends on God's infinite love and unwavering will.³³

Calvin asserts, although God's adoption as His son is a special privilege for believers, yet since God created all men in His image and likeness, there is some sense in which it can be said that God is the Father of all men. And though many are alienated from Him because of their unbelief, He does not cease to care for them with Fatherly concern and bestow His blessings upon them, thus showing that His goodness extends to all."³⁴ In his commentary on the epistle to the Romans, Calvin says, God's love is extended to all people, even those who are not chosen. While we may not understand how this is possible, we must trust in God's infinite wisdom and justice.³⁵

Even in Calvin's sermon on election and rejection, Calvin remains firm that, in His infinite mercy, God gives blessings to all people, even those who are ultimately condemned. We may not fully understand why God chooses to do this, but we must trust in His wisdom and goodness.³⁶ So even though Calvin believes that there are the elect and the non-elect, he consistently says that God's love is revealed to all people. So Calvin says, because even those who deserve to be rejected because of their rottenness, still benefit from the love of God that they have experienced in this life, in many ways. And it should not sound absurd that God, as the sovereign giver of gifts, distributes His gifts according to His discretion. Nevertheless, we must always hold this principle, that God's love is offered to all people for salvation, and that there is no other way to obtain it except through faith.³⁷

Calvin emphatically said, "Even those who are rejected by God still benefit from His goodness during their life on earth. God gives them talents, abilities, and other gifts that make their lives joyful and meaningful. In this sense, we can say that God's love includes all people."³⁸ God's love is universal and encompasses everyone, even those destined for destruction. Although we may not fully understand this aspect of God's character, we can trust in His infinite wisdom and goodness.³⁹ There are two types of election to be distinguished: one, when God chooses those who

³³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxi,1.

³⁴ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiii,1-3.

³⁵ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth Trust, 1960), Roma 8:30.

³⁶ John Calvin, *Sermons on Election and Reprobation Translated by Robert White* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: Banner of Truth, 2013), 60.

³⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiv,16.

³⁸ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II,xvi,3.

³⁹ John Calvin, *Khotbah-Khotbah John Calvin Tentang Kitab 1 Yohanes*, 32.

will be heirs of eternal life, and the other, when He determines those who will be cast down to eternal destruction. However, even though those who are doomed to eternal destruction do not experience God's love in the forgiveness of sins or victory over infirmities, they still experience God's love in various other things that they enjoy during their life in this world.⁴⁰ God's love for all people is universal and unconditional, encompassing all people regardless of their beliefs or actions. This is a powerful reminder of God's infinite grace and mercy. God's love is for all people in the world without distinction, meaning for all people regardless of their beliefs or actions. Thus, even those who are the most damned and separated from God's love still have His grace and mercy. This is a powerful reminder of God's infinite mercy, which should make us praise Him with humble and grateful hearts.⁴¹

Calvin explained that although God has chosen some people for salvation, He still shows His goodness to everyone during their lives in the world. This is evidence of His universal love and mercy.⁴² Although not everyone is chosen for salvation, this does not mean that God has no care or compassion for them. In fact, God extends His grace and mercy to them during their life on earth, even though they will eventually face His judgment. This shows that His love encompasses all people, and not just those chosen for salvation.⁴³ Calvin clearly affirms God gives His grace and mercy to all people without exception, even those who will ultimately be condemned. This shows that God's love is universal and includes all people, and not just certain people who are considered elect for salvation. God by His grace and mercy gives blessings to all without exception, even those who are ultimately condemned. This shows that God's love is universal and encompasses all people, and not just certain people who are chosen for salvation.⁴⁴

In his commentary on Romans 5:8, Calvin explains, We see here how great is the love of God revealed to us in Christ, and how clear that it is universal and unconditional. This shows that God's love includes all people without exception. Although we may not understand how this is possible, we must trust in God's infinite wisdom and goodness.⁴⁵ God's love is universal and encompasses all people, as He created all people in His image and likeness. This shows that God

⁴⁰ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiii,i.

⁴¹ John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries: Matthew-John 1-11, Jilid 17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing House, 1989), 3:16.

⁴² Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiv,16.

⁴³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiv,17-18.

⁴⁴ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Edinburgh, Skotlandia: The Calvin Translation Society, 1854), Efesus 1.

⁴⁵ Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, Roma 5:8.

cares for all people regardless of their status or condition.⁴⁶ So the concept of God's love for all people in John Calvin's theology is very consistent, both in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, he states that God loves all people without exception, as well as in his interpretations both in the interpretation of the letters of Romans, Ephesians, the Gospel of John consistently Calvin explains that God loves all people without exception.

3. Calvin's concern for humanity

John Calvin is known as a theologian who cares about his fellow human beings. Besides writing his theological works, Calvin was also involved in various social and humanitarian activities that showed his concern for others. Calvin's consistency in the theology of God's love for all people without exception is shown by caring for all people without exception not only for the elect. This means that Calvin shows his love not only to the elect but to all. At the time.

Calvin described Geneva as a chaotic place, without the rule of law and morals, and a social life separated from Christian values.⁴⁷ In the sixteenth century, Geneva was a stark contrast to its current state. Back then, the city was filled with filth, poverty, and highly disorganized conditions.⁴⁸ Calvin saw Geneva as a state of great concern in many ways. He imagined that in the midst of the city's chaos, he would have to devote his life and serve with dedication every day to all people without exception no matter whether they were elect or not.⁴⁹ In the city, he not only faced philosophical-theological questions, but also faced concrete and actual problems of social life. For Calvin, Geneva was his home base, where he contemplated theology and served others, yet also witnessed inequality, disease, and social injustice. As long as these social problems were not resolved, he might not be able to sleep peacefully. There was an existential restlessness that drove him to keep thinking and seeking solutions.⁵⁰

Alister E. McGrath states that Calvin not only engaged in high and abstract theology, but also plunged into more real and profound issues. He was directly involved in realizing social

⁴⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III,xxiv,15.

⁴⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, IV. V. 13.

⁴⁸ Timotius, Marthin S. Lumingkewas, and Agus Santoso, "Menelusuri Konsep Pelayanan Sosial John Calvin Dan Implikasinya Bagi Peran Gereja Dalam Pelayanan Sosial," *Mitra Sriwijaya: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 3, no. 1 (2022): 79.

⁴⁹ Timotius, Marthin S. Lumingkewas, and Agus Santoso, "Menelusuri Konsep Pelayanan Sosial John Calvin Dan Implikasinya Bagi Peran Gereja Dalam Pelayanan Sosial," 80.

⁵⁰ F.Y. Mamahit, "Ide Teologis Calvin Tentang Keadilan Sosial," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan* 10, no. 1 (2009): 34.

reform. For Calvin, poverty is not only a theological matter, but also a social reality that must be faced and found a solution. He believed that the church should be concretely involved in social issues. Therefore, in 1541, he established a social welfare system in Geneva.⁵¹ Calvin started the provision of free education, provided aid to the poor, established hospitals, improved sanitation systems, and gave refuge to refugees.⁵² The impact of his leadership in addressing social issues in Geneva rippled across Europe.⁵³

During the period between 1500 and 1640, Europe, including Switzerland, was plagued by various epidemics that resulted in very high mortality rates. One-year-old children were particularly vulnerable, and if any survived, many did not reach the age of ten.⁵⁴ Calvin also lost two of his brothers to the plague. Conditions at the time were very difficult, with the city streets littered with corpses. The city government was forced to hire people to transport the bodies.⁵⁵ In the midst of a period of reform in Switzerland, society experienced economic hardship characterized by sustained price increases, while employee incomes and salaries did not see a comparable increase.⁵⁶ All sectors experienced uncontrollable price hikes, which resulted in increased poverty and difficulty for people to obtain proper food and shelter. These deteriorating economic conditions also led to an increase in crime, with many thefts and robberies against the wealthy.⁵⁷

In such a situation, Calvin realized that preaching on the pulpit would not have a significant impact without real action. Therefore, he decided to move from the pulpit to real action, and started doing social services for the people of Geneva.⁵⁸ Calvin teaches that we need to provide help to the poor with love. Our hearts must be filled with compassion for others. If we give help sincerely and wholeheartedly, God will accept our deeds as a valuable and pleasing offering in His sight.⁵⁹ Calvin not only gave sermons on social service, but also responded to the social problems faced by the people of Geneva with concrete actions. He performed social services to those in need,

⁵¹ Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 111-113.

⁵² P. C. Potgieter, "John Calvin on Social Challenges," *Acta Theologica* 28 (2019): 73.

⁵³ Potgieter, "John Calvin on Social Challenges," 73.

⁵⁴ Bruce Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 270.

⁵⁵ Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 276.

⁵⁶ Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 272.

⁵⁷ Gordon, *The Swiss Reformation*, 272.

⁵⁸ Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, 120.

⁵⁹ John Calvin, *Sermons from Job* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing House, 1979), Ayub 31:16-24.

including establishing hospitals, providing free education, and giving aid to the poor.⁶⁰ Calvin dedicated himself wholeheartedly to serving the people of Geneva. He gave his attention to the sick, the poor, and also immigrants with a sincere heart.⁶¹ Calvin emphatically states that all these actions are done because it is God's will for His people to be His representatives in this world. His people are called to be bearers of His will through social service to those in need.⁶²

CONCLUSION

Through the explanation above, the author concludes that Calvin is very consistent in teaching God's love for all people including those who are not chosen to be saved, it appears that for Calvin. God's love is a central concept in Calvin's theology so it is very difficult to say that Calvin is inconsistent in the theology of God's love. In his writings, it is seen that God's love is a central concept in his theology, for Calvin whatever God does is based on His love seen in his book he said, therefore, God does not know us except from His love, or, in other words, we are not considered His children unless He loves us, even when He created man all done by God based on His love.

Calvin clearly said that God's love is not limited only to the elect but to all men without exception, "Since we know that God loves us with a love that is not limited only to the elect but to all men, we should never doubt that He always accompanies all men with His goodness." When talking about faith, Calvin also says that the faith that connects us to Christ, also comes from God's love, "That is why we say that faith is the medium that connects us to Christ.

Calvin recognizes that God's love is universal not limited to the elect but to all people, so the accusation that the concept of God's love in John Calvin's theology is inconsistent is untrue. Calvin explained that although God's adoption as His son is a special privilege for believers, since God created all human beings in His image and likeness, then there are some things that can be said that God is the Father of all human beings. Even in Calvin's sermon on election and rejection, Calvin was emphatic that, in His infinite mercy, God gives blessings to all people, even those who are ultimately condemned. So even though Calvin believed that there are elect and non-elect, he consistently said that God's love is revealed to all people.

⁶⁰ Jeannine Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare* (London: Associated University Press, 1989), 27.

⁶¹ Selderhuis, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, 111.

⁶² Calvin, *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, IV. III. 1.

Calvin did social service to all people without exception, proving that he was very consistent in the concept of God's love that loves all people without exception. Calvin devoted his life and served with dedication every day to all people without exception no matter whether they were chosen or not. So Alister E. McGrath states that Calvin not only engaged in high and abstract theology, but also plunged into more real and deep problems. Calvin not only gave sermons on social service, but also responded to the social problems faced by the people of Geneva with concrete actions.

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