CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF THE WORD OF GOD

AN EXAMINATION OF THE CHRISTOCENTRIC CHARACTER OF CALVIN'S THEOLOGY WITH REFERENCE TO HIS TEACHING CONCERNING MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD, THE LAW OF GOD, AND THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN

Thesis for the Degree of D.Phil.
in the University of Oxford, submitted by

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Trinity Term, 1964

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

C.O. = Corpus Reformatorum, I. Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia, ed. by Baum, Cunitz, Reuss (Brunsvigae, 1870).

Inst. = I. Calvini Institutio Christianae Religionis, Latin edition of 1559.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

In our time we, of course, face problems in Christian dogmatics within a different context from Calvin. Yet in the Reformed Churches we believe we would greatly impoverish ourselves if we departed from his locus or disregarded his seminal teaching. Thus, the underlying question of the thesis is: can Reformed theology go the same fundamental way as Calvin and yet go further, i.e., let Calvin's theology extend and make itself explicit in the face of <u>our</u> theological problems? We think so. We have chosen three areas in which to test this assertion, all of which are lively areas of discussion in modern theology: natural knowledge of God, history and ethics. In each of the respective chapters we try first to represent what Calvin said; then we suggest the problems these doctrines of Calvin present for modern (Reformed) theology. Finally, we let Calvin's doctrine of the Word extend and make explicit his statements in each of these areas; i.e., knowledge, history and ethics, in the face of the problems of today. In order to follow this procedure we set forth in the First Chapter the

heart and norm[1] for all of Calvin's theology, his doctrine of the Word. In sum, then, we let Calvin's doctrine of the Word clarify the Christological character of Calvin's doctrines of our knowledge of God, the Providence of God, the Law of God and the life of the Christian man in the face of contemporary theological discussion.

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1. In a theology of the Word, the Word Itself is, of course, the criterion (as well as the Object) of theology. Thus Calvin: "If we give due weight to the consideration that the Word of the Lord (verbum Domini) is the only way which can conduct us to the investigation of whatever it is lawful for us to hold with regard to Him - is the only light which can enable us to discern what we ought to see with regard to Him, it will curb and restrain all presumption. For it will show us that the moment we go beyond the bounds of the Word we are out of the course in darkness and must every now and then stumble, go astray and fall." (Inst. III, 21,2.) Elsewhere, Calvin comments that theology is to serve the purpose of finding the sum of what God has been pleased to teach us in His Word. ("Argument Du Present Livre", Prefixed to the French Edition of the Institutes, Geneva, 1545, I. Calvini Opera Selecta, Ed. by Barth and Niesel, Munich, 1928 Vol. III, p.7.)

   By the Word Calvin means Scripture. But Calvin understands Scripture as the Word in the sense that it is the testimony to (and by the power of the Holy Spirit the testimony of) the Word Who is eternal and became flesh, Whom we recognize in the Gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Cf. our Chapter One.) Since this Word is the criterion of Christian theology we must first let Calvin set this criterion before us in his teaching about It. This teaching, his doctrine of the Word, then, provides us with an instrument with which we may examine the Christological character of his other teaching.

C H A P T E R O N E

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

Section 1. The Twofold Relation of the Word of God

"...as all revelations proceeding from God do well bear the name of the word of God so ought we yet to set in the highest place the substantial Word, the foundation of all oracles, which being subject to no alteration abideth always one and the self-same with God, and is God Himself."[1] In this sentence in the Institutes we see set forth what Calvin elsewhere calls the duplex relatio of the Word of God; i.e., the Word has a relation to God and to men.[2] The Word is the revelation of God to men and, as we also understand from the Gospel of John, the Word abides with God, is

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1. Inst. I, 13,7. "...ut omnes divinitus profectae revelationes verbi Dei titulo rite insigniuntur, ita verbum illud substantiale summo gradu locare convenit, oraculorum omnium scaturiginem, quod nulli varietati obnoxium, perpetuo unum idemque manet apud Deum et Deus ipse est."

2. Comm. on John 1:1.; the several passages from Calvin's Comm. on John 1:1 discussed in this chapter may be found in C.O. 47, 1-3.

"the Wisdom ever dwelling with God..."[1] *

Why is the word 'Word' used to describe the character of the duplex relatio, the relation of the Son of God to God and to men? Calvin uses two different Latin words for 'Word' as we shall have to examine. For the moment we shall confine our discussion to the word 'Sermo' which is the word Calvin employed in answering this question in his Commentary on John 1:1. 'Sermo', we should mention, has the connotation of conversation, discourse and is principally used to denote 'speech' or 'speaking'.[2] Calvin maintains that such a word, 'Sermo' - meaning speech - is not inappropriate for the description of (1) the Son of God's relation to God and (2) the Son of God's relation to men. In the first case we do well to recall that the

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1. Inst. I, 13,7.
2. Cf. Harper's Latin Dictionary,

* And in the mystery of God's Three in Oneness the Word is God. Cf. Inst. I, 13,17 and Comm. on John 1:1. For the moment, however, we emphasize that God differentiates three hypostates within Himself and thus Calvin can speak of God hiding the Word within Himself before the foundation of the world. Comm. on John 1:1. Thus the Word can be said to have a relation to God, as well as being said to be God.

Son of God is the eternal Wisdom and Will (Sapientia et Voluntas) of God and as sermo (speaking or speech) is commonly called effigies (the representation) of the mind (sapientia et voluntas) it is not inappropriate to apply this word to the Son of God. In the second case we may say, then, that since the Son is effigies (the representation) of God's purpose to us men it is not inappropriate to say that God expresses Himself His purpose, to us by His Speech (Sermo).[1]

Calvin in his Commentary on John 1:1 not only finds the word 'Word' a particularly appropriate appellation for the Son of God, but designates the Latin word 'Sermo' as the most appropriate translation of λόγος of the Greek text. He judges 'sermo' to be "far more appropriate than verbum". This indicates that Calvin makes a distinction between 'sermo' and 'verbum'. However, in the opening sentence of this section, which we took from the Institutes, Calvin employs 'Verbum' rather than 'Sermo' in speaking of "the substantial Word". So Calvin, despite his

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1. Cf. Comm. on John 1:1.

statements in his Commentary on John 1:1 does not always distinguish 'Sermo' from 'Verbum' when he is speaking of the substantial Word, the Word which abides with God eternally, and is God. Yet, as T.H.L. Parker has noted, while also indicating that there is this inconsistency, Calvin in general couples together aeternus (eternal) and Sermo and never aeternum and verbum and in general Calvin uses Sermo rather than verbum as the synonym of Sapientia Dei.[1] The conclusion we may extract from this study may be illustrated by substituting Sermo for the second verbum in the initial sentence of this section which we took from the Institutes. (We take this liberty only on the basis of Calvin's admonition in his Commentary on John 1:1.[2]) Thus: "...as all revelations proceeding from God do well bear the name of verbum Dei so ought we yet set in the highest place Sermo Dei, the fountain of all oracles, which being subject to no alteration abideth one and the self-same with God, and is God Himself." Verbum Dei, i.e., all revelations, is the temporal form

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1. T.H.L. Parker, Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Grand Rapids, 1959), pp. 63-64.

2. C.O. 47,3.

of aeternus Sermo Dei. Or, to turn this statement about, aeternus Sermo Dei - the eternal Word of God, which has always dwelt with God, the One Whom we call the Second Person of the Trinity - is the Reality which is expressed to men in or by verbum Dei.[1]

We are not introducing the word 'Person' here in a manner contrary to Calvin's usage when we speak of the eternal Word of God as the Second Person of the Trinity. Calvin in discussing Sermo Dei states that the expression "the Word was with God" attributes to the Word (Sermo) an hypostasis (a Personhood) distinct from the Father, and yet, Calvin maintains in accord with the orthodox fathers of the Church, the Word is of the same essense with the Father.[2] Why Calvin, and why the fathers of the Church, insist on the unity of the Godhead is made clear in Calvin's Commentary on John.[3] Since Christ is the Word Incarnate* and since our faith

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1. In Calvin's words we find this stated thus: "Hic enim videmus verbum pro nutu vel mandato filii accipi, qui ipse aeternus et essentialis est patris Sermo." Inst. I, 13,7.

2. Comm. on John 1:1.
Cf. sections 16-29 in the Inst. Book I, Ch. 13.

3. Comm. on John 1:1.

* A statement which we shall especially examine in the next section.

rests upon Christ, we would be forsaking the One, Eternal God if the Word were not in the Unity of the Godhead the Self-same with God. Since this unity is to be insisted upon and yet the Word is identified with Revelation, specifically with Christ, we can quickly discern the grounds of a potential problem. Did the Word, the Second Person of the Trinity alone, become flesh or did the whole Godhead? Since there is but One God of One essence Calvin answers: "the whole Godhead is revealed in the flesh."[1] For Jesus Christ is not just a messenger of God, nor something derivative from God in any way, but is God Himself. Only by God Himself becoming flesh can we be assured of true knowledge, justification and sanctification.[2] If the whole Godhead dwelled in the flesh why does John proclaim: "The Word became flesh"? Calvin explains that while we may not forget the unity we may ascribe different works of God to the different Persons, although the distinct work of the distinct Persons condition and penetrate each other. It is by the

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1. Comm. on Ezek. 1:26, C.O. 40,56.
2. Inst. I, 13,13.

distinct work of the distinct Persons that we are able to distinguish the Persons.[1] Thus, as we saw in Calvin's Commentary on John 1:1 that the unity of the Godhead must not be forgotten, so in this part of the Institutes we learn that neither must the distinction of the Persons be neglected. Roughly the distinctions are as follows: "...to the Father is attributed the beginning of action, the foundation and source of all things; to the Son, wisdom, counsel and arrangement in action, while the efficacy of action is assigned to the Spirit".[2] We distinguish the Persons by their works. Thus, since the whole Godhead acting in the world is roughly the characteristic of God the Son, God the Word, i.e., "wisdom...in action", John proclaims that "the Word became flesh".

The work ascribed to the Son, in Calvin's definition, is God's wisdom, counsel and arrangement in action. Having understood this we can more readily comprehend the

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1. Inst. I, 13,17. Cf. "By Person I mean a subsistence in the Divine essence - a subsistence which, while related to the other two, is distinguished from them by incommunicable properties." Inst. I, 13,6.

2. Inst. I, 13,18.

Biblical statements and implications of which Calvin reminds us in his Commentary on John 1:1. Since God the Son is God's wisdom and arrangement, we might say order, in action, it is appropriate to say that the world (its plan, its arrangement) was created (ordered) through the Word. Certainly we say in faith upon reading and hearing the Biblical witness that Christ was God, but we would also say He is especially God the Son, God the Word, as He is God's Wisdom and Plan in action in the world. Turning to the Institutes we can hardly be surprised at the identification of the Word, i.e., God's Wisdom in action with the Yahweh of Israel[1] and with Christ[2]. As we have tried to make clear that the relation, as Calvin speaks of it, of the Word to God is that of the Second of Three Subsistencies (Persons) within the essence of the One

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1. Inst. I, 13,10; Inst. I, 13, 20.
2. Inst. I, 13, 9.

God* thus we should now, even before speaking more fully of the Revealed Word, make clear that the relation of the Word to men, as indicated by Calvin, is the

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* We are attempting in this chapter to examine Calvin's doctrine of the Word, not his doctrine of the Trinity. Since the Word is, as Calvin of course indicates with all the rest of the orthodox Church, the Second Person of the Trinity, however, we can scarcely avoid a brief summary of the most important statements Calvin makes about the Trinity, especially since the relation of the Word of God to God, which is important for our understanding of the doctrine of the Word, is a relation within the Godhead.

Whether or not Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity was always in full accord with the orthodox fathers of the Church may possibly be disputed, but it certainly is in accord with them as set down in the final edition of the Institutes: God proclaims to us His unity yet distinctly set it before us as existing in three Persons, Calvin tells us. These distinctions in God we must hold in mind if our knowledge of God is to be substantial, i.e., have content, rather than being just a flutter in the brain. Knowledge of the three Persons in the One Godhead gives our knowledge substance by providing us with this knowledge of the Character of the Godhead. (Inst. I, 13,2). Calvin outlines his doctrine of the Trinity by carefully following earlier teachers of the Church, saying: "the essence of God /is/ simple and undivided, and contained in Himself entire, in full perfection, without partition or diminution.../and yet/ if credit is given to the Apostle's testimony, it follows that there are three hypostases in God." (Inst. I, 13,2). Calvin believes there is no more eloquent or reverent comment about the unity and distinctions in the Godhead than that made by Gregory Nazianzus who said,

relation of Yahweh to Israel and even more clearly of Jesus Christ, the Word become flesh, with His people.

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*cont. "'I cannot think of the unity without being irradiated by the Trinity: I cannot distinguish between the Trinity without being carried up to the unity'". Calvin elucidates this passage by commenting that "while the words Father, Son and Holy Spirit, certainly indicate a real distinction not allowing us to suppose that they are merely epithets by which God is variously designated in His works, still they indicate distinction only, not division." (Inst. I, 13,17). Calvin uses essentia as the word to describe the essence, i.e., the unity or Oneness of God. (However, Calvin also reminds us that sometimes the Latin Fathers rendered ὁμοούσιος not as Essentia but as Substantia. But when this was dome they insisted upon speaking of One Substance just as Calvin insists upon speaking of One Essence. Inst. I, 13,5.) For the distinctions within the Godhead he allows that all the various words used by the Greek and Latin Fathers - Persona, hypostasis, ὑποστάσις, Substantia, Subsistentia - are acceptable, for while the words may differ, all express the same intention (Inst. I, 13,2 and I, 13,5). Calvin's own choice seems usually to be Persona and his doctrine of the Trinity would be simply stated thus: "in uno Deo subsistere seu /quod idem erat/ in Dei unitate subsistere personorum trinitatem" (a Trinity of Persons subsists in the One God). (Inst. I, 13,4).

Calvin's theology is self-consciously grounded in the Scriptures, so in using the words 'Person' and 'Trinity' he, naturally, wants to assure us that what these words describe is in accord with the Biblical message and not the product of speculation. Thus in the Institutes we find this defense: "in regard to those parts of Scripture which, to our capacities are dark and intricate, what forbids us to explain them in clearer terms - terms, however,

It is this Word, the Word which became Incarnate, which is set before us in Scripture and not just some

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* cont. kept in reverent subordination to Scripture truth.../for/...when it has been proved that the Church was impelled by the strongest necessity to use the words Trinity and Person, will not he who still inveighs against novelty of terms be deservedly suspected of taking offence at the Light of Truth...?" (Inst. I, 13,3).

Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity being orthodox he naturally insists contra the Arians that the Word has no beginning, was not made, (but rather was always with God, before the world existed), and contra the Sabellians that the distinction among the Persons must not be neglected (Inst. I, 13,4).

While Calvin insists over and over that "the Word and Spirit are of the very essence of God" (Inst. I, 13,16) and while he insists that the eternity of the Father is also the eternity of the Son and Spirit still he maintains that it is proper to say that (the Father being considered first) the Son is of the Father only and the Spirit is of both. (Inst. I, 13,18). Calvin is able to say that the Godhead is eternal and yet the Father is prior to the Son and both are prior to the Spirit by following Augustine's statement that this latter proposition about the Persons has reference to order rather than time. (Comm. on John 1:1). God establishes an order in Himself without respect to time. The knowledge of this order is precisely that which is the content of our knowledge of God. That is, "while God never manifested Himself to men by any other means than by His Son /the Word/ that is, His own only wisdom, light and truth" (Inst. IV, 8,5), men, nevertheless, know the Triune God in knowing the Son, the Word, for the Triune God is present and shines forth from the Son. "The perfect God, simple and undivided manifested Himself wholly in the Son /the Word/. (Inst. I,13, We see two things here: (1)that God revealed Himself wholly, i.e., as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the Son, the Word, and (2) that it is wholly through the Word that God reveals Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Inst. I, 13,2).

words, not just a fleeting voice of God.[1] What is set before us in Scripture is The Word, the Wisdom (Sapientia) ever dwelling with God by which all the prophets were inspired, by which, Calvin indicates more fully, all of the Old Testament writers were inspired, through which God spoke the world into being - the Word which we know from the Apostles' witness became Incarnate and was called Christ.[2] To make sure that the point is clear to all, Calvin in his chapter on the Trinity in Book I of the Institutes says that while he is not in that place treating of the Office of the Mediator, he deems it appropriate to state in that place so that it might "be clear and incontrovertible to all" that Christ is the Word Incarnate.[3] Moreover, since we have already understood that the Word lives behind and is that which is manifested in the words of the prophets, and since we understand that Christ is that Word, Calvin is led to the conclusion that Christ is the true Lord who ruled over Israel and is Him in

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1. Inst. I, 13,7.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. I, 13,9.

whom Israel believed and called Jehovah.[1*] That is, Calvin identifies Jehovah[*] as Him Whom after the Incarnation we know by the Name of Jesus Christ. Christ often appeared to Israel in the form of an angel. The Word as the Supreme Angel "then began as it were by anticipation to perform the Office of Mediator."[2] Or again, "Although the time of humiliation had not yet come, the eternal Word exhibited a type of office which He was to fulfil".[3] In sum: the Word that lived behind the revelation to Israel was in effect shadowing forth that which would be fully manifested in Christ.

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* Yahweh

1. Inst. I, 13,10. Cf. Inst. I, 13,27 "...the God who appeared to the fathers /Israel/ was no other than Christ."

2. Inst. I, 13,10. Cf. Inst. I, 13,20 where Calvin indicates, by citing Paul's example, that the Name of Jehovah (Yahweh) may be applied to Christ.

3. Inst. I, 13,10.

Section 2. Why Did the Word become Flesh?

Calvin gives two fundamental answers to this question. It may be helpful to summarize them and then look at his answers in detail. As we have seen, the Word has a relation to God and to man. Thus, the Word is the Mediator between God and man. But man, in the Fall, had turned away from the Word, the Mediator and no longer recognized the Word. Thus, the Word became flesh (1) to reverse this turning away of man to overcome the Fall, to overcome sin - to redeem man from sin, and thereby (2) become again the Mediator between man and God Whom man would recognize. In sum: the Word became flesh to (1) be man's Redeemer and thus (2) be once more the Mediator Whom man would recognize. Because the Mediator and the Redeemer are One and the Self-Same Person, however, revelation and redemption are not (to be understood as) separate acts; for instance one is not prior to the other. We can understand the unity of redemption and revelation when we realize that the act of redemption is the centre of man's knowledge of God.

i. The Word became flesh because our Mediator had need to be man as well as being God, Calvin indicates in his first sentence in the Institutes concerning "The Office of the Mediator".[1] Man, even had he remained free from sin, was in too humble a condition to penetrate to God without a Mediator.* How much less can man after the Fall find out God, "Our iniquities, like a cloud intervening between Him and us..." have utterly alienated us from the kingdom of heaven. Thus, if the Godhead Itself did not descend, it being impossible for man to ascend, man's condition was hopeless.

Before the Fall, God's Word, the Mediator between God and man, succoured man by overcoming the gulf between Creator and creature. He drew near man to proclaim the created harmony. After the Fall the Mediator must also be Redeemer, for He first must

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1. Inst. II, 12,1. The following passages, except where otherwise noted, are from the first paragraphs of Book II, Ch. 12 of the Institutes.

* "Quamvis ab omni labe integer stetisset homo, humilior tamen erat eius conditio quam ut sine mediatore ad Deum penetraret." Inst. II, 12,1.

dissipate the cloud of our iniquities, be an expiation for our sins, and draw near with the proclamation of the new harmony of the Atonement. Thus, to continue to perform the work of Mediator, the Son of God, while remaining God, assumed our flesh, became man in order to be our Redeemer. Calvin emphasizes that the Mediator is both the (1)Work of God in the world and (2)God's Word to the world. Through Him (1)man is reconciled (put right) with God and (2)through Him is the Announcement of this reconciliation made.* Revelation and redemption can not be separated.* (Cf. Inst. II, 12,5.)

It is important, Calvin reminds us, to say that our Mediator is true God and true Man. Why do we say true God?

> "It was His to swallow up death: who but Life could do so? It was His to conquer sin: who could do so save righteousness itself? It was His to put to flight the powers of the air and the world: who could do so but the mighty power superior to both? But who possesses life and

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* The Acts of God and the Speech of God can not be separated. Cf. Comm. on Romans 3:4, C.O. 49,48.

> righteousness and dominion and government of heaven but God alone? Therefore, God, in His infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us, became Himself our Redeemer in the Person of His only begotten Son."[1]

We must also say true man. For the "Glory of God" shines so brightly - even the more so in comparison with man's darkness - that God's unveiled presence would destroy us.[2] Again, we need to say true man, Calvin explains, because by so understanding Jesus Christ we are able to understand how, in accord with the Father's pledge, we are related to the Father. That is, Calvin continues, the Son of God in receiving what was ours, i.e., manhood, thereby transferred to us what was His, i.e., the Sonship of the Father.[3] "In this way we have a sure inheritance in the heavenly kingdom, because the only Son of God to whom it entirely belonged has adopted us as His brethren; and if brethren then partners with Him in the inheritance."[4] Calvin, expanding on this theme points out that Our Lord adopted the person of Adam, i.e., man, that in

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1. Inst. II, 12,2.
2. Comm. on Heb. 4:16, C.O. 55,56.
3. Inst. II, 12,2.
4. Ibid.

his place He might obey the Father, and then - having rendered perfect obedience - by standing in our place, as man pay the penalty our flesh had incurred.[1] "Finally, since as God only He could not suffer, and as man only could not overcome death, He united the human nature with the divine, that He might subject the weakness of one to death as an expiation of sin, and by the power of the other, maintaining a struggle with death, might gain us the victory. Those, therefore, who rob Christ of divinity or humanity, either detract from His majesty and glory, or obscure His goodness."[2]

Calvin does not present us with a dualist Christ, but rather he explains that the natures are bound up in such a way that there is one Person only.[3] Here Calvin speaks repeatedly of the Virgin birth. For it is the Virgin birth that shows so clearly the conjunction - Mary, a human, the mother, and God, through His Holy Spirit, the Father. Thus, the Godhead does not remain

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1. Inst. II, 12,3.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. II, 14,4.

separate from the flesh and yet, also, it is important to understand that the Godhead does not become transformed or fused with the flesh. "His divinity became conjoined and united with His humanity in such wise that each of the two natures constantly kept its distinct qualities, and yet one Christ arose from the union of both".[1*]

What God is it that is revealed in the flesh? (Cf. previous section.) The God in Jesus Christ is the full Godhead which dwells in the humanity of Christ and at the same time fills all things.[2] Thus we should understand that the Word in the flesh is in that flesh still with the full Godhead. Further, we should understand that God keeps His transcendence over man, (i.e., He filled all things, and did not confine Himself in the flesh of the man Jesus), so that we could never think that God merged Himself in the manhood of Christ. Yet, man can only find out God in Christ, for "Christ is God revealed in the flesh".[3]

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1. Inst. II, 14,1.
2. Cf. Inst. IV, 17,30; Inst. II, 13,4.
3. Serm. on Luke 1:39-44, C.O. 46,110.

* We shall try to clarify the point further in subsection ii.

Summary: Proximity, God drawing near man, is the first reason Calvin gives in the Institutes for why we have need to say the Mediator is true man. The second reason is that through the Son's Redeeming work, through His taking upon Himself what was ours, i.e., manhood, we have transferred to us what was solely His, the Sonship of the Father. The second reason is, then, adoption. The third reason why we have need to say true man (and, of course, all these reasons are closely connected) is that our Lord, in assuming our flesh, and Who in the flesh was perfectly obedient to the Father, might pay the penalty with His obedient flesh which our disobedience deserved and thereby appease the just anger of His Father. Fourth, Calvin reminds us that by tracing the human lineage of Christ's manhood back to David and Abraham we more readily recognize (and understand the meaning of) Jesus as the Messiah.

We say true God first because no one but God Himself knows the Father. Thus, unless the Mediator is God Himself, He could not be the Mediator between

God and man. "God alone is an adequate witness to Himself and can not be recognized except through His own testimony."[1] Second, only God could truly overcome death and truly conquer sin, so only the true God could truly exercise the power of the Redeemer (which the Mediator must do if He is to be the Mediator whom sinful man having now fallen into sin can recognize once more). In sum: In His strength (His Almightiness) the Mediator renews and in His humility (His lowliness) He succours man.

ii. In this discussion an assumption has obviously been made, which bears being stated explicitly again (Cf. Section 1). The Word of God, the Second Person of the Trinity is understood as being identical with the man Jesus. The Word, Calvin reminded us, is the Wisdom ever dwelling with God.[2] How can men know this Wisdom and be directed by it? They can not ascend to heaven;[3] the "Glory of God would destroy them".[4] Yet God never communicated to man

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1. Inst. I, 13,21; Inst. I, 11,1.
2. Inst. I, 13,7.
3. Inst. III, 12,1.
4. Comm. on Heb. 4:16, C.O. 55,56.

except through His Word.[1] Thus God in His Word came down and dwelt among men as Jesus the man out of Nazareth. Calvin does not try to prove this, other than pointing for "evidence" to the Biblical witness. This proclamation is the Biblical witness and the only proof of its truth is the testimony of the Spirit upon our hearts.[2] It is by faith, guided by Scripture, that we believe this assertion to be true. (See Section 5, "The Gift of Faith").

Calvin does not attempt, then, to prove from the Biblical testimony the truth of this assertion, nor does he inquire of Scripture how the Incarnation was possible, but rather he examines Scripture in order to try to understand what is set forth there about the Word Incarnate. In his exegesis of John 1:14, Calvin begins by indicating that John tells us that on the one hand the Son of God was clothed with human nature (ineffable mystery!) and yet on the other hand the Son, the Word, is and remains a real

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1. Inst. IV, 8,5; Cf. Inst. I, 13,7; Comm. on Gen. 48:15, C.O. 23,584.

2. Inst. I, 7,4.

hypostasis in the essence of God.* When he proclaimed that the Son of God took on human nature, Calvin points out, the Evangelist states that the Word was made 'flesh', rather than stating that the Word was made 'man'. Calvin suggests the word 'flesh' was used rather than the word 'man' in order to emphasize the low and abject state to which the God of Glory descended on our behalf. The word 'flesh' is not used (as Apollinaris supposed) to indicate that Christ took on our human body (only) but not a human soul (as well). The Word became the whole man, i.e., Christ had a soul as well as a fleshly body. The real point of John's proclamation is, Calvin indicates, that the Word begotten by God before all ages, and Who had always dwelt with the Father, was made man. The word 'flesh' is used in the proclamation to emphasize the overwhelming character of God's Grace to us.[1] From

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* The author believes that a brief examination of Calvin's exegesis of John 1:14 will not constitute so much a repetition of what is outlined above, but rather will serve as a clarification of it. Cf. C.O. 47, 13-

1. Some recent Reformed Theology has tended to say that the word 'flesh' is used instead of 'man', by the Evangelist, because he wished to indicate that Christ had accepted our "fallen state". This runs contrary to most of the Fathers and Calvin as well. Yet it is a position that can be defended. Cf. D.M. Baillie, God Was In Christ (London, 1958) p. 16.

this text, Calvin concludes, we can recognize a foundation for the two chief articles of belief about the Incarnation: "First, in Christ two natures were united in one Person in such a way that one and the same Christ is true God and man. Second, the unity of His Person does not prevent His natures from remaining distinct, so that the divinity retains whatever is proper to it, and the humanity likewise has separately what belongs to it." Thus, to expand on these points, Calvin in the Institutes carefully makes the point that when the Word was made flesh, He was neither changed into flesh nor confusedly intermingled with flesh, but chose the Virgin's womb, as it were, as a temple in which to dwell.[1] A further clarification is made in the Institutes when Calvin, following the Fathers, says the Word begotten by the

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1. Inst. II, 14,1. "Porro quod dicitur (Ioann. 1:14) verbum carnem esse factum, non sic intelligendum est quasi vel in carnem versum, vel carni confuse permixtum fuerit; sed quia e virginis utero templum sibi delegit in quo habitaret; et qui filius erat Dei, filius hominus factus est, non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae. Siquidem ita conuinctam unitamque humanitati divinitatem asserimus, ut sua utrique naturae solida proprietas maneat, et tamen ex duabus illis unus Christus constituatur."

Father before all ages assumed human nature by hypostatic union - and then Calvin defines 'hypostatic union' as a term "denoting the union in which two natures constitute one Person" and thus Calvin repudiates the Nestorians "who pretended that the Son of God dwelt in the flesh in such a manner as not to be at the same time man".[1] Thus Niesel is certainly correct when he says that Calvin understood the conjunction of the two natures in the Person of the Mediator in harmony with the Chalcedonian dogmatic definition.[2]

As it was the true and only God Who dwelled in the flesh, and since"God is One /then, we must repeat, it is/ the whole Godhead that is revealed in the flesh".[3]

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1. Inst. II, 14,5. "Fixa tamen interim manet ecclesiae definitio censeri Dei filium, quia sermo ante saecula ex patre genitas, unione hypostatica naturam humanam susceperit. Porro unio hypostatica veteribus dicta est, quae personam unam constituit ex naturis duabis. Quae loquutio ad refellendum Nestorii delirium inventa fuit, quia filium Dei fingebat ita habitasse in carne, ut non idem ille esset homo.

2. Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, trans. by Harold Knight (London, 1956) p. 247.

3. Comm. on Ezek. 1:26, C.O. 40,56.

Thus it is the Triune God - present in the Word - Who is revealed. But to say that the whole God, i.e., the full Godhead, is revealed in the flesh, is not to say that God wholly reveals Himself. Calvin emphasized in his commentaries on Scripture that revelation is God's veiling as well as His unveiling.[1]

What was unveiled in the Incarnation? We have already been led by Calvin to understand that the only Mediator between God and man is God's Word. Thus we must seek God only in His Word - and since we can not ascend to heaven we must seek God only in the Word Incarnate. What of God do we see there? What of God is set before us there?

After his chapters on the Person of the Mediator - in which Calvin sets forth the two natures in the One Person of Christ - Calvin places a chapter entitled: "Three Things Chiefly to be Regarded in Christ - viz. His Offiees of Prophet, King and Priest". Immediately following this chapter is a chapter concerning how Christ performed the Office of Redeemer. What we see,

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1. Cf. Comm. on Exodus 33:20, C.O. 25,111
Comm. on Ezek. 1:28, C.O.40,60.

then, in the Word Incarnate is The Prophet, The Priest, The King and (the Office which comprehends all these) The Redeemer. The Word Incarnate in the performance of each of these Offices reveals something of God to man (or, more precisely, the Word Incarnate reveals to man how God acts towards - and for - man).

"...the Office which Christ received from the Father consists of three parts. For He was appointed Prophet, Priest and King."[1] (a)Of course God had supplied a succession of prophets for His people; but His people were always impressed with the conviction that the full light of understanding was only to be expected with the advent of the Messiah. Thus, "we see that He was anointed by the Spirit to be a herald and witness of His Father's Grace - and not in the usual way", for, Calvin declares the anointing of the Holy Spirit which Christ received in order to perform the office of teacher*, was not for Himself but for

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1. Inst. II, 15,1.

* Prophecy, teaching and proclamation are used interchangeably by Calvin in this particular context, i.e., while he is speaking of Christ's Office of Prophet.

His whole Body, that the efficacy of the Spirit might always accompany the preaching of the Gospel.[1] Thus, the first thing we see revealed of God in Christ is the manifestation of God's Wisdom in the Self Proclamation of Jesus. Calvin cites in this context some words of Paul: in Christ "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

(b)Calvin next turns to the Kingly Office. It is vain to speak of the Kingly Office without first remembering "that its nature is spiritual".[2] The happiness which is promised us in Christ as subjects in His Kingdom does not consist in external advantages - "such as leading a joyful and peaceful life abounding in wealth, being secure against all injury, and having an affluence of delights, such as the flesh is wont to long for - but properly belongs to the heavenly life.[3] ("For the Kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Rom. 14:17.) "In fine, let each of us when he hears that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, be

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1. Inst. II, 15,2.
2. Inst. II, 15,3.
3. Inst. II, 15,4.

roused by the thought to entertain the hope of a better life and to expect that as it is now protected by the hand of Christ, so it will be fully realized in a future life."[1] The Kingdom is here but its fullness and eternal Glory are hidden from us; the hope of its eternity lies in our trust of the power of God in Christ, the King, over sin and death. And with what power does Christ have - to protect His Kingdom - now and forever? "...the Father has given all power to the Son"[2] to protect and govern. In the Incarnate Word - from the miracles He performed and in His Resurrection and Ascension* - we see revealed** God's power over and for His creatures.

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1. Inst. II, 15,3.
2. Inst. II, 15,5.

* Not that we look at the resurrection and ascension alone. "In order to know His Glory we must proceed from His death to His resurrection.../otherwise we/ ...will not comprehend the Lord's strength and power." Comm. on Isa. 53:3, C.O. 37,256.

** "see revealed" Do all, and did all, see God's power and God's Wisdom in the teaching and the miracles and resurrection (respectively) of the Incarnate Word? "By seeing /the Apostle/ does not mean any sort of seeing but what belongs to faith, by which /believers/ recognize the glory of God in Christ." Comm. on I John 4:14, C.O. 55, 356.

(c)The Incarnate Word, in His Office of Priest, by the sacrifice of His death, wiped away our guilt and made satisfaction for sin.[1] We see revealed in this the justice of God and the purity and/or holiness of God. Sin went not unpenalized, God punished sin - but not (ultimately) the sinner. In this we see revealed "God for us" or as Calvin indicates, we now have "a perpetual Intercessor with God"[2], we have One Who can and does reconcile us with the Father,[3] we have One Who can sanctify us.

(d)The Incarnate Word is our Redeemer. It is revealed in the performance of this Office that God is as lowly as He is exalted: "Christ's humility consisted in His abasing Himself from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest ignominy"[4]. Thus can we finally and most importantly and comprehensively say that the Word Incarnate, Jesus Christ, is the revelation of the Grace of God. As such, He is the revelation of God -

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1. Inst. II, 15,6.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, C.O. 52,25.

Jesus Christ, the Redeemer is also, as Redeemer, the revelation of God. The act of Redemption reveals God most fully; God is the One Who redeems us, Who became lowly for us, Who is <u>for us</u>. In Him are not only the final pledges of God's promises to man made,* but Jesus Christ is also the fulfilment of them. We find the basis for all these statements in the Sixteenth Chapter of the Second Book of the <u>Institutes</u>, which we must now consider in more detail.

God is a just Judge and can not permit His law to be violated with impunity.[1] Moreover, God is in Himself perfect righteousness; how can He prolong a relationship with men, all of whom are iniquitous? "God...cannot love the iniquity which He sees in all men. All of us, therefore, have that within which deserves the hatred of God. Hence, in respect first of our corrupt nature, and second of the depraved conduct

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1. <u>Inst.</u> II, 16,1.

* Faith, we note, as Calvin in one place defines it (Cf. Section 5, "The Gift of Faith"), is the acceptance of these promises - in the knowledge of their fulfilment - the Divine favour - in Christ.

following upon it, we are all offensive to God, guilty in His sight, and by nature the children of hell. But as the Lord wills not to destroy in us that which is His own [i.e., our God createdness] He still finds something in us which in kindness He can love. For though it is by our own fault that we are sinners, we are still His creatures. Though we brought death upon ourselves, He had created us for life. Thus, gratuitous love prompts Him to receive us into favour. But if there is a perpetual and irreconcilable repugnance between righteousness and iniquity, so long as we remain sinners we cannot be completely received. Therefore, in order that all ground of offence may be removed, and He may completely reconcile us to Himself, He by means of the expiation, set forth in the death of Christ, abolishes all the evil that is in us, so that we, formerly impure and unclean, now appear in His sight just and holy."[1] By this explanation Calvin demonstrates that God's justice and God's love (the latter comprehending mercy,

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1. Inst. II, 16,3.

forgiveness and Fatherliness) can be reconciled, so that the latter does not extinguish the former but upholds it. God in His love remains a just Sovereign who has not permitted His law to be violated with impunity but has taken the punishment upon Himself.

How, precisely, did Christ remove the enmity between God and man and purchase a righteousness which made God look favourably and kindly upon man? "[Jesus] accomplished this by the whole course of His obedience."[1] So Paul, Calvin reminds us, said "As by one man's obedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous".[2] The obedience of the man Jesus does not have reference to His death on the Cross only: "...from the moment when He assumed the form of a servant, He began, in order to redeem us, to pay the price of deliverence. However, Scripture, the more certainly to define the mode of salvation, ascribes it peculiarly and specially to the death of Christ."[3]

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1. Inst. II, 16,5.
2. Rom. 5:19.
3. Inst. II, 16,5.

Jesus by His obedience brought about the reconciliation of God and man. Calvin stresses that the obedience of the man Jesus was voluntary. "The first step in obedience was His voluntary subjection, for the sacrifice would have been unavailing to justification if not offered spontaneously."[1] This sense of "voluntary subjection" on the part of the man Jesus Calvin gains from his reading of John 10:15,18, "I lay down my life for the sheep...No man takes it from me."

While we see the voluntary nature of Jesus' death upheld, His voluntary obedience to the Father, Calvin is just as anxious that we should not forget that Christ, the Word Incarnate, is God's work in the world. Calvin in a supplementary chapter to his chapter on the Office of the Redeemer in the Institutes repeats for us the teaching that the humanity of Jesus is assumed into unity of Person by the Word, the eternal

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1. Inst. II, 16,5. Cf. "We must bear in mind that Christ could not duly propitiate God without renouncing His own feelings, and subjecting Himself entirely to His Father's Will." Inst. II, 16,5.

Word, co-eternal with the Father. And then he quotes I John 4:10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propritiation for our sins." Calvin adds, "<u>These words clearly demonstrate that God, in order to remove any obstacle to His love towards us, appointed the method of reconciliation in Christ.</u>"[1] The reconciliation of God and man achieved by the voluntary work of Christ, is the work of God.*

Finally, Calvin in the last sections of his chapter on the "Office of the Redeemer" - following the Apostles' Creed - describes the advantages we men gained from the events of Christ's death, burial, resurrection and ascension. By His death we have lifted from us the curse of the law[2], and are also delivered from the power of death[3]; in His burial we achieve the mortification of our flesh[4], by His descent

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1. <u>Inst.</u> II, 17,2.
2. <u>Inst.</u> II, 16,6.
3. <u>Inst.</u> II, 16,7.
4. <u>Ibid.</u>

* "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." <u>II Cor.</u> 5:19.

into hell we are reconciled[1]; by His resurrection we are given a living hope and a sign of victory over death; also by His resurrection do we gain our justification; also in His resurrection is righteousness restored to us and newness of life conferred;[2] in His ascension do we see His glory, majesty and might and dominion[3] and have opened up for us the access to His kingdom, which Adam had shut[4]; also in His ascension do we in faith perceive Him as (now) our Advocate and Intercessor before the Father.[5] Calvin, finally, gives his own summary at the end of Chapter 16, Book II of the advantages we men gained from Christ's work:

> If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that He possesses it; if we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, we shall find them in His unction; strength in His government; purity in His conception; indulgence in His nativity, in which He was made like us in all respects, in order that He might learn to sympathise with us: if we seek redemption we shall find it in His passion; acquittal in His condemnation; remission of the curse in His cross; satisfaction in His sacrifice; purification in His blood; reconciliation in His descent to hell; mortification of the flesh in His sepulchre; newness

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1. Inst. II, 16,10.
2. Inst. II, 16,13.
3. Inst. II, 16,16.
4. Inst. II, 16, 14,15,16.
5. Inst. II, 16,16.

> of life in His resurrection; immortality also in His resurrection; the inheritance of a celestial kingdom in His entrance into heaven; protection, security, and the abundant supply of all blessings, in His kingdom; secure anticipation of judgement in the power of judging committed to Him. In fine, since in Him all kinds of blessings are treasured up, let us draw a full supply from Him and none from any other quarter."[1]

Section 3. The Word and the Words

(i)In the opening paragraphs of this chapter there is a discussion of Sermo Dei and verbum Dei. It was concluded there that (in terms of Calvin's general usage) Sermo Dei is the Reality which is expressed to men by verbum Dei. Following this discussion Sermo Dei was identified - insofar as we men can recognize Sermo Dei - as Jesus Christ. Thus, we now say that verbum Dei (Scripture) proclaims Jesus Christ. Before we ask what the relationship between Scripture and Christ is we had best test whether or not this conclusion can be substantiated more precisely (in the context of Christ and Scripture) from Calvin's own words.

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1. Inst. II, 16,19.

In Book IV of the Institutes Calvin reminds us of Matthew 11:27 : No man knows the Father, only the Son knows Him.[1] "God never manifested Himself to men by any other means than by His Son."[2] Thus only Christ can reveal God to men. "God alone is a fit witness to Himself, Who is known only by Himself."[3] This Self-Testimony of Christ - in words and acts, i.e., as Prophet, Priest, King and Redeemer - is the only true and fitting revelation of God. But Christ in the flesh is no longer present with us. How, then, does God carry out His Self-Witness to men? What does remain with us is the first hand testimony about His words and acts, the testimony of Israel about Israel (a history in which Christ was foreshadowed[4]) and - His Presence through the Spirit, which enables Him, the Word, to become alive in the words of this testimony. "...our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from a higher source than human conjectures,

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1. Inst. IV, 8,5.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. I, 13,21.
4. Inst. II, 9,1.

judgements or reasons; namely, the secret testimony of the Spirit...the highest proof of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character /persona/ of Him whose speaking /loquentis/ it is* ...For as God alone can properly bear witness to His own Word /Sermo/, so the Word /Sermo/ will not obtain credit in the hearts of men, until it is confirmed by the inner testimony of the Spirit. The same Spirit, therefore, Who spoke by the mouth of the prophets must penetrate our hearts in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely intrusted."[1]

In the last section we saw how Calvin proclaimed that God forgives us, is Gracious to us, is for us. Thus when we realize that Scripture is testimony to this God it has truth for us - not explicitly because it is from God on high - but Calvin says its proof lies in "the character of Him Whose speaking it is".* The exalted God Who came low - the for-us-ness of this God -

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1. Inst. I, 7,4.

* "Itaque summan scripturae probatio passim a Dei loquentis persona sumitur." 'Persona' literally translated means "the face put on" or "the part assumed".

demonstrates that as He served us and on this basis has authority for us, so the Scripture which tells (first hand) of His lowliness, His service and thus is in itself a service gains its authority. Thus we may feel assured that although through human instrumentalities it is still from the mouth of God.[1]

The service rendered to the Servant, i.e., testimony to Him, and particularly that of Scripture which (being first hand) is the "truest", provides the objective means which carry the message of God's Work through His Son, and the inner testimony (subjective) of the Spirit is that which convinces men of the Truth of this testimony, Scripture, i.e., enables men to believe in Jesus Christ as the Emmanuel as He is proclaimed in Scripture[2] (Cf. Section 5). When Calvin indicates that the words of Scripture "come from the very mouth of God"[3] he is not trying to emphasize the

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1. Inst. I, 7,5.

2. Cf. "The whole comes to this, that the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to Himself." Inst. III, 1,1.

3. Inst. I, 7,5.

idea that God "dictated these words"* but rather is trying to establish that the Word by the means of His Spirit speaks and is present again NOW through this testimony of the Biblical witnesses to His Self-revelation. The Word, through the activity of the Spirit, makes us contemporaries of His disciples, as it were.[1] In sum: The Spirit, by giving us the gift of faith, enables us to recognize the Word speaking to us in Scripture.[2] We have seen above that we can only know God through the Son, He being the objective revelation of God (and the only Mediator between God and men). Now we must understand as well that we can only see Christ rightly in the first and best testimony to Him, Holy Scripture. "Christ can not be rightly known in any way other than from Scripture."[3] Thus as Christ in the flesh is no

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1. "The Lord has so knit together the certainty of His word [meaning Scripture, here] and His Spirit that our minds are duly imbued with reverence for the word when the Spirit shining upon it enables us to behold the face of God." Inst. I, 9,3.

2. Inst. I, 8,13.
3. Comm. on John 5:39, C.O. 47,125.

* Not in this context at any rate.

longer with us, if we seek to know God in Christ, we must rely on Scripture - and if the Holy Spirit so illumines, there we will come face to face with Him.* What is the relation of Christ to Scripture? There is an objective relation and a subjective relation. The words and acts of Christ are God's revelation (although veiled) to men. In that Scripture is the first hand account of the words and acts of Christ (and an account of how Christ foreshadowed Himself in Israel and prepared His people for His Advent) it is the servent of the Word, supplying us, as it does, with the facts of the Covenant and of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While there must be this objective content to revelation, Calvin particularly emphasized the subjective relation between Christ and the Scriptures which is ever newly brought about by the Spirit. For the Spirit Who originally inspired the prophets and apostles in the setting down of their testimony is the

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* It is obvious, then, why Calvin maintains that the preacher of the Word is bound to turn exclusively to Scripture as the source of his preaching. Comm. on Eph. 4:11, C.O. 51,196.

same Spirit of Christ's (Cf. Section 5) Who is with us now and by Whose power we are made contemporaries with the Apostles and thus we hear, even as they did, the Word spoken, now through their testimony, and Christ is present there to us.

(ii)Having tried to understand what Calvin says about the relation between Christ and the Scriptures, and knowing that only through Scripture will we rightly apprehend Christ, we might well examine what Calvin thinks our approach to Scripture should be; i.e., with what attitude do we come to Scripture and with what principles of interpretation?

"Reverence" and "obedience" are the words Calvin employs when describing what is the proper attitude to Scripture.

> "It is not strange that those /i.e., us men/ born in darkness become more and more hardened in their stupidity; because the vast majority, instead of confining themselves within due bounds by listening with docility to the word /verbum/ rejoice in their own vanity. If true religion is to shine upon us, our principle must be that it is necessary to begin with the heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound doctrine without being a disciple of Scripture. Hence the first step in true knowledge is taken when we reverently embrace the testimony which God has been pleased therein to give of Himself. For

> not only does faith, full and perfect faith, but all correct knowledge of God originate in obedience."[1]

In effect the Scripture is our standard of truth.[2] Thus do we submit to it. And yet we do not submit to it as a dictum, but because God through the Work of His Spirit comes to us through it,[3] and thus it is God Himself Whom we reverence and obey in our reverent acknowledgement of and submission to Scripture.

What are Calvin's principles of interpretation?[4] In the above discussion some of them have been implicit, but they bear being stated explicitly.

1. We have listened to Calvin emphasize that "God Himself is the only fit witness to Himself."[5] Therefore, Calvin entreats, "let us willingly leave to God the knowledge of Himself. In the words of Hilary (De. Trinit. Book I) 'He alone is a fit witness

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1. Inst. I, 6,2.
2. Inst. I, 6,3.
3. Cf. esp. Inst. I, 7,3.

4. I wish to thank Dr. Markus Barth for his helpful suggestions to me about what Calvin's principles of interpretation were, and also for giving me the figure of the bow and arrow used in connection with principle 4 (below).

5. Inst. I, 11,1. "Deus ipse solus est de se idoneus testis."

to Himself Who is known only by Himself.'"[1*] But where may we hear God's Self-proclamation? We have read, in the summation of Calvin's position on Scripture (above in subsection i), that the Spirit by giving us the gift of faith, enables us to recognize the Word (Sermo Dei) speaking to us in Scripture.[2] Thus, the Word, God Himself, through the activity of His Spirit, witnesses to Himself in the words of Scripture. Since Scripture, then, through the work of the Spirit becomes the instrument of God's Self-revelation to us men, it is the proper witness, it is therefore primary, i.e., it comes before any other witness.

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1. Inst. I, 13,21.
2. Inst. I, 8,13.

* God Himself is the only possessor of knowledge of God. An interesting implication is laid open here. God Himself - in His Three Persons - has knowledge of Himself. He came to dwell with us men. The Son knows the Father, told us of His knowledge, and adopted us. The implication is that via the Incarnate Word we now participate in the Triune God's knowledge of Himself. Thus Scripture, the testimony about God with us, becomes through the power or activity of the Spirit a part of the Divine Dialogue, we might say, between the Father and the Son, the latter being (I John 2:1) our Intercessor with the Father. (So too with subsequent proclamation and prayers in the Church; but the Scripture remains primary for it stands in relation to subsequent proclamation in the relation of original to reproductions or imitations.)

If the Spirit enables God to speak through the words of the Biblical witnesses to us, does He not also present God's Address to us through the words of any writer - chosen at random? Calvin indicates that such a notion misunderstands the office of the Spirit.[1] The office of the Spirit consists in precisely the work of sealing the teaching of the Gospel upon our minds.[2] That is, the work of the Spirit is precisely the work of making the Word alive in Scripture and confirming upon our hearts the certainty that what we "hear" when we read Scripture is God's Speech to us.[3]

2. What critical instruments shall we bring to our reading of Scripture? what hermeneutical keys? what scientific notions and what dogmatic principles? None. We do not test Scripture for its truth by any of these means for Scripture is its own interpreter. "Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth, as white and black do of their colour, sweet and bitter their taste"[4]; i.e., Scripture carries

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1. Inst. I, 9,1.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. I, 9,3.
4. Inst. I, 7,2.

its own Light. It is then a pernicious error to say that Scripture is of importance only insofar as conceded to it by the suffrage of the Church.[1] The Church does not have the power to abjudicate Scripture, but rather Scripture is the teacher of the Church:

> "Paul testifies that the Church is 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets'. If the teaching of the prophets and apostles is the foundation of the Church, the former must have had its certainty before the latter began to exist...but for /the teachings/ the Church Herself never could have existed. Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the fiction that the power of judging Scripture is in the Church. When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of Her authority, She does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful and controverted, but acknowledging it as the truth of God, She, as in duty bound, shows Her reverence by an unhesitating assent."[2]

Calvin makes clear, elsewhere in the Institutes, that Scripture is the teacher of the Church, for he indicates that God, for the Church, was pleased to commit His word /verbum/ to writing[3] and neither the Church nor the individual believer is to produce any new teaching contrary to it.[4] In another place we read, "The Lord,

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1. Inst. I, 7,1.
2. Inst. I, 7,2.
3. Inst. IV, 8,6.
4. Inst. IV, 8,9.

therefore, has astricted His Church to what He foresaw would be the strongest bond of unity when he deposited the doctrine of eternal life and salvation to men that by their hands He might communicate it to others."[1]

3.Canonization, we understand, then, is the recognition of or acknowledgement by the Church of the work of the Spirit. Thus, the origin of the Scripture rests on the Spirit. Calvin says: "With great insult to the Holy Spirit is it asked: who can assure us that the Scriptures proceeded from God? who guarantee that they have come down safe and unimpaired to our times? who persuade us that this book is to be received with reverence and that one expunged from the list, unless [as it is answered by foolish men] the Church regulate all these things with certainty."[2] Calvin is scathing about this reply: "as if the eternal and inviolable truth of God could depend upon the will of men."[3] The only One Who can assure us

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1. Inst. IV, 3,1.
2. Inst. I, 7,1.
3. Ibid.

that the Scripture is proper testimony to God, and is in its proper form, is the Holy Spirit for it is "those who are taught by the inner teaching of the Holy Spirit that acquiesce implicitly in Scripture."[1]

4. "The same Spirit Who spoke by the mouths of the prophets must penetrate our hearts, in order to convince us that they faithfully delivered the message with which they were divinely instructed."[2] The pneumatic interpretation of Scripture is the pillar of Calvin's hermeneutics. "Existential authenticity", "the core of the unhellenized Gospel", "the authentic ethic and sayings of Jesus", "the history behind the text" - Calvin did not seek to find and use this kind of key. Perhaps his hermeneutics can be described through the employment of this figure of speech: God Who originally shot the arrow of His Word by guiding the Biblical witnesses through His Spirit, guides His arrow to its target even today by the same Spirit. And the target is, of course, the hearts of men. Exegesis is watching the arrow in flight!

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1. Inst. I, 7,5.
2. Inst. I, 7,4.

5. The life of the Church depends on Her ever being reformed and renewed by listening to Scripture.

"Let there be an examination of (1)our whole doctrine, of (2)our form of administering the sacraments, and (3)our method of governing the Church; and in none of these three things will it be found that we have made any change upon the ancient form without attempting to restore it to the exact standard of the word /verbum/ of God."[1] Scripture is deposited with the Church that it might be the standard of the Truth men communicate to others.[2] In terms of hermeneutics, then, one reads Scripture so as to proclaim the Gospel and be a pastor to others, to be a merciful neighbour. One reads Scripture not for himself but for the other members of the Church and for all other men. We do not read and comment on Scripture in order to become clever and admired exegetes,[3] but to find Jesus Christ there and to find what He requires of His people.[4]

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1. "De Necessitate Reformandae Ecclesiae", C.O. 6,473-4.
2. Inst. IV, 3,1.
3. Cf. Serm. on II Tim. 3:16, C.O. 54,287.
4. Comm. on John 5:39, C.O. 47,125.

(iii)We have tried to describe Calvin's approach to Scripture, i.e., his canons of interpretation, not as a study *per se*, but as a means of understanding how, for Calvin, the words of Scripture (*verbum Dei*) and the Word of God (*Sermo Dei*) are related. Calvin provides us with another discussion where we can further examine this relationship, for in Book II of the *Institutes* he discusses the following topics: (1)"Christ, though known to the Jews under the Law, yet, only manifested under the Gospel"[1] (2)"the resemblance between the two testaments"[2] and (3) "the difference between the two testaments"[3].

The first of these topics presents us then with this question: what precisely is Christ's relation to the law and the Gospel and what is the relation of Law and Gospel to Scripture? An answer to this question presupposes that we first have understood the meaning of "Law" and especially of "Gospel".

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1. *Inst.* II,9.
2. *Inst.* II,10.
3. *Inst.* II,11.

> "By the Gospel [Calvin tells us] I understand the clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ. I confess, indeed, that inasmuch as the term 'Gospel' is applied by Paul to the doctrine of faith it includes all the promises by which God reconciles men to Himself, and which occur throughout the Law. For Paul there opposes faith to those terrors which vex and torment the conscience when salvation is sought by means of work. Hence...the Gospel, taken in a large sense, comprehends the evidences of mercy and paternal favour which God bestowed on the Fathers."[1]

But preeminently the Gospel is the proclamation of the Grace manifested in Christ.[2] This proclamation of Christ is, of course, what the New Testament is; we by now have already begun to be pretty sure, in examining this chapter of the Institutes that "Law" in this context means the Old Testament. (We just read that the term Gospel "includes all the promises by which God reconciles men to Himself and which occur throughout the Law."*) So before Calvin opens his discussion of the resemblance and difference between the two testaments we see the identification which Calvin makes of the Old Testament with Law and of the New Testament with

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1. Inst. II, 9,2.
2. Inst. II, 9,2. "Verum per excellentiam aptari dico ad promulgationem exhibitae in Christo gratiae."

* The New Testament is concealed in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is revealed in the New Testament.

Gospel. Hence, "There is this difference to be observed in the nature or quality of the promises, that the Gospel points with the finger to what the Law shadowed with types."[1] "What was shadow, [the Gospel] has made substance", i.e., the Old Covenant has been fulfilled (in all reality) in the New Covenant.[2] Calvin clearly identifies Law with Old Covenant and Gospel with the New Covenant.

We recall from the preceding section that Calvin (at least here in his doctrine of the Word) does not make separate God's Word from God's Work. God in Christ reconciled man to Himself and in Christ proclaimed this reconciliation. Thus, Calvin in identifying the Gospel with the New Covenant in Jesus Christ uses the word Gospel to represent both the fact of this covenant and the proclamation of this fact.

To say that the Gospel is the coming of the Lamb of God into the world and is (at the same time) the promulgation of this, is not to say that the Law, i.e., the Old Covenant was without Gospel. Israel

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1. Inst. II, 9,3.
2. Inst. II, 9,4.

under the Law, under the Old Covenant, was not deprived of the Gospel, i.e., was not deprived of the manifestation of Christ. The Old Covenant differs from the new only in respect to the clearness of the manifestation.[1] Christ went before Israel and was foreshadowed in the promises made under the Law. We saw in the first section of this chapter that Calvin identifies Yahweh as the Same One Who came to be with us in the flesh.

We are now in possession of some definitions. The Gospel is the manifestation of Christ and the promulgation of His manifestation. The Law is the Old Covenant and the Gospel ("substance") is the fulfilment of the promises (which were the shadows of the substance - before it appeared) of the Old Covenant. The Law called the Old Testament and the Gospel called the New Testament are together Scripture. Caution is necessary in making this last assertion, however; God's Word and Work are not separate. His Work is the preparation and fulfilment of the Covenant - His Word

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1. Inst. II, 9,4.

is the proper proclamation of this fulfilment. But we have seen, "God alone is the proper witness to Himself".[1] Thus, the promises of the Old Testament and the substance of the New Testament are Gospel only as God through the activity of His Spirit guides the "arrow of His Word" to the target, i.e., the hearts of men (Cf. points 1 and 4 of previous subsection). The promises written down in the Old Testament and the manifestation of Christ attested to in the New Testament are themselves Gospel only via the power of the Spirit, only as God in His Word becomes present in them.* In sum: Scripture is the Gospel, i.e., the proclamation of God's manifestation, insofar as Christ by His Spirit becomes present for us there. God must be present there (i.e., where there is Gospel - or Law) for He alone is a proper witness to Himself - so fact and proclamation, Work and Word, are together. Also, we may say, the Law is God's Law by the fact of His manifestation through His promises in it.

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1. Inst. I, 11,1.

* Likewise, we would extend the interpretation and say the Law is only the Command of God when by His Spirit He lays it upon our hearts - which He constantly does.

Finally, what is the relation of Gospel and Law? We shall try to examine this relationship broadly in Chapter Four. Here we shall discuss it only in relation to Calvin's understanding of the Law as the Old Covenant or Old Testament and the Gospel as the New Covenant or New Testament.

There is first of all a resemblance between the Old Covenant and the New, for "the Fathers were /in fact/ partakers with us in the same inheritance, and hoped for a common salvation through the Grace of the same Mediator."[1] We can go so far as to say that "the Covenant made with all the Fathers is so far from differing from ours in reality and substance that it is altogether the same".[2] The difference lies only in its administration.[3] The substantial unity resides in the fact that even under the Old Covenant God's people already "had and knew Christ the Mediator by whom they were united to God and made capable of receiving His promises".[4] "Who then will presume to

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1. Inst. II, 10,1.
2. Inst. II, 10,2. "Patrum omnium foedus adeo substantia et re ipsa nihil a nostro differt, ut unum prorsus atque idem sit."
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

represent the Jews as destitute of Christ when we know that they were parties to the Gospel Covenant, which has its only foundation in Christ?"[1*] All the Fathers were united to God by the illumination of His Word[2] and this illumination assured them of eternal salvation; "for if His Face, the moment it shines upon us [men], is a perfect pledge of salvation how can He manifest Himself to anyone as His God without opening to him the treasures of salvation?"[3] Thus what could be seen manifested, for example, in the proclamation of the prophets? "the Kingdom of Christ and eternal life are there exhibited in the fullest splendour".[4] The heavenly kingdom is not confined for those under the New Covenant - most assuredly the latter shall sit down there beside Abraham, Issac and Jacob.[5] In sum: Christ, sharing

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1. Inst. II, 10,4.
2. Inst. II, 10,7.
3. Inst. II, 10,8.
4. Inst. II, 10,15.
5. Inst. II, 10,23.

* Calvin a moment later quotes I Cor. 10:3,4 :"[Our Fathers] all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them and the Rock was Christ".

His inheritance with us men in the heavenly Kingdom, is the substance of God's revelation to men under the Old Covenant, i.e., under the Law.* So Law and Gospel are not disparate.

And yet there is a difference between the Covenants - a difference in administration. Calvin sets forth five aspects of this difference in administration.

"The first difference is that though in ancient times the Lord was pleased to direct the thoughts of His people, and raise their minds to the heavenly inheritance, yet, that their hope of it might be the better maintained, He held it forth, and, in a manner, gave a foretaste of earthly blessings [e.g., the gift of Canaan to Israel] whereas the gift of future life, now more clearly and lucidly revealed by the Gospel, leads our minds directly to meditate upon it, the inferior mode of exercise formerly employed in regard to the Jews being now laid aside."[1]

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1. Inst. II, 11,1.

* i.e., under the Old Covenant the "Body" is not yet to be seen, but its shadow may be seen.

"Form"* and "substantial content" describe the difference between Law and Gospel, Old and New Covenant. This becomes more evident as Calvin proceeds to delineate the second "difference of administration".[1] The cultic practises of Israel under the Old Covenant, especially as regards sacrifice, were not effectual, were not propitious themselves (e.g., the sacrifice of beasts) but foreshadowed good things to come.** In the New Covenant, in the Word become flesh, we have a perfect, effectual propitiation by which we are eternally sanctified.[2] Thus, the form of cultic practises in the Old Covenant informed the understanding of the Israelites (i.e., foreshadowed Christ's propitiatory Work) and indeed the account of them still informs us about the splendour and meaning of Christ's propitiatory Work, the content of the Gospel; but, in the Old Testament only the shadow is present

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1. Inst. II, 11,4.
2. Ibid.

* The form is the shadow of the body, the body being the substantial content.

** "Concludit ergo, umbram fuisse in ipsa futurorum bonorum non vivam rerum effigiem..."

while the body itself is absent. In the New Covenant the body (substance) is present and the full truth is exhibited.[1*] Thus, Calvin concludes, "It is now clear in what sense /Paul/ said that by the tutelage of the Law the Jews were conducted to Christ before He was exhibited in the flesh".[2**] In sum: the forms or figures employed in the Old Testament are different from those employed in the New Covenant. This is true for the obvious reason that in the former Christ could be only anticipated, while in the latter He was present and witnessed to in the flesh.

A third distinction: the Old Covenant was written on stone, the New Covenant is written on the hearts of men.[3] The former is literal, the latter Spiritual. What does this distinction mean? Calvin answers that

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1. Inst. II, 11,4. Again Calvin is saying the shadow (form) is present in the Old Covenant, the substance (content) in the New.

2. Inst. II, 11,5.
3. Cf. Inst. II, 11,7.

* "Alterum veteris et novi testamenti discrimen statuitur in figuris; quod illud, absente veritate, imaginem tantum et pro corpore umbram ostentabat; hoc praesentum veritatem et corpus solidum exhibet."

** Gal. 3:24.

while the Law commands what is right, prohibits crime, threatens transgressors with punishment, it at the same time neither changes nor amends that depravity of the heart which is inherent in all of us.[1] "The Old Testament is literal because promulgated without the efficacy of the Spirit; the New, Spiritual, because the Lord has engraved it on the heart...the Old is deadly, because it can do nothing but involve the whole human race in a curse, the New is the instrument of life, because those who are freed from the curse it restores to favour with God ...[*] /the Old/ is the ministry of condemnation, because it charges all of Adam's sons with transgression, /the New is/ the ministry of righteousness, because it unfolds the mercy of God, by which we are justified."[2] Moreover, that part of the Law which concerns ceremony, being a shadow of things to come, it behooved in time to vanish away,

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1. Cf. Inst. II, 11,7.
2. Inst. II, 11,8.

* Note that Calvin, here, does not distinguish between the Work of God and its proclamation in Scripture.

whereas the Gospel, exhibiting (or, we may say, being) the very substance of God's revelation, is established forever.[1]

The third distinction leads into a fourth. Calvin reminds us that Scripture applies the word "bondage" to the Old Testament, to the Law, and the word "freedom" to the New.* For the former stirs up fear, while the latter is productive of confidence and security.[2] "...by the law [says Calvin interpreting Gal. 4:25] we are subjected to slavery and by the Gospel alone regenerated into liberty. The sum of the matter comes to this: the Old Testament filled the conscience with fear and trembling, the New inspires it with gladness. By the former the conscience is held in bondage, by the latter it is liberated."[3] The liberty and joy of the Fathers was not derived from the Law, Calvin tells us - anticipating such an objection, but from the Gospel. But because they did

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1. Inst. II, 11,8.
2. Inst. II, 11,9.
3. Ibid.

* Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:25,26.

not have offered to them as clear a manifestation of the Gospel as is offered us, they did not enjoy the spirit of joy and freedom in such a degree as not to experience some measure of bondage.

Calvin, before proceeding to the "fifth difference ", makes explicit that in discussing the last three differences "Law" and "Old Testament" were used precisely interchangeably as were "Gospel" and "New Testament". Although we have already understood this general identification, we might wonder at such a precise identification. Certainly in the last three points, since Calvin was speaking of ceremonial prescriptions and the written law, the Old Testament could in these sections be referred to as Law. But what of God's promises, His words of Grace and mercy to Israel? Can we accept the word "Law" as a description of these dealings of God with His people? Calvin makes clear that he does not intend us to. God's promises, His mercy shown Israel, are not Law and therefore also not Old Testament; God's promises are Gospel and therefore New Testament. Thus, Calvin indicates that in discussing the first difference between the Testaments,

since he was there discussing promise (shadow) - in the Old Testament - and fulfilment - in the New Testament - he did not observe the method of identifying Old Testament with Law and New Testament with Gospel for there he was discussing the promises given Israel. In sum: A basic difference between Old Testament and New Testament resides in the fact that the former is Law and the latter Gospel. The promises given Israel are essentially Gospel and New Testament. But there is a more comprehensive distinction between Old Testament and New Testament which we have seen before, but which we must here keep in mind for it goes beyond the distinction of Old Testament to New Testament as Law is to Gospel. For even if we view the Old Testament as containing Law and Gospel (and the New Testament as also Law and Gospel) - although we may more usually speak of Law as meaning the Old Covenant and of Gospel as meaning the New Covenant - the basic difference remains, namely that the revelation to Israel was but a shadow, while the revelation in the New Testament is the substantial revelation: The Word of God with us in the flesh.[1]

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1. Cf. above with Inst. II, 11,10.

Calvin records a fifth and final distinction between the testaments. In the Old Testament we see blessed signs of salvation are given only to Israel; ceremonies only foreshadowing The Propitiation and Reconciliation are given to Israel; the written law is given only to Israel; but in the New Testament we see signs of salvation replaced by Him Who is our salvation and Whose Glory, filling the earth, all men may see; His propitiatory Work renders ceremonies unnecessary; and He now engraves His Law upon the hearts of men by the power of His Holy Spirit Whom He freely gives to all men - and thus all can be united with Him. Therefore, as we read in the New Testament, His Covenant of Grace is no longer confined to one nation (as it was in the Old Testament time) but is now for all nations and all men.[1]

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1. Cf. Inst. II, 11,11.

Section 4. The Power of God

The term Gospel refers to the revelation of the mystery of Christ and (by the activity of the Spirit, not separate from it) the proclamation of this revelation.[1] The proclamation of this revelation is first of all the proclamation given by the prophets and apostles, i.e., the Biblical witnesses. This Gospel of the prophets and apostles God deposited with the Church,[2] and committed to pastors the preaching of this doctrine,[3] in order that (through such preaching of the Gospel) we might believe in Christ. "For we believe in Christ when He is preached to us. I speak of the usual way by which the Lord leads us to faith.... Christ offers Himself to us through the Gospel and we receive Him by faith."[4]

This faith, which comes from hearing the Gospel, is not an "automatic process"; we have already seen that the Gospel proclaimed in Scripture is made effectual

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1. Inst. II, 9,2.
2. Inst. IV, 1,1.
3. Inst. IV, 1,5.
4. Comm. on John 1:12, C.O. 47,12.

by the activity of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on the relationship of the Word and Spirit is so great in Calvin's theology that one would be tempted to say that this emphasis on the activity of the Holy Spirit making the Word, Jesus Christ, present to us Now if not itself the dominant theme of his theology is at least so much at the centre of it that unless the student keeps it constantly in mind he will not correctly grasp Calvin's theology. Christ offers Himself to us through the Gospel[1] - where He is made alive by the Spirit.[2]

Since 'Gospel' means the proclamation of the revelation of Christ, preaching is, of course, Gospel. Preaching is the power of God; but not by virtue of the power and eloquence of the preacher, per se, nor even by virtue of the fact that pastors preach from the testimony of the prophets and apostles which the Father has entrusted to them. The fact that God appoints pastors and teachers[3] and commissions them to proclaim

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1. Comm. on John 1:12, C.O. 47,12.
2. Inst. III, 1,4.
3. Inst. IV, 1,1.

the Apostolic witness rather than some new doctrine[1] are scarcely points to be ignored and we shall return to them. But first and principally we must understand that just as by the work of the Spirit the Word becomes present to us in Scripture, likewise the Spirit by becoming a Co-worker with pastors and teachers presents the Word to us through their words.

Calvin sets forth this relation of the Spirit with preaching in the Institutes.[2] With regard to preaching we must neither exaggerate the work of the preacher, thinking it is he who penetrates to the hearts and minds of men rather than the Spirit, nor ignore the fact that God has "raised up teachers on the earth.../being/...pleased to instruct us in the present day by human means."[3] If we ignore the latter, the fact that God consecrates the mouths of men, and consider only the inadequacy of the words of men[4], we might ignore preaching and seek God elsewhere. The fact that God has consecrated human teachers provides

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1. Inst. IV, 8,9.
2. Inst. IV, 1, 5,6.
3. Inst. IV, 1,5.
4. IBid.

us with a twofold advantage: first, this provides us with a test of our obedience (do we obediently listen to His ministers, respecting their message as His?) second, God by speaking to us through human instrumentalities allures us to Himself rather than frightening us by His thunderous presence.[1] Surely when God is present to us in preaching it is because He has connected His Spirit with it.[2] Yet his ministers (whom He calls and directs) provide the human media - we might say they speak verbum Dei through which Sermo Dei by the activity of His Spirit makes Himself known to us. Thus, those called by God to preach may be spoken of as co-workers with God.[3]

Before we say any more about these commissioned co-workers with God we should repeat two points which are implicit in the Institutes, but finely drawn in the Commentaries. First, because God may by His Spirit connect Himself with preaching and thus graciously commend Himself to us, we may not assume that He must

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1. Inst. IV, 1,5.
2. Inst. IV, 1,6.
3. "Denique pluribus locis non modo se cooperarium Dei facit sed...et. cetæra.." Inst. IV, 1,6.

or that He always does. Human words can not imprison God's Word and therefore Calvin reminds us "God sometimes connects Himself with His servants and sometimes separates Himself from them", i.e., He never resigns to them His own Office.[1] (The second point:) when God does connect Himself with preaching and the Word is present to the congregation, still preaching may not necessarily gain a positive response of faith from men. But this does not suggest that the Word is ineffective and futilely present. The Word is not only God's Speech but God's Act.[2] Thus there can be no neutral or - we might translate - agnostic hearing of the Word[3]: for to ignore the living Word in proclamation is condemnation and curse. Preaching brings either a blessing or a condemnation;[4] either we recognize the Grace of God in it, or our hearts are hardened.

While Calvin emphasizes the work of the Spirit in his doctrine of preaching he does not by any means neglect the topic of the content of preaching. The

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1. Comm. on Mal. 4:6, C.O. 44,497.
2. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48.
3. Comm. on Heb. 4:12, C.O. 55,50.
4. Comm. on Isa. 55:11, C.O. 37,292.

objective testimony (to the Word) is of great importance for the work of the Spirit does not consist in unfolding before us new revelations but consists in "sealing on our minds the very teaching which the Gospel recommends".[1] So while the work of the Spirit is what renders the Gospel God's own testimony to Himself, and why we speak of preaching as "the power of God", this is not to say that the objective testimony is unimportant. For the Word - which is "the Object" which preaching announces and is about - rules over the Church no less than the Spirit of God.[2] Thus it is incumbent upon faithful ministers not "to coin some new doctrine, but simply to adhere to the doctrine to which all without exception are made subject"[3] - i.e., the Biblical testimony. In sum: While the Spirit makes the Word present to us, the Word is not revealed to us just anywhere. For the Word is Jesus Christ and He is rightly proclaimed by the Biblical witnesses. Thus, "their writings are to be regarded as the oracles

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1. Inst. I, 9,1.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. IV, 8,9.

of God, and other witnesses [i.e., preachers] have no other office than to teach what is delivered and sealed in the Holy Scriptures".[1] Preaching is not, however, precisely a secondary witness, even though the Biblical witnesses are always placed before any other human witness. Preaching is not a secondary witness in that through the work of the Spirit the same proclamation is given us that was given to the Biblical witnesses - and which they recorded[2] (i.e., we become contemporaneous with the Apostles).

Preaching is "objectively" Gospel, then, as its content is taken entirely from the Gospel proclaimed by the Biblical witnesses. But the Word becoming alive through the words of Scripture by the work of the Spirit is not all that is involved in the doctrine of preaching. If this were all, then we would have a negative doctrine of preaching, for personal study of Scripture would be sufficient. We now return to the person of the pastor to whom the Gospel is now committed[3] -

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1. "...et ideo eorum scripta pro Dei oraculis habenda sunt; alii autem non aliud habent officii nisi ut doceant quod sacris scripturis proditum est ac consignatum." Inst. IV, 8,9.
2. Cf. previous section.
3. Inst. IV, 1,5.

in the midst of God's living community.* Even as Paul so referred to himself they may be called co-workers with God.[1] They are co-workers with God in that as

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1. Inst. IV, 1,6.

*(i) We must not attach importance to the person of the pastor in himself. Calvin, rather, emphasizes the importance of the living community (Cf. the following ii); within this community - for its sake and for the sake of its witness - God entrusts the pastor with the teaching of the Gospel.

(ii) Calvin emphasized the importance of the living community: By being in the fellowship of the Church we are held by God in fellowship with Him (Inst. IV,1,3). Scripture reading in private is insufficient, per se. "Pride, or snobbishness or its emulation induce many to persuade themselves that they can profit sufficiently by reading and meditating in private, and so they despise public meetings and consider preaching superfluous. But since they do all in their power to dissolve and burst the bond of unity, which ought to be preserved inviolable, none of them escapes punishment, but all involve themselves in pestilent errors and pernicious reveries..." "Multos impellit vel superbia, vel fastidium, vel aemulatio, ut sibi persuadeant privatim legendo et meditando se posse satis proficere, atque ita contemnant publicos coetus, et praedicationem supervacuam ducant. Quoniam autem sacrum unitatis vinculum, quantum in se est, solvunt vel abrumpunt nemo iustam impii huius divortii poenam effugit quin se pestiferis erroribus ac taeterrimis deliriis fascinet." (Inst. IV, 1,5). Calvin adds "/this fellowship/ the Church can only be edified by the preaching of the Word" which is the basis for the common union of those called into the fellowship (Inst. IV, 1,5).

We can not hope to express in short compass Calvin's teaching regarding the Church. But from these

faithful ministers the pastors take up and proclaim the Biblical testimony to the Word and the Holy Spirit makes this proclamation God's Self revealing testimony. That is, the pastor and the Holy Spirit are co-workers not precisely because the Holy Spirit connects Himself with the human words, but because the Spirit may illumine the pastor's message by exhibiting the Word in that message which the pastor takes from those witnesses whom the Holy Spirit first inspired with the understanding of God the Word with us. For we must not

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*cont. passages taken from the first chapter of Book IV of the Institutes we can see why - against the background of these few statements from Calvin's teaching about the Church - the preaching of the Word has such a significant role in Calvin's theology. God has called men into a living community which is in fellowship with Him. Thus, while Scripture is always the teacher and guide (Cf. Inst. I,6), a living interpretation given to the gathered community is necessary for the continual edification, maintenance and maturation of God's living community. That is, the preaching of the prophets and apostles needs to be communicated to the living community in terms of a living interpretation of Scripture given by pastors - of which Calvin's own preaching, we interject, is a very eminent example. Thus, the "preached Gospel" is no less Gospel nor no less necessary than its standard, the written word.

think that the word of man *per se* and the Spirit of God together effect God's saving testimony, but we must realize that it is God's Word and Spirit which join in this action.[1] The minister is but the meritless tool or instrument of the Grace of God.[2] And yet we must not forget that God does specially call out certain men and commissions them pastors; but basically they are of importance only in regard to the fact that their words provide a *media* , i.e., God uses their words as a *media* to draw close to us and to train us in obedience.[3]

The Church and the preaching of its pastors are given by God for the maturation of His people.[4] As such this is the eschatological mystery - understandable only in terms of God's further Gracious giving.* That

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1. *Comm. on Ezek.* 2:2, *C.O.* 40,62.
2. *Inst.* IV, 1,6.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Inst.* IV, 1,5.

* "Christ has been appointed by the Father, not to rule after the manner of princes, by the force of arms...but His whole authority consists in teaching, in the preaching of which He wishes to be sought and acknowledged; nowhere else will He be found." *Comm. on Isa.* 49:2, *C.O.* 37,191. Christ's power and authority resides in the Gospel. *Comm. on Hos.* 1:11, *C.O.* 42,221.

is, God might perfect His people in a moment, but rather chooses the slow movement of His Church.[1*] In this "slow movement" of maturation pastors are needed - and are therefore called by God,[2] but they are not called to an exalted office over others, but are called to be tools, or media. Thus, Calvin instructs us, we should not exaggerate the dignity of the ministry.[3] But neither should we have a low regard for it, for it is instituted of God, He announces Himself through it, teaches us through it, and indeed draws near to us and draws us near to Him through it.[4] Thus when we listen to pastors we are

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1. Inst. IV, 1,5.
2. Inst. IV, 1,1.
3. Inst. IV, 1,6.
4. Ibid.

* The mystery lies in the fact of the delay in time between the reconciliation in Christ and the consumation in Christ. A clue to why God chooses the slow movement of the Church rather than an immediately effective Sovereign act in the maturation of His people may be found in The Song of Songs. God in love chooses to allure His creature - to whom He has granted freedom - to Himself. This personal relationship of God with His Community is set forth in The Song of Songs in both its gentleness and passion. It is an exposition of this gracious, alluring fellowship which Calvin provides in Inst. IV, 1,5; it is this that lies behind the eschatological mystery.

"face to face" with our Master.[1] "The Lord is nigh and exhibits Himself to us when the voice of the Gospel cries aloud.../or, to follow Paul, God's nearness/...denotes the preaching of the Gospel."[2] Christ offers Himself to us through the preaching of the Gospel.[3] Thus, the Gospel, first the preaching of the prophets and apostles and now that of pastors (based upon that preaching of the prophets and apostles) is given in the living community that God might allure and maturate us in the manner described in The Song of Songs.

Section 5. The Gift of Faith

Calvin tells us that the external manifestation of the Word of God should be sufficient to produce faith.[4] But our minds are so inclined to untruth that they can never adhere to the Truth of God, they can never discern its Light.[5] Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit,

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1. Comm. on Hag. 1:12, C.O. 44,95.
2. Comm. on Isa. 55:6, C.O. 37,288.
3. Comm. on John 1:12, C.O. 47,12.
4. Inst. III, 2,33. "Atque haec quidem nuda externaque verbi Dei demonstratio abunde ad fidem faciendam sufficere debebat..."
5. Ibid.

then, the Word has no effect. "Faith, then, is something higher than human understanding."[1] Faith is a singular gift of God. There are, however, two aspects of this gift: for the Spirit, first, originates faith but, second, also gradually increases it; that is, the Spirit of God not only purifies the mind in order to give it a taste for the Truth of God, but establishes the Truth in the soul.[2]

Early in the Institutes it is made clear that this Truth of God Which the Spirit establishes in the soul is the Word of God: "What kind of Spirit", Calvin enquires, "did [our Lord] promise to send? One Who 'should not speak of Himself' but suggest and establish the Truths...which He Himself had delivered through the Word. (The work of the Spirit...is not to form new and unheard of revelation or to coin a new form of teaching,which would lead us away from the received teaching of the Gospel, but to seal on our minds the very teaching which the Gospel delivers.)"[3]

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1. Inst. III, 2,33."Unde etiam liquet fidem humana intelligentia multo superiorem esse."

2. Ibid. While faith is an "intellectual act" or assent, it is grounded in the heart (animus) and not the mind (mens).

3. Inst. I, 9,1.

Because "Christ came provided with the Holy Spirit"[1] the Truth of God, the Word of God, may be efficacious. "For the soul (animus),when illumined by the Holy Spirit, receives as it were a new eye, enabling it to contemplate the heavenly mysteries...thus, only when the human intellect is irradiated by the Holy Spirit does it begin to have a taste for those things which pertain to the Kingdom of God (for which before it had not the slightest taste)."[2] Calvin adds to this statement a helpful figure: "The Word is like the sun shining on all to whom it is preached, but is of no use to the blind. In this respect we are all blind. Thus the Word cannot penetrate our mind unless the Spirit, the internal teacher, by His illumination makes a way for it."[3]

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1. Inst. III, 1,2.

2. Inst. III, 2,34. "Nam ab eo illustrata anima novam quasi aciem sumit, qua coelestia mysteria contemplentur... Atque ita quidem spiritus sancti lumine irradiatus hominis intellectus tum vere demum ea quae ad regnum Dei pertinent gustare incipit antea prorsus ad ea delibanda fatuus et insipidus."

3. Ibid, "Verbum quidem Dei instar solis est omnibus effulgentis quibus praedicatur; sed nullo cum fructu inter caecos. Nos autem natura caeci sumus omnes hac in parte; proinde in mentem penetrare nequit, nisi interiore illo magistro spiritu per suam illuminationem aditum faciente."

Although faith is something higher than human understanding[1], it is nevertheless a knowledge. Faith consists in the knowledge of God and His divine will.[2] This knowledge (faith) Calvin (elsewhere in the Institutes) refers to as the knowledge of "heavenly things" ("res coelestes").[3] Natural human understanding (reason) has as its object "earthly things" ("res terrenas").[4] By "earthly things" Calvin means to speak of those things "which relate not to God and His Kingdom, to true righteousness and future blessedness, but have some connection with the present life, and are confined within its boundaries...[i.e., matters]... of policy and economy, all mechanical arts and liberal studies."[5] In regard to these things "no man is devoid of the light of reason"[6] although even this knowledge (reason) is corrupted by sin.[7] By knowledge of "the heavenly things"(faith) Calvin means "the pure know-

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1. Inst. III, 2,33.
2. Inst. III, 2,2.
3. Inst. II, 2,13.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid. "...nullum destitui luce rationis hominem"
7. Inst. II, 2,12.

ledge of God, the method of true righteousness, and the mysteries of the heavenly kingdom."[1] Thus, while faith is higher than reason it, like reason, is knowledge - but of this different kind (i.e., different by virtue of its different object).

Scripture plainly teaches, Calvin maintains, that faith and knowledge are bound together.[2*] Thus we may understand just as the knowledge of reason has an

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1. Inst. II, 2,13.
2. Inst. III, 2,3.

* Mr. T.H.L. Parker in his book, Calvin's Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, (Grand Rapids, 1959),[i.] reminds us that Calvin sometimes speaks of knowledge producing faith and other times speaks of faith producing knowledge. While noting that Calvin by no means always uses notitia in one sense and cognitio in the other, Mr. Parker makes the helpful suggestion that Calvin's mind followed the pattern which I have outlined below and thus is not inconsistent, as it might seem.

Notitia Dei	Fides	Cognitio Dei
This is the knowledge of God's works, (it precedes faith), specifically the seeing or knowing of Jesus of Nazareth, and especially the knowledge of the miracles He performed.	Created by the Holy Spirit.	The Knowledge of God, especially of His Promise and His Will. (This knowledge follows faith.) This is a knowledge known to the heart as well as the mind.[ii.]

i. pp. 102ff.. Cf. also Calvin's Comm. on John 10:38, C.O. 47,254.
ii. Faith is rooted in the heart. Cf. Serm. on II Thess. 1:6-10, C.O. 52,227.

object ("earthly things") thus the knowledge of faith has an object: "Faith consists in the knowledge of God and Christ."[1] It is true, in a narrow sense, that faith relates only to God, but Calvin insists that it is proper to say that faith is the knowledge of God and Christ since we find God only in Christ.[2] Thus, in another context it is proper to speak of faith as "our embracing Christ"[3] by the power of the Spirit. Christ is the end (destinatus)[4] of our faith. As Christ is the object and destiny of our faith it is obvious that there is not only an inseparable relation between them, but faith is impossible except as it is preceded by the Word. To illustrate this point Calvin in a sermon on Genesis employs the figure of a fugue. He likens the Word to the dominant voice and faith is taken to be its echo.[5] Calvin then enquires: As an echo of the Word how could faith stand apart from it? As an echo how could faith make anything of itself, rather than the Word? As an echo of the Word how can

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1. Inst. III, 2,3.
2. Inst. III, 2,1.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. III, 2,6.
5. Serm. on Gen. 15:4-6, C.O. 23,689.

faith sustain itself from any other thing? Certainly not from the Spirit which does not set aside the Word, but is the One Who enables the Word to have an echo (faith).[1] In sum, faith rests on and is sustained by the Word of God.[2] Take away the Word and no faith will remain.[3]

Faith is knowledge, the knowledge of an object; but since this object is God, this is not abstract knowledge for the object is not passive. The object is a "He" and He has a will which He expresses to us (in His Word). Thus, Calvin says faith consists in "knowledge not of God merely, but of the divine will".[4] In an even stronger vein Calvin asserts, "Faith includes not merely the knowledge that God is, but also, nay chiefly, an understanding of His will towards us."[5] Yet, Calvin adds, we have not yet by this sentence fully made clear the content of the knowledge of faith. For the knowledge of God's will and the knowledge that His wrath is exercised upon those who do not follow it,

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1. Comm. on Luke 24:45, C.O. 45,816.
2. Inst. III, 2,6.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. III, 2,2.
5. Inst. III, 2,6.

fills us with dread.[1] Thus, faith needs something upon which to repose. Calvin suggests that in the definition of faith as the knowledge of the divine will we substitute the word 'mercy' for 'will'.[2] Faith, then, sees that God's wrath is enclosed within His Gracious Promise in which He testifies that He is a propitious Father. It recognizes Christ as the pledge (and the only pledge) of His love.[3] Thus it (faith) is sustained and in the knowledge of His will the heart can rise above fluttering doubt. Calvin now offers a full and proper definition of faith saying that it is "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ and revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit."[4]

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1. Inst. III, 2,7.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. "Nunc iusta fidei definitio nobis constabit, si dicamus esse divinae erga nos benevolentiae firmam certamque cognitionem, quae gratuitae in Christo promissionis veritate fundata, per spiritum sanctum et revelatur mentibus nostris et cordibus obsignatur.

While reason and faith are both knowledges there is a radical distinction between them. Faith, our knowledge of God, is in no sense an extension of our general knowing. It is, again, higher than human knowing.[1] Our knowledge of God comes from a heart and mind illumined by the Holy Spirit. Calvin reminds us of Paul's argument: "For what person knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11).[2] The Spirit of God and the spirit of man are not in natural continuity but in total discontinuity.[3] If a man has knowledge of God it is because God has spoken of Himself (in His Word) to that man and that Truth is sealed on his heart by the Spirit of God.[3] But a man may "naturally know" terrestial things. The distinction or discontinuity between faith and reason lied in the distinction or discontinuity between their (respective) objects - God and the world. Knowledge of the world may be

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1. Inst. III, 2,33.
2. Inst. III, 2,34.
3. Cf. statement cited from Inst. III, 2,34 near the beginning of this Section 5.

through reason. But knowledge of God can only come through God's Self witness to Himself and His own confirmation of this witness upon the hearts of men.*

Calvin, of course, makes it clear that those men who hold fast to Christ in the knowledge of faith have no reason to be proud in this faith. Calvin reminds us that faith, per se,[1] is weak, imperfect and does not have saving power. Christ is our righteousness and faith is but the empty vessel into which He comes.[2]

While faith is knowledge, then, it is more than knowledge in that it is also obedience and effects personal meeting or union. Faith is obedience in that by faith we put Christ on;[3] i.e., faith is an act as well as an assent. Faith is the way in which we draw near to Christ, recognizing we are destitute in ourselves.[4] Thus, Calvin interpreting Paul, in another section of the Institutes notes that Paul (in Romans 1:5) designates faith as obedience which is given to the

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1. Inst. III, 11,7.
2. Inst. III, 11,10.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

* The problems of philosophical epistemology, therefore, Calvin does not and need not discuss.

Gospel.[1] In other words faith recognizes and is obedient to the Lord of the Gospel; i.e., faith is not only recognition but shows itself as faith by acting on the basis of this recognition.[2]

In faith we recognize we are destitute and thus we take our empty vessel - faith - to Christ that He may fill it.[3] But in taking this empty vessel to Him we are not taking something besides our selves to Him - for it is we ourselves who are empty. Thus, it is we men who are filled by Christ, in faith; by faith He becomes ours, making us partners with Him in the gifts with which He is endued.[4] Thus we do

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1. Inst. III, 2,6.
2. Cf. Calvin's statement that obedience makes faith whole and complete. Comm. on II Cor. 1:24, C.O. 50,26. Cf. also Inst. I, 6,2 "For not only does faith, full and perfect faith, but all correct knowledge of God springs from obedience". "Neque enim perfecta solum, vel numeris suis completa fides, sed omnis recta Dei cognitio ab obedientia nascitur."
3. Inst. III, 11,10. "...dicimus fide nos ad eum vacuos accedere, ut eius gratiae locum demus, quo non ipse solus impleat."
4. Ibid. "...ut Christus noster factus, donorum quibus praeditus est nos faciat consortes."

not in faith view Him at a distance, but as we put Him on and have been ingrafted into His Body, He deigns to make us one with Him and we have, thereby, a fellowship of righteousness with Him.[1]

Faith is not the knowledge of a distant object; but (as the creation of the Holy Spirit) begets fellowship with Christ. "As soon as the minutest particle of faith is instilled in our minds we begin to behold the face of God placid, serene and propitious."[2] Calvin does not mean to suggest, however, that the immediate fruit of the first step in faith is a whole and complete knowledge of God. (Such knowledge must await the eschaton in any case.) Rather the first step of faith is likened to a man in a prison cell, receiving the rays of the sun indirectly. He does not see the sun, but has no doubt as to the source of the slender shafts of light.[3]

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1. Inst. III, 11,10. "Non ergo eum extra nos procul speculamur, ut nobis imputetur eius iustitia; sed quia ipsum induimus, et insiti sumus in eius corpus unum denique nos secum efficere dignatus est, ideo iustitiae societatem nobis cum eo esse gloriamur."
2. Inst. III, 2,19.
3. Ibid.

The knowledge of faith is like this, even after it has progressed; for while it is knowledge, nevertheless it consists more in certainty (like that of the prisoner knowing the sun he can not see is the source of the shafts of light in his cell) than in comprehension.[1]

Faith, then, has this very personal character - it has to do with personal certainty about the Divine favour or promise manifested in Christ. "The principal hinge on which faith turns is this", Calvin tells us, "We must not think that the promises of mercy which God offers are true apart from us and not all in us, but rather we should make them ours by inwardly embracing them."[2] A man does not have faith, Calvin indicates, unless he is firmly persuaded that God is reconciled to him, is a kind Father to him; he does not have faith unless he hopes everything from His kindness and anticipates his salvation, trusting in the Divine favour

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1. Inst. III, 2,14.

2. Inst. III, 2,16. "Hic praecipuus fidei cardo vertitur, ne quas Dominus offert misericordiae promissiones, extra nos tantum veras esse arbitremur, in nobis minime; sed ut potius eas intus complectendo nostras faciamus."

with undoubting confidence.[1] In sum, by faith a man knows - but knows something beyond the bounds of what we usually think of as knowing; namely, he knows "that neither death nor life, nor angels or principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate /him/ from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[2]

A man by faith is certain, then, of his salvation, of his fellowship with Christ. But in this life he does not grow up to a full or perfect knowledge of God, "since we are never so well in the course of the present life as to be entirely cured of the disease of distrust".[3] Thus, while we in faith are certain (of God's favour) we never come by it to a full or perfect knowledge of God since we continually depart in our proneness to sloth from the certainty of faith. This weakness in faith needs to be borne up by hope.[4] Thus, wherever living faith exists hope must also be there as

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1. Inst. III, 2,16.
2. Romans 8:38, cited by Calvin in Inst. III, 2,16.
3. Inst. III, 2,18.
4. Inst. III, 2,42.

its inseparable companion.[1] Faith, Calvin has taught us, lives by the Word, the Word of reconciliation, and now we see that this faith living from this Word looks forward in hope to eternal life, to the consummation of the Word of promise. Thus, the man of faith is aware that he lives in the midst of the eschatological mystery, i.e., in the time between the reconciliation in Christ and its comsummation in Christ (just as does the Church, of course, as we saw in the previous section). For him this is the time of faith, sustained by hope. If faith is a firm persuasion of the Truth of God, hope is the looking forward to the fulfilment of those things which God has promised. If faith believes God is true, hope looks forward to the full manifestation of His truth; if faith believes eternal life has been given us, hope expects that it will one day be revealed.[2] In sum: faith is the foundation on which hope rests; hope nourishes and sustains faith.[3] Thus now we live by faith in things unseen and only mirrored, but in hope we anticipate seeing God face to face and knowing Him as we are known by Him.

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1. Inst. III, 2,42. Cf. "Hope is nothing else than the food and strength of faith". Inst. III, 2,43.
2. Inst. III, 2,42.
3. Ibid.

As we weaken from time to time in our faith, we are constantly renewed by hope - thus Calvin echoes Paul: "We are saved by hope".[1] For hope begets patience, restraining faith from hastening on precipitately; hope refreshes, by reminding us of the End, while we are yet in the middle of the course.[2] In sum: by faith we embrace the testimony of the Gospel about God's free love for us and in hope we await its full manifestation, i.e., its fulfilment.[3] Thus, it is obvious that hope can have no object other than faith has, namely the merciful Word of God.[4] Thus can faith and hope both be strong and certain for the Word to which they look will never deceive.[5]

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1. Romans 8:24, cited by Calvin in Inst. III, 2,42.
2. Inst. III, 2,42.
3. Inst. III, 2,43.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

C H A P T E R T W O

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Introduction:

Our knowledge of God we receive from God's self revelation in His Word, which is sealed upon our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit. This is made clear in Calvin's doctrine of the Word. Is there another source of knowledge of God? i.e., is there a natural knowledge of God?

Karl Barth points out that the Reformers did not fully answer this question: "The [first article of the Barmen declaration, 1934] is important and apposite because it represents the first confessional document in which the Evangelical Church has tackled the problem of natural theology. The theology as well as the confessional writings of the age of the Reformation left the question open, and it has actually become acute only in recent centuries because natural theology has threatened to turn from a latent into an increasingly manifest standard and content of Church proclamation and theology."[1] It would be unfair to criticise Calvin for having left open the question of natural theology. First it would be unfair

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1. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol.II, Part I, pp.172ff..

because his doctrine of the Word prepares the way for the Evangelical treatment of this problem and second, as Barth indicates, this problem in its explicit form was not paramount in the 16th century; it only became so later.

It will be our task in this chapter to set forth what Calvin says with regard to natural knowledge and then let Calvin's doctrine of the Word extend and make explicit his statements on natural knowledge in the face of the more acute problem of today.

Section 1. Calvin on Natural Knowledge

Whether or not Calvin's doctrine of the Word strictly allows for any knowledge of God prior to knowledge of the Person Jesus Christ is a question which will occupy us in the last part of this chapter. Certainly Calvin in his writings speaks of two kinds of knowledge of God both seemingly prior to a knowledge of Christ. First he speaks of "a knowledge of God naturally implanted upon the human mind"[1] (sensus divinitatis) and second he speaks of "a knowledge of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world".[2]

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1. Title of Chapter III, Book I, Inst.. "Dei notitiam hominum mentibus naturaliter esse inditam."

2. Title of Chapter V, Book I, Inst.. "Dei notitiam in mundi fabrica et continua eius gubernatione lucere."

a) First, what is this innate sense of Deity of which Calvin speaks? He describes and supports the idea of this "innate sense" with three related points in Chapter Three of the Institutes.[1] (i) There has been no tribe or people however removed from civilization which is not imbued with the conviction that there is a God.[2] Since, then, there has never been any group without religion this amounts, Calvin maintains, to a tacit confession that the sense of deity is inscribed on every heart.[3] (ii)Second, Calvin indicates that idolatry is a proof that the impress of deity upon the mind of man must be strong for man is naturally haughty, and is reluctant to lower himself to allow other creatures to be set over him, yet he chooses to worship even wood and stone rather than to be thought to have no God.[4] (iii) Third, Calvin speaks of the secret dread of the supposed or professing atheist. "We do not read of any man who broke out into more unbridled and audacious contempt of the Deity than Caligula, and yet none showed greater dread when any indication of divine wrath was manifested...he shook with terror before the God whom

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1. Book I
2. Inst. I, 3,1.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

he professedly studied to despise."[1] The atheist looks for hiding places from the presence of God, but despite his efforts remains caught in the net; i.e., this sense of God which ought to lead to a fear (timor) or reverence of God issues in the instance of the atheist in dread. Thus, the dread of the atheist is another example that some idea of God always exists in every human mind.[2] Another way of putting this is simply to say that conscience is another piece of evidence for sensus divinitatis. For Calvin, at least here in Chapter Three, relates the sense of deity to conscience. "Though Diagoras, and others of like stamp, make themselves merry with whatever has been believed in all ages concerning religion, and Dionysius scoffs at the judgement of heaven, it is but a Sardonian grin; for the worm of conscience, keener than burning steel, is gnawing them within...[i.e.,]...when the stupid hardness of heart which the wicked eagerly embrace as a means of despising God, becomes enfeebled, the sense of deity, which of all things they wished most to be extinguished, is still in vigour, and now and then breaks forth."[3]

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1. Inst. I, 3,2.
2. Ibid.; also Inst. I, 3,3.
3. Inst. I, 3,3.

Having offered these demonstrations to us, Calvin concludes that this sensus Deitatis is not a teaching first learned at school, but one over which every man from the womb is his own master; "one which nature herself allows no individual to forget though many with all their might strive to do so."[1] In sum: Man naturally or innately knows (notitia) that God is. And since Calvin connects "conscience" and "sense of deity" we are led to understand that this innate sense not only discloses to man that God is, but that He is to be revered and not despised.

Having described this sensus divinitatis Calvin immediately comments upon the efficacy of this knowledge. "Scarcely one in a hundred is found who cherishes /this seed/ in his heart, and not one in whom it grows to maturity, so far is it from yielding fruit in its season."[2] Scarcely any hold fast to this natural sense of God, but rather choose to banish it.[3] It is a subtle banishment, for they do not deny God's Being, but rather they deny God's justice and providence.[4] Thus, maintaining

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1. Inst. I, 3,3.

2. Inst. I, 4,1. "...ita vix centesimus quisque reperitur qui conceptum in suo corde foveat, nullus autem in quo maturescat: tantum abest ut fructus appareat suo tempore."

3. Inst. I, 4,2.
4. Ibid.

that God sits idly in heaven, they rob God of His Glory by denying His power.[1]

Even those who cherish this religious seed are not led by it to proper piety. All men make ill use of this innate sense, not so much in ignoring it *per se*, but when they do recognize it within and seek after God "instead of ascending higher than themselves, as they ought to do, they measure him by their own fleshly stupidity, and, neglecting solid inquiry, fly off to indulge their curiosity in vain speculation".[2] In sum, although fallen man still retains an innate sense of God it never leads him to a true and saving knowledge of God, for man inevitably ascribes to this God whom he innately knows his own vain, carnal and idolatrous ideas and thus worships an idol. Thus fallen man in his inevitable misuse of his innate knowledge of God actually finds himself warring against the true God, and occasionally becoming aware of this he fears and trembles. In such fear and trembling man establishes some religious observances (i.e., manufactures false religion) in order to appease God. This he does rather than serving God in integrity of heart and holiness of life as accords

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1. *Inst.* I, 4,2.
2. *Inst.* I, 4,1.

with the true knowledge of Him.[1]

This innate sense of deity, Calvin clearly implies, was not impressed upon man's mind that he might be justly condemned if he fell into impiety. This sensus was a gift that man might be led by it to a knowledge of the glory of God.[2] But having fallen into impiety and idolatry and thus abusing this Divine gift, it is true that man now stands condemned without excuse.

b) In what sense is the knowledge of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world?[3] i.e., in what sense, if any, does God reveal Himself to us in nature and history? We might expect Calvin to teach that nature and history can not reveal God for nature is nature and not God and history is history and not God; i.e., Calvin maintained that there is a discontinuity between God and man's nature and history, a discontinuity which as we saw in Chapter One, Section 2, existed even prior to the fall. And that which is not God is not an adequate witness to God for "God Himself is the only fit witness to Himself".[4] How can Calvin then say that had Adam not fallen genuinus naturae ordo would have conducted man to a simple and primary knowledge

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1. Inst. I, 4,4.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. title of Inst. Book I, Chapter 5.
4. Inst. I, 11,1.

(notitia) of God the Creator?[1] Is this ordo God? Of course the world is not itself God. But the order of the world is God's (effigies) representation or (imago) image of Himself in it.[2] Since strictly speaking the representation or image of God is the Word of God[3]

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1. Inst. I, 2,1.

2. Comm. on Heb. 11:3, C.O. 55, 145-6:"...we have in this visible world a conspicuous image of God /and, as we shall see in the following note, for Calvin the image of God is the Word of God/...God has given us, throughout the whole architecture of this world clear evidence of His eternal wisdom, goodness and power and though He is in Himself invisible, He in a manner becomes visible to us in His works. Correctly then is this world called the mirror of divinity." "...quod in hoc mundo conspicuam habeamus Dei imaginem...Aeternae enim suae sapientiae, bonitatis, potentiae Deus luculentum testimonium reddit in tota mundi architectura: et quum in se sit invisibilis, nobis quodammodo in suis operibus apparet. Quare eleganter mundus divinitatis speculum nominatur..."

3. Introd. Arg. in Comm. on Gen. C.O. 23, 9-10. "Praeterea quum aeternus Dei sermo, viva et expressa sit illius effigies, huc nos revocat."

we may say that man may (or rather originally could) recognize God's disclosure of Himself in His image which is His Word which He has implanted upon His works. Thus Calvin: "For Christ is that image in which God presents to our view not only His heart, but also His hands and His feet. I give the name of His heart to that secret love with which He embraces us in Christ; by His hands and feet I understand those works of His which are displayed before our eyes."[1] The way in which Calvin understood God's revelation of Himself (in His Word) in His works is clearly delineated by Professor Torrance. God beholds Himself in the works of His creation as in a mirror. Man can not see the invisible God but can look into the mirror in which God is imaging Himself and see God's image there.[2] Thus,

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1. Introd. Arg. in Comm. on Gen., C.O. 23, 11-12. "Christus enim imago est, in qua non modo pectus suum nobis Deus conspicuum reddit, sed manus quoque et pedes. Pectus appello arcanum illum amorem quo nos in Christo complexus est: per manus autem et pedes quae oculis nostris exposita sunt opera intelligo."

2. T.F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man, (London, 1949) pp. 39-40. Cf. Inst. I, 5,1. "/God so manifests/ His perfections in the whole work of the universe, and daily places Himself in our view that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold Him. His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought, but on each of His works His Glory is engraven in certain marks /certas notas/ so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however dull and illiterate can plead ignorance."

the creation (i.e., the mirror itself) does not reveal God to us, but God by beholding Himself in the mirror (by using creation as a mirror), by imaging Himself in the mirror, gives us an image of Himself, a way of beholding Him, and thus reveals Himself to us. Man does not discern God in creation as such, but rather God discloses Himself through creation in this manner.

For Calvin, then, revelation is always by the Word of God. But there is - or rather, as we shall see, there originally was and objectively there still is - available to man a knowledge of the Word seemingly* prior to a knowledge of the Person Jesus Christ. For God images Himself in His creation and thus discloses Himself in this image which is His Word to us men.

Having set forth our understanding of the basic position of Calvin with regard to God's Self-disclosure in His works, we may now follow Calvin in his examination of (1)the evidences of this revelation, (2)the possibility subsequent to the fall of man's recognizing God in this revelation, and(3)the efficacy of this revelation in the time subsequent to the fall.

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* This does not have reference to Israel's knowledge of God. Israel participated, by way of anticipation, in the knowledge of God through Christ, according to Calvin. Cf. our Ch. 1, Section 3.

(1) Calvin maintains that "...God...not only deposits in our minds the seed of religion of which we have already spoken, but so manifests His perfections in the whole structure of the universe, and daily places Himself in our view, that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold Him."[1] The evidences of God's revelation in His works are the marks of God's perfections or attributes which we see when we examine the order in the movements of the worlds, the gifts which man possesses in his body and soul, and the order in human affairs. The marks of God's perfections, e.g., His wisdom, His power, His righteousness, are left by Him on His works.[2]

Calvin speaks first of God's wisdom. (As we shall see the attributes of God imaged in the natural order can not be isolated one from another. We shall merely try to indicate the "attributes" which Calvin seems especially to stress and allow the other certae notae to gather around.) God images His wisdom in His works.

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1. Inst. I, 5,1. "/Deus/...non solum hominum mentibus indidit illud quod diximus religionis semen, sed ita se patefecit in toto mundi opificio, ac se quotidie palam offert, ut aperire oculos nequeant quin aspicere eum cogantur.

2. Cf. Inst. I, 5,9. "The Lord is manifested in His perfections." "A suis enim virtutibus manifestatur Dominus." ; and also Inst. I, 5,1. "...to whatever side we turn we behold His perfections visibly portrayed."

"In attestation of His wonderous wisdom, both the heavens and the earth present us with innumerable proofs (documenta) not only those more recondite proofs which astronomy, medicine and all the natural sciences are designed to illustrate, but proofs which force themselves on the notice of the most illiterate peasant, who cannot open his eyes without beholding them."[1] None who use their eyes, then, can be ignorant of the divine wisdom, manifestly conspicuous in the endless variety, yet distinct and ordered array of the heavenly bodies.[2] "It is plain that the Lord has furnished every man with abundant proofs of His wisdom."[3]

Not only do the heavens proclaim the admirable wisdom of the Maker, but so also does the structure of the human frame. Calvin allows that man has properly been called a microcosm and maintains that the structure of this "world in miniature" mirrors the divine wisdom in a fashion parallel to that reflection in the structure of the great bodies of the universe.[4] Thus, Calvin says, "...in order to apprehend God, it is unnecessary to go

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1. Inst. I, 5,2.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. I, 5,3.

farther than ourselves...what excuse can there then be for the sloth of any man who will not take the trouble to descend into himself that he may find God?"[1] The innumerable workings in the human person are carried on by the operation of God and thus man is a rare specimen not only of divine wisdom, but also of divine goodness and power. "Whether [men] will or not, they cannot but know that these [operations of God in the human frame] are proofs of His Godhead - yet they inwardly suppress them...can there be anything more detestable than this madness in man who, finding God a hundred times both in his body and his soul, makes his excellence in this respect a pretext for denying that there is a God?"[2] This monstrous thinking

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1. Inst. I, 5,3. This sentence if not seen in the context of the Institutes might lead to so disastrous an interpretation of Calvin that we must by way of anticipation insert here that Calvin clearly says that man's fall so vitiates man's view of the natural order (naturae ordo) - which was originally designed to point man to God - that "Nothing shall we find, I say, above or below which can raise us up to God, until Christ shall have instructed us in His own school. And this cannot be done unless we, having emerged out of the lowest depths, are borne up above all heavens in the chariot of His Cross, that there by faith we may apprehend those things which the eye has never seen, the ear heard, and which far surpass our hearts and minds." Intro. Argm. to Gen. Comm., C.O. 23, pp. 9-10.

2. Inst. I, 5,4

attributes the authorship of the world to nature[1] rather than to God. The consequence of attributing creation to "nature" rather than to God is the manufacture of either a pantheism[2] or a deism.[3] Monster minds manufacture these idolatries in order "to form an unsubstantial deity, and thereby banish the true God whom we ought to fear and worship".[4] Calvin maintains, in sum, that only such perversity can fail to see the wisdom of God, Who is God, mirrored in the manifold and intricate gifts which constitute man, body and soul.

Calvin has spoken of (1) the order of the heavenly bodies and (2) of the various workings in man, body and soul, as evidences of God's revelation of Himself to us in His works. In these we see God's wisdom, and also His goodness and power, mirrored. Calvin now turns his attention to (3) God's rule over nature and history. (He will, of course, develop this more fully in the final chapters of the first Book.*) By the order and wisdom manifest in the structure of man and of the universe we know already that One Who is infinitely wise

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1. Or to "chance"(Inst. I, 5,11), or to "a universal mind" (Inst. I, 5,5.), etc..
2. Inst. I, 5,5. Calvin quotes Aeneid IV, lines 252-62 as a source for this kind of thinking.
3. Inst. I, 16,4. This is more fully developed in our next chapter.
4. Inst. I, 5,5.

* See our Chapter Three.

rules. If He also sustains the boundless fabric of this universe we must also know Him as all powerful.[1] Indeed, "in regard to His power, how glorious are the manifestations by which He urges us to the contemplation of Himself...at one time making heaven reverberate with thunder, sending forth the scorching lightning, and setting the whole atmosphere in a blaze; at another, causing the raging tempests to blow, and forthwith, in one moment, when it so pleases Him, making a perfect calm; keeping the sea...at one time, lashing it into fury...at another...stilling its waves."[2] These reflections on the omnipotence of God prompt Calvin to note almost in an aside, that God's eternity is then also shadowed forth in the firmament. For if God is omnipotent He must also be eternal, "since that from which all other things derive their origin must necessarily be self-existent and eternal. Moreover, if it be asked what cause induced Him to create all things at first, and now inclines Him to preserve them, we shall find that there could be no other cause than His own goodness."[3]

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1. Inst. I, 5,6.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. Calvin cites here Psalm 145:9 "His tender mercies are over all His works.".

God not only rules over nature and in this work reveals certain of His attributes, but He also maintains a special rule over the affairs of men, i.e., over history, and in this work reveals certain other of His attributes. Especially evident in this work is His righteousness, "for in conducting the affairs of men He so arranges the course of His Providence as daily to declare, by the clearest evidences that though all are in innumerable ways the partakers of His bounty, the righteous are the special objects of His favour, the wicked and profane the special objects of His severity."[1] Calvin believes that <u>objectively</u> history demonstrates that God punishes the wicked and blesses the righteous.[2] In this pattern God's mercy is also detectable, for, as may be seen, He frequently

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1. <u>Inst.</u> I, 5,7.

2. We must be careful to recall the context of this statement. Objectively God's justice is discernible, even in a fallen world, but - as we shall see in a moment - it is not grasped by the perverted mind of fallen man. We can only discern God's justice, subjectively, when we are lifted above the heavens by the chariot of Christ's Cross and apprehend there by faith those things which the eye has not been able to see or the ear hear since they far surpass the mind and heart of fallen man. Cf. p.107 note 1. Also cf. "It is indeed true that the manifestations of divine glory find not one genuine spectator among a hundred." <u>Inst.</u> I, 5,8.

visits the sinner with kindness seeking to win him back with more than a parent's fondness.[1]

The nature of Calvin's "proofs" can now be discerned. It is interesting to note that Aquinas at the beginning of Summa Theologiae denies that knowledge of God is implanted on the human mind naturally, while Calvin simply assumes it and begins the Institutes with this assumption. Similiarly these statements of Calvin's in Chapter Five are not so much real proofs (i.e., arguments from joined hypotheses to reasoned conclusions) but rather are assertions that that order which displays super-human wisdom (e.g., the perfectly regular order of the heavenly bodies - the very antithesis of chaotic motion), power, justice, and glory can not but reflect the Being and character of the true Godhead, Who created it and sustains it.

Thus, in the course of human events God reveals Himself - when the miserable are led back to the right path, the famished find food, the captive is delivered, the shipwrecked find safe harbour, the diseased find health, the lowly are exalted and the arrogant cast down.[2]

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1. Inst. I, 5,7.
2. Inst. I, 5, 8.

God is objectively revealed in this, for since God is maintaining the order of His world, necessarily this order reflects the attributes of its Sustainer. But, again, men ignore God's revelation in His works, referring blasphemously to these proofs of Providence as examples of "fortune".[1] Men walk blindfold in this glorious theatre and not even one in a hundred properly view the brightest manifestation of the divine glory.[2] Nevertheless, not only this inability to see but even the rage which it provokes among the wicked is a striking proof of God's power, for just when their rage seems most irresistible, it is crushed, their arrogance subdued, their strength broken - and the lowly are lifted, the afflicted released, the despairing given hope, the weak made strong.[3] Thus does the wisdom from above show itself confounding "the wisdom of the world", and bringing about that which is in perfect accord with perfect reason.[4]

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1. Inst. I, 5,8.

2. The "fallen mind" can not discern how God feeds the famished, delivers the captive - i.e., is always faithful, just and merciful. The "fallen mind" sees either the triumph of the chaos or it sees its own philosophical notion of triumphant good, but can not discern how God rules all things for good.

3. Inst. I, 5,8.
4. Ibid.

Finally Calvin draws to a close his argument concerning God's revelation to us in His works. "The Lord is manifested by His perfections. When we feel their power within us and are conscious of their benefits the knowledge must impress us much more vividly than if we merely imagined a god whose presence we never felt.* Hence it is obvious that in seeking God, the most direct path and the fittest method is, not to attempt with presumptuous curiosity to pry into His essence, which is rather to be adored than minutely discussed, but to contemplate Him in His works, by which He draws near, becomes familiar, and in a manner communicates Himself to us."[1]

In sum: "...in each of the works of God, and more especially in the whole of them taken together, the divine perfections are delineated as in a picture, and the whole human race thereby invited and allured to acquire the knowledge of God, and in consequence of this knowledge, true and complete happiness. Moreover, while His perfections are thus most vividly displayed the only means of ascertaining their practical operation and

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* "/Paul says/ we need not go far in search of Him because by the continual working of His power He dwells in every one of us." Inst. I, 5,9.

1. Inst. I, 5,9.

tendency is to descend into ourselves and consider how it is that the Lord there manifests His wisdom, power and energy; how He there displays His justice, goodness and mercy."[1]

(2) God's wisdom, power, eternity, justice and mercy, then, are mirrored, we may say revealed, in His works. Objectively this mirroring of God's attributes in the order of nature and in the order of history is God's revelation. Calvin, after affirming the reality of this revelation and citing the evidences of it, turns to the question of man's subjective appropriation of it; i.e., he turns to consider the possibility, subsequent to the fall, of man's recognizing God in His revelation in His works. His conclusion parallels his comments about the sense of deity naturally implanted on the human

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1. Inst. I, 5,10. "...in singulis Dei operibus praesertim autem in ipsorum universitate, non secus atque in tabulis, depictas esse Dei virtutes; quibus in eius agnitionem, et ab ipsa in veram plenamque felicitatem invitatur atque illicitur universum hominum genus. Porro lucidissimae quum illic appareant: quorsum tamen potissimum spectent, quid valeant, quem in finem a nobis sint reputandae, tum demum assequimur dum in nos ipsos descendimus, ac consideramus quibus modis suam in nobis vitam, sapientiam, virtutem Dominus exserat, suam iustitiam, bonitatem, clementiam erga nos exerceat."

mind. There we saw that while Calvin insisted that this "seed of religion" is naturally implanted on the mind of man he also insisted that all stifle and corrupt this gift. Here Calvin insists that God objectively reveals Himself in the order of history and nature, but also insists on the total incapacity of men to appropriate properly this revelation. "Bright, however, as is the manifestation which God gives both of Himself and His immortal kingdom in the mirror of His works, so great is our stupidity, so dull are we in regard to these bright manifestations, that we derive no benefit from them."[1] "For no sooner do we, from a survey of the world, obtain some slight knowledge of Deity, than we pass by the true God, and set up in His stead the dream and phantom of our own brain, drawing away the praise of justice, wisdom and goodness from

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1. Inst. I, 5,11. "Atqui quantacunque claritate et se et immortale suum regnum Dominus in operum suorum speculo repraesentet, qui tamen est noster stupor, ad tam perspicuas testificationes semper hebescimus, ut sine profectu effluant."

the fountain-head and transferring it to some other quarter. Moreover, by the erroneous estimate we form, we either so obscure or pervert His daily works, as at once to rob them of their glory, and the Author of them His just praise."[1]

Man, of course, was not created with such vast ignorance and utter dullness in regard to God's mirroring of Himself in the order of nature. If Adam had not fallen (si integer stetisset Adam) "the genuine order of nature (genuinus naturae ordo) would have led us [men]" to perceive "that God our Maker supports us by His power, rules us by His Providence, fosters us by His goodness and visits us with all manner of blessings."[2] In other words, man in his created state possessed so many noble endowments (reason, intelligence, prudence, judgement) that he was not only able to govern properly his earthly life, but indeed these endowments "enabled him to rise up to God and eternal happiness."[3]

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1. Inst. I, 5,15. "Simul enim ac modicum divinitatis gustum ex mundi speculatione delibavimus, vero Deo praetermisso, eius loco somnia et spectra cerebri nostri erigimus; ac iustitiae, sapientiae, bonitatis, potentiae laudem ab ipso fonte huc et illuc traducimus. Quotidiana porro eius facta ita aut obscuramus aut invertimus prave aestimando, ut et suam illis gloriam, et autori debitam laudem praeripiamus."

2. Inst. I, 2,1.
3. Inst. I, 15, 8.

In Adam's fall man's capacity to rise to God, i.e., to see Him mirrored in His works and thereby know Him as Maker, Sustainer and Benefactor, has been destroyed. To what degree? As we have already indicated, Calvin maintains that man, subsequent to the fall, is totally incapable of seeing God reflected "in the things that have been made".* Calvin says of God's manifestations in

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* Is the word "total" called into question by Calvin's statement that "we can still trace some remains of the divine image" in man? (Inst. II, 2,17.) And in another place Calvin says, "we grant that the image of God was not utterly effaced and destroyed in /man/, it was, however, so corrupted that any thing which remains is fearful deformity." (Inst. I, 15,4) Does Calvin's teaching that man still bears the image of God - although badly deformed - imply that man subsequent to the fall retains some slight, however imperfect, natural perception of God?

The question demands a proper understanding of the efficacy of the defaced imago Dei which Calvin understands man still to bear. Thus Calvin answers this question: "...the natural talents of man /Cf. the distinction Calvin makes between 'earthly things' and 'heavenly things' which we examined in our Chapter One, pp. 82-3 / have been corrupted by sin, but of supernatural talents he has been wholly deprived. For by the latter are intended both the light of faith and righteousness, which would be sufficient for the attainment of a heavenly life and eternal felicity. Hence, when he revolted from the divine government, he was at the same time deprived of those supernatural endowments, which had been given him for the hope of eternal salvation. Hence it follows that he is exiled from the kingdom of God in such a manner that all the affections

His works, "We /now/ derive no benefit from them."[1] When men now regard the fabric of the universe they dully content themselves with merely viewing the Author's works, never giving a thought to the Author.[2] History is regarded as the product of chance.[3]

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*cont. relating to the happy life of the soul are also extinguished in him, till he recovers them by the grace of regeneration. Such are faith, love to God, charity to our neighbour and the study of righteousness and holiness. All these when restored to us by Christ are to be regarded as adventitious and above nature. If so, we infer that they were previously abolished. On the other hand soundness of mind and integrity of heart were at the same time withdrawn and it is this which constitutes the corruption of the natural gifts." (Inst. II, 2,12). The residue still present in man of the divine image has reference only to man's natural gifts - i.e., has reference only to his perception of objects in the natural sphere. Thus, for example, since the reason by which man discerns between good and evil is a natural gift this has not been entirely destroyed but is weakened and corrupted. (Ibid.) In sum: The sparks of imago Dei which remain in man and distinguish him from the brutes have reference only to man's knowledge of the natural realm, of 'earthly things'. He has, by his own fault, been wholly deprived of the knowledge of 'heavenly things', i.e., "his supernatural gifts /are/ totally withdrawn". We have included in this note much of Inst. II, 2,12, in order to supply a context for other sentences in the Institutes which might seem to contradict the first sentence of this paragraph. However, the answer to our question is given in that first sentence.

1. Inst. I, 5,11.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Occasionally the order of nature or history forces men to the contemplation of God; however this contemplation does not discover God, but rather immediately flies off into carnal dreams, fictions and vanity. "This far, indeed, we [men] differ from each other, in that every one appropriates to himself some peculiar error; but we are all alike in this, that we substitute monstrous fictions for the One living and true God - a disease not confined to obtuse and vulgar minds, but affecting the noblest, and those who in other respects are singularly acute."[1] "Hence that flood of error with which the whole world is overflowed. Every individual mind being a kind of labyrinth, it is not wonderful, not only that each nation has adopted a variety of fictions, but that almost every man has had his own god."[2]

One can discover scarcely one individual who has not substituted some idol for the Deity; immense crowds of gods spring from human manufacture, every man giving himself full license.[3] Some, notably the Epicureans, observing the multiplicity of gods which the human mind

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1. Inst. I, 5,11.
2. Inst. I, 5,12.
3. Ibid.

brings forward, cite this confusion as evidence to support a denial of God. The proper inference, Calvin declares, is "that the human mind, which thus errs in inquiring after God is dull and blind in heavenly mysteries.../i.e./...if men are taught only by nature instead of having any distinct, solid or certain knowledge, they fasten only on contradictory principles, and in consequence, worship an unknown god."[1]

As we saw in our first chapter, by "solid or certain knowledge" of God Calvin means knowledge (including acceptance) of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who now* attempt to perceive God through nature will inevitably adulterate pure religion, and depart from the one God, although they will certainly allege that they do not so intend; "but it is of little consequence what they intend or persuade themselves to believe since the Holy Spirit pronounces all to be apostates who, in the blindness of their minds, substi-

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1. Inst. I, 5,12. "...hinc colligitur, plus quam hebetes ac caecas in coelestibus mysteriis esse hominum mentes quae in Dei investigatione sic errant... si naturaliter tantum edocti sunt homines, nihil certum, vel solidum, vel distinctum tenere; sed confusis tantum principiis esse affixos, ut Deum incognitum adorent."

* In the fallen world.

tute demons in the place of God. For this reason Paul declares that the Ephesians were 'without God'* until they had learned from the Gospel what it is to worship the true God. Nor must this be restricted to one people only, since in another place he declares in general that all men 'became vain in their imaginations' after the majesty of the Creator was manifested to them in the structure of the world. Accordingly, in order to make way for the only true God, he condemns all the gods celebrated among the Gentiles as lying and false leaving no Deity anywhere but in Mt. Zion where the special knowledge of God was professed."[1]

"In vain for us, therefore, does creation exhibit so many bright lamps lighted up to show forth the glory of its Author. Though they beam upon us from every quarter, they are altogether insufficient of themselves to lead us into the right path. Some sparks, undoubtedly, they do throw out; but these are quenched before they can give forth a brighter effulgence. Wherefore Paul, in the very place where he says that the worlds are the

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* Ephesians 2:12.

1. Inst. I, 5,13.

images of invisible things, adds that it is by faith we understand that they were framed by the Word of God*, thereby intimating that the invisible Godhead is indeed represented by such displays, but that we have no eyes to perceive it until they are enlightened through faith by internal revelation from God.** When Paul says that that which may be known of God is manifested by the creation of the world, he does not mean such a manifestation*** as may be comprehended by the wit of man; on the contrary he shows that it has no further effect than to render us inexcusable."[1]

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* Hebrews 11:3.
** Again, cf. Intro. Argm. to Gen. Comm., C.O. 23, pp.9-10.
***Romans 1:19.

1. Inst. I, 5,14. "Ergo frustra nobis in mundi opificio collucent tot accensae lampades ad illustrandam autoris gloriam: quae sic nos undique irradiant, ut tamen in rectam viam per se nequaquam possint perducere. Et scintillas certe quasdam excitant; sed quae ante praefocantur quam pleniorem effundant fulgorem. Quamobrem apostolus, eo ipso loco ubi saecula simulacra vocat rerum invisibilium subiungit, per fidem intelligi esse verbo Dei aptata; ita significans, invisibilem divinitatem repraesentari quidem talibus spectaculis; sed ad illam perspiciendam non esse nobis oculos, nisi interiore Dei revelatione per fidem illuminentur. Neque Paulus ubi tradit patefieri quod cognoscendum est de Deo ex mundi creatione, talem manifestationem designat quae hominum perspicacia comprehendatur; quin potius eam ostendit non ultra procedere nisi ut reddantur inexcusabiles."

In sum, Calvin maintains that God mirrors Himself in the order of nature that man might know Him as his Benefactor, and even be able by it to ascend to God and eternal happiness; i.e., this revelation of God in His works has as its purpose man's salvation. This purpose is not fulfilled subsequent to Adam's fall. Does God's revelation, then, go unfulfilled? Calvin has taught us that this can never be the case for there is no neutral hearing of the Word.[1a] To ignore the living Word is condemnation and curse.[1b] We must now, therefore, turn our attention to the consideration of the efficacy of God's revelation in His works.

(3) Man can not now discern God in His revelation in creation. Is, then, this revelation without effect? No! For "whatever deficiency of natural ability prevents us from attaining the pure and clear knowledge of God...since that deficiency arises from our own fault we are left without any excuse."[2] Or again,

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1. a) Comm. on Heb. 4:12, C.O. 55, 50 and b) Comm. on Isa. 55:11, C.O. 37, 292, both quoted in our Chapter One, p. 72.

2. Inst. I, 5,15. "Quanquam...naturali facultate deficimur, quominus ad puram usque et liquidam Dei cognitionem conscendere liceat, quia...hebetudinis vitium intra nos est, praecisa est omnis tergiversatio."

"we are justly excluded from all excuse for our uncertain and extravagant deviations, since all things conspire to show us the right way."[1] In sum it is wholly our fault that "we are not /as indeed we, now, are not/ sufficiently instructed by that bare and simple, but magnificent testimony which the creatures bear to the glory of their Creator."[2] The effect, the efficacy, of God's revelation in His works is to leave men without any excuse for their unrighteousness.

These words of Calvin, of course, are an echo of Paul's famous words to the Romans (vss. 18ff. of Chapter 1). And Calvin's exposition in the Institutes parallels his exegesis of this passage. In his commentary we see emphasized again that "no one" has properly known God - apart from the Gospel - although God's revelation in His works should have induced man to know

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1. Inst. I, 5, 15. "...omni prorsus excusatione merito excludimur, quod vagi et palantes aberramus, quum omnia rectam viam demonstrent."

2. Ibid. "...nuda ista et simplici testificatione, quae Dei gloriae a creaturis magnifice redditur, nequaquam nos sufficientur erudiri."

properly and glorify God and act in accordance with His claims.[1] All are guilty of sacrilege and of wicked and abominable ingratitude.[2] Thus, "Paul shows that the whole world is deserving of eternal death."[3]

Calvin opens his exegesis of verse 20 by setting forth in one paragraph what we have already set forth at length in this chapter; namely, that God is in Himself invisible but mirrors His attributes, which manifest His eternal power and divinity, in His works. Thus, the knowledge of Divinity is open to us, since knowledge of God's attributes is knowledge of Him. "Hence", Calvin says, "it clearly appears what is the consequence of having this evidence: men cannot allege any thing before God's tribunal for the purpose of showing that they are not justly condemned."[4] Not that

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1. Comm. on Rom. 1:18, C.O. 49,22. "...quod, quum structura mundi et haec pulcherrima elementorum compositio debuerit hominem instigare ad Deum glorificandum: nemo est qui officio suo fungatur."
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. "...universum mundum Paulus rerum facit aeternae mortis."
4. Comm. on Rom. 1:20, C.O. 49,24. "Hinc facile constat, quantum ex hac demonstratione homines consequantur: nempe ut nullam possint offerre defensionem in iudicium Dei quin iure sint damnabiles."

this is the purpose of God's revelation in His works, Calvin again makes clear. "The manifestation of God, by which He makes His glory known in His creation, is, with regard to the Light itself, sufficiently clear; but that on account of our blindness, it is not found sufficient. We are not however so blind that we can plead our ignorance as an excuse for our perversity."[1] This knowledge of God, gained from His revelation in His works, which originally was given for man's salvation, now avails only to take away any excuse. It now avails only to make him accountable. It differs greatly from that knowledge which Christ mentions in John 17:3 and in which we are to glory as Jeremiah 9:24.[2]

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1. Comm. on Rom. 1:20, C.O. 49, 24. "...demonstrationem Dei, qua gloriam suam in creaturis perspicuam facit, esse, quantum ad lucem suam, satis evidentem: quantum ad nostram caecitatem, non adeo sufficere. Caeterum non ita caeci sumus, ut ignorantiam possimus praetexere quin perversitatis arguamur."

2. Ibid.

Section 2. Calvin on Scripture as the Proper Guide and Teacher in Coming to God the Creator

Calvin's teaching about God's revelation in His works, *per se*, ends with Chapter Five. Calvin continues, however, in Book One to speak of God's revelation of Himself as Creator. But it is now Scripture - and Scripture only - which reveals this *positively*. Or more fully, we find that that revelation of God in His works which man on his own can no longer see, being blinded by sin, man can again see when directed by Scripture.

Chapter Six is entitled "*Ut ad Deum creatorem quis perveniat, opus esse scriptura duce et magistra*". Calvin having maintained in Chapter Five that God's revelation in His works of Himself as Creator is wholly insufficient for man - not with regard to the Revelation Itself, but with regard to fallen man's inability to grasp it - now begins Chapter Six by proclaiming that God brings to man another and a better help by which he may come to know God as Creator; namely, Scripture. Calvin likens the guidance of Scripture with regard to our knowledge of God as Creator to eye glasses: "For as the aged or

those whose sight by any means is defective, when shown any book, however fine, though they perceive that there is something written, are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but when aided by eye glasses begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the otherwise confused notions of Deity, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly."[1] God by speaking His Word announces to men that He is the God Who is Creator and Who alone is to be worshipped.[2] Actually, God has never revealed Himself only in the dumb testimony of His works, but has spoken His Word to His people in every generation. Adam, Noah, Abraham and all the patriarchs heard the Word of God, which elucidated and made clear "certae notae" which God has left upon the order of His creation.[3]

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1. Inst. I, 6,1. "Nempe sicuti senes, vel lippi, et quicunque oculis caligant, si vel pulcherrimum volumen illis obiicias, quamvis agnoscant esse aliquid scriptum, vix tamen duas voces contexere poterunt specillis autem interpositis adiuti distincte legere incipient: ita scriptura confusam alioqui Dei notitiam in mentibus nostris colligens, discussa caligine liquido nobis verum Deum ostendit." Cf. Inst. I, 14,1.

2. Inst. I, 6,1.
3. Inst. I, 6,1.

Since Calvin speaks of the Word spoken to the Patriarchs as the elucidation for them of God's revelation in His works, and speaks of the elucidating Word for us (in this context) as Scripture, we may assume that this Word spoken to the Patriarchs ("...in either oracles or visions...or by the instrumentality and ministry of men"[1]) is that Word which is set before us in Scripture as having been spoken to the Patriarchs.

The point Calvin stresses here, then, is that God has never left His people without His special presence and special Personal Self-Revelation which elucidates the certain marks of Himself as Creator which He has left upon His works. Through special ministries He spoke and disclosed Himself through His Word to Israel as the Creator and now He still reveals Himself to His people through the same testimony to and of the Word as it has been set down in Scripture. The special teaching Calvin would have us learn from this chapter in the Institutes is: "that God the Maker of the world is manifested to us in Scripture and His true character expounded so as to save us from wandering up and down

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1. Inst. I, 6,2. "Sive autem per oracula et visiones... sive hominum opera et ministerio..."

as in a labyrinth [which His created order now is for fallen man] in search of some doubtful deity."[1] While fallen men are uncertain about God's revelation in His works there can be no uncertainty about God's teaching in His Personal Word. "For God always secured to His Word a sure testimony surpassing all human opinion."[2] Thus, while man does well to think of the world as God's theatre and look for His glory there, man's real duty is to give ear to the Word and in this way be sure to profit.[3] "If true religion is to beam upon us,

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1. Inst. I, 6,1. "...Deum mundi opificem nobis patefieri in scriptura, et quid de eo sentiendum sit exponi, ne per ambages incertum aliquod numen quaeramus."

2. Inst. I, 6,2. "Semper enim Deus indubiam fecit verbo suo fidem, quae omni opinione superior esset."

3. Ibid. Cf. Inst. I, 14,20 where Calvin states that we ought to take "pious delight" in the works of God. But to do this properly we look to God's work only after we have first attended Scripture's account of the history of creation; i.e., we enjoy and know creation as God's work having been so taught by Scripture. It is from Scripture - accepted in faith- that we learn that God, by the power of His Word and Spirit, created the world ex nihilo, ordered it, preserves it, and set His creature, man, in it. We must always put on our "eye glasses" (i.e. Scripture) if we are to see Creation correctly.

our principle must be that it is necessary to begin with heavenly teaching, and that it is impossible for any man to obtain even the minutest portion of right and sound teaching without being a disciple of Scripture."[1] True knowledge begins when we accept Scripture as the source and norm for our thinking about God. Not only faith, but all correct knowledge of God originates with this reverent embracing of Scripture.[2]

The need for such certainty about God as is given in the Word is easy to discern: man is prone to sloth and constantly bent on devising new religion.[3] God, "foreseeing the inefficiency of His image imprinted on the fair form of the universe, has given the assistance of His Word to all whom He has been pleased to instruct effectually".[4] Scripture, in sum, provides men with the

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1. Inst. I, 6,2. "Sic autem habendum est, ut nobis affulgeat vera religio, exordium a coelesti doctrina fieri debere, nec quemquam posse vel minimum gustum rectae sanaeque doctrinae percipere, nisi qui scripturae fuerit discipulus."

2. Inst. I, 6,2.

3. Inst. I, 6,3.

4. Ibid. "...eos omnes quos unquam erudire cum fructu voluit, subsidium verbi adhibuisse, quod effigiem suam, in pulcherrima mundi forma impressam, parum esse efficacem provideret..."

standard of eternal truth. To turn aside from this standard means certain error. We may never reach God "if the Word does not serve us as a thread to guide our path".[1]

Calvin teaches that Scripture elucidates God's image of Himself in His works. Scripture does this, Calvin makes clear (in order to avoid any possible confusion on this point, although the matter might seem obvious), because in Scripture the Lord represents Himself in the same character in which we have already seen that He is delineated in His works.[2] More precisely, God the Creator reveals Himself - as a loving and just Father - in both His works and His Word.[3] God the Creator represents Himself as having the same character in both His Word and His works. He reveals Himself as eternal, righteous, judging, but also loving.[4] In sum: "the knowledge of God which is set before us in the

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1. Inst. I, 6,3. "...nisi verbi linea in ipsum dirigamur."
2. Inst. I, 10,1.
3. Book I deals exclusively with God the Creator and not with God the Mediator and Redeemer.
4. Inst. I, 10,2.

Scriptures is designed for the same purpose as that which shines in creation, namely to invite us first to the fear of God and then to trust in Him that we may learn to worship Him with perfect integrity of heart and unfeigned obedience and to depend entirely on His goodness."[1]

Section 3: Our Problem

Calvin speaks of two kinds of knowledge of God both seemingly prior to a knowledge of the Person Jesus Christ. He speaks of "a knowledge of God naturally implanted on the human mind" and "a knowledge of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world". Calvin clearly indicated that fallen man inevitably misuses these "knowledges" and does not know God from them. The possibility of such knowledge renders man inexcusable. However, Calvin's doctrine of the Word raises questions about the reality, per se,

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1. Inst. I, 10,2. "...non in alium scopum destinatur, quae in scripturis nobis proponitur Dei notitia, quam quae in creaturis impressa nitet. Nempe ad Dei timorem primum, deinde ad fiduciam nos invitat: quo scilicet et perfecta vitae innocentia, et non simulata obedientia colere illum discamus, tum ab eius bonitate toti dependere."

and therefore the possibility of "natural knowledge of God". Three of the major thrusts of Calvin's doctrine of the Word particularly call any "natural knowledge of God" into question.[1] I. Calvin in his discussion of faith made it abundantly clear that not only is there an inseparable relation between the Object of our faith - Christ - and our faith, but that faith is impossible except as it is preceded by its Object. To illustrate his point Calvin employed the figure of the fugue, likening the dominant voice to the Word and faith to its echo. The Object of faith elicits our faith; faith does not create its object. The Object of preaching, of theology, of our knowledge of God is not, then, faith, but the Object of our faith. Thus, <u>in speaking of man's knowledge of God we always begin with the Object of faith, not with faith itself</u>.

II. Calvin throughout his doctrine of the Word, but most especially in his discussions of the eternal Word[2] and of the Incarnate Word[3] identified Christ as God.[4]

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1. Chapter One, Section 5.
2. Chapter One, Section 1.
3. Chapter One, Section 2.
4. Cf. <u>Inst.</u> I, 13,9.

Christ is the only Object in the world - in the entirity of its history and in the entirity of its structure - which can rightly be identified as God Himself. In this One Object and only in this One Object God (ontically) dwells in His own Triune Being.

III. Calvin's discussion of the Incarnate Word provides us with these two fundamental and inseparable answers to the question: why did the Word become flesh? (1)To reverse man's turning away from the Word, i.e., to overcome the fall of man, to redeem man from sin and thereby (2)become again the Mediator between man and God Whom man would recognize. Because the Mediator and the Redeemer are one and the Self-Same Person revelation and redemption are not separate acts. Since Christ is God with us and therefore the revelation of God to us, and since He also is the One Who has overcome sin and its consequence, death, we realize that revelation is the revelation of our redemption.

In the light of these principles in Calvin's doctrine of the Word we should examine Calvin's understanding of the two kinds of knowledges of God which are - seemingly - prior to knowledge of the Person Jesus Christ. These

"two kinds of knowledge" seem to be called into question by Calvin's doctrine of the Word; and some modern evangelical statements also seem to call them into question, e.g., The Theological Declaration of the Synod of Barmen: "...Jesus Christ, as He is attested to us in Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we have to hear and whom we have to trust and obey in life and in death. We condemn the false doctrine that the Church can and must recognize as God's revelation other events and powers, forms and truths, apart from and alongside this one Word of God."[1]

I. In speaking of man's knowledge of God we always begin with the Object of faith, not with faith itself.

(a) When Calvin speaks of a sensus divinitatis is he following this principle? One must found the possibility of man's knowledge of God on the reality of God's Self Revelation. What revelation of God is it that enables man innately to perceive God? Calvin supports

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1. Cited in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics, II/1, trans. editors: G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh, 1957) p. 172.

the idea of an "innate sense of God" with three points:

1. There has been no people which has not been imbued with the idea that there is a god.

2. Idolatry indicates the strength of man's innate sense of god. For man, although proud, will worship wood and stone rather than to be thought to be without a god.

3. Conscience indicates that man believes there is One over him who judges him.

Calvin describes certain acts and beliefs of men. What is the object to which these acts and beliefs relate? They relate to an object which is given the name "god" - but while the object is given a name this name giving does nothing to clarify what (or who) this object is. Nothing substantial is said about the object itself. Such a discussion is not in accord with Calvin's first principle and therefore such a discussion, _per se_, is not helpful to evangelical theology today.

This does not mean Calvin's discussion of _sensus divinitatis_ is useless. There are two ways in which it still might be used to advantage. On the one hand this impulse to worship might be understood as the work of the Spirit, already in hidden fashion directing

men to God's Objective Revelation in Jesus Christ.[1] Thus this Objective Reality is understood to be the ground for such a possibility. On the other hand, the innate sense of God might be an apprehension of the Word which is imaged in genuinus naturae ordo. In this regard, however, we must face the question: is Calvin's discussion of the genuine order of nature, his discussion of the knowledge of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world, in accord with this first principle?

(b) A given Object in history is God Himself. This Object is, eo ipso, the revelation of God. But the Biblical witness testifies - and we saw Calvin therefore teaching[2] - that through this Object the worlds were made. Calvin maintains, then, that the Word of God is imaged in the order of the world. Thus there is an objective revelation in the order of the world which is the ground of the possibility of man apprehending God in the creation and continual

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1. Such a theological assertion could only follow a thorough discussion of the Word of God.

2. Chapter One.

government of the world. We can enquire with relation to Principles II and III if the Object is properly understood (i.e., II is this Object indeed Christ? and III is this Object the revelation of redemption? *) but for the moment we must grant that Calvin's teaching about man's knowledge of God revealed in creation does not contradict his first principle, i.e., that the discussion of the Object of faith is prior to a discussion of faith itself.

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* Even when we come to ask these other questions we must, in order to be fair to Calvin, remember Calvin's important qualifications. a)With reference to Principle II Calvin clearly indicates that God's revelation in creation can not now be apprehended by the creature unless he has Scripture as his "guide and teacher". Calvin does not speak of a revelation in creation possible now apart from Scripture which proclaims the Incarnate Word. b)With reference to Principle III - revelation as the revelation of redemption - we should remember that the special purpose of Book I is to speak of the revelation of God the Creator. We shall have to see that revelation in Christ is God's revelation of His entire Self, thus we can not now speak of the revelation of God the Creator and the revelation of God the Redeemer as separate acts. Calvin was, however, developing his argument about the original innocence of man, the Grace from which he turned, and therefore man's culpability for sin. It would be unedifying to treat his terminology in too pharisaical a manner. His intention is proper, even if his language seems to call into question the unity of God's Triune Being.

Calvin did not argue that the world qua world reveals God. The world could not reveal God because it is in no way God, it is not in continuity with Him. "And God Himself is the only fit witness to Himself."[1] But God images Himself in ordo of the world; He views Himself in the mirror which the world is for Him. Thus God's image is present in ordo of the world, and God's image is His Word. Thus, there is an Object - the revelation of God - which is properly an Object of faith. Moreover, this Object is not a passive or static Object. God continues, in every moment, to behold His creation - if He ceased, it would no longer be - and behold Himself in it. Thus, we must say that God is continually disclosing Himself in His creation. In this revelation, as in all revelation, God initially moves toward the creature rather than the creature moving towards a static object. The Object of revelation Calvin identifies with Christ. We shall examine this more fully in considering the revelation in creation in the light of Calvin's Principle II. We include this statement here only to emphasize that the

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1. Inst. I, 11,1.

revelation in creation is, for Calvin, a movement of God toward His creature. The Object is not passive. We recall Calvin's description of God's revelation in His works: "For Christ is that image in which God presents to our view not only His heart, but also His hands and feet. I give the name of His heart to that secret love with which He embraces us in Christ; by His hands and feet I understand those works of His which are displayed before our eyes."[1] The hands and feet of the Messiah (the One Who comes) is the content of the Object in ordo of creation which reveals God.

As we saw in Barth's report cited on the first page of this chapter, the question of natural theology has become of paramount interest in modern times - even for evangelical theologians. In many instances what the object is, which is revealed to natural perception is simply not made clear by advocates of natural revelation.* This is certainly not true in Calvin's discussion of God's revelation in creation. In the citation above from his introduction to his

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1. Intro. Arg. in Comm. on Gen., C.O. 23, 11-12.

* The object is said to be god - but what god?

Genesis commentary Calvin makes clear that the wisdom, power and righteousness revealed in ordo of creation are not only revealed as the attributes of the Creator but more especially God's revelation in His works is the revelation of the wisdom, power and righteousness of Christ (i.e., "His hands and feet"). There is no objective act of God which does not disclose Christ, Christ Himself being the objective Actor. Thus the wisdom, power and righteousness seen in Creation are indeed revelation, but only by virtue of the fact that they disclose to us the power, wisdom and righteousness of Christ. Calvin went on to make clear that such a revelation is no longer subjectively possible to fallen man qua fallen man. It is possible still for him who will put on the "eye glasses" of Scripture.

Fallen man can no longer receive God's coming in the order of creation. Yet the order of creation can still proclaim to man the glory of God, if a man turning to Scripture learns there who his Creator is and what the meaning of creation is. And, in fact, God has always spoken to His people - even Adam - not merely in the Word spoken in His works but also in "either oracles or visions...or by the instrumentality and

ministry of men".[1] In sum: it is permissible to speak of God's revelation in creation in terms of Calvin's Principle I if we can clearly discern what the object is, which this revelation is, and if it is a substantial object in the sense that it is an object worthy of faith. The question is whether or not the object is such a substantial reality that a possibility of really knowing it exists. Since for Calvin the Object is Christ, Calvin's discussion of God's revelation in creation is certainly permissible in terms of Principle I.

The questions about the Object and the knowers of the Object are not finally separate. For the God known in creation is not an abstract Being made up of the perfect ideas of wisdom, righteousness and power. The Object revealed in creation is not now known to us first in creation but is now first known to us through the ministry and instrumentality of men.* But this Object is preached as the Creator and thus by and through the ministry of men (and most especially the ministry of the men called Prophets and Apostles**) those who come

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1. Inst. I, 6,2.
* Cf. section on preaching above - Ch. One, Section 4.
** Cf. section on Scripture above - Ch. One, Section 3.

to know this Object from the ministry of the saints recognize the same Object in creation. As God, the Father of Christ, is Creator, and as He created the world through Christ, then indeed to him who knows this the glory, justice and power of the order of creation proclaim the glory, justice and power of Christ. In this sense - and in accord with the Psalmist - the heavens and the earth do proclaim Him Who made them. With the spectacles of Scripture the eyes of faith can survey the innumerable works carried on in the human frame and understand them to be a manifestation of the divine wisdom; the man of faith under Scripture seeing the powers unleashed in the world knows that they proclaim the ultimate power of Christ in the world; and while the man of faith may not always discern how God brings good out of evil he still understands the good which he does see to be a proclamation of Christ's righteousness.[1]

There is, then, a close relation between the Object (in creation) and the knowers of the Object to the degree that the question can not now be answered: what God is

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1. Cf. Inst. I, 5,8.

known in creation? until it is answered by those who have come to know this Object by this Object's coming to them through the ministry of men by the power of the Spirit.

But if there can not be a possibility of revelation unless it is established by the reality (or the Object) of revelation, must it not be true to say conversely that if there is a reality then the possibility must exist? This is true and Calvin allowed for and insisted upon the objective possibility. But there is one fact which disallows this possibility from ever being subjectively realized: sin.[1] The preceding discussion in this chapter reveals how clearly Calvin indicates that man inevitably turns from the Word and misuses or misunderstands all that is given to him. Man is totally incapable of seeing God reflected in "the things that have been made". There is a cloud of sin which intervenes between Him and us.[2] Thus man can

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1. It is the knowledge of sin which Calvin understands to be the content of our knowledge of ourselves. Cf. Inst. II, 1,1.

2. Cf. Inst. II, 12.

not discern God's revelation unless God in His revelation sets aside this cloud.*

It is not unusual today to hear members of the Church applaud the theist (who finds a god in nature or reason) and condemn the non-theist. Calvin leads us away from such understanding, insisting that such a discussion not only (1)supports a lie, but (2)blinds man further.[1] The object of such a faith is simply

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* Now, of course, the primary content of revelation is the knowledge that God has set aside this cloud of sin. The question of whether or not, then, God's image in His works is still objectively revelation must be considered in terms of Principle III. We may say, for the moment, that there is but one God and as He acts everywhere the same, He Who in this moment beholds Himself in His creation images Himself there also as Redeemer (Jesus Christ).

1. (1)"/Paul declares/...all men 'became vain in their imaginations' after the majesty of the Creator was manifested to them in the structure of the world. Accordingly, in order to make way for the only true God /Paul/ condemns all the gods celebrated among the Gentiles as lying and false leaving no Deity anywhere but in Mt. Zion where the special knowledge of God was professed." Inst. I, 5,13.
(2) The philosophical concept of god is not only untrue to God's Self-Revelation, but it blinds man further. For "...the essential motion of any natural theology, in spite of the shadow religion which it may involve, can only be perverted from the very start, so that its essential direction is continually away from God, from perversity to perversity, from alienation to alienation." So Prof. T.F. Torrance in his well documented summary of this point in Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London, 1949) p. 164.

the projection of man's thoughts and not, therefore, the proper object of faith. In terms of the doctrine of revelation, then, man's sin is not so much a refusal to appropriate subjectively the Object of faith, as it is his refusal to appropriate it properly. Calvin indicates this by saying true religion is the basis of all idolatry.[1] Just as Jesus Christ came as the Light of men, and so incidentally blinded even further those who would not turn to Him[2], so the Light of the Word imaged in creation can not be met with indifference. If it is not properly accepted, it will incidentally blind and man will manufacture a false god rather than accept the Word imaged in creation. Thus, every man appropriates the Word imaged in creation, but since no man appropriates the Word properly all sin. Every man ratifies the sin of Adam.

When a man - by the gift of faith - comes to a recognition of the true Object of faith, God's Word, Jesus Christ, he not only comes to a knowledge of God,

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1. Comm. on Ps. 97:7, C.O. 32,44.
2. Comm. on John 12:40, C.O. 47, 297-98.

but reflexively to a knowledge of himself.[1] For as Calvin - following Scripture - makes clear, the revelation of Christ reveals our sin,[2] including the sin in this area, i.e., appropriating perversely God's revelation in His works. And our sin is always the attempt to project the object for our faith[3] rather than accepting the Object, which is the True Object, God Himself, Who elicits - indeed gives us the gift of - our faith.[4]

II. Christ is the only Object in the world - in the entirety of its history and in the entirety of its structure - which can be rightly identified as God Himself.

(a) If Christ is the only Object in the world that is God, is any discussion of sensus divinitatis possible? It is not possible in terms of Principle II[5] unless the

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1. Cf. "Paul shows that the whole world is deserving of eternal death." Comm. on Rom. 1:18, C.O. 49,22.

2. Inst. I, 1,2. and Inst. II, 1,1.

3. Cf. Comm. on Rom. 1:18, C.O. 49,22.

4. Cf. Chapter One, Section 5.

5. "We must beware of seeking God elsewhere, for everything that would set itself off as a representation of God, apart from Christ, will be an idol." Comm. on Col. 1:15, C.O. 52,85.

discussion of sensus divinitatis is properly set within a doctrine of the Word. Contemporary evangelical dogmatics would be unwise to place such a discussion at the beginning of a dogmatic work, in the manner Calvin did in the Institutes. However, if we take seriously Paul's proclamation that "in [Christ] all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."[1], if we are to take seriously Calvin's comment that Christ "is not called the 'first born' simply on the ground of His having preceded all creatures in point of time, but because He was begotten by the Father, that they might be created by Him, and that He might be, as it were, the substance or foundation of all things"[2], if we are to take seriously Barth's comment that "The world came into being, it was created and sustained by the little child that was born in Bethlehem, by the Man who died on the

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1. Col. 1:16-17.
2. Comm. on Col. 1:15, C.O. 52,85.

Cross of Golgotha, and the third day rose again"[1], if we take seriously all these proclamations then we will agree with Calvin that God the Creator created the worlds through Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is imaged in the order of creation and thus Jesus Christ is objectively revealed there. Human nature is a part of this order and it might be possible to say that it therefore innately wishes to respond to Jesus Christ Who comes to it in the structure of its own being. But, as we have repeated several times above, Calvin disallowed this subjective realization entirely because of the totality of man's sin, his utter turning from God. Christ Who in the created order is present[2] can now only be known there by us men after we first learn of Him from Scripture and/or preaching.[3] Thus, there could be a way of speaking about sensus divinitatis, but it

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1. Karl Barth, Dogmatics in Outline, trans. by G.T. Thomson, (London, 1955) p.58. Barth clarifies for us here the statement of Col.1:16 and Calvin's comment upon it; i.e., it is not an asarkos logos through whom the worlds were made and are sustained - such an abstraction is an idol - but through Jesus Christ.

2. "...by /Christ's/hands and feet I understand those works of His which are displayed before our eyes." Intro.Arg. in Comm. on Gen. C.O. 23, 11-12.

3. Cf. Section 1, part 2 and Section 2 of this Chapter.

is proper so to speak only if one understands this "sense" is possible (1) because Christ is objectively mirrored and therefore present in the order of nature and human nature, all things having been created through Him for Him, and(2) there is no proper use ever made of this revelation to the "innate sense" because of man's fallenness. To clarify the first point: sensus divinitatis, if it is a legitimate aspect of Christian dogmatics at all, must never refer to any innate sense other than an innate knowledge of Him Who was born in a stable, died on a cross and the third day rose again.

(b) Any understanding of God apart from Jesus Christ is an idol, Calvin tells us.[1] The ground of this assertion was examined in Chapter One.[2] The Father knows the Son and in the power of the Spirit the Son knows the Father. God came to us in the mode of the Son and by the power of the Spirit has permitted us to share His knowledge of the Father. Our knowledge of God is a possibility because God has permitted us to be partners in His knowledge of Himself. The Son in

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1. Comm. on Col. 1:15, C.O. 52,85.
2. Cf. Special note, p. 47.

history is Jesus Christ. But God's action in history is not different from His Being. Calvin, as his doctrine of the Word (Chapter One) clearly demonstrates, is no nominalist. We can not then think of a Word behind Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Word of God. There is no Word or Son behind Him - a "so called" asarkos logos. While Jesus Christ is He Who was born in Bethlehem and died on Golgotha, He is also, and is thereby revealed as, the Very One on Whom Adam was patterned,[1] through Whom all things were made.[2] Thus Calvin's statement that God is conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world does not contradict Principle II, for the God imaged in the order of the world is precisely Jesus Christ, Him through Whom and for Whom the world was made. Again, we must remember that Calvin made clear that because of man's total sinfulness no subjective realization of this objective revelation is possible. That is, there can be no subjective realization of this revelation

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1. Cf. Comm. on Col. 1:15, C.O. 52,85.
2. Col. 1:16 and Heb. 1:2; Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/1, Ed. G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance, pp. 34-54.

of Christ in His Works unless faith puts on the eye glasses of Scripture. Thus, the eyes of faith do not derive Christ's righteousness, wisdom and power from creation - the eyes of faith learn of these from the testimony of Scripture and preaching to Christ's life, death and resurrection in Palestine 4B.C. - 29A.D. - but faith with the eye glasses of Scripture sees Christ's righteousness, wisdom and power in creation.[1]

While Calvin, then, seemingly spoke of a knowledge of the Word prior to a knowledge of the Person Christ[2], he does not really do so.[3] The Word revealed in God's works is (not an asarkos logos but) Jesus Christ.[4] The total revelation of Jesus Christ includes the revelation of His glory in (the Church and in) the world.

The Wisdom of God is Jesus Christ. The worlds were made through Jesus Christ and the wisdom reflected in the order of creation is a mirror, a revelation, of

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1. This is not to claim the special knowledge of the Pharisee. But whatever in history is right and wise and strong the man of faith understands as of Christ and therefore for faith a proclamation of Him.

2. Inst. I, Chap.5.

3. Cf. Intro. Arg. in Comm. on Gen., C.O. 23,11-12.

4. Ibid.

His wisdom. Fallen man can not know this revelation, but in coming by faith to know the Wisdom of God, Jesus Christ, he knows that whatever wisdom he is able to understand in the wonderous workings of the heavens or in the structure of the human frame is a reflection of the Wisdom of God known to him as Jesus Christ.

God's power is revealed in Jesus Christ. His power over creation is not only manifested in the temptations He overcame and in the miracles He performed, but above all, of course in the resurrection when He overcame sin and death, preserving thereby His creatures from the power of sarx, from the chaos. Powers are simply a puzzle to fallen man. The eyes of faith with the eye glasses of Scripture, however, knowing that the Power of God in Jesus Christ has defeated the powers of the world - although His victory is still to be consummated - sees all healing power as a reflection of Christ's victorious power.

History is a dark labyrinth for fallen man. Whether to be an optimist or a pessimist is an open and disturbing question for him. The Christian man and community - knowing Jesus Christ - can not unravel all the ambiguities

of history as history. But knowing (1)the Absolute Righteousness of God and (2)His overwhelming mercy, revealed together in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ,[1] they anticipate the joyful consummation of history in and through Jesus Christ. Wherever in history, then, they see righteousness and mercy they understand this as a reflection of Christ's righteousness and mercy; e.g., whenever the miserable are led back to the right path, the famished find food, the captive is delivered, the shipwrecked find safe harbour, the diseased find health, the lowly are exalted.[2]

We have in Scripture not only the story of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ but also an account of the consummation in Him and the Creation through Him. While we as fallen men can not now discern God reflected in His Works, we do learn from Scripture of Jesus Christ in all His glory. With the perspective of Scripture, any perfection in nature we may understand as a "world order mirror" reflecting something of Christ's perfection; with this perspective any proper

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1. Chapter One, Section 2.
2. Inst. I, 5,8.

knowledge we may have we may understand as a "shadowy mirror" of the Wisdom which is Christ's; with this perspective we may understand that anything of beauty, order or goodness which we see is an invitation God gives us to know something of Him.

The fall of man is most adequately understood, then, as man's rejection of Jesus Christ. Man rejects this Christ Who comes to him in the Works of God.[1] This happens without exception. It is because Christ has been present since the creation of the world and has been reflected in the things that have been made, that men are rightly known as sinners, i.e., those who reject Jesus Christ. That law which the Gentiles have, but do not do, is the Law that will judge them on the last day, namely Jesus Christ, the Lord. What the Gentiles violate is the Lordship of Christ, Who objectively

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1. As we saw in Ch.One, Section 2, Jesus Christ must now not be simply the Mediator between God and man, but must overcome man's sin; Jesus Christ must now be the Redeemer if He is to mediate God to man. Thus while Christ and the Spirit were and are given to man by the Father, it is only by virtue of the concrete redemption of Christ wrought on Golgotha that man can - hearing the preached Word by the power of the Spirit - receive and know the revelation of God.

comes to them in the Works of God. When history is regarded as the product of chance, the Gentiles sin because this is a denial of Christ, His Lordship, which they objectively could know (but never do). The multiplicity of gods among the Gentiles is a testimony that the God Who is God is present, but the same multiplicity - every man seeking to be the lord of his god - reveals man's sin; for to replace Christ Who is Lord with another, is the conscious rejection of Christ which sin is. And no man can claim to stand outside the sphere of sin - for Christ, the Word, is revealed in the Works of God, and there can be no neutral hearing of this Word.[1] One must either respond or reject - there is no neutrality; to be neutral about the Word is to reject the Word, which brings condemnation.[2] Since none have responded positively to Christ's coming in the works of God, all stand under the condemnation of God. Thus Calvin sums up our guilt: "it clearly appears what is the consequence of having

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1. Comm. on Heb. 4:12, C.O. 55,50.
2. Comm. on Isa. 55:11, C.O. 37,292.

[the revelation of Christ in God's Works]: men cannot allege anything before God's tribunal for the purpose of showing that they are not justly condemned".[1]

We do not now discern God in His works. How do we know that God is Creator and Sustainer? Calvin told us that we now know from Scripture.[2] Who, however, is the God which Scripture proclaims to us? The Lord of Israel is Yahweh; the Lord of the world the Apostles proclaim as Jesus Christ. Calvin says Yahweh and Christ are the same.[3] Thus Calvin clearly indicates <u>again</u> in this way that the God Who reveals Himself in His Works is the God Who reveals Himself as the Word, Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ Who is reflected in the things that have been made. The Bible (<u>verbum Dei</u>) is about <u>Sermo Dei</u>, Jesus Christ.[4] If Scripture affirms that God created and sustains the world, our faith is faith in Christ - and in this area, then, the faith that it is His Father Who creates all that is, through Him, and if

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1. <u>Comm. on Rom.</u> 1:20, <u>C.O.</u> 49,24.
2. <u>Inst. I</u>, Chap. 6.
3. Cf. Chapter One, Section 1.
4. Cf. Chapter One, Section 3.

He is revealed in the things that have been made then it is none other than Christ Who may be objectively seen there.

We put on the eye glasses of Scripture, and what faith then sees is not a series of events and episodes, but it sees the Eternal Word, Jesus Christ, Whom faith comes to know - in the fulness of faith - through all God's acts. The acts of God in Christ 4B.C.-29A.D. disclose to us the fulness of Christ's Lordship and Redemption and thus faith can affirm that which it does not see apart from faith - among other things God's revelation in His Works, His Lordship over history, etc..

Faith does not and need not feel discontent with "hearing" and not "seeing". Calvin indicates that to not only the patriarchs, Noah, Abraham and others, but even to Adam God elucidated and made clear "the certain marks" of Himself in His works by speaking.[1] God elucidated the revelation in His works by speaking to the patriarchs "...in either oracles or visions...or by the instrumentality and ministry of men".[2] Calvin

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1. Inst. I, 6,1.
2. Inst. I, 6,2.

always tends to associate man's solid and certain knowledge of God with hearing.[1] Preaching is for Calvin "the power of God".[2] The Gospel is something heard, and it is the Gospel which supplies man with His certain and sure knowledge of God. The whole point here is that the Gospel does not contradict but elucidates God's revelation in His works simply because Christ's Lordship is hidden from sinful man and difficult even for faith to discern. But since the centre of the Gospel is clearly Christ and since it is the same Christ Who is the Lord reflected in the order of the creation created through Him, that place in which He is clearly known, i.e., the Gospel, brings to light His Presence where He is more hidden, i.e., in His works. All this establishes that just as there is no Word in Scripture, Calvin would maintain, that is not Christ, thus there can not be, Calvin must maintain, a Word revealed in God's works that is not Christ. And Jesus Christ, the Word of God, was always Specially and Personally Present elucidating Who He fully was, i.e., What God it was, mirroring Himself in the order of nature and history.[3]

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1. Cf. Inst. I, 5,12.
2. Cf. Chapter One, Section 4.
3. Cf. pp. 128-29.

Nature and history need no longer be a burdensome labyrinth for man. He does not need to seek God there (or in himself). "God the Maker of the world is manifested to us in Scripture and His true character expounded so as to save us from wandering up and down as in a labyrinth in search of some doubtful deity."[1] Not only are history and nature not a burden to man - they no longer place man under a burdensome quest for "the holy" - but nature and history are no longer an ultimate riddle for man. For Scripture, as we have seen, elucidates nature and history in that Scripture represents that the same Lord Jesus Christ has the same Gracious character in His works as He has in His saving work. There is only One Jesus Christ. Thus the man of faith can only anticipate a happy conclusion for history.

But let us also note with particular reference to Principle II that because God's revelation is localized, so to speak, in Jesus the Man of Nazareth (4B.C.-29A.D.), nature and history are freed for man's use. No longer

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1. Inst. I, 6,1.

will he try to make nature - or even his own human nature - into an idol. There is nothing now "to fear" in them. Christ has placed them not only under Him, but again (Gen. 1:26) rightly under us. History and nature are under Jesus Christ. Not under some general word, but under Him Who was born in a stable, died on a Cross and rose again on the third day. We can hear of Him so clearly and know Him so concretely that general concepts about a god are quite out of the question for us. This same Man, the God-Man, is indeed reflected in the things that have been made (although not subjectively grasped by fallen man) - for God in His Word beholds the world as a mirror. But He has so revealed Himself as Jesus Christ, Who lived and died and rose again in Palestine, that no other being than Christ can ever be rightly understood as the power and deity revealed in the mirror of the world.

III. Revelation and redemption are not separate acts; revelation is the revelation of our redemption.

(a) On the basis of Principle III we may assert that in no sense does man qua man have an innate sense of God. If God's revelation is the revelation to us of the redemption He has wrought for us then man can never

be the "initiating" partner in revelation. However, if Christ images Himself in the order of nature, this order would include human nature, and man naturally - prior to the fall - might on this basis be said to have participated innately in God's knowledge of Himself. Still it may be asked: if the content of our knowledge of God is redemption could one speak of an innate sense of Deity the content of which is redemption? Ephesians 1:3ff. would indicate that such a possibility can not be excluded:

> "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. He destined us in love to be His sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished upon us. For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth."

Calvin comments that this passage "makes it evident that salvation was accomplished not by any accidental or unlooked for occurrence, but by the eternal and unchangeable

decree of God."[1] Whether or not Calvin equates this "decree" with Jesus Christ is a question we shall examine in Chapter Three. If modern evangelical theology equates this "decree" with Christ, then, the Christ Who images Himself in the created order (of which man is part) is imaged there as the One Who He is, namely, the Redeemer. That is, if God chose men in Christ, before the creation of the world, to be His sons through Christ, and this decree was of such a nature that God would Himself bear the pain of human suffering and death to secure this decree, then Christ is eternally the Redeemer; He is the eternal Redeemer in the sense that He eternally subordinates Himself to God the Father[2]; in the Incarnation the Son of God maintained the role of obedience to the Father - even unto death - that he eternally has; so we say that while it was the concrete life and death which redeemed us, we nevertheless must maintain that it was the eternal mode of the Being of the Son, Jesus Christ, that was revealed in the world in 4B.C.-29A.D.. As Ephesians, Chapter One, indicates, while we are in fact sons

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1. Comm. on Eph. 1:3, C.O. 51, 146.
2. Cf. Chapter One, Section 2.

through His Blood this fact is the effecting (in 29A.D.) of that which was eternally decreed in the Son.

To summarize: Christ being the Redeemer, He is eternally, thereby, the proclamation (or decree) of redemption, and He is the proclamation of redemption because redemption was won for us through the obedience of His Being (in history), i.e., the Being of the Son Who is eternally obedient. Thus, where Christ is known He is known as the One Who is obedient to the Father, and obedient ever since the creation of man for man's sake as well as for God's Sake. Thus, the Christ Whom Calvin understands is imaged in the order of creation is imaged there as the One Who is obedient to God (for God's Sake and) for man's sake. The obedience maintains the harmony of God in Himself and as the pattern that is to exist between God and man it was the Word to man.[1] When man broke, by not following, this pattern of obedience, Christ's obedience - "redemption through His Blood" - obtained the reconciliation. Thus, Calvin may speak of a revelation of Christ to unfallen man, saying that Christ is mirrored in the order of

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1. Cf. discussion of <u>duplex relatio</u> Chapter One, Section 1.

creation, since God beholds Himself there, as Christ, as the Eternally Obedient Son (i.e., as, therefore, the Redeemer). And since unfallen human nature was a part of this order of creation, man in innately participating in God's knowledge of Himself would have knowledge of the obedience of the Son and what that obedience meant for man - reconciliation - and this would precisely be the content of his knowledge of revelation. Therefore, because God may be said to behold Himself, as Christ, i.e., as the Redeemer, in the order of nature and thereby reveal Himself as such to unfallen man - Calvin's discussion of sensus divinitatis does not necessarily contradict Principle III.

(b) Since it is Christ Who is imaged in genuinus naturae ordo and since Christ is eternally the Redeemer, then it is redemption which is the content of the revelation of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world. Calvin's discussion of God's revelation in His works does not necessarily contradict Principle III.

Again, Calvin tells us that "God has given us throughout the whole architecture of this world clear evidence of His eternal wisdom, goodness and power and

though He is in Himself invisible, He in a manner becomes visible to us in His works".[1] In our discussion of Principle II we established that for Calvin God's eternal wisdom is Christ, God's goodness is Christ, God's power is Christ. Now we must see that as the Wisdom of God Jesus Christ is also the Word of Redemption; that God's Power is the power of Christ to effect redemption; and that the goodness of God is our redemption in Christ.

The wisdom, goodness and power of God conspicuous in creation can not be separate from God's own Wisdom, Goodness and Power, Jesus Christ. This is why Calvin spoke of genuinus naturae ordo as a mirror in which God beholds Himself. Our final task in this section will be to understand that God in His Wisdom, Goodness and Power wills man's redemption and thus any revelation of God's wisdom, power and goodness (in creation) is a revelation of redemption. In this way we can assure ourselves that Calvin's doctrine of God's revelation in His Works does not violate Principle III.

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1. Comm. on Heb. 11:3, C.O. 55, 145-6. "Aeternae enim suae sapientiae, bonitatis, potentiae Deus luculentum testimonium reddit in tota mundi architectura: et quum in se sit invisibilis, nobis quodammodo in suis operibus apparet."

Calvin clearly indicates that the original purpose of God's revelation in His Works was that "from it [man might] pass to eternal life and perfect felicity".[1] That is, "the knowledge of God, which is set before us in the Scriptures is designed for the same purpose as that which shines in creation - namely, that we may thereby learn to worship Him with perfect integrity of heart and unfeigned obedience, and to depend entirely on His goodness."[2] "...there is One God Who governs all natures, and, in governing, wishes us to have respect to Himself, to make Him the Object of our faith, worship and adoration."[3] "It must be acknowledged, therefore, that in each of the works of God, and more especially

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1. "Erat quidem hic genuinus ordo, ut mundi fabrica nobis schola esset ad pietatem discendam, unde ad aeternam vitam et perfectam felicitatem fieret transitus." Inst. II, 6,1.

2. "...non in alium scopum destinatur, quae in scripturis nobis proponitur Dei notitia, quam quae in creaturis impressa nitet. Nempe ad Dei timorem primum, deinde ad fiduciam nos invitat: quo scilicet et perfecta vitae innocentia, et non simulata obedientia colere illum discamus, tum ab eius bonitate toti dependere." Inst. I, 10,2.

3. "...unum esse Deum, qui sic gubernat omnes naturas ut velit nos in se respicere, fidem nostram ad se dirigi, coli et invocari a nobis..." Inst. I, 5,6.

in the whole of them taken together, the divine perfections are delineated as in a picture, and the whole human race thereby invited and allured to acquire the knowledge of God, and in consequence of this knowledge, true and complete felicity."[1]

It would be undoubtedly wrong to ignore utterly the division Calvin maintained between Book I and Book II of the Institutes: "Of the Knowledge of God the Creator" and "Of the Knowledge of God the Redeemer". But, as an examination of Calvin's doctrine of the Word has demonstrated, it would be just as unwise to overemphasize it! The purpose of God's revelation in His Works, His revelation of His power, wisdom and goodness, Calvin clearly indicates is to allure men to Him (as the Object of faith) and bestow upon them eternal felicity. It is precisely this which is also the purpose of God's redemption! But can we say "also", since Calvin says: "God never manifested Himself to men by any other means

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1. "Fatendum est igitur, in singulis Dei operibus, praesertim autem in ipsorum universitate, non secus atque in tabulis, depictas esse Dei virtutes; quibus in eius agnitionem, et ab ipsa in veram plenamque feliciatatem invitatur atque illicitur universum hominum genus." Inst. I, 5,10.

than by His Son, that is, His own only wisdom, light and Truth. From this fountain Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others, drew all the heavenly doctrine which they possessed. From the same fountain all the prophets drew all the heavenly oracles which they published. For this wisdom did not always display itself in one manner."[1] That revelation which was given in creation was the revelation of the Son - in the Son God willed the eternal felicity of man. Redemption, then, is the purpose of God in creation, i.e., of God the Creator. Clearly, God's revelation in His works, then, is the revelation of redemption. Calvin in the Institutes is presenting doctrine in an orderly fashion - following the Apostles' Creed he naturally treats of the first article prior to the second. But he does not present two different "Gods" and therefore he is not speaking of two kinds of revelations but rather of two different aspects of the one revelation of God in His Son.

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1. "...Deum non alia se unquam ratione manifestasse hominibus quam per filium, hoc est unicam suam sapientiam, lucem ac veritatem. Ex hoc fonte hauserunt Adam, Noe, Abraham, Issac, Iacob et alii quidquid habuerunt coelestis doctrinae. Ex eodem prophetae omnes hauserunt et ipsi quoque quidquid coelestium oraculorum ediderunt. Enimvero haec sapientia non uno modo semper se exseruit." Inst. IV,8,5.

That the purpose of God's revelation of His wisdom, power and goodness is redemption is made clear for us, by Calvin, when he declares that it is Christ Who is God's Wisdom, Power and Goodness; for Calvin declares this in his discussion of Christ's Prophetic Work as the full revelation of God's Wisdom, Christ's Kingly Work as the full revelation of God's Power, and Christ's Priestly Work as the full revelation of God's Goodness and Righteousness and Calvin understands that Christ fulfils the three offices of Prophet, Priest and King in order that He may be our Redeemer.[1] "In order that faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation, and so rest in Him, we must set out... that the office which He received from the Father consists of three parts. For He was appointed both Prophet, King and Priest; [however] little [is] gained by holding the names unaccompanied by a knowledge of [their] end and use."[2]

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1. Cf. Inst. II, Chapters 15 and 16. Cf. also pp. 29-39.
2. Inst. II, 15,1.

Christ is understood to exercise His Prophetic Office in that "the teaching which He delivered substantially [includes] a wisdom which is perfect in all its parts".[1] Outside of Him there is nothing worth knowing, Calvin maintains.[2] Here Calvin undoubtedly means there is nothing outside Christ that can lead us to salvation; for he follows the above statement with another in which he proclaims that those who by faith apprehend Christ's character in His teaching, possess a "boundless immensity of heavenly blessings."[3] And earlier in the same Chapter Calvin had indicated that the teaching of the prophets was always given to God's people "such as might suffice for salvation".[4] If the intention of the prophetic Word was salvation how much clearer is the intention of Him of Whom it is said: "When He is come, He will tell us all things".[5] God's revelation of His Wisdom is the revelation of redemption.

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1. Inst. II, 15,2.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. II, 15,1.
5. John 4:25 cited by Calvin in Inst. II, 15,1.

Calvin, in discussing the Kingly Office of Christ (i.e., God's Power) emphasizes repeatedly that God employs His Power to maintain His people, and maintain them eternally[1]; i.e., God reveals His Power as the power of redemption. God's revelation of His Power - Christ's Kingly Rule - is the revelation of redemption. "There can be no doubt that God promises that He will be, by the hand of His Son, the eternal governor and defender of the Church...As often as we hear that Christ is armed with eternal power, let us learn that the perpetuity of the Church is thus effectually secured... [for] however numerous and powerful the enemies who conspire to assault the Church, they are not possessed of strength sufficient to prevail against the immortal decree by which He appointed His Son eternal King. Whence it follows that the devil, with the whole power of the world, can never destroy the Church, which is founded on the eternal throne of Christ...this eternity ought to elevate us to the hope of a blessed immortality."[2]

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1. Inst. II, 15,3.
2. Ibid.

"Since then [Christ] arms and equips us by His power...we here find most abundant cause of glorying, and also are inspired with boldness, so that we can contend intrepidly with the devil, sin and death."[1] God's power, as we see it revealed, is His power against the devil, sin and death. This is why the revelation of God's power is the revelation of redemption. God's power ultimately effects our redemption. Thus Calvin: "The Father has given all power to the Son, that by His hand He may govern, cherish, sustain us and keep us under His guardianship and give assistance to us. Thus, while we wander far as pilgrims from God, Christ interposes, that He may gradually bring us to full communion with God."[2]

When Calvin spoke of God's revelation of His goodness in His Works, he especially identifies God's goodness with God's preservation of His creation and its creatures. "If it be asked what cause induced Him

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1. Inst. II, 15,4.

2. "Dedit enim pater omnem potestatem filio ut per eius manum nos gubernet, foveat, sustentet, sub eius tutela nos protegat, nobisque auxilietur. Ita quantisper a Deo peregrinamur, Christus intercedit medius, qui nos paulatim ad solidam cum Deo coniunctionem perducat." Inst. II, 15,5.

to create all things at first and now inclines Him to preserve them, we shall find that there could be no other cause than His own goodness. [Calvin adds] ... if this is the only cause, nothing more should be required to draw forth our love towards Him."[1]

The revelation of God's goodness is the revelation of God's Will to preserve us. God's goodness is fully delineated, then, in Christ's Priestly Work. "God in His character of Judge is hostile to us"[2], because of our sin. "Expiation must...intervene...[thus] it behoved Christ as a Priest to appear with a sacrifice... the honour of the priesthood was competent to none but Christ, because, by the sacrifice of His death he wiped away our guilt and made satisfaction for sin."[3] Here is eternal preservation; Christ in wiping away sins grants us newness of life and by making satisfaction for sin preserves us from the consequence of sin - death only in the last time. While we are still polluted by sin, in Him we are priests (Rev. 1:6), thus we can offer ourselves to God and thus enter the heavenly sanctuary.[4] The revelation of God's goodness

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1. Inst. I, 5,6.
2. Inst. II, 15,6.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

is the revelation of His will to preserve us. He preserves us, eternally, through Christ's Priestly work. The revelation of God's goodness is the revelation of redemption!

The work of Christ as Redeemer comprehends the three Offices: Prophet, Priest and King.[1] Thus, we may say, Christ is the Wisdom of God, the Goodness of God and the Power of God and He is all these to us, and acts as all these to us, in order to effect our redemption. Thus, the revelation of Christ as the Wisdom, Power and Goodness of God is the revelation of redemption. And it is this same Goodness, Power and Wisdom, which is the Son that we have seen is the revelation of God mirrored in His Works. Thus, God's revelation in His Works is the revelation of redemption and thus Calvin's discussion of God's revelation conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world does not contradict Principle III.

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1. Inst. II, 16,1. "All that we have hitherto said of Christ [i.e., as Prophet, Priest and King] leads to this one result, that condemned, dead and lost in ourselves, we must in Him seek righteousness, deliverance, life and salvation [for]...'neither is there salvation in any other'(Acts 4:12)". "Quae hactenus de Christo diximus, ad unum hunc scopum referenda sunt, ut in nobis damnati, mortui et perditi iustitiam in ipso, liberationem, vitam et salutem quaeramus...non esse aliud nomen sub coelo datum hominibus in quo oporteat salvos fieri (Act. 4:12). Also Cf. pp.38-39.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE

Introduction:

Calvin deems it convenient in his discussion of God's Providence "to determine certain and distinct grades" in God's Providence.[1] "Therefore, to put the matter within the comprehension of the simple, there is first to be asserted before the eyes of all the general government of the world, by which all things are cherished and nourished, so that their natural state may remain intact. Then /second/ there are to be considered the guards God sets for the government and care of particular parts - of such a kind, indeed, that nothing happens but by His will and assent. Then /third/ there must come to mind His particular care of the human race by which it comes about that the life and death of men, the condition of public kingdoms and peoples no less than of private individuals, and

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1. "...certos et distinctos gradus statuere convenit" De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione, C.O. 8,348.

everything commonly ascribed to fortune, all depend upon a single heavenly control. Lastly /fourth/ there is the truly paternal protection with which He guards His Church, to which the most present help of God is attached (which is joined and united with His own by means of His Son)".[1]

Calvin here has distinguished four grades in God's Providence. First there is the work of God which preserves intact all things in their natural state. This work we may, for convenience, speak of as Preservation.[2] Second, there is a special affirming

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1. De Aet. Dei Praedes., C.O. 8,349. Translation here by J.K.S. Reid Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God (London, 1961) p. 164. Numbers and italics mine. "Itaque, ut pro captu rudium crasse agamus, primo loco statuenda est ante oculos generalis mundi gubernatio, qua foventur et vegetantur omnia, ut stet incolumis naturae eorum status. Deinde considerandae sunt in singulis partibus regendis et curandis Dei excubiae: et quidem tales, ut nihil nisi nutu arbitrioque eius eveniat: Tum peculiaris generis humani cura in mentem nobis venire debet: qua fit ut vita et mors hominum, tam publica regnorum et gentium quam privata cuiusque conditio, et quidquid fortunae adscribi solet, ab una coelesti moderatione pendeat. Ultimo praesidium vere paternum, quo ecclesiam suam tuetur, cui praesentissima Dei ipsius virtus annexa est. (selon qu'il est conioinct et uny avec les siens par le moyon de son Fils)."

2. Cf. K.Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/3, trans. ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh,1960) pp.60-61 for discussion of the tradition of "conservatio" in theology.

work of God in which by His will and assent, He specially guards the particular parts or processes of creation. This work we may, for convenience, speak of as Concurrence.[1] Third, there is the work of God which controls and cares for the whole human race in life and in death, in general and in particular; i.e., God cares for and rules "public kingdoms and peoples no less than...private individuals." This work we may, for convenience, speak of as Government.[2] Fourth, Calvin speaks of God's special paternal care and work done on behalf of His Church to whom He is joined in His Son. This work is really the work of predestination, or better, the special paternal favour God showers upon the blessed elect may be said to be the first fruits of predestination bestowed upon the elect by way of foretaste.

The great matter of interest here is that Calvin proclaims the heart centre or purpose of all God's

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1. Cf. K.Barth, op.cit. pp. 94-107 for discussion of the tradition of "concursus" in theology.

2. Cf. K.Barth, op.cit. pp. 155-57 for discussion of the tradition of "gubernatio" in theology.

Providential action to be election.[1] All the Providential Work of God culminates,and is for, this work. The tasks of this chapter then are (a)to understand what Calvin said about God's Preservation, Concurrence and Government and then (b)determine if Calvin spoke of these works of God in such a way that they are always understood in the light of their purpose, election, and (c)by reference to Calvin's doctrine of the Word we must ask:can Calvin's doctrine of God's Providence be extended in such a manner as to be an adequate understanding for modern discussions about the Christian doctrine of history and God's Providence?

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1. The famous scholar Wendel says: "Predestination can in fact be regarded as in some respects a particular application of the more general notion of Providence". François Wendel, Calvin, The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought (New York, 1963) trans. by Philip Mairet, p.178. It seems more likely that Calvin's understanding should be read the other way around. First, it is usual to learn the general from the particular, but even more important with regard to this point we must recall Calvin's strong Christological emphasis (Cf. Chapter One). Calvin thinks first of God's saving and revealing Work and only second of the Paternal Blessing in nature and history which then may be affirmed.

Section 1. Calvin's Doctrine of God's Providence.

First, how can man know anything about God's Providence? Calvin referring to the author of Psalm 73 says:

> "/He/ by all his reasoning upon it, could not comprehend how God, in the midst of such great disorders and confusions, continued to govern the world.../for/ when men are merely under the guidance of their own understandings, the inevitable consequence is, that they sink under their trouble, not being able by their own deliberations and reasonings to arrive at any certain or fixed conclusions...I readily admit that no man can form a right judgement of the Providence of God, but he who elevates his mind above the earth. /i.e./.. Until God become my schoolmaster, and until I learn by His Word what otherwise my mind, when I come to consider the government of the world, cannot comprehend, I stop short all at once, and understand nothing about the subject. When, therefore, we are here told that men are unfit for contemplating the arrangements of Divine Providence until they obtain wisdom elsewhere than from themselves, how can we attain to wisdom but by submissively receiving what God teaches us by His Word and by His Holy Spirit?"[1]

In sum: faith's knowledge of the Word Which is testified to in Scripture includes a faith in and thereby a knowledge of God's Providence.

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1. Comm. on Ps. 73:16, C.O. 31,682. "...ratiocinando tamen non potuisse assequi quomodo inter tantas perturbationes Deus mundum gubernet. ...quousque perveniant homines ubi proprio sensu duce aguntur: nempe deficere sub molestia, quia nihil certum vel stabile reperiant.... Et sane de providentia Dei neminem fateor recte iudicare, nisi qui supra terram

(a) Calvin on God's Preservation.

The first aspect or grade of God's Providential work is, we have seen, the work of preservation. "After learning that there is a Creator, [faith] must forthwith infer that He is also a Governor and Preserver, and that, not by producing a kind of general motion in the machine of the globe as well as in its parts, but by a special Providence He sustains, cherishes and superintends all things which He has made to the very minutest."[1]

"No one could seriously believe that [God] is [the world's] Creator without feeling convinced that He takes care of His Works."[2] Thus, all who pay attention

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cont. conscendit...[i.e.,]Donec sit Deus mihi magister, et ex eius verbo discam quod alioqui mens mea non capit, in reputanda mundi gubernatione deficio. Quum ergo audimus homines, nisi aliunde sapiant quam ex se ipsis non esse idoneos ad considerandum providentiae Dei ordinem, quod iam erit nostrum sapere nisi obedienter amplecti quod Deus tam verbo suo quam spiritu docet?" Cf. also Inst. I, 17,2.

1. Inst. I, 16,1. "...fides..., nempe ut quem omnium creatorem esse didicit, statim quoque perpetuum moderatorem et conservatorem esse colligat; neque id universali quadam motione tam orbis machinam quam singulas eius partes agitando; sed singulari quadam providentia unumquodque eorum quae condidit, ad minimum usque passerem, sustinendo, fovendo, curando."

2. Ibid. "...nec quisquam serio credit fabricatum esse mundum a Deo, quin sibi persuadeat operum suorum curam habere..."

to the words of Scripture will not attribute events to chance, but "will look farther for the cause and hold that all events whatsover are governed by the secret counsel of God."[1] In order to preserve His creation God directs the path of the sun,[2] directs the seasons,[3] controls the movements of the sky, the air, the earth, and the water[4]; in sum: "nothing occurs but what God has knowingly and willingly decreed".[5]

Calvin speaks at times of a universal Providence and a special Providence.[6] The latter we will discuss more fully as the work of God's concurrence. The former, universal or general Providence we consider to be God's work of preservation, and so it is important to note how Calvin precisely defines it. "It is true,

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1. Inst. I, 16,2. "...causam longius quaeret, ac statuet quoslibet eventus occulto Dei consilio gubernari."
2. Inst. I, 16,2.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. I, 16,3.
5. Ibid. "nihil contingat nisi ab ipso sciente et volente decretum."
6. Cf. Inst. I, 16,4.

indeed, that each species of created objects is moved by a secret instinct of nature, as if they obeyed the eternal command of God, and spontaneously followed the course which God at first appointed. And to this we may refer our Saviour's words that He and His Father have always been at work from the beginning (John 5:17); also the words of Paul that 'in Him we live, are moved and have our being' (Acts 17:28); also the words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who when wishing to establish the divinity of Christ says that He upholds 'all things, by the word of His power' (Hebrews 1:3)."[1] Calvin insists, however, that beyond this general preservation, this general Providence, there is a special Providence (which also in part must be considered as Preservation). For beside guiding in

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1. Inst. I, 16,4. "Verum quidem est, singulas rerum species arcano naturae instinctu moveri, ac si aeterno Dei mandato parerent, et quod semel statuit Deus, sponte fluere. Atque huc referri potest quod dicit Christus (Ioann. 5:17), se et patrem ab initio usque semper fuisse in opere; et quod Paulus docet (Act. 17:28), in ipso nos vivere, moveri, et esse; quod etiam autor epistolae ad Hebraeos, Christi divinitatem probare volens, dicit (Heb. 1:3), potenti eius nutu sustineri omnia."

a general way the motion and instincts of the objects in His creation God exercises a special paternal preservation; "not a drop of rain falls without the express command of God...not a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of [the] Father".[1]

God's general Providence, Calvin tells us, is God at work "continuing the order of nature"[2]; by His special Providence God adapts His creatures to a certain and special purpose.[3] (We note that God's special Providence in part must be, then, an aspect of God's preserving, concurring, and governing. However, most important we see again that God's general Providence or preservation is His work of continuing nature intact.)

Thus Calvin speaks repeatedly of God preserving His creation. How precisely does God preserve His creation? Calvin begins to outline his answer in Institutes I, 17,11.

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1. Inst. I, 16,5.

2. Cf. Inst. I, 16,7. "Unde colligitur, non tantum generalem eius providentiam vigere in creaturis, ut naturae ordinem continuet; sed in certum et proprium finem aptari, admirabili eius consilio."

How is it, Calvin enquires there, that the confidence of the saints in God's preserving activity never falters? How is it the saints feel most assured when life appears most chaotic? Why when assailed by the devil and by wickedness, do the saints not despair? Because, Calvin answers, "they call to mind that the devil, and the whole train of the ungodly, are, in all directions, held in by the hand of God as with a bridle, so that they can neither conceive of any mischief, nor plan what they have conceived, nor howsoever much they may have planned, move a single finger to perpetrate, unless in so far as He permits, nay, unless insofar as He commands; they are not only bound by His fetters, but are even forced to do Him service..."[1] In sum, God preserves His creation not only by not abandoning it to the evil powers (the devil, the ungodly, the chaotic), but God actually preserves His creation by taking command over and using - i.e., keeping in His power - the powers of

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1. Inst. I, 17,11.

evil.[1] Calvin understands that God by His Power not only holds the devil in check, but forces all the work that He permits the devil to do, to be done in His service.[2] Insofar as the devil has any power, he is allowed it by God. This is not because God wills evil to be done, but rather God allows a bit of the devil's work in order to visit His wrath upon us His creatures, who continue in rebelliousness, in order to chastise us that we might reform.[3]

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1. "Calvin allowed his thoughts to dwell particularly upon the order that God had implanted in creation, and the order which he has set in human affairs, for it is in this orderliness of things that we are directed into the way of honouring God aright and into the proper employment of His gifts to man. But since the order of creation and of human society has been perverted through the sin and fall of man, true knowledge of God carries with it restoration of order in accordance with God's goodness and will..." So T.F.Torrance in his "Introduction"to A Calvin Treasury, Ed. by William F. Keesecker (London, 1963) p. ix. Prof. Torrance's statement serves to remind us that order is by no means a neutral thing in Calvin's thought. Disorder, the perversion of order, comes through sin and fall. New order comes with revelation and redemption. Thus God to preserve, to maintain order (does not, as Calvin likes to remind us, sit idly by, but) acts against sin, against evil.

2. Inst. I, 17,11.
3. Cf. Inst. III, 4,31.

This whole theme is developed most fully in Chapter 18, Book I of the Institutes; it is here that we come upon Calvin's treatment of the central issues of God's preserving work. At the end of our Chapter Two we saw that God's goodness consists in His Will to preserve us.- God's Goodness - His Will to preserve us - Calvin now argues, is total; His Power to effect His Will is also total. Thus, if Calvin is to proclaim and delineate God's preserving work, he must reconcile God's total Goodness and God's total Power.in the face of the great evil at large in the world. This is the task he sets for himself in Institutes I,18. If we follow his argument we will discover how Calvin understands God's action in the face of evil and thus we will understand how-according to Calvin's theology - God preserves His creatures.

The first argument Calvin considers, as an explanation of evil in the world, is that view which denies to God all power. Certainly no one could ever attribute such an argument to Calvin who says, "From the first chapter of Job we learn that Satan appears in the presence of God to receive his orders, just as do

the angels who obey spontaneously. The manner and the end are different, but still the fact is that he cannot attempt anything without the will of God."[1] Calvin means to repudiate any notion that evil is done outside of God's scope; not only is evil done within the sphere of God's control, but God controls it by His own power and will! "Whatever men, or even Satan himself, devise, God holds the helm, and makes all their efforts serve the execution of His Judgements".[2] Examples: God does not merely permit Satan to deceive Ahab, He wills that Ahab be deceived and to effect this purpose He uses the agency of Satan.[3] The Jews and Pilate evilly purposed to destroy Christ; they destroyed Him but He was most fundamentally delivered to death by the Will and foreknowledge of God.[4] Men (e.g. Pharoah in Exodus 4) do not simply on their own harden their hearts against God - it is true that a man may harden

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1. Inst. I, 18,1. "Exprimo capite Iob scimus satanam se coram Deo sistere ad excipienda iussa, non minus quam angelos, qui sponte obediunt; diverso quidem id modo et fine, sed tamen ne quid aggredi possit, nisi volente Deo."

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Calvin cites Acts 2:23 in Inst. I, 18,1.

his own heart, but God is the ultimate cause of the hardening.[1] "The sum of the whole is this: since the Will of God is...the cause of all things, all counsels and actions of men must be held to be governed by His Providence; so that He not only exerts His power in the elect, who are guided by the Holy Spirit, but also forces the reprobate to do Him service [by controlling the evil one who is the lord of the reprobate]."[2]

Calvin certainly grants total power to God; it seems no one may seriously question this. But has he succeeded in attributing omnipotence to God in such a manner as not to call into question God's goodness? i.e., God's desire to preserve. Calvin now mentions the argument that while God is omnipotent He has two contrary wills, one good and the other evil; one secretly decreeing what He has openly forbidden in His known will. Calvin wastes no time in letting the reader know how utterly repugnant such a view is, not just to him but (in his judgment) to Scripture and the Holy Spirit.[3] He, then, proceeds against the argument

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1. Inst. I, 18,2.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. I, 18,3.

by saying,"The will of God is not at variance with itself. It undergoes no change. God makes no pretense of not willing what He wills, but while in Himself the will is one and undivided, to us it appears manifold, because from the feebleness of our intellect, we cannot comprehend how, though after a different manner, He wills and wills not the same thing."[1] While generally we can not understand how God "wills and wills not the same thing", there are nevertheless ways of illustrating the point. The crucifixion provides one illustration. Herod and Pilate conspired to put Christ to death. For them this was an evil act. God did not will an evil act, but He did will the death of Christ - for our redemption. Herod and Pilate will an evil deed; God wills a good deed. God on the one hand, and the Conspirators on the other will the same act; but in it God wills a good and the Conspirators will an evil.

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1. Inst. I, 18,3. "...ideo vel secum pugnat, vel mutatur Dei voluntas, vel quod vult se nolle simulat; sed quum una et simplex in ipso sit, nobis multiplex apparet: quia pro mentis nostrae imbecillitate, quomodo idem diverso modo nolit fieri et velit, non capimus."

Thus God and the Conspirators will the same thing (Christ's death) and yet not the same thing for God wills it for a good and the Conspirators for an evil. (What is also incidentally emphasized is how God uses the evil act for His good purpose.) Thus God controls evil and yet is only Good in Himself. Calvin adds a second illustration drawn from the work of Augustine in order to indicate again how God can will something to be done which he forbids us to do:

> "Man sometimes with a good will wishes something which God does not will, as when a good son wishes his father to live, while God wills him to die. Again, it may happen that man with a bad will wishes what God wills righteously, as when a bad son wishes his father to die and God also wills it. The former wishes what God wills not; the latter wishes what God also wills. And yet the filial affection of the former is more consonant to the good will of God, though willing differently, than the unnatural affection of the latter, though willing the same thing; so much does approbation or condemnation depend on what it is befitting in man, and what in God to will, and to what end the will of each has respect. For the things which God rightly wills, He accomplishes by the evil wills of bad men."[1]

Assuming the death of the father, in this case, to be a good, we again see that God may not will what faithful men will, and may will the same thing as do evil, wretched men - and in fact even use their agency, yet remain a just and good God.

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1. August. Enchirid. ad Laurent. Cap. 101.

While this point may be allowed Calvin, we have so far allowed one question to be begged, and we must now for a moment turn to it. Since Calvin maintains God is in no way responsible for evil, how does Calvin understand evil to have entered the world?

> "As to the first man, we must hold he was created perfectly righteous and fell by his own will; and hence it comes about that by his own fault he brought destruction on himself and on all his race. Adam fell, though not without God's knowledge and ordination, and destroyed himself and his posterity; yet this neither mitigates his guilt nor involves God in any blame. For we must always remember that he voluntarily deprived himself of the rectitude he had received from God, voluntarily gave himself to the service of sin and Satan, and voluntarily precipitated himself into destruction. One excuse is suggested, that he could not evade what God had decreed. But his voluntary transgression is enough and more than enough to establish his guilt. For the proper and genuine cause of sin is not God's hidden counsel but the evident will of man."[1]

Calvin does not see any contradiction in saying man

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1. De Aet. Dei Praed., C.O. 8,314. "Quod si ad primum hominem veniatur illum, quum integer creatus foret, sponte cecidisse: ac inde factum esse, ut sibi et suis exitium propria culpa accersiverit. Iam esti nonnisi sciente atque ita ordinante Deo cecidit Adam, seque et posteros perdidit: minime tamen id vel ad levandam eius culpam, vel ad Deum crimine implicandum facit. Semper enim hoc spectandum, quod rectitudine, quam a Deo acceperat, sponte se privavit, sponte se peccato et Satanae addixit in servitutem, sponte in exitium se praecipitem dedit. Una excusatio obtenditur: quod a Deo decretum erat, non potuisse effugere. Sed ad reatum satis superque voluntaria transgressio sufficit. Neque enim propria genuinaque peccati causa est arcanum Dei consilium: sed aperta hominus voluntas."

fell voluntarily into sin and did so in accordance with the foreknowledge and decree of God. Before proceeding to deal with this, we might note again that evil itself, or Satan himself, is not, of course, the creation of God; as we have seen, God created order and that order is good; anything which disrupts that order is not good, is evil; disorder is evil. As the passage above shows man was created righteous, he was in the proper order of things. But by his own will he disrupted God's order, and this is what is meant by saying he served Satan. "Thus by Adam's own fault destruction, disorder or evil was brought down on the whole race. But, we recall Calvin's insistence that God is omnipotent! So this event, although it accords with man's will, and is therefore man's fault, is also according to God's ordination. How can God be thought to be blameless? Calvin again invokes Augustine, following the latter's argument thus: "In a wonderful and ineffable way, what was done contrary to His Will was yet not done without His Will, because it would not have been done at all unless He had allowed it... [and willingly permitted it]...For the principle that here operates cannot be denied: men and angels as to

themselves did what God did not will, but as to the omnipotence of God they were by no means able to effect it...in sinning they did what God did not will in order that God through their evil will might do what He willed."[1] We have the same answer again; i.e., to return to our cardinal example, man and God will Christ's death; man wills it voluntarily and sinfully, hoping to gain in the disorder; God wills it for man's goodness, order, in sum for his redemption.[2]

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1. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O.8,315. "ut miro et ineffabili modo non fuerit praeter eius voluntatem factum, quod etiam contra eius voluntatem factum est: quia non fieret, si non sineret, Nec utique nolens sinit, sed volens. Negari enim, quod sillic principium sumit, non potest: tam hominem quam angelos apostatos, quantum ad ipsos attinet, quod Deus voluit, fecisse: quantum vero ad Dei omnipotentiam, nullo modo efficere id voluisse....sic peccando fecisse quod nolebat Deus, ut per malam eorum voluntatem faceret Deus quod volebat."

2. Calvin reintroduces this example in Inst. I,18,4. "If I am not mistaken I have already shown clearly how the same act at once betrays the guilt of man, and manifests the righteousness of God...Augustine's answer here will be always sufficient: 'Since God delivered Christ, and Christ delivered His Body, and Judas delivered His Lord, why, in this delivery, is God righteous and man guilty? Because there is but one act involved we must answer that /God is righteous and man guilty because/ they did the act for different reasons.'(August. Ep. 48 ad Vincentium.)...Certainly in regard to the treachery of Judas, there is just as little ground to throw the blame of the crime upon God, because He was both pleased that His Son should be delivered up to death and did deliver Him, as to ascribe to Judas the praise of our redemption."

It is in this manner, then, that God preserves His creatures. Although sinful man wills evil this evil willing can not bring about man's destruction. For "anything that is done without the will of God is still [by His Grace] not done contrary to it, because it could not be done if He did not permit it; nor does He permit it unwillingly, but willingly; nor would He Who is Good permit [this] evil [of man's] to be done were He not omnipotent to bring good out of evil."[1] In sum: man wills what for man is evil; God, foreknowing this, wills through this human will and action, His own purpose which is Good, which is the preservation of His creature.

This final conclusion leaves still open the question of the relation between human causality and God's ordination. Thus we turn to the question of Calvin's understanding of God's concurrence.

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1. Calvin in Inst. I, 18,3 citing Augustine's Comm. on Ps. 111:2. "...non fiat praeter eius voluntatem quod etiam contra eius fit voluntatem: quia non fieret si non sineret; nec utique nolens sinit, sed volens, nec sineret bonus fieri male, nisi omnipotens etiam de malo facere posset bene."

(b) Calvin on God's concurrence.

The whole problem of the relation of divine ordination to human causality, or more broadly, the whole problem of God's Sovereignty in relation to man's freedom is understood by Calvin in terms of two orders of necessity: the natural order of necessity and the supernatural order of necessity, the former being, so to speak, contained in the latter.[1] The natural order is the order of human causality, or proximate causes. This order rests, however, within the supernatural order, in which God is the cause. Because the natural order rests in the supernatural God is understood as the remote cause of all events in the natural order. An act in the natural order can be caused by man, and if that act is sinful man is responsible for his sin; God is the more remote cause, but because He does not will sin (although willing the same act that sinful man wills) and wills and brings good out of the sinful acts of man, He can in no way be considered to be the author

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1. An interesting question to be raised in Section 2 is: does Calvin understand these orders as corresponding (in a way in which modern theologians would) to world history and covenant history!

of sin. God's freedom in all this is His freedom to be Lord of the creature, who needs must do His will. The real freedom which is man's in all this, is the freedom to do the will of God - this is the purpose of the creature's life, and thus the true creature does this, is free to do this. This <u>is</u> freedom and not the tyrannical movement by God of automatons. For while the natural sphere is set within the supernatural, and thus God in His Sovereignty is the ultimate cause of every act* nevertheless the creature is not aware of what will be the issue of all things and thus he must act in the natural, seemingly contingent sphere as if nothing were determined about anything; i.e., the creature must choose. We have outlined Calvin's position; now we must substantiate that this is his position and see it in more detail.

First, then, what of the sphere or order of supernatural necessity? "First, it must be observed that the will of God is the cause of all things that

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* God is the ultimate cause in a Gracious way; for even where the creature commits an act against freedom, i.e., against the doing of God's will, God can create freedom (the doing of His Will) out of it;(we recall Calvin's use of Augustine: 'that is not done without God's will which is done contrary to it').

happen in the world."[1] Even those events which seem most fortuitous God directs by His counsel; even in such a case where a branch from a tree, or an axe slips unintentionally from a man's hand, and strikes a passerby on the head.[2] "For us", then, Calvin says, "the free will of God disposes of all things."[3] "But it seems absurd (absurdum) to remove contingency from the world; by contingency /Calvin/ means that things can happen either one way or another."[4] "I say then," Calvin argues, "that though all things are ordered by the counsel and certain arrangement of God, to us, however, they are fortuitous. Not because we imagine that Fortune rules the world and mankind, and turns all things upside down at random...but as the order, method, end and necessity of events, are, for the most part, hidden in the counsel of God, and not comprehended by the mind of man, though it is certain that they are

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1. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,353. "Primo loco videndum est, quomodo Dei voluntas rerum omnium quae in mundo geruntur causa sit."

2. Ibid.

3. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,354. "...nobis libera Dei voluntas omnium sit moderatrix."

4. Ibid.

produced by the will of God, they have the appearance of being fortuitous, such being the form under which they present themselves to us, whether considered in their own nature, or estimated according to our knowledge and judgement."[1] Calvin, to illustrate the point, offers us the example of a merchant, who with trustworthy friends enters a forest, imprudently strays from them and falls among robbers and is murdered. Calvin maintains that his death "was not only foreseen by the eye of God, but had been fixed by His decree."[2] "Still, in relation to our capacity of discernment, all these things appear fortuitous."[3] The Christian "will consider

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1. Inst. I, 16,9. "Dicam igitur, utcunque ordinentur omnia Dei consilio certa dispensatione, nobis tamen esse fortuita. Non quod fortunam reputemus mundo ac hominibus dominari, temereque omnia sursum deorsum volutare...sed quodiam eorum quae eveniunt, ordo, ratio, finis, necessitas, ut plurimum in Dei consilio latet, et humana opinione non apprehenditur, quasi fortuita sunt, quae certum est ex Dei voluntate provenire. Non enim aliam imaginem prae se ferunt, aut in natura sua consideratae, aut secundum notitiam nostram iudiciumque aestimatae."

2. Inst. I, 16,9.
3. Ibid.

that every circumstance which occurred in that person's death was fortuitous [and yet] will have no doubt that the Providence of God overruled it and guided fortune to His own end...nothing will happen that the Lord has not provided."[1]

Calvin particularly liked one example[2], for the purpose of illustrating the order of supernatural necessity and the order of natural necessity and their relation, namely, the example of the bones of Christ. God assumed a body like ours, and thus the bones of Christ were frangible. They were subject to natural causes; but God decreed that Christ's bones should not be broken. With regard to the natural sphere of necessity Christ's bones were frangible, with regard to the supernatural order of necessity they were not. And while, Calvin tells us, this order of natural necessity is determined by the supernatural, he does not at all reject contingency, in regard to human understanding.[3] Christ's bones could never have been

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1. Inst. I, 16,9.

2. Since he used it more than once: Cf. Inst. I,16,9 and De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,354.

3. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,354. "Iam vero quia divinitatus positum naturae ordinem intueri nos decet, contingentiam, quoad sensum nostrum, minime reiicio."

broken, but this would not have been apparent to anyone who saw Him.

Calvin would not have us who are in the natural order of necessity ignore contingency and choice because of our belief in the supernatural decree of God. For example, the man of faith may well believe that God has made the earth fruitful and decreed that he, man, should be blessed with food. This does not mean the man of faith should become idle and not seek his food. "Hence as to future time, because the issue of all things is hidden from us, each ought so to apply himself to his work, as though nothing were determined about any part. Or, to speak more properly, he ought so to hope for the success that issues from the command of God in all things, as to reconcile to himself the contingency of unknown things and the certain providence of God."[1]

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1. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,354. "Ergo quantum ad futurum tempus, quia nos adhuc rerum eventus latent, perinde ad officium suum intentus esse quisque debet, ac si nihil in utramvis partem constitutum foret. Vel, ut magis proprie loquar, talem in omnibus, quae ex Dei mandato aggreditur, successum sperare debet, ut in rebus sibi incognitis contingentiam cum certa Dei providentia conciliet."

The man of faith then has confidence "because he is persuaded that his pains are not airily thrown to chance"[1] but he is also charged to act responsibly in a seeming order of contingency. We must now turn our attention to the question of responsibility: what is God doing and what is man doing? But one important comment first needs to be made. This responsibility is not freedom as such, for Calvin. Calvin was too good a student of Scripture to think in this fashion. Freedom in Scripture is always freedom from sin, freedom from law, freedom from death - in sum, freedom from sarx. The creature freed from these is freed to be the true creature of God, to be who he really is, to be in Christ! This is freedom.

Yet to be free means to be a partner - a Covenant partner of God. A partner, by God's free Grace, is not a brute animal nor an automaton, but a being who can reject partnership. Freedom comes in the accepting, and not as such in the possibility of accepting or rejecting. Yet acceptance (which is freedom) is not

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1. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,354.

acceptance unless the possibility of rejecting is present. Thus, it is important to understand the responsibility of man alongside of God's free and total Lordship. Calvin has upheld the latter, we must now try to see a bit more of his understanding of the former.

Calvin's general argument, with reference to man's responsibility, runs: man is a responsible agent in the natural order of necessity; this order is, of course, dependent upon the supernatural order. Nevertheless in the former sphere there is natural causation or better, there are proximate causes, for which man is responsible, even though God is the remote and ultimate cause of every event. Man in his own sphere, insofar as he can see, is in the midst of contingency and is called in it to choose and do the orderly and shun the disorderly; he therefore is responsible (proximately) for maintaining order in his sphere.

Calvin has maintained that God is the cause of all events. What, then, can he say to those who, hearing this, say: since God has decreed in advance the issue of all events why should one avoid a road where robbers are waiting? when ill why call a doctor? if in bad health why avoid rich foods? why pray at all? If God

has decreed what the issue of events is to be why should the adulterer or thief be punished since he is but executing God's decree? Why should a son do anything other than await his parents' death with indifference rather than seeking remedies for their illnesses? Indeed, does not such an acknowledgement of God's Lordship, in effect, give to crime the name of virtue?[1]

Calvin begins his reply by quoting Proverbs 16:9 : "a man's mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps". Calvin interprets this text to mean "that the eternal decrees of God by no means prevent us from proceeding, under His will, to provide for ourselves, and arrange all our affairs.../for while/ He...has fixed the boundaries of our life, He has at the same time intrusted us with the care of it."[2] In other words God doesn't simply decree over our heads, as it were, but gives to His partner in the natural sphere,

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1. Inst. I, 17,3.

2. Inst. I, 17,4. "significans aeternis Dei decretis nos minime impediri quominus sub eius voluntate et prospiciamus nobis, et omnia nostra dispensemus.... Namque is qui vitam nostram suis terminis limitavit, eius simul curam apud nos deposuit...."

means with which the creature participates with God in God's Providence! It is to this end that God "provides us with the means of preserving [our life], forewarns us of the dangers to which we are exposed, and supplies cautions and remedies that we may not be caught unawares."[1] Our duty is clear, since God has given us means to rule with Him - we are to rule; i.e., since we have been given the means by which to order and defend life - we are to defend it.[2]

Those who took the view that Calvin's teaching produces fatalism, now receive their reply; they say Calvin's view implicitly recommends the view that if a danger is not fatal it will not hurt us, and if it is fatal it can not be resisted by precaution. Calvin asks them: "But what if dangers are not fatal, precisely because the Lord has furnished you with the means of warding them off, and surmounting them?... [i.e.,] the Lord enjoins you to guard against a danger just because He wills it not to be fatal."[3] Calvin sees a joint rule of the natural sphere - the natural sphere resting always, of course, on the supernatural

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1. Inst. I, 17,4.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

sphere; in the natural sphere God does not simply interpose,but uses the agency of His creatures.*[1] In this ruling man shares in responsibility for the order in the natural sphere.

That man who in the natural sphere follows what God commands joins in God's rule - by doing the will of God. Now it is also true that the man who violates God's command is still following God's will or ordination but only in the sense that God "in His boundless wisdom well knows how to use bad instruments for good purposes."[2] Thus, while God uses bad men - bad instruments - only the bad acts of men are responsible for the bad order in the natural sphere.- God never originated in the

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1. Inst. I, 17,4. "Ideo ante admonui, providentiam Dei non semper nudam occurrere, sed prout adhibitis mediis eam Deus quodamodo vestit."

2. Inst. I, 17,5. "...quia pro immensa suae sapientiae magnitudine, ad bene agendum malis instrumentis uti bene probeque novit."

* The creature's acts are proximate causes, for which the creature is responsible; for God rules through His creatures and with them, not simply over them. (However, God does ultimately weld all the proximate causes in conformity with His will.)

natural sphere disorder of any kind. He uses disordering agents, but uses them only to bring order. God's use of bad instruments Calvin compares with the sun's rays upon a dead body.[1] A dead body left out in the open in the sun will raise up a foetid odour. Yet the odour does not have its origin in the sun's rays; they are not foetid.

It is evident, then, that the man of faith, while acknowledging God's Lordship, will pay due regard to inferior causes.[2] He will thereby understand man to be the sole bringer of disorder - and not man as created by God but man who gave up of his own will goodness and order for disorder.[3]

We are now ready to say what God does and what man does with respect to man's life: <u>God and man share, by God's Grace, the rule over the natural sphere</u>. This sharing by God with man, outlined at the outset of <u>Institutes</u> I, 17,4, is that special Providence of God which we have called, for convenience sake, concurrence. This is what Calvin called "the care of particular

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1. <u>Inst.</u> I, 17,5.
2. <u>Inst.</u> I, 17,6.
3. <u>Inst.</u> II, 2.

parts" (Cf. above) and he maintained that nothing happens to these particular parts but by His will and assent. Assent here has a particular meaning - for Calvin tells us that God does not prevent us from providing - in fact it is His will that "we provide - for ourselves and arrange all our own affairs"- we are intrusted with the care of our lives.[1] God cares for the particular parts of His creation by letting His creature will and choose within the general decree of order He provides. He then assents, affirms and upholds this activity of His creature by bringing His will - our good - out of it.[2]

The man of faith then, will indeed understand all good fortune to be the gift of God, and all adversity to be divine admonition,[3] but he will not overlook inferior or proximate causes. It is in this discussion that the seemingly abstract discussion of two spheres of necessity becomes existential. For if a man receive goodness is it not natural for him to thank the ministers of this goodness as well as God? "In sum, in the blessing which he receives he will revere and extol God as the principal author, but will also honour...those

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1. Inst. I, 17,4.
2. Cf. Inst. I, 17,6 and Inst. I, 17,4.
3. Inst. I, 17, 8,9.

by whose hand God has been pleased to show him kindness."[1] If someone does me a kindness, he really does it, he is responsible for it and I am properly grateful to him. But I am also grateful to God Who moves men in love and kindness towards each other. There is no contradiction in saying both God and a man are responsible for a man's love for me.* But such a statement does suggest that God as the Author of love ("In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation of our sin" I John 4:10) cooperates in His Gracious condescension with man; i.e., He concurs with man.

Calvin maintains,we believe, a solid argument upholding the Lordship of God and the responsibility of man. He has shown how God concurs with man by providing man with the means of co-ruling the natural

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1. Inst. I, 17,9.

* What if a man rather than receiving goodness should sustain loss through imprudence? The man of faith will accept it as the admonition of the Lord "but at the same time he will impute it to himself." Inst. I, 17,9.

sphere with Him.* The question arises, is this Lordship of God, by which God preserves His creature, and in which the creature is given a sharing role, firm and steady?[1] Does God's rule move steadily toward its purpose and fulfilment in Him?

(c)Calvin on God's Government

Calvin develops his argument for God's government, for God's rule over against the Stoic doctrine of fate and the Epicurean doctrine of chance.[2] The problem Calvin discussed in relation to God's preservation was the problem of evil; the problem in relation to God's concurrence was to reconcile God's Gracious and total Lordship with responsible creaturehood; the

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* Although man shares in God's rule, still God's will to preserve His creature and His power over the evil powers disallows the creature from ever letting sarx in to the extent that it ultimately can destroy God's creation. God's goodness can not be defeated. Cf. above on "Preservation".

1. Inst. I, 17,12.

2. Barth comments that both the Lutherans and the Reformed, at the Reformation, opposed Stoicism and Epicureanism, but the Lutherans broke more sharply against Stoicism and the Reformed against Epicureanism. Thus the Reformed had to offer a stronger defense against the charge of consorting with the Stoic doctrine of fate than with the Epicurean doctrine of chance. Cf. K.Barth, Church Dogmatics III/3, p.162.

problem in relation to God's rule is to maintain that God rules purposefully, i.e., God gives a purpose to human life and history, and does not leave history to chance or fate.[1] Calvin, we saw from his definition of God's government, maintains that God controls human history. "Then there must come to mind His particular care of the human race, by which it comes about that the life and death of men, the condition of public kingdoms and peoples no less than of private individuals and everything commonly ascribed to fortune, all depend upon a single heavenly control."[2]

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1. The purpose of God's rule is briefly summarized in Inst. II, 15,5: "For the Father has given all power to the Son, that by His hand He may govern, cherish, sustain us, keep us under His guardianship and give assistance to us. Thus, while we wander far as pilgrims from God, Christ interposes, that He may gradually bring us to full communion with God."

2. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8,349. "Tum peculiaris generis humani cura in mentem nobis venire debet: qua fit ut vita et mors hominum, tam publica regnorum et gentium quam privata cuiusque conditio, et quidquid fortunae adscribi solet ab una coelesti moderatione pendeat."

"Let the reader remember that what is called Providence does not mean that God, sitting idly in heaven, looks on at what is taking place in the world, but means that He, as it were, holds the helm and overrules all events. Hence His providence extends not less to the hand than to the eye (i.e., He not only sees, but ordains what He wills to be done). When Abraham said to his son 'God will provide'(Genesis 22:8), he meant not merely to assert that the future event was foreknown to God, but to resign the management of an unknown business to the will of Him whose province it is to bring perplexed and dubious matters to a happy result."[1] Calvin concludes: "Hence it appears that Providence consists in action."[2]

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1. Inst. I, 16,4. "teneant lectores providentiam vocari, non qua Deus e coelo otiosus speculetur quae in mundo fiunt, sed qua veluti clavum tenens, eventus omnes moderatur. Ita non minus ad manus quam ad oculos pertinet (C'est à dire, que non seulement il voit, mais aussi ordonne ce qu'il veut estre fait). Nec enim, quum filio suo dicebat Abraham: Deus providebit, tantum volebat praescium futuri eventus asserere, sed curam rei incognitae in eius voluntatem reiicere, qui rebus perplexis et confusis exitum dare solet."

2. Ibid. "Unde sequitur, providentiam in actu locari."

Who is it that Calvin is disagreeing with, not only in this passage, but from the outset of his treatment of God's Providence?[1] Who is it that believes that God sits idly in heaven leaving the control of the world to lesser powers? On the one hand the Epicureans and their kind who represent the Deity as having resigned the management of the world to Fortune[2] and on the other hand the Stoics who resign the management of the world to fate.[3] In treating of Calvin's understanding of the problem of evil and of the problem of God's Lordship and man's responsibility we have already seen how he , in large measure, contrasts God's government to the doctrines of chance and fate. We can with some brevity, therefore, examine specifically how Calvin contrasts God's government first with the doctrine of fate and then with the doctrine of fortune. By seeing what Calvin rejects with regard to the rule of the world, we shall

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1. Inst. I, 16,1.
2. Inst. I, 16,4.
3. Cf. Inst. I, 16,8.

see more clearly what his proclamation "God rules" means. He rejects five arguments of the Stoics and four of the Epicureans.

I. Stoics.

(1)The Stoic understands fate to be ruling the world, and thus the rule of the world resides in things; Calvin maintains that the government of the world resides in God Himself. "In short [the Stoic] imagines that all things are sufficiently sustained by the energy divinely infused into them at first. But faith must penetrate deeper.... it infers that God is...a Governor and Preserver, and that, not by producing a kind of general motion in the machine of the globe as well as in each of its parts, but by a special Providence [He is] sustaining, cherishing, superintending all things...."[1] Again, "We do not with the Stoics imagine a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes, and a kind of involved series contained in nature, but we hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things - that from the

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1. Inst. I, 16,1.

remotest eternity, according to His own wisdom, He decreed what He was to do, and now by His power executes what He decreed. Hence we maintain that, by His Providence, not only heaven and earth and inanimate creatures, but also the counsels and wills of men are so governed as to move exactly in the course which He has destined."[1]

(2)The Stoic understands God to be bound by the order of things; Calvin maintains God is free and freely acts. Calvin's point is most specifically emphasized when he says that the Providence of God "at one time works with means, at another without means, and at another against means."[2] Means here is a translation of medium which means visible or physical things.[2] Calvin proclaims God is free over physical things and in fact controls them - He can just as simply act without or against "things" as with them. In another place Calvin remarks that

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1. Inst. I, 16,8.

2. Inst. I, 17,1. "ut nunc mediis interpositis operetur, nunc sine mediis, nunc contra omnia media." For meaning of medium Cf. Summa Theologiae, Part I, Question 54, Article 1, Reply 3.

"those who confine the providence of God within narrow limits, as if He allowed things to be borne along... according to a perpetual law of nature, defraud God of His glory...."[1] The notion that God is bound to the order of things is repugnant to Calvin: "For what, /he/ asks, is meant by government, if it be not to preside so as to regulate the destiny of that over which you preside?"[2] Calvin says the proclamation of God's government must not merely include the uhderstanding that God maintains the order of nature, but must include the understanding that "He takes special charge of every one of His works."[3]

Calvin puts the Stoic point thus:

> "Assuming that the beginning of motion belongs to God, but that all things move spontaneously or causally, according to the impulse which nature gives, the vicissitudes of day and night, summer and winter will be the work of God; inasmuch as He, in assigning the office of each, appointed a certain law, namely that they should always with uniform tenor observe the same course, day succeeding night, month succeeding month and year succeeding year. But as at one time, excessive heat, combined with

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1. Inst. I, 16,3.
2. Inst. I, 16,4.
3. Ibid.

> draught, burns up the fields; at another time excessive rain rots the crops, while sudden devastation is produced by tempests and storms of hail, these will not be the works of God, except insofar as they are produced by ... natural causes."[1]

What is wrong with this view, this view that binds God to the order of things? "There is no place left either to the paternal favour or the judgements of God."[2] And such paternal oversight Calvin reminds his reader is the constant testimony of Scripture, e.g. Psalm 146:9, Matthew 10:29, Psalm 113:5-6.

(3)Calvin, as we have seen, took pains to maintain that there is a natural sphere in which events are subject to natural necessity or natural causes. This sphere rests within a supernatural sphere, and thus while there are natural necessities they are subject to divine ordination (or, perhaps we may say, super-natural necessity). The Stoic confuses these two. kinds of necessity. Calvin indicates this in De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione when he says "The nature of the Stoics' supposition is known. They weave their fate out of a Gordian complex of causes. In this they

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1. Inst. I, 16,5.
2. Ibid.

involve God Himself, making golden chains, as in the fable, with which to bind Him so that He becomes subject to inferior causes. [The fantastic aspect of this Stoic doctrine is, says Calvin, that they make the supernatural order rest in the natural order rather than understanding the natural as resting in the supernatural]...Let the Stoics have their fate; for us, the free will of God disposes all things. [Yet Calvin does not deny contingency, does not deny a natural sphere - he simply sees it resting in God's sphere.] It would be absurd to remove contingency from the world,"[1] he says. For while all things are ordered by God, their order and issue are hidden from us - we are in a sphere of apparent contingency.[2] God means us, then, to act responsibly in a sphere of apparent choice; the man of faith lives in the assurance that God is, however, ultimately ordering His world. The Stoic does not allow that God is overruling and bringing order to the contingent, but as the above quote shows the Stoic doctrine is the reverse of

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1. De Aet. Praed. Dei, C.O. 8, 353-54.
2. Inst. I, 16,9.

Calvin's, making God's order subject to the causes or necessities of the natural order.

(4)The Stoic doctrine of fate is mechanistic; because Calvin understands God's rule as paternal he can maintain that God allows His creature real freedom and responsibility.

While the Stoics, with other philosophers concur with Paul, that in God "'we live are moved and have our being'(Acts 17:28) yet they are far from having a serious apprehension of the Grace which He commends /Calvin tells us/ for they have not the least relish for that special care in which alone the paternal favour of God is discerned."[1] "We do not with the Stoics imagine a necessity consisting of a perpetual chain of causes, and a kind of involved series contained in nature, but we hold that God is the disposer and ruler of all things - that from the remotest eternity, according to His own wisdom, He decreed what He was to do, and now by His power executes what He decreed."[2] One may quickly discern, and the Stoic

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1. Inst. I, 16,1.
2. Inst. I, 16,8.

would not deny, that the Stoic doctrine is one of unqualified determinism. The creature is moved entirely by natural necessities - he is in no sense free to determine anything by his own will or judgement. As we have seen Calvin avoids such determinism. For the creature lives in a natural sphere of proximate causes, and while God overrules this sphere, nevertheless God allows the creature the place of co-ruler in the natural sphere; i.e., the creature is made responsible in a sphere of contingent occurrences, even though God has the will and the power to bring to order what the creature may disorder. Sin itself is a testimony that there is an area of real initiative left to man by God. The fact of man's disorder, of man's sin, demonstrates that Calvin could not be a determinist; he has had to account for contingency and human free will - for in no sense can sin be thought to be a necessity in the supernatural!

(5)Such a suggestion is repugnant to Calvin who insists that God is in no way the author of evil,

although He is its Controller.[1] On the other hand the Stoic must readily concede that his deity has posited evil as well as good in the necessity of things; for since all, for the Stoic, is determined by the necessities in nature, and since there is evil, then evil is a necessity in nature. We have seen how, in disputing Stoicism, and yet maintaining God's omnipotence, Calvin argued that while God controls all - even Satan - He is in no way the Author of evil. For man may will an event in the natural sphere and it is evil; but God may supernaturally will the same event for good, i.e., for our order and preservation. To illustrate the point Calvin refers us to Augustine's example: the Crucifixion. "...how /can/...the same act at once betray the guilt of man and the righteousness of God/?/...'Since God delivered Christ, and Christ delivered His Body, and Judas delivered His Lord, why, in this delivery, is God righteous and man guilty? Because there is but one act involved we must answer

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1. Inst. I, 18. Chapter title: "Deum ita impiorum opera uti, et animos flectere ad exsequenda sua iudicia, ut purus ipse ab omni labe maneat."

that /God is righteous and man guilty because/ they did the act for different reasons' (August. Ep.48 ad Vincentium)...Certainly in regard to the treachery of Judas, there is just as little ground to throw the blame of the crime upon God, because He was both pleased that His Son should be delivered up to death and did deliver Him, as to ascribe to Judas the praise of our redemption."[1]

II. The Epicureans.

(1)The first and major doctrine of the Epicureans with regard to the rule of the world is to resign its direction to blind, inconsequent, capricious and oscillating chance or fortune. Calvin replies to this view: "we must consider the Providence of God, as taught in Scripture, is opposed to fortune and fortuitous causes. By an erroneous opinion prevailing in all ages, an opinion almost universally prevailing in our own day - viz. that all things happen fortuitously - the true doctrine of Providence has not only been obscured but almost buried."[2] According to this "erroneous

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1. Inst. I, 18,4.
2. Inst. I, 16,2.

opinion", "there is nothing in providence...to prevent creatures from being moved contingently, or to prevent man from turning himself in this direction or that, according to the mere freedom of his own will."[1] This view attributes to God all power, but not the direction or ordination of the events in the world.[2] This view maintains that"man is moved by God according to the pleasure of His nature, but man himself gives the movement any direction he desires."[3] In reply Calvin says: "The general providence of God not only continues the order of nature...but by His wonderful counsel they are adapted to a certain and special purpose."[4] And that special purpose is to bring men "to full communion with God."[5] We have seen, already, Calvin's full reply to the Epicurean doctrine of fortuitous causes. There is indeed a natural sphere which seems contingent - and in which man is called to responsible behaviour (he is responsible for proximate causes);

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1. Inst. I, 16,4.
2. Inst. I, 16,6.
3. Ibid.
4. Inst. I, 16,7.
5. Inst. II, 15,5.

however "what seems to us contingence, faith will know to be the secret impulse of God."[1]

Calvin summarizes this point in the Institutes. "I say then, that though all things are ordered by the counsel and certain arrangement of God, to us, however, they are fortuitous - not because we imagine that Fortune rules the world and mankind, and turns all things upside down at random...but as the order, method, end and necessity of events are, for the most part hidden in the counsel of God, though it is certain that they are produced by the will of God, they have the appearance of being fortuitous, such being the form under which they present themselves to us, whether considered in their own nature, or estimated according to our knowledge and judgement."[2]

(2)"The Epicureans...dream of an inert and idle God; and others not a whit sounder.../feign/ that God rules the upper regions of the air, but leave the inferior to Fortune."[3] There is the clear implication

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1. Inst. I, 16,9.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. I, 16,4.

in Epicurean thought that it would defile or pollute God to say He ruled the world - since the world is a place polluted with evil. Calvin answers the implication, thus: "From what place comes, I ask, the foetid odour of a dead body, which has been uncoffined and putrified by the sun's heat? All see that it is excited by the rays of the sun, but no man therefore says that the foetid odour is in them. In the same way, while...wickedness belongs to the wicked man, why should it be thought that God contracts any impurity in using /the defiled creation/ as His instrument?"[1]

(3)Calvin, perhaps, has satisfied us that God is not defiled by ruling a polluted world, but a second implication of the Epicurean position remains: does (or would) a perfect God - even if He is not subject to defilement - have to do with an imperfect sphere?*

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1. Inst. I, 17,5.

* The Christian, of course, at once thinks of God's saving work in Christ - which is God's love - and replies in the affirmative. The question, here, however, is more precisely to be considered with reference to Providence, (does a perfect God rule an imperfect sphere?), and thus an answer paralleling the "saving answer" and (ultimately coincidental with it) rather than the saving answer, per se, must be

Calvin's answer might be summarized thus: The Perfect God will rule an imperfect sphere in order to bring it to perfect order - or, rather than saying He will "bring" it to perfect order we should say "return" it to perfect order, since the Perfect God created a sphere of perfect order, which fell into disorder when the creatures in it negated the perfect freedom given them in creation.[1] Several passages in the Institutes allow us to so summarize Calvin; in one place he says "In His boundless wisdom God well knows how to use bad instruments for good purposes."[2] Moreover in telling us that in the same act we can "distinctly recognize the justice of God and the iniquity of man, as each is separately manifested"[3] Calvin indicates not only that the Perfect God does not become imperfect because He acts in an imperfect order but that the Perfect God works for order, in the face of (man's) acts of disorder. That is, God acts

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* cont. given. As the Perfect God wills to save the imperfect creature for communion with Him, so He maintains an imperfect world by willing order out of its disorder. (It is in disorder because the creature negates the perfect freedom given him in creation.)

1. Inst. II,2.
2. Inst. I, 17,5.
3. Inst. I, 17,9.

perfectly, even where there is imperfect order, and it is this action which will bring the imperfect order to perfect order for God would not even permit imperfection unless He were omnipotent to bring good out of evil.[1] The Perfect God does not shun imperfect order, but seeks to order it. The central act of history well illustrates this. While the destruction of a creature is a disordering act of man, nevertheless for God the Crucifixion of Christ is the act of perfect redemption[2] delivered to us, for us, by the Perfect God. This central act is the archetypal example of how God acts perfectly in an imperfect sphere to bring it to perfect order. Finally, Calvin tells us, that the agent of discord and disorder, Satan, is in God's hands.[3] The Perfect God is One Who can control imperfection; if He could not, He would not be the Perfect God - for He would not be perfectly omnipotent; the God of order employs disorder - to chastise and punish[4] those who have by negating their freedom let Satan in - to bring about that perfect and free order which He wills for His creatures.

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1. Inst. I, 18,3.
2. Inst. I, 18, 3,4.
3. Inst. I, 17,11.
4. Inst. III, 4,31.

(4)We have already anticipated the final objection of the Epicureans to God's rule. If God rules how did evil get into the world in the first place? Calvin declares man was given perfect freedom - allowed freely to grasp God - and he negated, as he was free to do, this freedom. This argument is in part given in De Aeterna Dei Praedestinatione.[1] We find that the whole argument here is being directed against those who attribute world occurences to fortuitous causes, i.e., the Epicureans. Calvin says, "the will of God is the cause of all things that happen in the world; and yet God is not the author of evil.../for/..whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God." The "right and just works" of God consist in part in God's gift to man of allowing man to freely cling to God's will. This is right of God; that man wills not to cling to God's will is man bringing disorder out of order - "evil and sin are nothing in themselves

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1. C.O. 8,352-53.

but only a disorder and corruption of what ought to be"[1] -i.e., what God first gave. And what God first gave was freedom. This freedom man ill uses; thus Calvin (quoting Augustine): "'Man through liberty became a sinner, [and] corruption, ensuing as the penalty, has corrupted freedom into necessity' (August. Lib. de Perf. Justit.)...[so now] 'we are under a yoke, but no other yoke than we have put ourselves under; therefore, in respect of servitude we are miserable and in respect of will inexcusable, because the will, when it was free [the gift of God], made itself the slave of sin.'"[2] In the same act God affirms the creature's freedom, and the creature in receiving this freedom negates it, corrupts the free order. Man is blameworthy, God is not; not only is God not the author of evil, but even as the creature brings evil by negating His freedom, God negates the creature's negation, and brings good out of evil, freedom out of

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1. C.O. 8,353. "et quant à moy ie proteste que ie ne veux rien attribuer à Dieu le mon cerveau, mais si faut-il que nous luy laissons ce que luy mesme s'attribue."

2. Inst. II, 3,5.

sarx.[1]

In presenting Calvin's doctrine of God's government we have been repetitious. We have been so, because we wished to present clearly Calvin's argument against every poiht raised by the doctrine of fate and the doctrine of chance. For it is because God rules, and not chance or fate, that life has meaning, and purpose and an end. To achieve this end "the Father has given all power to the Son, that He may govern, cherish, sustain us"[2] for this end. And while we wander far from this end, Christ rules that He may bring us to this end, namely "full communion with God."[3] In sum: the use of the doctrine of God's government for the Christian man is that it assures him that life and his life are meaningful, that God rules it for a purpose; life is not directed by either meaningless chance or ineluctable fate.

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1. C.O. 8,356. "Sed quia in tam densa humanae mentis caligine perquam tenuis et fere evanida est illa cognitio, scriptura altiorem nobis speculam aedificat, e qua Deum contemplatur omnia hominum opera sic moderantem ut in finem a se destinatum applicet."

2. Inst. II, 15,5.

3. Ibid.

Sections 2 and 3. Our Problem.

(a) God's preservation.

Some modern commentators have found Calvin's teaching about God's Lordship over the devil repugnant. The notion that God - a loving Father - employs the devil is repugnant to them. Their reading of the Institutes leads them to believe that Calvin spoke of God's control and use of the agency of Satan in order to defend God's (abstract) Sovereignty and/or to defend the proclamation of an avenging Deity. Such an interpretation is at utter variance with ours. Calvin, we maintain, supported the idea of God's use of the agency of Satan in order to proclaim that God has the Will and the Power to preserve the creature, no matter what the creature wills, We have to do here with Grace - God's negation of the creature's negation of God. That is, man wills what for man is evil, or disorderly; God, foreknowing this, uses Satan, whom man has invoked for evil, and uses Satan in such a way that He, God, wills through human will and action His purpose, which is preservation. The creature, in spite of himself, can not usher in ultimate destruction,

because God uses the destroyer, Satan, to destroy man's destruction. Again, man constantly puts himself in the hands of the devil, but the devil is in God's hands, so while the creature seeks destruction, even his own destruction, God forces the devil to do His work and destroys destruction.

Calvin's intention is the proclamation of Grace, but there is a flaw in his proclamation. He understands, and we follow him here, that God preserves us by Grace for the decree He has - before the foundation of the world - made about us. But for us this decree is Jesus Christ. God preserves His creature in Christ and through Christ for Christ - that in the last time He may deliver us to God the Father.[1] Jesus Christ is the Grace of God to us. Finally, Calvin's doctrine of preservation can only be the proclamation of Grace if it is for Christ as well as by Christ that we are being preserved; i.e., God uses the agency of Satan to bring men to the Grace of Jesus Christ. For Calvin Christ is certainly the agent of God's electing work, but He is

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1. Cf. I Cor. 15:24.

not the decree itself; it lurks behind Him in the dark recesses of God. And, as J.K.S.Reid teaches us, "To accord to Christ an important place in the execution of the decrees falls short of what is demanded. Instrumentality is not a concept that adequately conveys the role that Christ must here be deemed to play. He must be regarded as not merely the agent but as the fundamentum of the decrees, so that they are framed, not in His absence, but really 'in Him'."[1]

One can readily discover that while for Calvin Christ is the agent of God's eternal decree of election, Christ is not Himself that decree. "But of the gratuitous election by which alone we may attain this highest good, the mirror, earnest and pledge is the Son, Who came from the bosom of the Father to make us heirs of the heavenly kingdom by ingrafting us into His Body. Further, as this inheritance was once obtained for us by the blood of Christ and is attested in the sacred pages of the Gospel, so possession of it is

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1. J.K.S. Reid, Introduction to his trans. of "De Aet. Dei Praed.", Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God (London, 1961) p.41.

entered into not otherwise than by faith. In a word, I not only freely confess but emphasize everywhere in my writings both that the salvation of men is bound to faith, and that Christ is the only door by which all must enter into the heavenly kingdom; nor is tranquil peace to be found elsewhere than in the Gospel. Those who deviate in the slightest degree from this can do nothing but wander through tortuous ambiguities. The more anyone tries to invade and penetrate those profound recesses of the divine counsel, the further he recedes from God."[1]

For Calvin, Christ is the mirror of our blessed election - and more, for He is "the earnest and the pledge" of that election. He is our way into the

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1. De Aet. Dei Praed., C.O. 8,307. "Atqui gratuitae, qua hoc tantum bonum consequimur, adoptionis speculum, arra et pignus est filius, qui e patris sinu ideo ad nos prodiit, ut in corpus suum inserendo regni coelestis haeredes faceret. Porro sicuti haec haereditas et Christi sanguine parta est semel, et sacris evangelii tabulis consignata: ita eius possessio non aliter quam fide adiri potest. Denique, non tantum libenter fateor, sed passim in scriptis meis inculco, et fidei alligatam esse hominum salutem, et Christum unicam esse ianuam, qua in regnum coelorum ingredi oportet, nec alibi tranquillam pacem quam in evangelio inveniri: quicunque inde vel minimum deflectunt, nihil quam per flexuosas ambages errare: et quo quisque in profunda illa divini consilii adyta confidentius irrumpere et penetrare conatur, eo longius a Deo recedere."

Kingdom of God. But He is the mirror, the earnest, the pledge and the way of an election not founded in Him but of an election founded "in those profound recesses of the divine counsel." We must then concur with J.K.S. Reid who comments: "...Calvin does not give good guidance when...he invokes the dark recesses, the divinae sapientiae adyta, as though there were, even after the revelation of Christ, a residuary darkness to which He is not Himself privy and for which He has no power of illumination. The unknowable that remains in God after His revelation in Christ is not an unilluminated area, but an unfathomable depth. The Incarnation gives us the key to all God's nature, or it is not the complete revelation which Christianity has always considered it to be. Moreover, since the revelation takes the form of a real incarnation, the human attributes which Christ assumes are, in their measure, and so far as they go, adequate."[1]

The critics of Calvin would be unwise, however, to think that his entire theology is distorted by this flaw. For in his doctrine of the Word and in his

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1. Reid, op.cit., p.41.

discussions of the Eternal Word and the Incarnate Word Calvin proves himself no nominalist, and thus provides us, at the heart of his theology, with a knowledge that allows us to revise his doctrine of election (and thus, for our purposes, present his doctrine of preservation as a proclamation of Grace). At the very outset of our discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the Word we understood the duplex relatio of the Word. The Word, on the one hand, is God's own Wisdom or Counsel, and on the other hand is God's revelation (speaking) to man.[1] Therefore, what God reveals is Himself, His Very Own Counsel. Thus the Word is the Counsel of God. This Counsel became flesh and is Christ.[2] The substantial Word of God, Sermo Dei, identified with Jesus Christ, is the foundation of all revelations, labelled verbum Dei, which we identified[3] with Scripture and preaching. In sum: What God reveals in Christ, and what is therefore, by

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1. pp. 3ff.
2. p. 10.
3. Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter One.

the power of the Holy Spirit, testified to in Scripture and preaching is God's own Wisdom and Counsel; i.e., Christ is the Counsel of God, being Himself, therefore, the decree of election. Thus, Calvin provides in his doctrine of the Word the means for reforming his doctrine of election. Thus, with this correction of Calvin's doctrine of election we may read Calvin's doctrine of God's preservation as a proclamation of God's utter, effectual and victorious Grace.*

(b)God's concurrence.

At the conclusion of our treatment of Calvin's doctrine of God's concurrence we allowed that Calvin presented a solid argument; he upheld God's Lordship and man's responsibility. His basic argument relied upon a conception of two orders of necessity, one supernatural and the other natural. The supernatural order is related to the natural order as remote (and overruling) cause to proximate cause. And although the supernatural cause effects, ultimately, God's purpose and ordination, man is given, proximately, the position of co-ruler in the natural sphere (Institutes I,17,4). Thus we understand man is given responsibility, since he shares with God the rule of the natural sphere. An

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* For Jesus Christ is man, and what He does, He does for man - not for "some men" only.

illustration of how this works was given: if I receive a kindness, I thank not only God, as its principal Author, but the person (who is proximately responsible) that showed it to me.

This discussion is useful; but as Karl Barth says there is a certain tragic fault in it.[1] For Calvin's doctrine and subsequent Reformed doctrine treat most helpfully of the formal side of the problem, i.e., the problem of causes, but never comsto treat of the material side; i.e., God concurs <u>because</u> He wills the execution in history of the covenant of Grace based upon the election decree founded in and effected by Jesus Christ; it is this work which is the purpose of His concurring work in all of the natural sphere. God's way with His creature is the way He has with His Covenant partner.

Acknowledging Calvin's doctrine of concurrence as useful - for it laid down unequivocally the irreversible Lordship of God over His creatures - can we, in terms of Calvin's doctrine of the Word, extend His doctrine

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1. K.Barth, <u>Church Dogmatics</u> III,3, p.115.

of God's concurrence so as to present the material as well as the formal side? Because Calvin centred his theology in the Word of God, it is possible.

First we should recall what Calvin said about man's knowledge of God's Providence: man can not learn, by reasoning, of God's rule; when men are guided by their own understandings the inevitable consequence is that they sink in their own troubles and disorder; only from His Word do we learn rightly of God's rule.[1] As we concluded, above[2], faith's knowledge of the Word, which is testified to in Scripture, includes a faith in and thereby a knowledge of God's Providence. Even without the commentary on Psalm 73:16, we know - from Chapter Two - that any knowledge that God is continually governing the world is now learned from Scripture. And the object of Scripture, we learned from our discussion of Calvin's view of Scripture[3], is Jesus Christ. Faith in this Object, presented to us in Scripture, includes, then, a knowledge[4]

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1. Comm. on Ps. 73:16, C.O.31,682. Cf. p. 181.
2. p. 181.
3. Chapter One, Section 3, especially the first part of that section.
4. Chapter One, Section 5, especially p. 85.

and a knowledge of God's Providence. Faith in Christ includes knowledge of God's Providence since Christ is the Worker of God's Providence; i.e., as we have seen, there is no objective act by God in the world apart from Christ, Christ Himself being the objective Actor.[1] In sum: Faith learns of Christ from Scripture. In Scripture Christ is proclaimed as the Lord of history. Thus faith in Christ includes a knowledge of Him, and this knowledge includes a knowledge of Him as the Worker of God's Providence.

Christ is the Worker of God's Providence, but how does He work? He does not work differently in the world from the way in which He works in Israel, i.e., with His people. For our faith rests upon God's faithfulness; i.e., He is going to keep His free promise given to us in Christ.[2] So the way God works His Providential Work is in the same Christ Who is the goal of our election. Thus to see how God works His Providence we have to turn back to Calvin's remarks on the Incarnate Word[3] - for God's action there

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1. P. 142.
2. Cf. Chapter One, Section 5. Inst. III,2,7.
3. Chapter One, Section 2.

is paralleled in His ordering of the world through the Word.

We saw in Chapter One, Section 2 that the Word acts in history to overcome sin, to effect reconciliation. We saw that we call the Word God for "It was His to swallow up death: who but Life could do so? It was His to conquer sin: who could do so save righteousness itself? It was His to put to flight the powers of the air and the world: who could do so but the mighty power superior to both? Who possesses life and righteousness and dominion and government but God alone?"[1]

We also call the Word, Man, for: (1)God is with us, (2)He transfers to us what is His, Sonship - even as (3)He takes on Himself what is ours - punishment and death - and because of His perfect obedience is able to pay the price for us and redeem us; (4)Christ as the descendent of Abraham and David is the New Covenant fulfilled by Man on man's behalf.

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1. Inst. II, 12,2.

Thus we can now see the material side of God's concurrence. First God in Christ wills

(1)to swallow death

(2)to conquer sin

(3)to put to flight the evil powers.

God acts for His creation, and thus He acts in love; for "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins"(I John 4:10). The way of God with His creation, as disclosed in Christ, is love.

The fact that God became a man shows more specifically the way of God's concurrence, the way in which He accompanies His creature. For Calvin tells us that God became a man that (1)He might draw near His creatures. God's way is the way of co-operation, of co-operating with His creatures. He (4)became man in order to seal for man the Covenant God had made with man. God does not with His might force man into the Covenant, but gives man a fellow Man Who goes along beside man fulfilling man's covenant faithfulness for and with man. ("And I will walk among you..." Leviticus 26:12) In being the faithful obedient covenant Man (3)Christ

fulfils all righteousness for us; God does not destroy His creature who has fallen but accompanies him, taking upon Himself the consequence of human sin. Thus, (2)God makes men co-rulers with Him, for they are made sons - through redemption - with the Son.

Christ does all this as Redeemer; but this work in world history is the material content of His concurring Lordship. He loves His creature, so when the creature sins and brings disorder, God in Christ restores order through His reconciling loving work. God loves the creature and thus seeks His redemption; but also this means that when the creature's works, his plans, his governments, die - are destroyed - Christ restores them to life and restores them in fulness and integrity; i.e., He renews and ultimately resurrects the Creature's work and brings it to consummation in the consummation of the world.

And because God loves His creatures He gives them cautions and means, as Calvin teaches, by which to fend off the Evil One; i.e., God in Christ grants them the Holy Spirit.

God works His love in Christ in history by co-operation. Co-operation with God is freedom. So God directs the chaos bound motion of His creatures in such a way that His creatures are being moved by the free (co-operating) God toward their fulfilment, which is in the Covenant. Where His creatures bring disorder in history - which pains God ("In all our afflictions, He is afflicted." Isaiah 63:9) - He bears this disorder and brings order out of it. But because God's freedom in no way annihilates the independent activity of His creature, and the creature's activity is what we, proximately, see, the way in which God will fulfil history is hidden from us; except we know that He will fulfil it in that love and co-operation which is revealed in the Crucifixion of Christ.

God co-operates with all men, not just with Church men. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." (II Corinthians 5:19) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son."(John 3:16) Men, through Christ, are the sons of God, not just Church men. Christ has transferred to men what was His - sonship. The way of God with the world is the way of

a Father with His sons.[1] This fact is, of course, manifested in the Church.[2] Finally, God is, of course, in His humanity, now exalted with His Church, but He is also with all His creatures. He became man to be near to man - in love, in loving co-operation.

From Calvin's doctrine of the Word we have been able to draw out the material side of a doctrine of concurrence, which may remain within the formal treatment, of causes, which he explicitly developed. God's action in Christ - the love of the true God and the co-operation with us of the true Man - as represented to us by Calvin in his discussion of the Incarnate Word lets us draw easily enough the parallel with God's concurring Lordship. And Calvin's doctrine of the Word assures us that there is a parallel, for God Who acts <u>faithfully</u> in redemption acts the same everywhere and therefore in the work of Providence.

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1. Cf. <u>Comm. on Ps.</u> 23:1, <u>C.O.</u> 31,238.

2. <u>Ibid.</u>

(c)God's government.

Calvin clearly states that God governs through Christ in order to preserve His Church, bringing men through it to full communion with Him:

> "For the Father has given all power to the Son, that by His hand He may govern, cherish, sustain us, keep us under His guardianship, and give assistance to us. Thus, while we wander far as pilgrims from God, Christ interposes, that He may gradually bring us to full communion with God. And, indeed, His sitting at the right hand of the Father has the same meaning as if He were called the Vicegerent of the Father, intrusted with the whole power of government. For God is pleased to govern and protect His Church through the mediation of His Son.... Scripture throughout calls /the Son/ Lord, the Father having appointed Him over us for the express purpose of exercising His government through Him."[1]

Calvin's doctrine of God's government is quite helpful. God rules through Christ for a purpose; that purpose is to draw men into full communion with Himself.

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1. Inst. II, 15,5. "Dedit enim pater omnem potestatem filio ut per eius manum nos gubernet, foveat, sustentet sub eius tutela nos protegat, nobisque auxilietur. Ita quantisper a Deo peregrinamur, Christus intercedit medius, qui nos paulatim ad solidam cum Deo coniunctionem perducat. Et certe quod sedet ad patris dexteram, tantundem valet ac si vocetur patris legatus, penes quem tota sit imperii potestas; quia Deus mediate (ut ita loquar) vult in eius persona ecclesiam regere ac tueri....passim scriptura Dominum vocat, quia hac lege eum nobis praefecit pater ut suam dominationem per eum exerceat."

God, therefore, does not resign the government of the world to chance or fate. But how does God rule the world, i.e., how does He govern men toward their end? Calvin's answer: "through the mediation of His Son." But Calvin did not develop this in terms of his doctrine of God's government. He does indicate, however, in discussing Christ's Kingly work, that God in His Son governs history in order to preserve - and presumably bring men to - the Church (where God through His Son is united to His people[1]): "There can be no doubt that God here (Psalm 139:35-37) promises that He will be, by the hand of His Son, the eternal governor and defender of the Church...as often as we hear that Christ is armed with eternal power let us learn that the perpetuity of the Church is thus effectually secured; that amid the turbulent agitations by which it is constantly harrassed and the grevious and fearful commotions which threaten innumerable disasters, it still remains safe...however numerous and powerful

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1. C.O. 8,349. Cf. footnote 4.

the enemies who conspire to assault the Church, they are not possessed of sufficient strength to prevail against the immortal decree by which He appointed His Son eternal King. Whence it follows that the devil, with the whole power of the world, can never possibly destroy the Church which is founded on the throne of Christ."[1]

God governs (now to speak positively, i.e., not merely against Stoic and Epicurean) through the Son, and therefore through His rule over the Church to whom the Son is bound in sacred marriage.[2] And what the Church does, as we saw in Calvin's doctrine of the Word, is to preach the Gospel[3] and then God in His Spirit gives men faith in the Gospel. God, concretely and materially, governs men by directing them to their end through the instrumentality of preaching and the accompanying gift of faith. Christ rules the world - directs it to its end - through preaching and faith. Thus, by reference to Calvin's doctrine of preaching and faith, we may extend the "material content" of God's rule - through His Son - in the world.

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1. Inst. II, 15,3.
2. Inst. IV, 1,10.
3. Ibid.

While Calvin's arguments against contingency on the one hand and necessity on the other may stand, an exposition of the positive way of God's rule in Christ, effected through preaching and faith, may supply us with an even stronger basis. For as Barth says of Calvin's argument without discounting it, it leaves "an impression of flatness, and even of uncertainty. Have the arguments really proved what they set out to prove?"[1]

(1)Preaching.

We learned from Calvin's doctrine of God's government that "His government extends not less to the hand than to the eye.../God's/ Providence consists in action."[2] In Calvin's doctrine of preaching we learned that God's Word is not only God's Speech but God's Act.[3] We conclude that God's Providence is in God's Word, but more especially that preaching is the providential action by which God governs; for God governs the world in order to allure it to its fulfilment in Him, and Calvin tells us that it is

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1. K.Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/3, p.164.
2. Inst. I, 16,4.
3. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48.

precisely through preaching that God allures us to Himself rather than frightening us by His thunderous presence.[1] Preachers provide the human media (we might say verbum Dei) through which Christ comes and governs. What was said, then, about preaching is to be said of God's government.[2] We saw that it is the Spirit that makes Christ present to us now in preaching. (a)God's government is then Spiritual - the Spirit makes present the directing (Kingly) Word in the words of direction given in the community. But where do these directing words come from? (i)The norm for these words is Scripture; (ii)they are spoken by men who are called by God to give a living, and always faithful, interpretation of Scripture. Thus (b)God's government calls upon men; God makes men His co-workers. Moreover, God calls on men to follow Scripture faithfully, so we say (c)God's government calls upon men to be faithful to the Word. We now see in what kind of action God's government consists.

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1. Inst. IV, 1,5.
2. Chapter One, Section 4.

(2)Faith.

We have so far seen the Objective side of God's government: He is Present as Governor by the Spirit, He calls men to be His Co-workers; He calls men to be faithful to Him. Preaching has the intention of effecting faith;[1] what we have said of faith is also true of the subjective aspect of God's government. (i)We saw that the Spirit originates and maintains faith;[2] thus, <u>by the work of the Spirit men participate in God's government</u>. (ii)We saw that faith is a knowledge, a knowledge of the free promise given in Christ. Men respond in gratitude and love to this promise of God's love, and thus praise Him. <u>Men love God, having received His loving promise, and thus become co-workers in His loving work.</u>[3] (iii)By faith men embrace Christ and in thus putting Him on become obedient.[4] <u>Men in putting Christ on are obedient to His Word</u>.

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1. <u>Inst.</u> IV, 1,5. "God inspires us with faith, but it is by the instrumentality of His Gospel, as Paul reminds us: 'Faith comes by hearing'(<u>Rom.</u> 10:17). God reserves to Himself the power of maintaining it, but it is by the preaching of the Gospel...that He brings it forth and unfolds it."

2. <u>Inst.</u> III,2,33.
3. <u>Inst.</u> III, 2,4.
4. <u>Inst.</u> III, 11,10.

(3)Preaching and Faith.

Having made analogous preaching and faith with government and governed we see how God rules. God makes Himself present and by His Spirit allures man to Him; in this He offers man love and man being given the place in Christ of the Beloved is overwhelmed with God's love, and loves; such a faithful Love can only be returned with faithful love.

Now we are provided with the "proof of proofs" with which to face Stoic or Epicurean.

I. Stoic

(1)God's government is Spiritual - it occurs among the Father, the Son and the sons. It can not rest in things.

(2)Precisely because God is bound in love to His creatures He is not bound to that creation which He has set under them; i.e., God is bound to His free creatures and not to any process of nature.

(3)God loves His creature and His creature's destiny is to love Him. The relationship is a loving partnership - but since God has power over disorder He remains Lord. While God participates in the life of His creatures

even in their afflictions (Isaiah 63:9), and while the creatures participate in His Life and Rule He never surrenders His Lordship to the creature; while the faithfulness of His creatures testifies and actualises His faithfulness, the unfaithfulness, the disorderliness of His creatures (simul iustus, simul peccator.) He never permits to become part of His rule.

(4)The relationship of lovers as in the Song of Songs[1] is the relationship between Governor and governed and thus a mechanistic determinism is disallowed.

(5)Because God's Government is Spiritual it is in no way involved in sin - for the Spirit is precisely Him Whom the Scriptures understand to be the opponent of and weapon to be used against sarx.[2]

II. Epicureans

(1)Man can turn himself whichever way he will according to Epicurean teaching. But God's government is one in which He employs co-workers. Thus one is either a co-worker with or a refuser of God. But God constantly seeks in love His creature to be His co-worker. God

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1. Cf. Chapter One, p. 78, the special note.
2. Especially Eph. 1-3.

does not force the creature to do His Will, but seeks him with the promise of His gratuitous love. Scripture prevents us from any sentimentality, however; God wills to be Lord, and His love burns the refuser!

(2)The Epicurean says that it would defile God to act in fallen creation. Calvin says no, comparing God's action with the sun's rays and fallen creation with a dead body. The sun is not defiled by the putrifaction of the body. At this point we had best leave Calvin and following his doctrine of the Word, remember that Christ became sin for us. Of course, Christ did not sin, but He took upon Himself the consequence or punishment for our pollution. This is the nature of God's love for us, that, though sinners He is still for us! He is faithful and seeks to win the faithfulness of His creatures.

(3)Would a perfect God face imperfection? Calvin answered that the perfect God would seek to bring perfect order out of imperfection. Here we concur, saying that the heart of God's government is not different from His saving purpose and thus can be seen in the crucifixion and resurrection. Here is Good out of evil,

indeed! Through such faithfulness and such love God has assured Himself of the ultimate love and faithfulness of His creatures.

(4)The way in which evil got into the world is, then, clear enough. God's government is one of loving, partnership - not one of automatic determinism. The creature chose not to be faithful, but God in His loving faithfulness will not let His creature go.

We have said things differently from Calvin, yet not contrary (with one exception) to him. Moreover, these final statements are not only in accord with his doctrine of the Word, but are the kinds of statement his doctrine of the Word forces upon us in the face of modern issues. Calvin saw clearly enough that full communion with God was the end of God's government.[1] Not stressing the material aspect of God's government, however, he did not publish clearly that God's rule not only means that we are destined to be with Christ, but also means that the whole way there is not determined by an abstract decree, but by the very alluring love which God has shown us and shows us every day in Jesus Christ.

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1. Inst. II, 15,5.

Thus Barth: "whenever the Christian believes and obeys and prays there does not merely take place a creaturely movement. But concealed within the creaturely movement, yet none the less really, there moves the finger and hand and sceptre of the God Who rules the world. And what is more, there moves the heart of God, and He Himself is there in all the fulness of His love and wisdom and power. We then find ourselves at the very seat of government, at the very heart of the mystery and purpose of all occurrence. The subjective element, which ultimately can never have more than the form of a bloodless and impotent asking, of hands which are empty although stretched out to God, conceals and contains and actualises the most objective of all things, the lordship of the One Who as King of Israel and King of the kingdom of grace holds all things in His own hands and directs everything that occurs in this world for the best: per Jesum Christum, Dominum nostrum."[1]

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1. K.Barth, Church Dogmatics III/3, p.288.

C H A P T E R F O U R

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LAW OF GOD

Introduction:

Calvin in the final edition[1] of the Institutes devotes a great many pages to the law.[2] It is not unusual for critics, seeing this large section on law, and not relating it to the whole of Calvin's theology, to charge Calvin with an excessive emphasis upon law* at the expense of Grace. However, if law is from God the Lawgiver then the law is revelation and, as we have seen, revelation is the revelation of redemption. Thus, there is Grace in law (and by implication law in Grace). Calvin, as we saw in our Chapter One, makes explicit this connexion in his discussion of law and Gospel.

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1. I.e., the final Latin edition, 1559.
2. Inst. II, chaps. 7-11, C.O. 2, 252-340.

* lex

The task of this chapter is to make explicit, all along the line, how Calvin's understanding of law may be related in his theology to Gospel. We will, then, first set forth Calvin's treatment of the law of God under four headings:

(1) Law and the Lawgiver (the Revealing God)

(2) Law and its purpose

(3) Law and the Spirit

(4) Law and righteousness.

We will then attempt with modern issues in mind to explicate Calvin's doctrine of the law in terms of his discussion of law and Gospel, where he recognized that the One Word of God is at once the law of God and the Gospel of God.

Section 1. Calvin on the Law of God.

(1) Law and the Lawgiver

The first comment which Calvin makes about the law of God in formally introducing this topic in the **Institutes** discloses that Calvin takes his whole understanding of law from Scripture. For in defining "law" Calvin says "By the law I understand not only the Ten Commandments, which contain a complete rule of life,

but the whole system of religion from God delivered by the hand of Moses."[1] Law means for Calvin the religious system of Israel, the religion of the Old Covenant, given by God. The law of God, then, is the covenant which God gave to Israel. The law then is the revelation of God. So Calvin indicates: "Since God was pleased, and not in vain, to testify in ancient times, by means of expiations and sacrifices [which were part of the law, i.e., part of the religious system of Israel] that He was a Father, and to set apart for Himself a chosen people, He was doubtless known even then in the same character in which He is now fully revealed to us."[2]

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1. Inst. II, 7,1. "Legis nomine non solum decem praecepta, quaepie iusteque vivendi regulam praescribunt, intelligo, sed formam religionis per manum Mosis a Deo traditam."

2. Inst. II, 9,1. "Quia non frustra Deus iam olim per expiationes et sacrificia voluit se patrem testari, nec frustra populum electum sibi consecravit, iam tunc haud dubie in eadem imagine cognitus est in qua nunc pleno fulgore nobis apparet."

If the law is revelation, the revelation of God's character, and revelation is the revelation of our redemption, then the law must present Christ to us. And indeed Calvin says that the primary purpose of the law given to Israel was "to keep alive the hope of salvation in Christ until His Advent."[1] Moreover, Christ is not only the purpose of the law, but is present in it, not in substance but, so to speak, in shadow. Calvin compares in Chapter 9 (Book II) the manifestation of Christ in the law with His manifestation in the Gospel: "Nor does John the Baptist, when he says 'No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (John 1:18) exclude the men of faith, who had previously died, from a participation in the knowledge and light which are manifested in the person of Christ; but comparing their condition with ours, he intimates that the mysteries which they only

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1. Title of Chapter 7, Book II of the Inst. "Legem fuisse datam, non quae populum veterem in se retineret, sed quae foveret spem solutis in Christo usque ad eius adventum."

beheld dimly under shadows are made clear to us.... Hence, although this only begotten Son, Who is now to us 'the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person,' was formerly made known to the Jews [as Paul says]...[as] the Deliverer under the old covenant, nevertheless, as Paul elsewhere declares, 'God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (II Corinthians 4:6), because when He appeared in this His image, He in a manner made Himself visible, His previous appearance having been shadowy and obscure."[1]

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1. Inst. II, 9,1. "Neque vox illa Ioannis Baptistae: Deum nemo vidit unquam, unigenitus qui est in sinu patris enarravit nobis, pios qui ante mortui fuerant excludit a societate intelligentiae et lucis quae refulget in Christi persona; sed illorum sortem cum nostra comparans, mysteria quae sub umbris obscure tantum speculati sunt, docet nobis manifesta esse;... Quamvis ergo unigenitus ille, qui nobis hodie est splendor gloriae et character substantiae Dei patris, olim Iudaeis innotuerit...fuisse antiquae liberationis ducem, verum tamen est, quod alibi tradit idem Paulus (II Cor. 4:6), Deum qui iussit e tenebris lumen splendescere, nunc illuxisse cordibus nostris, ad illustrandam notitiam gloriae Dei in facie Iesu Christi. Quia ubi apparuit in hac sua imagine, quodammodo se fecit visibilem, praeut obscura et umbratilis ante fuerat eius species."

Christ Himself is manifested, although in a shadowy form, in the law. Thus, we know at once the character or nature of God's law. For "He was doubtless known even [under the law] in the same character in which He is now revealed to us"[1], and the character of the law is identical with the character of the lawgiver.[2] We must not, then, speak of the law of God as some 'entity' apart from God; it is His Word, in which He has disclosed His character, His for-us-ness, to us.[3] Thus: in the law, God announces Himself to us as our Father; and by this Word seeks to bring us to that Word, Jesus Christ, and through Christ ultimately to Himself. Thus God's announcement of Himself as our Father, the claim upon us (which is accompanied by the Gospel - the Word of promise[4]) forms the covenant - and this covenant as delineated in the Old Testament is what Calvin means most comprehensively by law.

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1. Inst. II, 9,1.
2. Inst. II, 8,6.
3. Chapter One, Section 2.
4. Cf. Inst. II, 8,13-14.

This old Covenant had within it three kinds of laws: moral, ceremonial and judicial.[1] "The moral law... being contained under two heads,* the one of which simply enjoins us to worship God with pure faith and piety, the other to embrace men with sincere affection, is the true and eternal rule of righteousness prescribed to the men of all nations and of all times, who would frame their life in conformity with the will of God. For His eternal and immutable will is that we are to worship Him and mutually love one another. The ceremonial law of the Jews was a tutelage by which the Lord was pleased to exercise, as it were, the childhood of that people, until the fulness of the time should come when He was fully to manifest His wisdom to the world, and exhibit the reality of those things which were then adumbrated by figures (Galatians 3:24; 4:4). The judicial law, given them as a kind of polity, delivered certain forms of equity and justice, by which they might live together innocently and quietly. And as that exercise in ceremonies properly pertained to the doctrine of piety, inasmuch as it kept the Jewish Church in the worship and religion of God, yet was still distinguishable from piety itself, so the

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1. Inst. IV, 20,14.
* We shall consider these "two tables of the law" in the next section, The Law and its Purpose.

judicial form, though it looked only to the best method of preserving that charity which is enjoined by the eternal law of God, was still something distinct from the precept of love itself. Therefore, as ceremonies might be abrogated without at all interfering with piety, so, also, when these judicial arrangements are removed, the duties and precepts of charity can still remain perpetual."[1]

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1. Inst. IV, 20,15. "Lex itaque moralis...quum duobus capitibus contineatur, quorum alterum pura Deum fide et pietate colere, alterum sincera homines dilectione complecti simplicitur iubet, vera est aeternaque iustitiae regula, gentium omnium ac temporum hominibus praescripta, qui ad Dei voluntatem vitam suam componere volent. Siquidem haec aeterna est et immutabilis eius voluntas, ut a nobis ipse quidem omnibus colatur, nos vero mutuo inter nos diligamus. Caeremonialis Iudaeorum paedagogia fuit, qua populi illius quandam velut pueritiam exercere Domino visum est, donec veniret tempus illud plenitudinis, quo sapientiam suam terris ad plenum manifestaret, ac veritatem exhiberet earum rerum quae tum figuris adumbrabantur. Iudicialis, politiae loco illis data, certas aequitatis et iustitiae formulas tradebat, quibus innocenter et quiete inter se agerent. Atque ut illa caeremoniarum exercitatio ad pietatis quidem doctrinam proprie pertinebat (utpote quae Iudaeorum ecclesiam retinebat in Dei cultu ac religione), ab ipsa tamen pietate distingui poterat, ita haec iudiciorum forma, quanquam non alio spectabat, quam qui optime servari posset ea ipsa caritas, quae aeterna Dei lege praecipitur, ab ipso tamen dilectionis praecepto distinctum quiddam habebat. Quemadmodum ergo salva et incolumi pietate abrogari potuerunt caeremoniae, ita et iudiciariis his constitutionibus sublatis, perpetua caritatis officia et praecepta manere possunt."

The judicial laws - the laws by which Israel lived together as political community - are not binding upon us; each nation is left at liberty to enact the laws most beneficial to itself, testing, however, these laws against the rule of charity.[1]

Not only does Calvin indicate that the ceremonial laws are no longer valid, but says that <u>in themselves</u> they never were of any value.[2] "For what could be more vain or frivolous than for men to reconcile themselves to God, by offering Him the foul odour produced by burning the fat of beasts? or to wipe away their own impurities by sprinkling themselves with water or blood? In short, the whole legal worship (if considered <u>in itself</u> apart from the types and shadows of corresponding Truth) is a mere mockery.... Had there not been some spiritual end to which they were directed in the observance of them, the Jews would have deluded themselves as much as the Gentiles in their vanities...God enjoined sacrifice in order that...He might raise [the Jews'] minds to something higher."[3] In a word God foreshadows

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1. <u>Inst.</u> IV, 20,15.
2. <u>Inst.</u> II, 7,1.
3. <u>Ibid.</u>

His own sacrifice in the sacrificial practises of Israel to prepare His people for His own sacrifice; since He came and sacrificed Himself we no longer need signs and shadowings of His sacrifice since it is, so to speak, now present in substance, i.e., in its fulness. The ceremonial laws are abrogated by Christ. Likewise the judicial laws given to hold Israel together politically are no longer valid, since they were given for one nation for a given time, that that nation might hold together and be prepared for Christ's advent. Since Christ's advent God is known not only as the Deliverer of Israel but of all nations. The political laws God gave Israel in antiquity are not appropriate for all nations at all times, and thus Calvin says they were particular to Israel and are not universal laws.

However, the moral law is still valid. There is no continuing usefulness in ceremonial law or in a special form of the judicial law. What are the continuing uses of the moral law? There are three uses of the law: (1)conviction; (2)restraint; (3)guidance.

(1) "By exhibiting the righteousness of God - in other words the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God - [the law] admonishes every one of his own unrighteousness, censures, convicts and finally condemns him. This is necessary, in order that man, who is blind and intoxicated with self love, may be brought at once to know and to confess his weakness and impurity. For until his vanity is made perfectly manifest, he is puffed up with infatuated confidence in his own powers, and never can be brought to feel their feebleness so long as he measures them by a standard of his own choice. So soon as he measures them by the requirements of the law, he has something to tame his presumption."[1] "Thus the law is a kind of

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1. Inst. II, 7,6. "...ut dum iustitiam Dei ostendit, id est, quae sola Deo accepta est, suae unumquemque iniustitiae admoneat, certiorem faciat, convincat denique ac condemnet. Sic enim opus est, caecum et ebrium amore sui hominem ad notitiam simul et confessionem suae tum imbecillitatis tum impuritatis adigi; quando nisi vanitas eius evidenter redarguatur, insana virium suarum confidentia inflatus est, nec adduci umquam potest ut de eorum tenuitate sentiat, quantisper eas arbitrii sui modo metitur. Atque simulac eas comparare ad legis difficultatem coepit, habet illic quod ferociam minuat."

mirror in which we first contemplate our weakness, then the iniquity which proceeds from it, and finally the condemnation which comes from both."[1] Calvin reminds us, then, of Romans 3:20 "through the law comes knowledge of sin". But while the law brings the knowledge of sin, we are not to abandon all hope. For the children of God "divesting themselves of the absurd opinion of their own virtue, may perceive how they are wholly dependent on the hand of God and feeling how naked and destitute they are, they may take refuge in His mercy, rely upon it and cover themselves up entirely with it; renouncing all rightousness and merit and clinging to mercy alone, as offered in Christ to all who long and look for it in true faith."[2] The law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

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1. Inst. II, 7,7. "Ita lex instar est speculi cuiusdam, in quo nostram impotentiam, tum ex hac iniquitatem, postremo ex utraque maledictionem contemplamur."

2. Inst. II, 7,8. "omissa suae virtutis stolida opinione, sola Dei manu stare se et consistere intelligant, ut nudi et vacui ad eius misericordiam confugiant, in hanc se toti reclinent, in hanc penitus se abdant, hanc unam pro iustitia et meritis arripiant, quae omnibus in Christo exposita est, quicunque eam vera fide et expetunt et exspectant."

(2) "The second use of the law is, by means of its fearful denunciations and the consequent dread of punishment, to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice. Such persons are restrained, not because their mind is inwardly moved and affected, but because, as if a bridle were laid upon them...they check the depravity which would otherwise petulantly burst forth. They are not on this account either better or more righteous in the sight of God... [for] their heart is by no means trained to fear and obedience...they thoroughly detest the law itself and abhor the Lawgiver...In some this state of mind is more evident, in others more hidden; but it is the case of all who are not regenerate, that they are led to an observance of the law not by voluntary submission, but by the force of fear. This forced and constrained righteousness is necessary for the good of the human community, whose peace is provided for by God, but for which all things would be thrown in confusion."[1] The

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1. Inst. II, 7,10. "Secundum legis officium est, ut qui nulla iusti rectique cura, nisi coacti, tanguntur, dum audiunt diras in ea sanctiones, coerceantur saltem interior eorum animus permoveatur aut afficiatur, sed quia, tanquam iniecto fraeno...suam pravitatem intus cohibent, quam alioque petulantur effusuri erant. Ex poenarum formidine. Coercentur autem, non quod

second use of the law applies not only to the unregenerate, but also to those whom God has destined for His kingdom, but to whom He has not yet made Himself known; i.e., He restrains their lust by the law until He wins their hearts to Him by His Spirit.[1] By restraining them from lusts by the force of the law, He trains them in piety.[2]

(3) "The third use of the law - being also its proper use, and more closely connected with its proper end - has respect to believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already flourishes and reigns. For although the law is written and engraven on their hearts by the finger of God, that is, although they are so

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(1.cont.) eo nec meliores quidem sunt, nec apud Deum iustiores...cor...non habent compositum ad timorem et obedientiam Dei...legem quoque ipsam pessime oderunt, et Deum legislatorem exsecrantur.... Aliis quidem obscurius, aliis clarius, omnibus tamen nondum regeneratis hic sensus inest, ut non voluntaria submissione, sed inviti ac restitantes, tantum timoris violentia ad legis studium trahantur. Sed tamen haec coacta expressaque iustitia necessaria est publicae hominum communitati, cuius hic tranquillitati consulitur, dum cavetur ne omnia permisceantur tumultu, quod fieret si omnia omnibus licerent."

1. Inst. II, 7,11.
2. Ibid.

influenced and actuated by the Spirit, that they desire to obey God, there are two ways in which they still profit in the law. For it is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what that will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge; just as a servant who desires with all his soul to approve himself to his master, must still observe and be careful to ascertain his master's dispositions, that he may comport himself in accomodation to them....[Second,] because we need not teaching merely, but exhortation also, the servant of God will derive this further advantage from the law: by frequently thinking upon it, he will be excited to obedience, and confirmed in it, and so drawn away from the slippery paths of sih.... Even in the case of a spiritual man, inasmuch as he is still burdened with the weight of the flesh, the law is a constant stimulus, pricking him forward when he

would indulge in sloth."[1] In sum: the law is useful to believers because "it contains a perfect pattern of righteousness; therefore unless we should not have any proper rule of life, it is wrong to discard it."[2*]

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1. Inst. II, 7,12. "Tertius usus, qui et praecipuus est, et in proprium legis finem proprius spectat, erga fideles locum habet, quorum in cordibus iam viget ac regnat Dei spiritus. Nam tamesti digito Dei legem scriptam et insculptam habent in cordibus, hoc est, sic affecti sunt et animati per spiritus directionem ut obtemperare Deo cupiant, bifariam tamen adhuc in lege proficiunt. Est enim illis optimum organum, quo melius in dies ac certius discant qualis sit Domini voluntas, ad quam aspirant, atque in eius intelligentia confirmentur. Ut si quis servus iam ita sit toto animi studio comparatus ut domino suo se approbet, necesse tamen habet mores domini explorare accuratius et observare, ad quos se componat et accommodet....quia non sola doctrina, sed exhortatione quoque indigemus, hanc quoque utilitatem ex lege capiet servus Dei, ut frequenti eius meditatione excitetur ad obsequium, in eo roboretur, a delinquendi lubrico retrahatur....Imo spirituali homini, quia nondum carnis mole expeditus est, assiduus aculeus erit, qui desidere illum non permittat."

2. Inst. II, 7,13. "Quod si absolutum in ea iustitiae exemplar eminere nemo infitietur, aut nullam esse nobis recte iusteque vivendi regulam oportet, aut ab ea nefas est discedere."

* The abrogation of the curse of the law in the case of believers will be examined below in the section "Law and the Spirit".

2. Law and its purpose.

The telos of the law, Calvin reminds us in citing Romans 10:4, is Christ.[1] In another place, however, Calvin speaks of the end of the law in somewhat different words: "It will not be difficult to ascertain the general end contemplated by the whole law - i.e., the fulfilment of righteousness, that man may form his life on the model of the divine purity. For therein God has so delineated His own character, that anyone exhibiting in action what is commanded, would to an extent exhibit a living image of God."[2] The end of the law is the fulfilment of righteousness. Christ is also precisely called the end of the law because He is the fulfilment of righteousness;[3] He is known as the perfect image of God because He did in action what God commanded. Thus, if we wish to hold

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1. Inst. II, 7,2.

2. Inst. II, 8,51. "Quorsum vero spectet lex universa, non erit nunc difficile iudicium, nempe in iustitiae complementum: ut hominis vitam ad divinae puritatis exemplar formet. Ita enim suum ingenium Deus illic delineavit, ut, si quis factis quidquid illic praecipitur repraesentet, imaginem Dei quodammodo sit in vita expressurus."

3. Cf. Inst. II, 7,2.

on to Christ, to be with Him who is the end of the law, we are enabled to do so by following the law; i.e., forming our lives on that model of purity of which Christ is the living fulfilment. In sum: the purpose of the law "is to connect man with God and...to make him cleave to the Lord in sanctity of life. Now this sanctity consists in two principal parts - that 'we love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with all our mind, and our neighbour as ourselves.' (Luke 10:27)."[1] The purpose of the law is to direct us to sanctity of life by which we may hold on to Him Who is already holding us. This sanctity of life consists in two principal parts, which are delineated by the two tables of the law: "The law consists of two tables, the first of which instructs us concerning the worship of God and the duties of piety and the second instructs us concerning the love of our neighbour....

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1. Inst. II, 8,51. "...hominem vitae sanctitate cum Deo suo coniungat, et...cohaerere faciat. Porro eius sanctitatis perfectio in duobus iam recitatis capitibus sita est, ut diligamus Dominum Deum ex toto corde, tota anima, totis viribus, et proximum sicut nos ipsos."

Reverence to God, I acknowledge, ranks higher than love of our brothers; and therefore the observance of the first table is more valuable in the sight of God than the observance of the second. But as God Himself is invisible, so piety is a thing hidden from the eyes of men; and though the manifestation of it was the purpose for which ceremonies were established, they are not certain proofs of its existence. It frequently happens that none are more zealous and regular in observing ceremonies than hypocrites. God therefore chooses to make trial of our love to Himself by that love of our brother, which He enjoins us to cultivate. This is the reason why not only here but in Romans 13:10 love is called 'the fulfilling of the law'; not that it excels, but that it proves the worship of God to be real. God, I have said, is invisible; but He represents Himself to us in our brothers, and in their persons demands what is due to Himself. Love to men springs only from the fear and love of God."[1] The purpose of

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1. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50,251. "lex constet duabus tabulis, quarum prior docet de cultu Dei et pietatis officiis: altera autem de caritate....Fateor pietatem erga Deum fratrum caritati praestare: ideoque prioris tabulae observationem pluris fieri coram Deo quam

the law, in sum, is to "teach us how to cultivate reverence, and the proper duties of religion in which His worship consists" and how, "in the fear of His name, we are to conduct ourselves towards our fellow men."[1]

When Calvin speaks of the two principal parts of the law he is speaking of law (torah) generally, but also of the Decalogue particularly. He assigns the first four commandments to the first table and the last six commandments to the second table.[2] While

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(1.cont.) secundae. Sed pietas res est ab hominum sensu abscondita: sicuti Deus ipse est invisibilis. Ad eam testificandam quamvis institutae sint caeremoniae: non tamen certa sunt argumenta. Nam saepe fit ut nulli sint magis strenui et assidui caeremoniarum cultores quam hypocritae. Deus ergo experimentum nostri erga se affectus capere vult ex fraterna caritate quam mutuo nobis commendat. Haec ratio est cur caritas vocetur legis perfectio, non hic tantum, sed etiam ad Romans 13:10 : non quia antecellat cultum Dei, sed quia sit eius approbatio. Iam dixi Deum esse invisibilem: se autem nobis repraesentat in fratribus, et in illorum persona quod sibi debetur exigit. Ergo caritas erga homines non nisi ex timore et amore Dei nascitur.

1. Inst. II, 8,11. "Proinde priore tabula ad pietatem et propria religionis officia, quibus maiestas sua colenda est, nos instituit; altera praescribit quomodo propter nominis sui timorem nos in hominum societate gerere debeamus."

2. Inst. II, 8,12.

righteousness with our fellows and reverence to God may be distinguished they are not, as we have already seen from Calvin's exposition of Galatians 5:14, unrelated. In fact, "it is vain to talk of righteousness apart from religion. One might just as well try to speak of a body as being beautiful, the head of which has been cut off. Not that religion is merely the head of righteousness, but the very soul of it, giving to it all its life and vitality; for without the fear of God, men preserve no justice and love among themselves. Therefore, we call the worship of God the principle and foundation of righteousness, because without it any justice, temperance, and continence men practise among themselves is vain and frivolous in the sight of God."[1] Thus, while righteousness is

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1. Inst. II, 8,11. "Frustra...sine religione venditatur iustitia, ac nihilo maiore specie quam si truncum abscisso capite corpus ad decorem obtendatur. Neque modo est praecipua ipsius pars, sed anima quoque, qua tota ipsa spirat et vegetatur; neque enim citra Dei timorem inter se homines aequitatem ac dilectionem servant. Principium ergo et fundamentum iustitiae vocamus Dei cultum; quod eo sublato quidquid inter se aequitatis, continentiae, temperantiae homines exercent, inane est ac frivolum coram Deo."

a purpose of the law as well as consecration to God, if the primary requirement of consecration to God is met, the second requirement, integrity in the common life, is sure to follow. The second table provides the men of faith not with troublesome chores, but with a description of that life of integrity which they who are consecrated to God wish spontaneously to follow.

Why should men consecrate themselves to God and comply with His requirements? That such a question should be addressed to Calvin some - critical of Calvin - might wonder at. For Calvin's theology is often, popularly, depicted as being grounded in the axiom: God is Sovereign! In a certain sense this is true, but as we tried to indicate in our Chapter One the principle of God's Sovereignty in Calvin's theology is not simply an arbitrary axiom, but is grounded in Christ's atoning (servant) work. Thus, if Calvin maintains all along the line the irreversible Lordship of Christ, he takes the trouble to support it in terms of God's Work in His Word in the world.

Likewise, in his exposition of the law Calvin presents the reader with an exposition of that part of Scripture which testifies to the basis on which God rules and demands the obedience of His creatures. "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage." From his reading of this passage Calvin indicates that God vindicates His Lordship and demands the obedience of His creatures on three grounds: i.e., on the basis of (1)the Grace of creation, (2)His paternal kindness to us and (3)His redeeming Work.

(1)"If all things are from Him, and by Him consist, they ought in justice to be referred to Him (as Paul says in Romans 12:36[1]). Therefore, by this Word alone we are brought under the authority of the Divine Majesty; for it would be monstrous for us to wish to withdraw from the realm of Him, out of whom we cannot

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1. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen."

even exist."[1]

(2)One the grounds of His Gracious creation and government God has the right to rule, but "in order not to seem to drag men by mere necessity, but to allure them, God graciously declares that He is the God of the Church."[2] That is, God tells His people "I have chosen you to myself as a people to whom I shall not only do good in the present life, but also give you all happiness in the life to come."[3] Calvin scarcely simply asserts the Sovereignty of God - he establishes its grounds!

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1. Inst. II, 8,13. "Quod si ab ipso sunt omnia, et in ipso consistunt, aequum est ut in ipsum referantur: quemadmodum ait Paulus (Rom. 11:36). Abunde itaque hoc solo verbo sub divinae maiestatis iugum redigimur, quia portentosum fuerit ab eius ditione velle nos submovere extra quem esse non possumus."

2. Inst. II, 8,14. "Postquam se eum esse ostendit qui ius habeat praecipiendi, cui obedientia debeatur, ne sola necessitate videatur trahere, dulcedine quoque illectat, Deum se ecclesiae pronuntiando."

3. Inst. II, 8,14. "Ego vos mihi delegi in populum, cui non modo in praesenti vita benefacerem, sed vitae quoque futurae beatitudinem largirer."

(3)The Israelites are told in the preface of the Decalogue that they are being commanded by the God Who delivered them from Egypt. Thus they were moved to obey out of gratitude for redemption (and that they might cleave to their Redeemer). Now that the law is given to all men, we should understand that God's Redemption of us is what principally establishes His law over us. We ought not simply ignore the statement "I am the Lord Who brought you out of the land of Egypt..." "For instead of supposing that the matter has no reference to us, we should reflect that the bondage of Israel to Egypt was a type of that spiritual bondage, in the fetters of which we are all bound, until the heavenly avenger delivers us by the power of His own arm and transports us into His free kingdom. Therefore, as in ancient times, when He would gather together the scattered Israelites to the worship of His name, He rescued them from the intolerable tyranny of Pharaoh, so all who profess Him now are delivered from the fatal tyranny of the devil, of which that of Egypt was only a type. There is no man, therefore, whose mind ought not to be aroused to give heed to the law, which, as he is told, came from the King of

kings, from Him Who, as He gave all their being, justly destines and directs them to Himself as their proper end. There is no one, then, who should not hurry to embrace the Lawgiver, whose commands, he knows, he has been especially appointed to obey, from whose kindnesses he anticipates an abundance of all good, and even immortality, and whose wonderful power and mercy, he knows, have delivered him from the jaws of death."[1*]

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1. Inst. II, 8,15. "Nos autem (ne ad nos pertinere nihil id putemus) reputare convenit, aegyptiacam Israelis servitutem typum esse spiritualis captivitatis in qua omnes vincti detinemur, donec brachii sui virtute liberatos in regnum libertatis nos coelestis vindex traducit. Quemadmodum ergo, quum dissipatos olim Israelitas ad cultum nominis sui recolligere vellet, eos ab intolerabili, qua premebantur, Pharaonis dominatione eripuit, ita quibus hodie se in Deum esse profitetur, eos omnes iam ab exitiali diaboli potestate asserit, quae illa corporali adumbrata fuit. Quamobrem nemo est cuius animus inflammari non debeat ad auscultandam legem, quam a summo rege profectam audit; a quo ut suam originem ducunt omnia, ita aequum est ut finem suum vicissim in ipsum destinent ac dirigant. Nemo, inquam, est qui non rapi debeat ad amplexandum legislatorem, ad cuius observanda mandata peculiariter se delectum esse docetur; a cuius benignitate, cum bonorum omnium affluentiam, tum immortalis vitae gloriam exspectat; cuius mirabili virtute ac misericordia e faucibus mortis se liberatum novit."

* No one can rightly say that Calvin simply assumes God's Sovereignty!

3. Law and the Spirit.

Calvin reminds us of Paul's statement that "the written code kills, but the Spirit gives life."[1] The written code kills, Calvin explains, for while it holds out the reward of eternal salvation, it promises this reward only to those who are perfectly obedient to the law.[2] The requirement of the law is perfect righteousness before God; and since "in none of us is that righteousness...manifested, we therefore are excluded from the promises...and fall under the curse."[3]

Despite the curse,"the Spirit gives life." Calvin cites II Corinthians 3:17: "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." Although the written code brings us under the curse - we shall not receive eternal salvation, for we are not righteous - the Spirit frees us from the curse. Calvin indicates that we are freed

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1. II Cor. 3:6 cited by Calvin in Inst. II, 7,2.
2. Inst. II, 7,3.
3. Ibid.

by the Spirit from the curse in two ways. First, Christ is that Spirit and He bestows upon us His righteousness[1]; and, second He renews us by the Spirit. The fact that Christ imputes to us His righteousness is a matter we shall discuss in Chapter Five when we examine the relation between justification and sanctification in Calvin's theology. The question of renewal is the consequential point here. We recall from Chapter One[2] that the Spirit grants men the gift of faith. By faith men "embrace Christ"[3] or "put Christ on."[4] Prior to putting Him on men have an aversion to righteousness, but once embracing Him they have a taste and desire for the Truth.[5] With regard to law, then, the Spirit grants to men a taste for righteousness; i.e., the Spirit writes and engraves the law on the hearts of God's people so that they desire to obey God's law.[6] The Spirit captures the hearts of men so that they have a flaming desire for

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1. Inst. II, 7,2.
2. Section 5.
3. Inst. III, 2,1.
4. Inst. III, 11,10.
5. Inst. III, 2,33.
6. Inst. II, 7,12.

righteousness. The law is a permission - enabling them to please God and live justly - rather than a yoke. Calvin makes this point by employing a figure: The man of faith is "just like a servant who desires with all his heart to approve himself to his master.../and therefore constantly/...observes and is careful to ascertain his master's dispositions, that he may comport himself in accomodation to them."[1] If this meant being an obsequious servant, the law would still be yoke and not permission. But the master in this case is the Holy, Loving God. The servant in this case is the man whose heart has been turned by the Spirit to love and righteousness. In accomodating himself to the command of God, he is accomodating himself to the love and righteousness which he now inwardly seeks above all else. Thus, this servant, the man of faith is inspired by the Spirit with a love of the law[2] (and since he does that which he desires and loves he experiences freedom). This point is well summarized for us in Calvin's

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1. Inst. II, 7,12.
2. Ibid.

Commentary on Psalms 119 : "An unfeigned love of God's law is an undoubted evidence of adoption, since this love is the work of the Holy Spirit...At the same time we are taught that there can be no true keeping of the law but what springs from free and spontaneous love....For this reason David has previously said that the law of God was not only precious but also delightful to him. Since on the one hand, in keeping the law it behooves us to begin with voluntary obedience, so that nothing may delight us more than the righteousness of God, so on the other hand it must not be forgotten that a sense of the free goodness of God and His fatherly love is indispensably necessary in order for our hearts to be inclined to this affection. So far are the bare commandments from winning men to obey them, that they rather frighten them away. Hence it is evident, that it is only when a man shall have tasted the goodness of God from the teaching of the law, that he will apply his heart to love it in return. The frequency with which the Prophet repeats the prayer 'that God would quicken him' [by the Spirit] teaches us that he knew well the frailty of his own life,

so that in his estimation men only really live insofar as God in every moment breathes life into them."[1] Men only really live, i.e., freely live, where the Spirit of God inclines them to love the law and therefore motivates them to do the law.[2] Freedom, for Calvin, is not really freedom from the law but freedom to do the law. That is, we are free when we do the law because it is what we freely wish to do; we are free

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1. Comm. on Psalms 119:159, C.O. 32,286. "Adde quod sincerus legis Dei amor certum est adoptionis signum, quum opus sit spiritus sancti....Interea docemur, veram legis observationem non nisi ex liberali amore nasci....Ac prionde David legem Dei non modo sibi pretiosam esse ante dixit, sed delectabilem. Sicuti autem in servanda lege a spontaneo obsequio inchipere oportet, ut nihil nos magis delectet quam Dei iustitia: sic rursus tenendum est, non nisi gratuitae bonitatis Dei et paterni amoris sensu inclinari animos nostros ad hunc affectum: quia nuda praecepta adeo non sibi conciliant homines, ut potius absterreant. Ergo qui ex legis doctrina gustaverit Dei bonitatem, is demum ad eam amandam animum suum mutuo adiiciet. Quod vero toties precem hanc iterat propheta ut Deus ipsum vivificet colligimus, vitae suae fragilitatem probe fuisse ei cognitam: ut non aliter vivere homines duceret nisi quatenus singulis momentis vitam illis Deus inspirat."

2. Cf. II Cor. 3:17 : "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

when we wish to do the law as a loving and grateful response to God, Who, we learn, has first loved us and sent His Son to be the expiation for our sins. In obeying the Law of God, however, the man of faith is excused from certain formal practises or laws and from certain aspects of the law. In sum: there are aspects of the law which are abrogated, and Calvin took account of them.

There is a sense in which, in the case of believers, the law is abrogated. This is not to say "that the things which it enjoins are no longer to be observed, but only that the law is not to believers what it formerly was; i.e., it no longer, by terrifying and confounding their consciences, condemns and destroys them."[1] For believers the curse of the law is abrogated. For Christians no longer receive their justification before God, on the grounds of their own compliance with the law.[2] "He who imagines that in order to

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1. Inst. II, 7,14. "...non quod amplius illis non iubeat quod rectum est, sed duntaxat ne sit illis quod antea erat; hoc est, ne eorum conscientias perterrendo et confundendo damnet ac perdat."

2. Inst. III, 19,2.

obtain justification he must bring any degree of works whatever, cannot fix any mode or limit but makes himself debtor to the whole law. Therefore, laying aside all mention of the law, and all idea of works, we must in the matter of justification have recourse to the mercy of God only and turning away our glance from ourselves, we must look only to Christ."[1] The Christian is no longer under the condemnation of the law, for by God's mercy he may plead Christ's righteousness before the judgement seat. The curse of the law is abrogated; the law itself, the Christian knows, still commands what is right, still "contains a perfect pattern of righteousness," is still "a proper rule of life."[2]

The first freedom the Christian enjoys with regard to the law is freedom from its curse. The second freedom is freedom from the yoke or necessity of the law.

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1. Inst. III, 19,2. "Nam qui vel tantillum operum se afferre debere ad obtinendam iustitiam cogitat, non potest modum aut finem praefigere, sed debitorem universae legis se constituit. Sublata igitur legis mentione, et omni operum cogitatione seposita, unam Dei misericordiam amplecti convenit, quum de iustificatione agitur, et averso a nobis aspectu, unum Christum intueri."

2. Inst. II, 7,13.

We have already understood this to be the primary work of the Spirit with regard to the law. Calvin sums up the point succinctly: "consciences [of the men of faith] do not render obedience because they are compelled by the constraint of the law, but are freely obedient to the will of God after being released from the yoke of the law."[1] Calvin continues the point and illustrates it: "freed from severe exaction, or rather from the full rigour of the law, Christians hearing themselves invited with paternal lenience by God, cheerfully and alertly obey the call, and follow His guidance. In sum, they who are bound by the yoke of the law are like slaves who are appointed to do daily tasks by their masters. They don't dare to come before their masters until they have finished the appointed work, considering anything less than the whole work to be nothing. But children, who are treated by their parents in a more liberal manner, don't hesitate to

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1. Inst. III, 19,4. "conscientiae, non quasi legis necessitate coactae, legi obsequantur, sed legis ipsius iugo liberae voluntati Dei ultro obediant."

present their imperfect and even sometimes faulty works, in confidence that their obedience and readiness of mind will be accepted, although the performance is not all they wished. Like children ought we be, feeling a certain confidence that our services however small, rude and imperfect, will be accepted by our most indulgent Father."[1] The law for the Christian man, who is free, provides him with a guide - which he is grateful for, for he wishes to gratefully respond to his kind and liberal Father - and the law guides him in a proper response. The point of importance is that the Christian trusts in God's Grace, in the liberality of the Father, and it is just this trust which makes

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1. Inst. III, 19,5. "Rursum si ab hac severa legis exactione, vel potius toto legis rigore liberatae, paterna lenitate se a Deo appellari audiant, hilares et magna alacritate vocanti respondebunt, et ducentem sequentur. In summa, qui legis iugo astringuntur, servis sunt similes quibus certae in singulos dies operae a dominis indicuntur. Hi enim nihil effectum putant, nec in conspectum Dominorum venire audent, nisi exactus operarum modus constiterit. Filii vero, qui liberalius et magis ingenue a partibus tractantur, eis non dubitant inchoata et dimidiata opera, aliquid etiam vitii habentia offerre, confisi suam obedientiam et animi promptitudinem illis acceptam fore, etiam si minus exacte effecerint quod volebant. Tales nos esse oportet qui certo confidamus, obsequia nostra indulgentissimo parti probatum iri, quantulacunque sint, et quantumvis rudia ac imperfecta."

his service acceptable to God - "without this trust [granted by the Spirit] everything should be attempted in vain: God regards no service unless it is truly done out of a desire to serve Him."[1]

"The third aspect of Christian liberty is that, in the sight of God, we are not under any obligation about outward observances which in themselves are a matter of indifference, so that we are in a position to use them or not as we please."[2] This aspect of Christian liberty might not seem so important to us, but Calvin is quick to caution us that "the knowledge of this liberty is very necessary to us" for (1) a quiet conscience and (2) as a weapon against superstitions.[3]

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1. Inst. III, 19,5. "Neque haec fiducia parum nobis necessaria est, sine qua frustra omnia conabimur: siquidem nullo nostro opere se coli reputat Deus, nisi quod in eius cultum vere a nobis fiat."

2. Inst. III, 19,7. "Tertia, ut nulla rerum externarum, quae per se sunt ἀδιάφορα, religione coram Deo teneamur, quin eas nunc usurpare nunc omittere indifferenter liceat."

3. Ibid. This aspect of Christian liberty ought perhaps not be neglected in contemporary discussions about the church's liturgy.

Calvin, in discussing this aspect of Christian liberty, reveals a sense of humour. He indicates that a man who wonders if it is lawful to use linen in any way will begin to trouble himself about the legality of using hemp or tow. If he hesitates in taking wine he finally will not even touch water, if he detects in it a touch of sweetness.[1] Behind this humour, there is, however, a serious note. If some objects are deemed holier by the law than others, then men who do not accord them the proper order in worship would offend God. Under such a legal system men are always 'concerned and troubled about many things'. However, Calvin assures us, in Christ God has made all things ours, so the Christian knows "that we are to use the gifts of God without any scruple of conscience, without any trouble of mind, for the purpose for which God gave them to us; in this trust our souls have peace with Him, and are grateful for His liberality towards us."[2]

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1. Inst. III, 19,7.

2. Inst. III, 19,8. "nempe ut Dei donis nullo conscientiae scrupulo, nulla animi perturbatione utamur, in quem usum nobis ab ipso data sunt; qua fiducia et pacem cum eo habeant animae nostrae et eius erga nos largitatem agnoscant."

God has in Christ freed life from the quest for 'the holy' and He has revealed this fact to us by the Spirit. Thus, not only is the Christian's mind put at rest - he need not be troubled about deciding what is an holy object and what is not, or about the degrees of holiness, but moreover he knows, in terms of doctrine and witness, that any attempt to define holy objects is superstition. Christians, of course, may make free use of external observances if they serve the edification of the Church.[1]

"Now, we see clearly, that Christian freedom in all its parts is a Spiritual matter; the whole strength of it consists in giving peace to troubled consciences, whether they are troubled about the forgiveness of sins, or whether they are troubled about whether or not their imperfect...polluted works are acceptable to God, or whether they are troubled about the use of indifferent forms."[2]

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1. Inst. IV, 10,32.

2. Inst. III, 19,9. "Est autem diligenter observandum, Christianam libertatem omnibus suis partibus rem spiritualem esse; cuius tota vis in formidolosis conscientiis coram Deo pacificandis posita sit, sive de peccatorum remissione inquietae sint ac sollicitae, sive anxiae sint, utrum opera imperfecta et vitiis carnis nostrae inquinata Deo placeant; sive de rerum indifferentium usu torqueantur."

Summary of the section: The law remains to teach us and admonish us.[1] But for the Christian, who relies upon Christ's work, its power of constraint is abrogated.[2] Men, moved by the Spirit to an understanding of this Grace, this liberality, now desire cheerfully to obey God and follow His righteous law.[3]

4. Law and Righteousness

We have already understood that the law is revelation,[4] and that "perfect righteousness is set before us in the law."[5] Thus, while it is important to examine the law as we have, i.e., law as revelation, law and its uses, law and its purpose, law and the manner in which - after first condemning us - it now enables us to embrace Him Who is embracing us, we must not neglect the primary point. For if law is revelation and in it "perfect righteousness is set before us" then the important point is that the law

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1. Inst. II, 7,14.
2. Inst. II, 7,15.
3. Inst. III, 19,5.
4. Cf. Inst. II, 9,1. "the only begotten Son...was formerly made known to the Jews...He was the Deliverer under the old dispensation..." Cf. all of paragraph II, 9,1.
5. Inst. II, 7,3.

is first about God Who represents Himself as He is in His revelation, and only second about us - only second must we concern ourselves about its usefulness to us, its purpose for us, etc.. In the first instance the law proclaims that the God Who has come to us is righteousness, righteous in Himself.

Thus, it is too weak to say merely that God will stand by His law and uphold it. He is Himself the righteousness, which is mirrored in the law.[1] Thus, as there is only righteousness in God, righteousness will have its way in the world, which is the Righteous God's creation. Unrighteousness, if God is Lord, will be annihilated. But in none of God's creatures "is that righteousness manifested"[2] - thus all creatures are due annihilation.[3] But God is not only righteousness, but is goodness, which means, as we have seen[4], that He wills the preservation of His creature, whom He still loves.[5] How can God Who

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1. Serm. on Job 9:29-35, C.O. 33,459.
2. Inst. II, 7,3.
3. Ibid.
4. Cf. our Chapter Three.
5. Inst. II, 16,2.

is perfectly righteous also be merciful? He can not simply close His eyes to iniquity. In the Cross we see God's righteousness and love reconciled. He who never sinned became Sin for men and in His annihilation iniquity was punished.[1] Not only is God's righteousness upheld, and God's goodness proclaimed (by this means the preservation of the creature is effected), but in taking the consequence of our iniquity upon Himself, God's utter love is manifested.

The point of importance for our discussion is the absolute seriousness of the law. God Himself is revealed in the law and God is not different from His revelation; thus God Himself, as it were, can not break the law, which ultimately He is. Nor, then, may He permit His creatures to violate Him, His law, with impunity. Thus Christ's Coming scarcely can be said to abrogate the law; it is precisely because God can not violate Himself Who is righteousness, that He comes in Christ to fulfil for His creatures their

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1. Cf. Chapter One, especially discussion in Section 2 of how Christ performed the office of Redeemer.

righteousness in the law; i.e., the work of Christ in the Atonement indicates precisely that the law can not be set aside (for God or) for men. If it could, God Himself would not have had to experience grief, pain and tortuous death.

Christ has removed for us the consequence of disobedience, but He has not set aside the demand of the law; He in fact more fully reveals it. If the law has such an absolute character that God Himself in Christ suffers that its demands may be fulfilled, we understand all the more clearly its absolute demand upon us.

"There can be no doubt," Calvin tells us, "that the claim of absolute perfection which God made for His law is perpetually in force."[1] By "the law human life is instructed not merely in outward decency, but in inward spiritual righteousness."[2] Though none can

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1. Inst. II, 8,5. "Non enim dubium quin perpetuo valeat illud quo absolutam iustitiae doctrinam legi suae Dominus vendicavit...."

2. Inst. II, 8,6. "Initio constitutum sit, non ad externam honestatem modo, sed ad interiorem spiritualemque iustitiam, hominis vitam in lege informari."

deny this few attend the basis; i.e., "they do not consider the Lawgiver, by whose character the law must be determined."[1] A civil government might enact laws prohibiting murder, adultery, and theft; it would not prosecute the man who has only felt a longing in his mind after these vices, but has not actually committed them. Human law has regard - can only have regard - for outward acts. "But God, whose eye nothing escapes, pays more attention to purity of heart than to outward appearance.... Being a Spiritual Lawgiver He speaks to the soul not less than the body. The murder which the soul commits is wrath and hatred; the soul's theft is covetousness and greed; the soul's adultery is lust."[2]

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1. Inst. II, 8,6. "Id fit quia in legislatorem non respiciunt, a cuius ingenio natura quoque legis aestimanda est."

2. Ibid. "Deus autem, cuius oculum nihil fugit, et qui externam speciem non tam moratur quam cordis puritatem, sub scortationis, homicidii, furti interdicto, libidenem, iram odium, alieni appetentiam, dolum et quidquid tale est, vetat. Nam quum sit spiritualis legislator, animae non minus quam corpori loquitur. Homicidium autem animae, ira est ac odium; furtum mala cupiditas et avaritia; scortatio, libido."

The demand of human law is satisfied if a man simply refrains from external transgressions. "But the law of God is directed towards our minds, the proper regulation of them is the principal necessity to a righteous observance of it."[1] The great majority conceal their disregard of God's law by a simulated and external observance, keeping all the while their hearts in utter disobedience.[2] In their hearts they lust, they covet, are greedy. "The principal thing which the law requires [of them] is lacking."[3] This occurs because men inquire 'what can I get away with' and still remain within the letter of the law? i.e., they form an idea about their righteousness in terms of this question rather than in terms of the righteousness of the Lawgiver.[4] For if they understood

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1. Inst. II, 8,6. "contra autem, quia animis nostris lata est lex coelestis, eorum coercitio ad iustam eius observationem in primis necessaria est.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. "Iam vero deest quod praecipuum erat legis."

4. Ibid.

the character of the law in terms of its source, i.e., the Lawgiver, they would realize that the "law is Spiritual". Calvin in referring here to Romans 7:14 implies Paul's understanding of the opposition of sarx and pneuma. The law directs a man in such a way that in being guided by it he co-operates with the Spirit Who enters "the inner man" and there puts sarx to rout. Two qualifications must be immediately made here: (1)"it would avail us nothing to know what God demands did not Christ come to the succour of those who are labouring, and oppressed under an /otherwise/ intolerable yoke and burden"[1]; i.e., the Spirit enables us to obey the law; and (with reference to our discussion of "Law and Spirit") we must say (2)that while God still maintains the old order: (i)He commands (Alone and Absolutely), (ii)we act, (iii)God judges our action - He has, since Christ's Advent, prefaced this old order, with a new order (i.e., law is now substantially established by Grace):

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1. Inst. II, 7,2. "quia nihil prodesset quid exigat Deus a nobis scire, nisi sub iugo et onere intolerabili laborantibus et oppressis Christus succurreret." Further Calvin tells us: "it is vain to teach righteousness by precept until Christ bestow it by free imputation and the sanctification of the Spirit." Ibid. "Nam priore quidem significat frustra doceri iustitiam praeceptis, donec eam Christus et gratuita imputatione et spiritu regenerationis conferat."

now (i)God has rendered judgement against Christ and for us, (ii)the response of the man of faith is loving gratitude, (iii)God commands us (Absolutely) that we might express this love, (iv)the man of faith (simul iustus, simul peccator) still disobeys, self love still being in him; (v)God judges the act, and against unrighteousness unlooses His minister, Satan, in order to chastise His child. In sum: precisely because God has forgiven us our trespasses in Christ and poured out His Spirit, He has "authenticated" (i.e., established by Grace) His claim, and thus rather than giving up His place as Lawgiver He has established it upon 'The Rock of rocks'.

Thus the Lawgiver - objectively by the law, subjectively by the Spirit - directs us to be "Spiritual" men, to put off the old man, to put off sarx.* Calvin's discussion of sanctification will be examined in Chapter Five, and we don't wish to anticipate that now. What we wish to explicate here is how Calvin understood the absolute character of the law and the grounds for its being absolute; i.e., Calvin understood that

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* Sarx, of course, means here the power of sin; soma, or body, is not the enemy. Greek dualism is not in Scripture, and there is very little of it in Calvin's writings.

Jesus Christ, as the Grace of God, as the means of our forgiveness, as the Giver of the Spirit, establishes the law - God's Rule - rather than abrogating it.[1] Not only does Christ not abrogate the law but He demands through it a new spiritual integrity from God's creatures.[2] Thus "there is always more to the demands and prohibitions of the law than is expressed in words."[3] Rather than being literalists - who give a ridiculous interpretation by trying to restrict the spirit of the law to the strict letter of the words - we ought to consider in the case of each law what the purpose is for which it was given.[4] And this purpose is to be largely - spiritually - rather than narrowly conceived; i.e., "when a particular virtue opposed to a particular vice is spoken of, all that is usually meant is abstinence from that vice. We maintain that it goes farther, and means opposite duties and positive

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1. Inst. II, 8,15.
2. Inst. II, 8,7.
3. Inst. II, 8,8. "plus inesse semper in praeceptis ac interdictis quam verbis exprimatur."
4. Ibid.

acts. Hence the commandment, 'Thou shall not kill', the majority of men will merely consider as an injunction to abstain from all injury, and all wish to inflict injury. I hold that it moreover means that we are to aid our neighbour's life by every means in our power. And not to say this without giving grounds, I maintain it thus: God forbids us to injure or hurt a brother, because He wishes the brother's life to be dear and precious to us; and, therefore, when He so forbids, He, at the same time, demands all the works of charity which can contribute to his preservation."[1]

The law discloses to us that God may make an absolute demand upon His creatures. And thus the law describes the character of the relationship between us

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1. Inst. II, 8,9. "Contrariam enim vitio virtutem, fere interpretantur vitii ipsius abstinentiam; nos eam ultra procedere dicimus, ad officia scilicet factaque contraria. Itaque in hoc praecepto: non occides, sensus hominum communis nihil aliud considerabit, quam ab omni maleficio ac malefaciendi libidine abstinendum esse. Ego praeterea contineri dico, ut proximi vitam quibus possimus subsidiis adiuvemus. Ac ne sine ratione loquar, ita confirmo: Deus vetat iniuria fratrem laedi aut violari, quia vitam eius caram nobis esse vult ac pretiosam; simul ergo postulat quae ad illius conservationem conferri possunt officia caritatis. Atque ita videre est ut semper nobis finis praecepti reseret quidquid illic facere aut iubemur aut vetamur."

men and God: "We are not our own, but we are the Lord's."[1] Because this is true He can claim us - and this is law; but since He does claim us He makes His righteousness ours; since He claims us, in love He enables us to participate in love - and this is Grace.

Thus the law does not demand inner spiritual integrity as a "good in itself" but demands it* so that everything we think, speak, plan or do will be to God's glory[2] - for such is the purpose of man's life.[3] Thus, since "we are not our own, therefore neither is reason or will our own. We are not our own, therefore let us not seek our own carnal ends. We are not our own, therefore, let us, as far as possible, forget ourselves and our possessions. Since, on the other hand, we are God's /let us be guided by His law and/

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1. Inst. III, 7,1. "Quod si nostri non sumus, sed Domini...."
2. Ibid.
3. Geneva Catechism, C.O. 6,9.
   "M. What is the chief end of human life?
   C. To know God.
   M. Why do you say that?
   C. Because He created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which He Himself is the beginning, should be devoted to His Glory."

* And the Spirit enables us.

therefore [1] live and die to Him (Romans 14:8). We are God's, therefore [2] let His wisdom and will guide our actions. We are God's, therefore [3] let Him be the end of our life in every particular."[1] In sum: that man who obeys the law by the power of the Spirit submits himself to God - and thus he realizes his proper end, for that man (iniquitous in himself) no longer lives but Christ lives and reigns in Him (Galatians 2:20).[2*]

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1. Inst. III, 7,1. "Nostri non sumus: ergo ne vel ratio nostra vel voluntas in consiliis nostris factisque dominetur. Nostri non sumus: ergo ne statuamus, nobis hunc finem, ut quaeramus quod nobis secundum carnem expediat. Nostri non sumus: ergo quoad licet obliviscamur nosmetipsos ac nostra omnia. Rursum, Dei sumus: illi ergo vivamus ac moriamur. Dei sumus: cunctis ergo nostris actionibus praesideat sapientia eius et voluntas. Dei sumus: ad illum igitur, tanquam solum legitimum finem, contendant omnes vitae nostrae partes."

2. Ibid.

* We have not examined in our discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the law of God the question of the relation between the law given in nature and the written law (Cf. Inst. II, 8,1) as have some (Cf. E.A. Dowey, The Knowledge of God in Calvin's Theology (New York, 1952) p. 230), simply because the law in nature is to the written law as the revelation in nature is to Scripture (our present guide and teacher) and this we have examined at length in Chapter Two.

Section 2. Our Problem

We now wish to examine Calvin's discussion of the law of God in the light of his discussion of law and Gospel so that we may see how law may always be related to Gospel in his theology; for Calvin understands that the Same Jesus Christ is God's "good news" to us and is the One Who claims us for the Father! We, first, then must very briefly review Calvin's discussion of law and Gospel as set down in Chapter One.[1] Law is understood to be the Old Covenant - its promises* and claims. The Gospel is the fulfilment of the promises in Christ and Christ's fulfilment on our behalf of God's claims upon us.** The manifestation of Christ is the Gospel (and its law) but the words 'Gospel' and 'law' also apply to the promulgation of this manifestation, so law and Gospel are together: Scripture.

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1. PP. 53-67.

* There is Gospel in law!

** God still claims us in Christ; there is law in Gospel!

But Scripture is the Word of God - and therefore God's Own good news to us, and God's own law for us - only insofar as Christ is manifested and present in it by the power of the Holy Spirit.

With this summary of Calvin's discussion of law and Gospel we shall now review Calvin's discussion of the law, under the headings we assigned to it.

1. Law and the Lawgiver.

The Lawgiver we saw under this heading above is Himself present in His law, for law is the revelation of God and "God Himself is the only fit witness to Himself."[1] God's Incarnation and Sacrifice were foreshadowed in the ceremonial law, and His charity in the judicial law - these are now, however, abrogated. The moral law, in which God's righteousness is revealed is still valid, and God still manifests Himself in it. Thus Calvin spoke of three (continuing) uses of the moral law: (i)it convicts; (ii)it restrains; (iii)it guides.

Now we must be careful to understand in the light of Calvin's discussion of law and Gospel that the law qua law does not convict, restrain and guide, but

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1. Inst. I, 11,1.

rather Christ Who is present by the power of the Spirit in the law convicts, restrains and guides.

(i)First Calvin tells us that the law by proclaiming the righteousness acceptable to God convicts all of unrighteousness.[1] The law as first of all revelation is the revelation of God's righteousness and of the only One - Who is God - Who fulfilled it: Jesus Christ. Thus the righteousness proclaimed in the law is the righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is no abstract righteousness but Christ in His righteousness Who convicts all men of sin. ("If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin." "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did they would not have sin." John 15:22, 24a.). Our disinclination to obey, our disinclination to be concerned with our neighbour's good, our inclination to be lords, our inclination to serve our selves are mirrored and are illumined by what we men did with Jesus Christ. The

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1. Inst. II, 7,6.

Cross of Jesus Christ illumines our sin. The law describes the perfect righteousness of Christ - and any who act against Him, against His righteousness, are convicted of utter unrighteousness. Whoever does not believe in Him and manifest that faith in perfect obedience is revealed, by God's judgement: a sinner.

The perfect love of Christ, manifested to us now through His Body which testifies to Him by the proclamation of the law and the Gospel in the power of the Spirit, is the only Reality which will convince us that we are not justified. It is not law qua law, but the manifestation of Christ in the law by the power of His Spirit that brings man "to confess his weakness and impurity.../and/ tames his presumption."[1]

Thus, while Christ in the law brings man to a confession of guilt, He never leads man to utter despondency, for He Who comes through the law is at once the Very One Who is the "good news" of God.[2]

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1. Inst. II, 7,6.
2. Cf. Inst. II, 7,8.

(ii)Second, Calvin tells us, the law, by means of denunciations restrains those who have no real regard for justice. It is not the law itself which punishes, of course, but the law proclaims that He Who is Lord holds in His hand all power. And, indeed, we need here to recall our examination of Calvin's discussion of God's preserving work; Calvin made it clear that Satan is in the Lord's hands and that God uses his agency to chastise and punish.[1] He who would go against the command that Christ presents to him in the law, will feel the chastising and punishing wrath which God visits upon us men through the agency of Satan. And while Satan can not finally destroy God's creatures, but rather in the last time - under God's Lordship - only destroy destruction, nevertheless today the Deuteronomic pattern of delict and sanction still pertains in the economy of God, over which Christ is the living Overseer. It is because Christ is the living Lord that that order prevails in which "Whoever plays with fire, gets his fingers burned." In sum: Christ not only convicts through the law, but He carries

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1. Cf. Inst. I, 17,11 and Inst. III, 4,31.

out an aspect of His preserving work through it by warning and then chastising any who violate His righteousness; His wrath is expressed through the agency of Satan.

(iii)Although believers spontaneously desire to do the Lord's will, the law is still useful to them as regards concrete guidance and concrete encouragement.[1] But it is, of course, Christ Who leads and encourages us as He is manifested in the law. Since Christ is manifested in the law, it would be strange for those who depend only upon Him and His mercy not to seek Him there. For where else is He to be found? He is present as we have seen in the law and Gospel, i.e., Scripture[2] and in the preaching based on Scripture.[3] Thus, those who would be encouraged by His presence must hurry to those places where He is preached, abide in those communities (where two or three or more are gathered in His Name), and continually read the law - and Gospel - in Scripture. Not only for the encouraging presence does one go to these places or turn to that

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1. Inst. II, 7,12.
2. Chapter One, Section 3.
3. Chapter One, Section 4.

witness, Scripture, but also for guidance. For by the power of the Spirit, Christ manifested in the witness of the law, lays upon the heart of each His commands. And in that community which promulgates the law (and the Gospel) Christ, while not visible Himself manifests Himself as the living law of God for "He represents Himself to us in our brothers, and in their persons demands what is due to Himself."[1]

2. Law and its purpose.

Under this heading we paid special attention to Calvin's discussion of the two tables of the law: the first table we learned teaches us to cultivate piety; the second instructs us concerning the love of the neighbour. But Calvin is not speaking of the "bare commandments" when he speaks of the two tables. He acknowledges that not only do the written commands fail to win men, but actually they alienate men from the law's purpose.[2] And, moreover, as far as the first

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1. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50, 251. "Iam dixi Deum esse invisibilem: se autem nobis repraesentat in fratribus, et illorum persona quod sibi debetur exegit.

2. Comm. on Psalms 119:159, C.O. 32,286.

table is concerned it frequently happens that none are more punctilious in observing the letter of the written law than hypocrites.[1]

We do not worship God properly by being punctilious with regard to the letter of the law in the first table.[2] Rather we worship Him properly by loving and obeying the living Lord. Where is He? Again, "God, I have said, is invisible; but He represents Himself to us in our brothers, and in their persons demands what is due to Himself."[3] The law of God and the Gospel of God are preached in the community of men. The written law manifests Christ, and is the law of God as Christ, Who directs us to our neighbour, lays a given command upon our hearts in the face of the need of a neighbour.[4] In succouring the neighbour we prove our dedication to God - "Love to men springs only from the fear and love of God" - and although in

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1. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50,251.
2. Ibid.
3. Cf. above: Commands, Calvin teaches us, not only prohibit, i.e., 'thou shall not kill,' but commend positive action, i.e., help the brother to preserve his life.
4. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50, 251.

this we are primarily serving God, we are also, of course, actually helping the neighbour and thus fulfilling the purpose of the second table. In sum: We are not called by a group of propositions to the love of God and neighbour, but God, in the concreteness of our community life, as its Living Lord lays these commands upon our hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit, wherever He finds a child of His in need; and God's children are always in need; but they do not lack a remedy for wherever two or three or more gather in His Name He is in their midst directing His children - through His manifestation in the proclamation of the law - to the needs one of another.

Calvin's exposition of the legitimacy of God's law is quite helpful. He defended it on the grounds of (1)God's Grace in creation; (2)God's paternal kindness and (3)God's redeeming work. In the light of Calvin's discussion of law and Gospel, however, we must go on to indicate that the third reason comprehends the first two. For Jesus Christ is the "purpose" of the law and is the "good news" or Gospel of God. Because He is the "good news" of God He is the legitimate law of God.

He is the "good news" because He, from the highest pinnacle, descended to the lowest depth, suffering ignominious death, for us. Thus, He secured for us the Father's love. This act of Covenant renewal preserved that relationship between God and man, which is God's purpose in creation and providence. Thus the redeeming work of Christ is the inner presupposition of God's creation and preservation.

God in His redeeming work in Christ served man. On the basis of this wholly effective, wholly good, wholly loving service God commands man! God, as man's Creator and Preserver could of course demand rightfully the service of man. But God has chosen rather to claim man in love; i.e., the loving God seeks to win man by serving him, by acting for man in Christ. Because God has loved (and loves) and served (and serves) man in Christ, man owes God all love and service. By the Grace of the law God permits man to return love and service to Him by loving and serving the neighbour through whom Christ comes and comes again.

In the light of God's service to man in Christ we see that all the other works of God (creation, providence, etc.) serve this end and thus all that God has done in the world is done in loving service to man. God's law, far from being arbitrary, is founded on incomprehensible Grace.

Not only is the law founded on Grace, but both the discussions above, indicate the law is itself the effecting of Grace. (1)God, Who is invisible mediates His command to us through the neighbour. God's Word comes to us through the neighbour who is the living proclamation of the written law which we receive in the community of God. While we apprehend the Word as law, nevertheless the Word is the "good news" of God, Jesus Christ. That is, in seeking to follow God's law we find that being apprehended by that living law in the person of the neighbour means being apprehended by Jesus Christ - and here Grace is proclaimed and actual for us men.

(2)Knowing that God makes legitimate His claim upon us, by establishing it upon His redeeming Grace (ie., Grace establishes the law) means that, for the

man of faith, authority is service. Thus the man of faith who wishes to witness to Him Who is the ground of all legitimate authority, by virtue of His service, will wish to lead a life of service - to God and men. This life of service is precisely what Calvin told us is delineated in the law. Thus if men of faith would witness to Christ, the Lord by virtue of His service, they will follow the law the Lord gives them. In sum: Men of faith are obedient to the law, for such a proclamation of service manifests Grace. "God has so manifested His own character /in the law/ that any one exhibiting in action what is commanded, would in some measure exhibit a living image of God."[1] And the image of God is the Word of God,[2] Who is Jesus Christ. Thus, again, the law is the effecting, the actualization in the world of God's Grace.

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1. Inst. II, 8,51. "Ita enim suum ingenium Deus illic delineavit, ut, si quis factis quidquid illic praecipitur repraesentet, imaginem Dei quodammodo sit in vita expressurus."

2. Introd. Arg. in Comm. on Gen., C.O. 23, 9-10. "Praeterea quum aeternus Dei sermo, viva et expressa sit illius effigies, hoc nos revocat."

3. Law and the Spirit.

The written law, Calvin tells us, holds out the reward of salvation.[1] It can do this, since the written law is no set of abstract propositions but a delineation of Christ's righteousness. Thus, we may be assured that any who can be as Christ, may be assured of God's love. But in none of us is such righteousness, thus none of us deserve reward, God's love.[2]

The written code is a curse not primarily because we can not fulfil it (although, we can not, of course) but because we have no desire to fulfil it since we do not see it for what it is. (We say this in the context of Calvin's discussion of Gospel and law.) For the written code kills precisely because it is commonly understood to be a list of rules and regulations. The heart of Calvin's theology disallows such an understanding, for from that heart we understand that Christ in His Spirit gives Life to, i.e., is Himself present in, the otherwise dead letter of the law. Christ lifts from us the yoke of the law by presenting Himself by the power of the Spirit in the law, and thus

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1. Inst. II, 7,3.
2. Ibid.

shows Himself to be the telos of the law; thus the law brings us to Christ rather than being an intolerable, and intolerably abstract, letter.

Christ, Whom men by faith - given by the Spirit - put on, comes and is objectively present in the promises and claims of the law (and as the fulfilment of the promises by being the Fulfiller of the claims is understood also as God's "good news" for us) and thus offers Himself as that Saving Object making Himself knowable to faith. Thus the love of the law with which the Spirit inflames the hearts of men is not love of the law qua law, but rather the love of Him Who is present in the law.

Thus the law as "rules and regulations" is abrogated for the men of faith - and law could only appear in the guise of "rules and regulations" to fallen man - for the law can rightly be understood only in terms of its telos: the manifestation of Christ. Christ continues to claim His members, however; His claim is by no means abrogated - if it were there would be no Grace and thus: only nothingness.

Those aspects of the law as 'rules and regulations' which <u>are</u> abrogated, Calvin set forth, and we now shall briefly enlarge upon them <u>entirely</u> in the context of Calvin's discussion of law and Gospel.

(1)The law is no longer curse, since Christ is seen manifested in it. It is Christ - our justification or our forgiveness - Who in the law is claiming us for the Father, thus we no longer fear the curse of the law, but only serve Him Who is Lord over and present in the law - living by His sure mercy. The law can not be a curse, for it is the vehicle in which our Righteousness, our Justification presents Himself to us. The law in manifesting Christ, Who is the Grace of God, actually manifests and makes possible in concrete terms our freedom; i.e., the law as Christ manifests Himself in it is the vehicle carrying the announcement of the fact of our freedom. The law is so far from being curse, that it is, in fact, its opposite.

(2)The law is then no longer a yoke. Because it is Christ Who comes in the law the man of faith meets the law with joy. It is not a burdensome task but a

way in which he can embrace Him by Whom he is already being embraced. The Christian is not asked to fulfil the letter of the law, but is required to love and serve Him (Who comes in the law) Who is already loving and serving His children and inclining them to love and serve Him by loving and serving their neighbours. The Christian meets Christ with thanksgiving which includes thanksgiving for the ways in which we men can be with Christ. One of these ways is by being confronted by Him in the need of the neighbour.

Christ, by manifesting Himself in the law, not only frees man from understanding the law as "rules and regulations" but also frees man from other yokes. By revealing His gracious Self in the proclamation of the law He reveals all other absolute claims as ungracious and tyrannical. For what could claim us that in any way could approach the Grace of God? We are then no longer harassed by the presentation of the hundreds of claims which the world places upon us. We no longer need to evaluate and judge them, for because Christ is graciously manifest in God's law, we know where our service should be given and we know where we

want to give that service (i.e., concretely to that neighbour in need through whom Christ comes to us[1]).

Finally we need to remember that what God commands of us He effects.[2] If the Lord commands us to do His will - i.e., to be free - He effects the command in us by the power of the Spirit. Thus, Calvin most happily reminded us of II Corinthians 3:17 :"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom."[3] Thus the law is not a yoke because the graciously commanding Christ claims us through it and the Spirit of Christ enables us to embrace the claim (i.e., obey) and thus the One Who claims. Thus, also we welcome the law and the Spirit because in enabling us to embrace Christ, law and Spirit allow us to break with all subtle tyrants, which ultimately rule man by pandering to his own perverted self-will; i.e., God's command frees a man from sarx and really frees a man since God's Word in the law is God's Act;[4] He effects what He says.

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1. Cf. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50,251.
2. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48: "He so speaks that His command immediately becomes His act."
3. Cited by Calvin in Inst. II, 7,2.
4. Cf. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48.

The third aspect of Christian liberty consists in the abrogation of "things Holy". In the law Christ discloses Himself as the Holy One of Israel. Beside Him nothing else is 'holy'! In a real sense all of life is then freed. God in His own holiness has revealed Himself in Christ and is manifested in the proclamation of the law and the Gospel. Now it may be that all wisdom, righteousness and power are for the Christian a reminder of God's wisdom, righteousness and power. But the Christian seeing these (and all treasures) in Christ does not seek to find God anywhere else. Thus, Christ in manifesting Himself in the law is the abolition of religion, since He and He alone discloses God's claim, righteousness and Grace. The notion that "any thing that is may become transparent to its divine ground" is revealed (Graciously and freeingly) as an "unlawful" and superstitious quest. Man need not seek the Holy in art, and nature, and conscience since '<u>the</u> Holy One' is plainly revealed in Jesus Christ Who manifests Himself in the law.

Calvin's statement that "we are to use the gifts of God without any scruple of conscience, without any trouble of mind"[1] coupled with his reminder that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament are abrogated may be of some use in current discussions of liturgy. Certainly the Christian community needs forms.[2] But all forms should be subjected to a test in order to be sure they in no way conceal the utterly free Grace, the utterly unconditional forgiveness that God wishes to grant and grants to His children. In sum: It is the manifestation of Christ in the law which overrules any suggestion of condition which the law might seem literally to imply. All Church forms ought, then, to be a proclamation of the Spirit rather than the letter of the law.

4. Law and righteousness.

Law, we understood from Calvin's discussion, is revelation; it is the revelation of Christ's righteousness. Now it happens that God judges us on the basis of Christ's righteousness, i.e., God accepts Christ's

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1. Inst. III, 19,8.
2. Cf. Inst. IV, 10,32.

righteousness as our righteousness: and this is the Gospel!. Calvin, then, perhaps more than any other theologian, helps us understand the Atonement as the revelation of God's righteousness, and therefore as the revelation of our initial unrighteousness.

But there is something more accomplished by the Work of Christ. For He now bestows His righteousness upon us as a gift; this is revealed in His resurrection.[1] As large and helpful as Calvin's discussion of law and righteousness is, then, it must be enlarged in terms of his discussion of the Revealed Word,[2] for it was there that he told us (following Paul's proclamation in Romans 4:25) that it is by Christ's resurrection (rather than by the Atonement, per se) that our righteousness is restored to us.[3] The whole story of law and righteousness is not told in "the good news" of the Atonement. The whole story of righteousness must include the very heart of the "good news" - the "good news" of the resurrection. We are acquitted and judged righteous by His resurrection.

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1. Cf. Rom. 4:25.
2. Cf. Chapter One, Section 2.
3. Inst. II, 16,13.

Thus Calvin: "Our salvation may be divided between the death and resurrection of Christ: by the former, sin was abolished and death annihilated; by the latter, righteousness was restored and life revived, the power and efficacy of the former being bestowed upon us by means of the latter."[1] Calvin did not really leave resurrection out of his discussion of law and righteousness for he says, "when death only is mentioned, everything peculiar to the resurrection is at the same time included, and there is a like synecdoche in the term resurrection, as often as it is used apart from death, everything peculiar to death is included."[2] When Calvin spoke of Atonement in regard to law and righteousness, he implies, then,

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1. Inst. II, 16,13. "Quare sic salutis nostrae materiam inter Christi mortem et resurrectionem partimur, quod per illum peccatum abolitum et mors exstincta, per hanc iustitia reparata et erecta vita: sic tamen ut huius beneficio vim, efficaciamque suam illa nobis proferat."

2. Ibid. "quoties solius mortis fit mentio, simul comprehendi quod proprium est resurrectionis; parem quoque synecdochen esse in voce resurrectionis, quoties seorsum a morte ponitur: ut secum trahat quod peculiariter morti convenit."

the resurrection "good news". But this bears being made explicit for too many accuse Calvin falsely of legalism, of stressing law over Gospel rather than seeing law as the vehicle of the Gospel.

If, then, Christ is the revelation of God's righteousness, His resurrection is in the first place the proclamation that God has vindicated[1] Himself in the face of man's unrighteousness. But because, as we have seen,[2] God became man - a perfectly obedient man - in order to vindicate Himself in the face of His unrighteous creatures, man participates in God's Self-vindication. Thus, the resurrection is in the second place the vindication of man. Moreover, in hearing the "good news" of his vindication by hearing the proclamation of the resurrection, man is moved in gratitude by the Spirit to put the Vindicator on,[3] and thus man is not only objectively vindicated but begins now to live that vindication, i.e., to live in righteousness and integrity of life.

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1. The word "vindicate" throughout this section has reference to the "vindication of righteousness"; i.e., to its successful establishment.

2. Chapter One, Section 2.
3. Cf. Chapter One, Section 5.

We saw that Calvin maintained that Christ does not abrogate the law, but more fully reveals it - He makes explicit the claim for "spiritual integrity." In light of his comments about Christ's resurrection we must now explicate this further. The creature now has revealed to him that he is vindicated. God has decreed and effected his vindication: he is judged righteous. If man is to be who he is, he must simply remain with the Vindicator; he has no where else to go. In sum: Christ more fully illumines the law - the claim of God on His creatures - because He reveals that God has decreed and effected a closing of the "exit" doors"- the "exit doors" that lead into chaos. And in His room only His claim is permitted. While men can still try to get these exit doors open - and in fact God does permit a bit of a draught to come in through them - their activity is foolishness and in the light of the resurrection even farcical for the doors are effectually and for eternity barred! Christ fully illumines the law for He discloses that God in His Grace has defeated every other claimant -

i.e., He has defeated Satan - and now only God's claim is left - and it will be met, for what God commands, He effects.[1]

Calvin told us in his discussion of law and righteousness that in the Atonement God has authenticated His claim. But Calvin's statement about Christ's resurrection implies that God has more than vindicated His claim; in the resurrection He has vindicated Himself (His own righteousness) and His creature in a way that assures His claim will be effected: the creature in Christ shall be conformed to Christ; i.e., by the power of the Spirit will be righteous by participating in Him Who is perfect Righteousness. Thus, God's claim may (and must) be absolute since by being in Christ the Christian (wholly vindicated) complies with the command: "Be you perfect" (Matthew 5:48); in other words, in participating in God's work of vindication the creature becomes who he is. For man is who he is when he puts Christ on, for 'we are not our own, we are the Lord's.'[2]

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1. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48.
2. Cf. Inst. III, 7,1.

The Christian by putting Christ on obeys the law and therefore worships God and shows positive charity to the neighbour. The relation of faith in Christ and actual service to God and/or to the neighbour in Calvin's theology is the problem we now turn to in Chapter Five: the problem of the relation of justification and sanctification.

C H A P T E R F I V E

THE DOCTRINE OF THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN MAN

Introduction:

The life of the Christian man is the "sanctified" life. Calvin can not speak of sanctification without also speaking of justification, however. For as he says, "As Christ cannot be divided into parts, so the two things, justification and sanctification, which we perceive to be united together in Him, are inseparable."[1] From this statement of Calvin we learn not only that he can not (nor may we) speak of sanctification in isolation from justification, but he can not speak of sanctification and justification at all apart from Him in Whom they are. Thus, prior to any discussion of sanctification and justification there must be an understanding of the event of salvation in Jesus Christ, for in Him, in His action, is our justification and sanctification.

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1. Inst. III, 11,6. "sicut non potest discerpi Christus in partes, ita inseparabilia esse haec duo, quae simul coniunctim in ipso percipimus, iustitiam et sanctificationem."

Moreover, another discussion is prior to a discussion of sanctification and justification. For "so long as we are without Christ and at a distance from Him, nothing which He suffered and did for the salvation of the human race is of the least benefit to us. To communicate to us the blessings which He received from the Father He must become ours and dwell in us."[1] In this connexion Calvin advises us that we ought not to consider the event of salvation as taking place apart from us; in fact the very heart of faith does not "suppose that any of the promises of mercy which the Lord offers are true only extra nos, and not in nobis."[2]

Thus if we are to understand Calvin's doctrine properly we must understand that he, in effect, places two "prefaces" or "introductions" before his discussion

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1. Inst. III, 1,1. "quamdiu extra nos et Christus et ab eo sumus separati, quidquid in salutem humani generis passus est ac fecit, nobis esse inutile nulliusque momenti. Ergo ut nobiscum quae a patre accepit communicet, nostrum fieri et in nobis habitare oportet."

2. Inst. III, 2,16. "...ne quas Dominus offert misericordiae promissiones, extra nos tantum veras esse arbitremur, in nobis minime."

of sanctification - justification.[1] First, we must speak of the event of salvation in Christ, and second we must understand that the Holy Spirit in granting us the gift of faith enables us to embrace Him Who is our Saviour, and thereby our justification and sanctification; i.e., by the Spirit salvation is not left at a distance from us but is given to us. Only after these "prefaces" may we speak of the sanctification and justification we receive. Only then shall we be able to see in what way they are related and therefore how Calvin understands the relation of the righteousness imputed to us with the "new life of the Christian man".

Section 1. Two Prefaces

(a)The first preface we draw from Section 2 of our first chapter. There in discussing Calvin's answer to the question: why did the Word become flesh? we examined Calvin's treatment of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ as the Mediator, as the Prophet, as the Priest, as the King, as the Redeemer. Since, Calvin

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1. The first preface, narrowly conceived, is Inst. II, 12-17; the second preface is Inst. III, 1-2.

has told us that our sanctification and justification are to be found in this Person in His Work, we must understand how Calvin in fact saw them there.

Even had man remained free from sin, he was of too humble condition to penetrate to God without a Mediator.[1] But after the fall, in addition to the distance between God and man, i.e., that discontinuity between them (between Creator and creature), a cloud of iniquity intervened between God and man.[2] Thus God became man in order (1)to redeem man and (2)to be the Revelation of God (now, the revelation of this redemption) to man. Thus, Calvin tells us, it is always of primary importance to say in the first place that Christ is true God and true Man. We must say true God for:

(1)Who could swallow up death, except Life?

(2)Who could conquer sin, except Righteousness Itself?

(3)Who could defeat all powers, except Almightiness?

"But who possesses Life, and righteousness and dominion and government of heaven but God alone? Therefore, God

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1. Inst. II, 12,1.
2. Ibid.

in His infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us, became Himself our Redeemer in the Person of His only begotten Son."[1]

Calvin instructs us that it is of equal importance to teach that Christ is true man, for:

(1) God's unveiled glory in the face of our finitude and infamy would destroy us.[2] In kindness God veils Himself in the flesh.

(2) <u>in Christ's becoming man, He not only received what was ours, i.e., manhood, but transferred to us what was His, i.e., the Fatherhood of the Father.</u>[3]

(3) it is true, that Christ, in assuming our flesh, was perfectly obedient in the flesh to the Father and thus He placed Himself in the position of being able to pay, and then He did pay, the penalty with His obedient flesh, which our disobedience deserved, and appeased the just anger of the Father.[4]

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1. <u>Inst.</u> II, 12,2.
2. <u>Comm. on Heb.</u> 4:16, <u>C.O.</u> 55,56.
3. <u>Inst.</u> II, 12,2;(Jesus as the perfectly obedient man renews from man's side the covenant. We include this work under point 2.)
4. <u>Inst.</u> II, 12,3.

However, Calvin in speaking of Christ as true God and true Man does not proclaim a dualist Christ, but rather following Chalcedon he explains that the two natures are so united that there is One Person only.[1] This is analogous with Calvin's understanding, as we shall see in a moment when we read his Commentary on I Corinthians 1:30, that while we must distinguish between justification and sanctification we must not separate them, for they are two aspects of the One event of salvation. Justification and sanctification are analogous with God and Man, in Jesus Christ. For they are distinct, yet inseparable.

If Jesus Christ as true God and true Man is our redemption and the revelation of it and thereby, as we shall see, our justification and sanctification, how did He effect our redemption, and therefore our justification and sanctification? The work of Christ Calvin describes, as we saw,[2] under several heads: the work of Christ as Prophet, Priest, King and Redeemer. Thus, the work of Christ as the God-Man - i.e., the defeat of sin, death

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1. Inst. II, 12,4.
2. Chapter One, Section 2.

and evil, the work of Gracious Presence, propitious sacrifice (and thereby) adoption and covenant renewal - is all effected by the work which Calvin described under these several heads. The work of these offices he summarizes in his Commentary on I.Corinthians 1:30 :

"/Paul/ gives to Christ four titles of praise that include His entire excellence, and every benefit we receive from Him.

"In the first place, he says that 'He is made unto us wisdom' by which he means that we obtain in Him an absolute perfection of wisdom, inasmuch as the Father has fully revealed Himself to us in Him, that we may not desire to know any thing beside Him ... * Second, he says that He is 'made unto us righteousness', by which he means that we are on His account acceptable to God, inasmuch as He expiated our sins by His death and His obedience is imputed to us for righteousness. 1**

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* A description of Christ's prophetic work.
** A description of Christ's Priestly work.

1. A few lines earlier in this Comm. on I Cor. 1:30 Calvin stated: "When Paul calls Christ 'righteousness' an antithetical corollary must be understood - that in us there is nothing but sin, and so with the other terms /i.e., in us is only unwisdom, unholiness and loss/." "Nam dum Christum iustitiam nostram appellat subaudienda est antithesis, quod in nobis nihil sit nisi peccatum: et sic in aliis." C.O. 49,331.

For as the righteousness of faith consists in forgiveness of sins and a gracious acceptance, we obtain both through Christ.

"Third, Paul calls Him our sanctification, by which he means, that we who are otherwise unholy by nature, are by His Spirit renewed unto holiness,* that we may serve God. From this, also, we infer, that we cannot be justified freely through faith alone without at the same time living in holiness of life. For these fruits of Grace are connected together, as it were, by an indissoluble tie, so that he who attempts to sever them tries to tear Christ in pieces. Let therefore the man who seeks to be justified through Christ, by God's unmerited goodness, consider that this cannot be attained without his taking Christ at the same time for his sanctification, i.e., he must be renewed by His Spirit to innocence and purity of life. Those that slander us, as if by preaching free justification by faith we called men from good works, are amply refuted from this passage, which proclaims that

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* A description of Christ's Kingly work. Cf. Inst. II, 15,3-4 and our pages 30-31.

faith apprehends in Christ regeneration[1] equally with forgiveness of sin. Note well! These two works [sanctification and justification] of Christ are conjoined in such a manner as to be, notwithstanding, distinguished from each other. It is quite illegitimate to confuse mistakenly what Paul here clearly distinguishes.

"Fourth, Paul teaches us that Christ is given to us for redemption, by which he means that through His goodness we are delivered at once from all bondage to sin, and from all the misery that flows from it. Redemption, then, is the first gift of Christ that is begun in us and the last that is completed. For redemption at first draws us out of the labyrinth of sin and death, and yet we groan for it until the final day of resurrection. If it is asked in what way is Christ given us for redemption - I answer: 'Because He made Himself a ransom.'*

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* A description of Christ's redemptive work.

1. Calvin uses 'regeneration' and 'sanctification' interchangeably. He says "The term 'sanctification' means 'separation'; this 'separation' takes place in us when we are regenerated by the Spirit to newness of life, that we may serve God and not the world." Comm. on I Cor. 1:2, C.O. 49,308 : "Porro sanctificationis verbum segregationem significat. Ea fit in nobis quum per spiritum in vitae novitatem regeneramur, ut serviamus Deo, et non mundo."

"In fine, we find all blessings in Christ...Paul doesn't indicate that Christ has been given to us as something to add to or buttress wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption, but assigns to Christ exclusively the entire fulfilment of them all. Now as you will hardly read another passage in Scripture which so clearly delineates all the offices of Christ, you may also understand from it the nature and efficacy of faith. For as Christ is the proper Object of faith, every one that knows what are the benefits which Christ confers upon us is at the same time taught to understand what faith is."[1]

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1. Comm. on I Cor. 1:30, C.O. 49, 331-32. "Quatuor porro Christo elogia hic adscribit, quae totam eius virtutem, et quidquid ab ipso bonorum recipimus complectuntur. Primo dicit, nobis factum esse sapientiam. Quo intelligit, absolutam sapientiae perfectionem in ipso nos obtinere: quia se in eo pater nobis ad plenum revelaverit, ne quid praeter ipsum scire appetamus... Secundo dicit, nobis factum esse in iustitiam: quo intelligit, nos eius nomine acceptos esse Deo, quia morte sua peccata nostra expiaverit, et eius obedientia nobis in iustitiam imputetur. Nam quum fidei iustitia in peccatorum remissione et gratuita acceptione consistat, utrumque per Christum consequimur. Tertio vocat sanctificationem: quo intelligit, nos alioqui natura profanos, spiritu eius regenerari in sanctitatem, ut serviamus Deo. Unde etiam colligimus non posse nos gratis iustificari sola fide, quin simul sancte vivamus. Istae enim gratiae quasi individuo nexu cohaerent: ut qui eas separare mititur, Christum

We learn two very important points from this commentary: we see (1)that our justification and sanctification are distinct yet indissolubly linked -

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(1. cont.) quodammodo discerpat. Proinde qui per Christum gratuita Dei bonitate iustificari quaerit, cogitet fieri hoc non posse quin simul in sanctificationem eum apprehendat: hoc est, eius spiritu renascatur in vitae innocentiam et puritatem. Qui autem nos calumniantur, quasi gratuitam fidei iustitiam praedicando a bonis operibus avocemus homines, abunde hinc refelluntur, quod fides non minus regenerationem in Christo apprehendit quam peccatorum veniam. Rursum observa sic duo ista Christi officia coniungi, ut tamen distinguatur unum ab altero: quae ergo Paulus nominatim discernit, perperam confundere non licet. Quarto, in redemptionem datum esse docet: quo intellígit eius beneficio nos tam ab omni peccati servitute, quam omni miseria, quae inde manat, liberari. Ita redemptio primum Christi donum est quod inchoatur in nobis et ultimum perficitur. Hoc enim salutis est initium, quod ex peccati et mortis labyrintho extrahimur: interea tamen usque ad ultimum resurrectionis diem gemimus desiderio redemptionis, ut habetur Rom. 8:26. Modus autem si quaeritur, quo Christus in redemptionem nobis datus est, respondeo, quia pretium se constituit. Postremo, bonorum omnium, quae hic recensentur, non dimidium aut partem aliquam, sed complementum in Christo quaeramus. Neque enim dicit Paulus, nobis datum esse in supplementum vel adminiculum iustitiae, sanctitatis, sapientiae, redemptionis: sed solidum omnium effectum ei soli assignat. Quoniam autem vix occurret alius in scriptura locus, qui distinctius omnia Christi officia describat, ex eo quoque optime poterit vis et natura fidei intelligi. Nam quum proprium fidei obiectum sit Christus, quicunque novit quae sint erga nos Christi beneficia, ille etiam edoctus est quid sit fides."

to try to separate them is to tear Christ apart; we see (2)that our justification is the priestly work of Christ (His expiatory work) and that our sanctification is the Kingly work of Christ (He with the Spirit of renewal reestablishes* innocence and purity).

Calvin, at the close of his Commentary on I Corinthians 1:30 draws our attention to faith. For while Christ is in His Priestly and Kingly work objectively our justification and sanctification, He is not these things apart from us, so to speak; Christ, by His Spirit, Who grants us faith, means for us to participate in our justification and sanctification, i.e., embrace Him. Thus, we must turn now to Calvin's "Second Preface".[1]** (b)The second preface we draw from Section 5 of our first chapter. There we examined Calvin's discussion of "the gift of faith".

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* Lost since Adam.

** For a description of Christ's work, i.e., (1)how His work is the work of God and (2)nevertheless the voluntary, obedient and loving work of man, Cf. p.p.36-37.

1. Inst. III, Chs. 1-2.

Our justification and sanctification are found in Christ's work. They are not something, then, which we may accomplish. How, then, may we participate in justification and sanctification? how may we enjoy these benefits of Christ's Kingly and Priestly work? The question of how we obtain the benefits of Christ is, of course, precisely the question which Calvin poses and attempts to answer in Book III: "The Mode of Obtaining the Grace of Christ, The Benefits It Confers, and the Effects Resulting From It."[1] As we have seen[2] in Book III Chapter 1 Calvin treats of the objective side of his answer: i.e., Christ grants us His Spirit in order to bestow upon us His benefits; and in Book III Chapter 2, Calvin treats of the subjective side; i.e., the Spirit's principal work[3] is to create faith in us men, faith through which we embrace Christ and all His benefits.[4]

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1. Inst. III. "De Modo Percipiendae Christi Gratiae, et qui inde fructus nobis proveniant, et qui effectus consequantur."

2. Chapter One, Section 5.
3. Inst. III, 1,4.
4. Inst. III, 2,4.

First, we should examine the objective side of Calvin's answer. "To communicate to us the blessings which He received from the Father, Christ must become ours and dwell in us.../we must, as it were, become/... ingrafted into Him and clothed with Him.*... And though it is true to say that this happens through faith, still we see that the communication of Christ, offered in the Gospel, is not embraced by all; this fact teaches us to proceed further and to inquire into the secret efficacy of the Holy Spirit."[1] As there are, Calvin continues, three witnesses in heaven - Father, Word and Spirit, so on earth there are blood, water and Spirit.[2] That is, there are on earth the objective,

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* When Calvin says that the Spirit unites us with Christ and indicates even that we are to be one with Him ("...donec cum ipso in unum coalescimus..." Inst. III, 1,1) we ought not confuse this language with the language of identification which the mystic uses. Our Chapters One and Two - in which we examined the discontinuity between God and man, which Calvin consistently emphasized - disallows any "mystic interpretation" of these phrases. When Calvin speaks of "union" or "oneness" he is emphasizing the closeness of fellowship between God and Man in Christ, and not of the absorption of man by God.

1. Inst. III, 1,1. "Ergo ut nobiscum quae a patre accepit communicet, nostrum fieri et in nobis habitare oportet... nos etiam vicissim dicimur in ipsum inseri, et eum induere...Etsi autem verum est hoc fide nos consequi, quando tamen videmus non omnes promiscue amplecti Christi communicationem, quae per evangelium offertur, altius conscendere ipsa ratio nos docet, ac de arcana spiritus efficacia inquirere..."

external facts of the Christ on the one hand, and the interior witness of the Spirit on the other. The Spirit testifies inwardly that these external events are the events of God; thus, the Spirit binds us to these events; i.e., "the whole comes to this, that the Holy Spirit is the bond by which Christ effectually binds us to Himself."[1] "We do not, then, contemplate Him at a distance extra nos, that His justification may be imputed to us; but because we have put Him on, and are ingrafted into His Body, and because He has so deigned to unite us to Himself, therefore we glory in a participation of His righteousness."[2]

This is why Christ came provided with the Holy Spirit, that "He might separate us from the world and introduce us into the hope of an eternal inheritance."[3] For by the Spirit we learn of and are made alive in our adoption in the Son.[4] The Spirit in being an "earnest"

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1. Inst. III, 1,1. "Huc summa redit, spiritum sanctum vinculum esse, quo nos sibi efficaciter devincit Christus."

2. Inst. III, 11,10. "Non ergo eum extra nos procul speculamur, ut nobis imputetur eius iustitia; sed quia ipsum induimus, et insiti sumus in eius corpus unum denique nos secum efficere dignatus est, ideo iustitiae societatem nobis cum eo esse gloriamur."

3. Inst. III, 1,2.
4. Inst. III, 1,3.

of our inheritance in the Son infuses into us that new life which is a foretaste of eternal salvation.[1] In sum: "By the Grace and energy of the Spirit we become His members, so that He keeps us under Him, and we in our turn possess Him."[2] Without the Spirit Christ would be of no value to us.[3] In fact "teachers would proclaim to no purpose did not Christ, the internal teacher, by His Spirit, draw to Himself those who are given Him by the Father. Therefore, as we have said that salvation is perfected in the Person of Christ, so, in order to make us partakers of it, He baptises us 'with the Holy Spirit and with fire'(Luke 3:16) enlightening us into the faith of His Gospel and so regenerating us to be new creatures."[4]

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1. Inst. III, 1,3; Cf. Inst. II, 15,5. The Spirit "has chosen His residence in Christ, that those heavenly riches which we so desperately need may flow out upon us from Him."

2. Inst. III, 1,3.
3. Ibid.

4. Inst. III, 1,4. "quia sine profectu clamarent doctores nisi Christus ipse interior magister suo spiritu ad se traheret, qui dati sunt a patre. Ergo sicut in Christi persona reperiri diximus perfectam salutem, ita, ut fiamus eius participes, baptizat nos in spiritu sancto et igni (Luc 3:16), illuminans nos in evangelii sui fidem, atque ita regenerans ut simus novae creaturae...."

Institutes III, 1,4 is the transitional paragraph between Calvin's discussion of the objective and subjective sides of the communication of Grace, of the communication of the benefits of Christ to us. Here Calvin tells us: faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit.[1] It is by faith, the gift of the Spirit, that men become the 'sons of God'."[2] Faith is the human act by which men embrace Christ; i.e., men exercise faith and thus possess Christ, but the Spirit first gives it to them that they might exercise it! "Faith itself is produced only by the Spirit."[3] Faith is a human act, a laying hold of Christ, but it is only a human act because Christ first has received all blessings from the Father and now embraces men by the Spirit; in embracing them He permits them to embrace Him. After making sure we know what faith is, Calvin does not hesitate

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1. Inst. III, 1,4. "Verum quia fides praecipuum est eius opus..."

2. Calvin cites John 1:12.

3. Inst. III, 1,4. "admonet fidem ipsam non aliunde prodire quam a spiritu."

to say "by the faith of the Gospel Christ becomes ours, and we are made partakers of salvation and eternal blessedness procured by Him."[1]

We have treated faith in Chapter One, Section 5, so we may here briefly review the relevant points: (1)There are two aspects to the gift of faith: for first the Spirit originates faith, but, second, also gradually increases it; i.e., the Spirit not only purifies the mind and creates a desire for Christ, but continues to establish Christ in the soul.[2] That fellowship between Christ and the Christian is ever being strengthened in the hearts of men by enlarging faith. (2)Faith looks constantly to Christ as the Truth; the Spirit teaches nothing other than Christ.[3] Christ is the proper object of faith.[4] Faith rests solely on and is sustained by the Word of God.[5] Take away the Word and no faith will remain.[6] (3)Faith in being directed to Christ is directed to God[7] and in

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1. Inst. IV, 1,1. "Fide evangelii Christum fieri nostrum, et allatae ab eo salutis aeternaeque beatitudinis, nos fieri participes...."

2. Inst. III, 2,33.
3. Inst. I, 9,1.
4. Serm. on Gen. 15:4-6, C.O. 23,689.
5. Inst. III, 2,6.
6. Ibid.
7. Inst. III, 2,1.

knowing God in Christ faith gains a knowledge of God's will for man.[1] (4)Faith not only has a knowledge of God's will, but has "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ and revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit."[2] (5)Faith then has a knowledge of Grace (divine favour) and thus it is a radically different kind of knowledge from the knowledge of earthly objects.[3] (6)Since faith knows Grace, faith is not proud of itself for it knows that Grace, not faith, saves.[4] (7)Since faith may repose on Grace it is overwhelmed by love and seeks to embrace Grace, i.e., Christ, and put Him on.[5] And this is precisely what faith, fully understood, is: drawing near to Christ and putting Him on.[6] For faith is nothing in itself but is the vessel which Christ fills.[7] By faith He becomes ours, making us partners with Him in the gifts with which He is endued.[8] Thus we in faith

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1. Inst. III, 2,2.
2. Inst. III, 2,7.
3. Inst. III, 2, 33-34.
4. Inst. III, 11,7.
5. Inst. III, 11,10.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.

do not view Him at a distance, but as we put Him on and have been ingrafted into His Body, He deigns to make us One with Him and we have, thereby, a fellowship of righteousness with Him.[1] (8)Faith is not abstract knowledge but begets fellowship with Christ.[2] It always, therefore, consists more in certainty than in comprehension.[3] In faith we make all the promises offered in Christ our own.[4] A man has no faith unless He is firmly persuaded that God is reconciled to him, is a kind Father to him; a man has no faith unless he hopes everything from His kindness and anticipates his salvation in undoubting trust of the divine favour.[5] In sum: a man of faith is certain of salvation through his fellowship with Christ.

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1. Inst. III, 11,10.
2. Inst. III, 2,19.
3. Inst. III, 2,14.
4. Inst. III, 2,16.
5. Ibid.

Section 2. Calvin on Sanctification and Justification.

Having seen that our justification is Christ's Priestly work and sanctification His Kingly work, and having seen that Christ bestows this sanctification and justification upon us by His Spirit, and that we accept these in faith, the gift of the Spirit, we can now finally turn to these gifts and see what they are. "The whole [of that discussion in the two prefaces] may be thus summed up: Christ given to us by the kindness of God is apprehended and possessed by faith, by means of which we obtain in particular a twofold benefit: first, being reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes, instead of a judge, a propitious Father; and second, being sanctified by His Spirit, we aspire to integrity and purity of life."[1]

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1. Inst. III, 11,1. "Summa autem haec fuit: Christum nobis Dei benignitate datum, fide a nobis apprehendi ac possideri, cuius participatione duplicem potissimum gratiam recipiamus; nempe ut eius innocentia Deo reconciliati pro iudice iam propitium habeamus in coelis patrem; deinde ut eius spiritu sanctificati innocentiam puritatemque vitae meditemur."

While justification and sanctification are the twofold benefit of the One Work of Christ and His Spirit, and, as we have seen, can by no means be considered as founded in separate events, or bestowed separately, e.g., one after the other, nevertheless "justification is something very different from reformation to newness of life."[1] How then does Calvin describe these two benefits of Christ?

(a) Sanctification* and the Christian life.

From the moment a man is given the gift of faith he begins to aspire to the holiness of Him Whom he has put on.[2] "Repentance not only always follows faith, but is produced by it."[3] Faith produces repentance, simply because faith gives a man the knowledge that he

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1. Inst. III, 11,11.
2. Cf. Inst. III, 11,1.
3. Inst. III, 3,1. "Poenitentiam vero non modo fidem continuo subsequi, sed ex ea nasci...."

* We accept Barth's statement that the weight and order of Inst. Book III stresses sanctification for strategic reasons; Calvin was retorting to the Roman criticism of sola fide. In fact, for him justification and sanctification come together, neither absorbs nor precedes the other. Cf. Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/2, pp. 509-10.

is of God,[1] i.e., he learns that he is not his own, but is the Lord's.[2] Knowing that he is the Lord's he wishes to rid himself of the errors of his former life (when he believed himself to be his own master) and follow the Lord's path.[3] In sum: once a man is incorporated into Christ, the Spirit Who incorporates Him, reveals to him that he is a son with the Son. The "convert" learning that to live as a "son" means having God as a propitious Father, a Father Who will accept as pleasing the faulty and frail service of His sons,[4] desires to live as a "son of God".

Sanctification, then, from the subjective (or human) side means aspiring to live as a son of God, and thus "turning away" from the old life.[5] Such 'turning away" or repentance or sanctification consists of two parts: mortification of the flesh and newness of life.[6] Mortification is participation in Christ's

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1. Inst. III, 1,2.
2. Inst. III, 7,1.
3. Inst. III, 1,1.
4. Inst. III, 1,2.
5. Calvin says: "By repentance I understand regeneration" Inst. III, 3,9. "Uno ergo verbo poenitentiam interpretor regenerationem...." Above with reference to Calvin's Domm. on ICor. 1:2 we also saw that he does not distinguish between 'sanctification' and 'regeneration'.
6. Inst. III, 3,3.

death and newness of life is participation in Christ's resurrection.[1] Now we can see clearly why our sanctification is found in the work of Christ. Christ did not die and rise again for Himself only, but He accomplished this for us. Thus, in Him or by Him sin is clearly revealed and the converted man, seeing what sin is, hates and abominates it.[2] But he also knows that sarx has had a fearsome grip upon him - and he is humbled, dejected and despondent.[3] Being prostrate the converted man looks again at Him Who revealed sin and now sees His Grace, goodness, mercy and the salvation He offers, and the convert passes from death to life; he sees and seizes new life.[4] Now we understand precisely the relation between Christ's work and the actual Christian life.

Some modern critics have been unhappy with Calvin's statement that it is the fear of God's judgement which arouses a man to repentance and makes him

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1. Inst. III, 3,9.
2. Inst. III, 3,3.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid. This is human action, but human action in Christ into Whom a man is placed and turned ("converted") by the Holy Spirit.

overwhelmingly glad of the "newness of life" proffered by God.[1] Some would prefer to say that it is God's love which so arouses a man. Since the fruit of God's Judgement is Grace, and since the fear of the former moves man toward the latter, we need not worry too much about such criticisms. Calvin's theology is so balanced at its heart;[2] that the fear of the Lord includes love of the Lord, (for *timor* knows that the Lord is a propitious Father) and love of the Lord includes *timor* (for while the Father is propitious He is also just!).

In saying that the convert passes from his old life to newness of life, Calvin does not suggest that the convert leaves at once (or ever, for that matter) all his sins behind. Calvin does not neglect what is represented in the phrase: *simul iustus, simul peccator.*[3] It is true on the one hand that the purpose of regeneration or repentance is to form in us anew the image

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1. Cf. *Inst.* III, 3,7.
2. Cf. our Chapter One.
3. *Inst.* III, 3,10.

of God.[1] And, incidently, since the image of God is strictly speaking the Word of God[2], we see again that our repentance, our regeneration is not something we do, but the work of God in us. But while by sanctifying His people God is putting to rout and <u>really</u> putting to rout the power of <u>sarx</u> that is in them, "this renewal is not accomplished in a moment, in a day, or a year. Only by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow, progress /Is/ God abolishing the remains of carnal corruption in His elect, cleansing them from filth, and consecrating them as His temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practise repentance, and know that death only is the termination to this warfare."[3] The sanctification

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1. <u>Inst.</u> I, 3,9.
2. <u>Introd. Arg. in Comm. on Gen.</u>, C.O. 23, 9-10.
3. <u>Inst.</u> III, 3,9. "Atque haec quidem instauratio non uno momento, vel die, vel anno impletur, sed per continuos, imo etiam lentos interdum profectus abolet Deus in electis suis carnis corruptelas: repurgat eos sordibus, sibique in templa consecrat, sensus eorum omnes ad veram puritatem renovans, quo se tota vita exerceant in poenitentia: sciantque huic militiae nullum nisi in morte esse finem."

that is present in God's people consists more in their aspiration and inclination to purity and integrity of life than in their attainment of it. For Calvin says, "While the children of God are delivered from bondage to sin, they have not obtained full freedom, they still feel the annoyance of the flesh."[1] The implication is that full sanctification of the saints awaits the end time.[2] Here, as elsewhere, the eschatological emphasis of Calvin is strong. Sanctification can only be fully understood, fully understood as perfected and therefore fully understood in its ultimate purpose, by regarding it in the light of the Second Coming. Until that time, Calvin holds, "there is always sin in the saints, because depraved concupiscence resides in their flesh, and is at variance with rectitude."[3]

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1. Inst. III, 3,10. "Sic ergo a peccati servitute liberantur filii Dei per regenerationem, non ut quasi plenam libertatis possessionem iam adepti nihil amplius molestiae a carne sua sentiant...."

2. Also Cf. Inst. III, 3,9.

3. Inst. III, 3,10. "Docemus itaque in sanctis, donec mortali corpore exuantur, semper esse peccatum: quia in eorum carne residet illa concupiscendi pravitas, quae cum rectitudine pugnat."

But, what is eschatologically realized, always has some present reality. God has not yet brought to fulfilment the sanctification of His people, yet He has already accomplished much in them. For "in regenerating His people God indeed [has accomplished] this much for them: He destroys the dominion of sin, by supplying the agency of the Spirit, which enables them to come off victorious in the contest [with sin]. [In sum:] Sin, though it ceases to reign [in the saints] ceases not to dwell in them. Accordingly, though we say the old man is crucified, and the law of sin is abolished in the children of God, the remains of sin survive not to have dominion, but to humble them under a consciousness of their infirmity."[1]

While sin remains in the saints, they persevering in the Spirit will come off victorious. In this battle how are they to be guided? Although Calvin has already

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1. Inst. III, 3,11. "Praestat hoc quidem Deus, suos regenerando, ut peccati regnum in ipsis aboleatur. Virtutem enim spiritus subministrat, qua superiores in certamine victoresque fiant. Sed regnare tantum, non etiam habitare desinit. Proinde sic dicimus veterem hominem crucifixum esse, legem peccati sic abolitam esse in filiis Dei, ut reliquiae tamen supersint: non ut dominentur, sed ut eos suae infirmitatis conscientia humilient."

spoken of the law of God, he turns in Chapter 6 (Book III) specifically to the ethical question with regard to the elect people of God; i.e., to the practical question of Christian life and witness. "We have said that the object of regeneration is to bring the life of believers into concord and harmony with the righteousness of God, and so confirm the adoption by which they have been received as sons. But although the law comprehends within it that new life by which the image of God is restored in us, yet as our sluggishness stands greatly in need both of aids and incentives, it will be useful to collect out of Scripture a true account of this reformation lest any who have a heartfelt desire for repentance should go astray."[1] Not only do we learn that Calvin wishes to gather from Scripture a "universal rule for the men of faith"[2] i.e., for the Christian life,

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1. Inst. III, 6,1. "Scopum regenerationis esse diximus, ut in vita fidelium appareat inter Dei iustitiam et eorum obsequium symmetria et consensus, atque ita adoptionem confirment qua recepti sunt in filios. Etsi autem novitatem illam qua imago Dei in nobis instauratur, lex ipsius in se continet, quia tamen tarditas nostra multis tam stimulis quam adminiculus opus habet, proderit ex variis scripturae locis rationem vitae formandae colligere, ne in studio suo aberrent quibus resipiscentia cordi est."

2. Inst. III, 6,1.

but in this passage we learn (1)that the righteousness of the saints confirms their adoption as sons and (2)that the new life restores in them the image of God. Why does the righteousness of the saints confirm their adoption as sons? Because the Son of God, as we have seen, is Righteousness, and if He the Son is Righteousness, the adopted sons would pattern themselves on this perfect Sonship! This is also why the new life restores men to the image of God; for the new life of integrity and righteousness of the saints reflects the righteousness of the Son, Who is strictly speaking the Image of God.[1]

Calvin's "universal rule for the men of faith", then, will concern itself with conformity to the Son; since Calvin's ethical thought about the Christian community begins with sanctification, and he understands that the Son is our sanctification, Calvin's ethical thinking will be entirely involved with sonship, witness, discipleship; it seeks no ground in moral or natural philosophies. As Calvin says, his theology

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1. Cf. Introd. Arg. in Comm. on Gen., C.O. 23, 9-10.

especially with regard to ethics is founded in salvation and therefore is "not an affair of the tongue, but of life"; it must be transfused into the heart, and pass into behaviour.[1]

The heart of Calvin's ethics can thus be summarized: "Ever since God exhibited Himself to us as a Father, we must be convicted of extreme ingratitude if we did not in turn exhibit ourselves as His sons."[2] The "universal rule" for Christians is: Be conformed to the Son.[3] On this goal (to conform to the Son) the Christian should set his eye;[4] by looking to this goal the Christian will improve in holiness and justice.[5] He is not to be easily discouraged: "Seeing that in this earthly prison of the body no man is supplied with sufficient strength to hasten in his course with due alacrity, while the greater number are so oppressed with weakness, that hesitating, and halting, and even

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1. Inst. III, 6,4.
2. Inst. III, 6,3. "Ex quo se nobis patrem Deus exhibuit, extremae ingratitudinis nos esse arguendos, nisi vicissim illi filios exhibeamus."
3. Inst. III, 6,5.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

crawling on the ground, they make little progress, let every one of us go as far as his humble ability enables him, and prosecute the journey once begun.... If during our whole life we seek and follow - we at the end of our life will attain full fellowship with God."[1]

We are to conform with the Son. Although we are given power through Christ's resurrection for our life it is Christ's death, mortification, which is chiefly to be regarded with regard to our present conduct of conformity.[2] We are to die to ourselves. Interest in our own glory we are to lay aside, even as Christ laid aside His infinite glory. "We are not our own, therefore, neither is our own reason or will to rule our acts and plans. We are not our own; therefore, let us not make it our end to what is agreeable to our carnal nature. We are not our own, therefore as far as possible let us forget ourselves and the things that are ours. On the other hand we are God's, let us, therefore, live and die to Him. We are God's,

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1. Inst. III, 6,5.
2. Inst. III, 7,1.

therefore, let His wisdom and will govern our acts. We are God's; to Him, then, as the only proper end, let every part of life be directed."[1]

If the ground of Calvin's ethics is: be conformed to the Son, we now see how we conform to Him; namely by denying that we are masters of our lives, and giving over every part of our life to His Lordship. We conform to Christ by denying self! This is not a tyrannical demand from God. For we belong to the Father in the Son! Freedom - and the Christian, as we have seen, is free by the Spirit - is freedom to serve Christ and the Father; i.e., the creature is free to be true creature, to be a true son.

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1. Inst. III, 7,1. "Nostri non sumus: ergo ne vel ratio nostra, vel voluntas in consiliis nostris factisque dominetur. Nostri non sumus: ergo ne statuamus nobis hunc finem, ut quaeramus quod nobis secundum carnem expediat. Nostri non sumus: ergo quoad licet obliviscamur nosmetipsos ac nostra omnia. Rursum, Dei sumus: illi ergo vivamus ac moriamur. Dei sumus: cunctis ergo nostris actionibus praesideat sapientia eius et voluntas. Dei sumus: ad illum igitur, tanquam solum legitimum finem, contendat omnes vitae nostrae partes."

Calvin has often spoken of our creaturely sluggishness. How is it that the creature can come to deny self and return his life to God's proper Lordship of it? Self denial becomes possible to the man who, by the work of the Spirit, has so trained his mind on God during his whole life that he becomes diverted from vain thoughts.[1] This is the very practical way in which God corrects lusts and brings men under His authority; i.e., He moves them by His Spirit to direct their minds to Him in His Word.[2] Thus, a man never justifies himself by his self denial (it in no way is meritorious) since His self denial is the work of God in him.

An ethics of self-denial might seem negative. This is not the case, however. For in denying the self, God's creatures return to true creaturehood, i.e., creaturehood under the Lordship of God - their Creator. If they return to a life under the Fatherhood

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1. Inst. III, 7,2.
2. Inst. III, 20,42.

of God, then, they must - in not being consumed in self-love - become "good brothers" again. And here we can see the positive side of Calvin's ethics. Calvin reminds us "how difficult it is to perform the duty of seeking the good of our neighbour! Unless you leave off all thought of yourself, and in a manner cease to be yourself, you will never accomplish it. How can you exhibit the works of charity which Paul describes (in ICorinthians 13:4) unless you renounce yourself, and become wholly devoted to others?"[1] We can only serve the neighbour in love by subordinating our good to that of the neighbour.[2] Since we are directed by the Lord to such charity, how else can it be accomplished except in self-denial? Thus, our self denial means love of the neighbour. Thus Calvin's ethical thinking is positive - we can only serve God, by letting Him be Lord ("we are not our own"), and we can only love the neighbour by first

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1. Inst. III, 7,5.
2. Ibid.

overcoming our overwhelming and perverted love of self. In sum: we become true sons of the Father by resigning control of our lives to the Father; by becoming sons we also become good and loving sons, for we now serve the Father Who comes to us in our brothers.[1] Thus, self-denial effects charity in us.[2] But if self denial, made possible by the Sanctifying God, means helping the neighbour, and loving him, it more profoundly means helping and loving Him Who sanctifies men. But how does a creature help God? By helping Him fight the power of sarx in the world. And since Christ defeated sarx by the Cross, the Christian specifically serves God and shows his love for Him, by sharing His cross bearing.[3]

Again, the teaching of cross bearing is not a negative teaching; for as we conform to His suffering, Calvin proclaims, He conforms us to His glory and

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1. Cf. Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50,251.

2. Inst. III, 7,7. "We have succeeded in mortifying ourselves if we fulfil all the duties of charity."

3. Cf. Inst. III, 8.

immortality, i.e., to His Resurrected Life.[1] As we conform to His suffering, He conforms us to His sanctification.[2] Thus Calvin does not promote a simple imitatio doctrine: a doctrine which is, indeed, all too legalistic. Rather, following Paul, Calvin tells us "the Apostle does not simply exhort us to imitate Christ, as though he had said that the death of Christ is an example which is appropriate for all Christians to follow. He has something higher in mind.... His teaching is that the death of Christ is efficacious to overthrow and destroy the depravity of our flesh and His resurrection to renew a better nature within us. We participate in this Grace.... Now having laid down the fundamental truth Paul properly exhorts Christians to strive to live in a manner that corresponds /to this Truth/ to their calling."[3] The fundamental fact of human existence

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1. Inst. III, 25,3.
2. Comm. on Heb. 2:10, C.O. 55,27.
3. Comm. on Rom. 6:4, C.O. 49,105.

is that in Christ the Old Man has passed away and the New Man has come. To conform to this fact of Christ, is to live to Grace, not to law. But since sarx is still so prevalent in the world we have still, if we are to live in Grace, to die, i.e., let the Old Man die - which means now not only denying the self (denying sarx) but bearing the burdens of sarx that others have, which fundamentally means helping Him Who is the Principal Bearer of the afflictions of the power of sarx.[1]

The Christian life is, then, "hard, laborious, troubled, a life full of many and various kinds of evils.... Having begun this course with Christ, the first born, he continues it with all His children."[2] Christ's "whole life was nothing else than a kind of perpetual cross."[3] It is to this life that the Christian is conformed.[4] The Christian gains consolation in this conformity, from the knowledge that through his sufferings he is held in fellowship with Christ.[5]

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1. Cf. Is. 63:9.
2. Inst. III, 8,1.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

Such sufferings are necessary to the Christian in order to move him to humility, i.e., his hope rests not in his own action, but only in God's mercy.[1] Suffering also teaches patience; it teaches the Christian to wait in hope, patiently.[2] Suffering tries men's patience and thus in it God trains men in obedience.[3] Through suffering, men are also chastised and thus improved by God.[4]

Bearing burdens patiently in hope, with steadfast endurance is a sign of the elected people of God.[5] "For the afflictions of believers are simply the means by which they are conformed to Christ.... Affliction then is no reason why we should be grieved, bitter or burdened, unless we also disapprove of the election of the Lord, by which we have been fore-ordained to life, and are unwilling to bear in our persons the image of the Son of God, by which we are prepared for the glory of heaven."[6]

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1. Inst. III, 8,2.
2. Ibid.
3. Inst. III, 8,4.
4. Ibid.
5. Comm. on Rom. 8:29, C.O. 49:159-160.
6. Ibid.

The Christian can bear the burden of the cross because he knows he is bearing Christ's Cross and he knows (1)the promise of resurrection from that Cross and (2)he knows the new life already present as a foretaste of that resurrection; i.e., he knows (a)he is free from the curse of the law and (b)he knows that as a "son" he can at any moment call upon the Father (in prayer). Thus we can see why right after the chapters on the Christian life and cross bearing Calvin includes a Chapter entitled, "Of Meditating on the future life" - for Christians are sustained in present cross bearing by this hope. Moreover eschatological fulfilment has some present reality. So Calvin also has chapters on the present freedom Christians enjoy, and the present "sonship" testified to by the fact that Christians may call on the Father for help (in prayer).

(1)Christians are able to bear the burden of the cross, and not come under the dominion of sarx if they become superior to all that is in the world. By meditating on the future life, by raising their minds

to heaven God's people keep themselves from an intemperate* love of the world, they keep themselves from a love of wealth, of worldly peace, of luxury, of worldly delights.[1] Moreover, though they be assailed by the wicked, suffer all kinds of insults, are robbed by the greedy and assailed by all sorts of wicked assaults, they will have no difficulty in bearing every burden, if they but turn their eye to the day on which the Lord will receive them.[2] "To conclude in one word: the Cross of Christ then only triumphs in the breasts of believers over the devil and the flesh, sin and sinners, when their eyes are directed to the power of His resurrection."[3]

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1. Inst. III, 9,6.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. "Ut uno verbo concludam, tunc demum in pectoribus fidelium triumphat Crux Christi de diabolo, carne, peccato et impiis, si oculi in resurrectionis poetentiam convertuntur."

* Calvin is not an ascetic. In Book III, Chapter 10 he tells us that a moderate use of what God has created is proper; i.e., the blessings of God's creation are meant not only to meet our necessities but are for our comfort and delight (Inst. III,10,2). Therefore excessive austerity is to be avoided and a moderate participation in comforts and delights extolled (Inst. III,10,3). Only in comparison with heavenly blessings are earthly blessings to be rejected (Inst. III, 10,4).

(2)Moreover, this power of Christ's resurrection, is already present - not only through meditation, but in the Christian's experience of freedom - freedom from the curse of the law and freedom from sin. The first freedom, freedom from the curse of the law Calvin sets forth in Chapter 19, his famous chapter on Christian liberty, which we have already examined in Chapter Four. Beyond this freedom the Christian may be free from sin insofar as he calls on God, and allows the Spirit to put sarx to rout. The Christian being a "son", may call upon the Father to pour out His Truth and Spirit to effect the overcoming of temptation. Thus, the Christian prays, and Calvin discusses this in Chapter 20.

In Chapter 20 Calvin reminds us that whatever is defective in us is supplied for us in Christ in Whom the Father is pleased to dwell.[1] Thus, "it simply remains for us to seek and in prayer implore of Him what we have learned to be in Him."[2] Only faith -

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1. Inst. III, 20,1.

2. Ibid. "superest, ut in ipso quaeramus, et ab ipso precibus postulemus quod in ipso esse didicimus."

the gift of the Spirit - properly so implores; for "faith springs from the Gospel and thus by faith our hearts are framed to call upon the Name of God.... then, the Spirit of adoption, which seals the testimony of the Gospel on our hearts, gives us courage to make our requests of God, calls forth cries that can not be uttered, and enables us to cry Abba Father."[1] It is the last point which is of greatest importance for us. For it is by the Spirit that men pray and call upon God as Father. Thus, it is by the Spirit that men pray correctly; i.e., if the men of faith pray correctly it is the work of the Spirit in them.

Calvin sets down four rules of prayer, where followed we may say the Spirit is at work. The first rule is reverence: "this we shall accomplish in regard to the mind, if we lay aside carnal thoughts

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1. Inst. III, 20,1. "ex evangelio nascitur fides, sic per eam ad invocandum Dei nomen corda nostra formari...spiritum adoptionis, qui testimonium evangelii cordibus nostris obsignat, erigere spiritus nostros, ut vota sua exponere Deo audeant, excitare gemitus inenarrabiles, clamare cum fiducia: abba, pater."

and cares /sarx/."[1] "But as our faculties are far from being able to attain such high perfection, we need some assistance.... God, therefore, gives us the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our prayers to dictate what is right and regulate our affections."[2]

The second rule of prayer is sincerity: We must "accompany our prayer with a sincere, even ardent desire to obtain what we are lacking."[3] What we are lacking is the right regulation of our affections, and the same Spirit Who guides us in ordering them guides us, of course, to an ardent desire for right affections.[4] The third rule of prayer involves the discarding of all pride and self-confidence. We are to place our entire trust in God. We have seen that

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1. Inst. III, 20,4. "Quod scilicet, quantum ad mentem, consequemur, si carnalibus curis cogitationibusque expedita...."

2. Inst. III, 20,5. "Caeterum quia tantae perfectioni longe abest quin pares sint facultates nostrae, quaerendum est remedium quod subveniat....Deus, spiritum in precibus nobis dat magistrum, qui dictet quod rectum est, atque affectus nostros moderetur."

3. Inst. III, 20,6.

4. Cf. Calvin's discussion outlined in our Chapter Four on the second aspect of Christian liberty.

faith is the gift of the Spirit and that faith is trust in God.[1] Thus, this trust is born of the Spirit. Moreover, faith is trust in God's promise in Christ; faith is "a firm and sure knowledge of the divine favour towards us, founded on the truth of a free promise in Christ revealed to our minds and sealed on our hearts by the Holy Spirit."[2] Thus, it is by the Spirit that we conform to the fourth rule of prayer, which is "that we should be animated to pray with the sure hope of succeeding."[3]

To summarize: the eschatological reality present now for the Christian (besides freedom from the curse of the law) is freedom from sin. The Christian is freed from sin by the work of the Spirit as the Spirit moves men to call upon the Father (i.e., to pray). In moving men to call upon their Father the Spirit

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1. Cf. Chapter One, Section 5.
2. Inst. III, 2,7.
3. Inst. III, 20,11.

defeats *sarx* in them, for the Spirit moving men to pray:

(1)removes *sarx* from their minds;

(2)grants them an ardent desire for integrity;

(3)grants them trust in God and a corresponding distrust of *sarx*;

(4)grants them knowledge of the certainty of God's promises and thus fortifies them against the *waning* power of *sarx*.

(b)Justification

Although we have now examined Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life, it is advisable to say something about his doctrine of justification. This is important for while justification and sanctification always come together as a double blessing nevertheless we should not think that justification, *like* sanctification is something "God begins in His elect, and carries on during the whole course of life, gradually and sometimes slowly."[1] Rather "God justifies not partially, but

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1. *Inst.* III, 11,11. "*inchoat Deus in electis suis, totoque vitae curriculo paulatim et interdum lente in eo progreditur...*"

freely, so that His people can appear in the heavens as if clothed with the purity of Christ."[1] Justification unlike sanctification is perfect from the outset; God accepts His people wholly and freely, not on the basis of what they shall be after they have grown in sanctification, but as they are now in Christ.

Justification and sanctification are then distinguished for "it is necessary that justification should be [understood to be] something very different from reformation to newness of life."[2] But what would happen if they were separated - so that one even neglected one for the other? Sanctification if unaccompanied from the outset by the declaration of unconditioned forgiveness would leave the saints in anxiety and fear - for they can never become perfect enough in themselves. In fact without the declaration of forgiveness there would be no saints to grow in

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1. Inst. III, 11,11. "Iustificat iautem non ex parte, sed ut libere, quasi Christi puritate induti, in coelis compareant."

2. Ibid. "necesse est longe aliter iustificari quam reformantur in vitae novitatem."

newness of life, because without the knowledge of forgiveness how could any embark upon the Christian life? On the other hand - justification without sanctification would deny newness of life, would deny that God is renewing His creation and would even imply that God does not care if His creatures sin or not.[1]

Calvin delineates clearly the impossibility of separating sanctification and justification, on the one hand, and the danger (justification by works) of confusing them, on the other, in Institutes III,16,1: "While we acknowledge that faith and works are necessarily connected, we, however, place justification in faith, not in works. Our reason for this we can readily explain, if we only turn to Christ, towards Whom our faith is directed, and from Whom it receives all its power. Why, then, are we justified by faith? Because by faith we apprehend the righteousness of Christ, which alone reconciles us to God. But this you cannot attain without at the same time attaining

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1. Cf. Inst. III, 16,1.

sanctification; for Christ 'is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption' (I Corinthians 1:30). Christ, therefore, justifies no man without sanctifying him. These blessings are conjoined by a perpetual and inseparable tie. Those whom He enlightens by His wisdom He redeems; whom He redeems He justifies; whom He justifies He sanctifies.... Though we distinguish between sanctification and justification, both are inseparably comprehended in Christ. Would you then obtain justification in Christ? You must previously possess Christ. But you cannot possess Him without being a partaker of His sanctification, for Christ can not be divided. Since the Lord, therefore, does not grant us the enjoyment of these blessings without bestowing Himself, He bestows both at once, but never the one without the other. Thus it appears how true it is that we are justified not without, and yet not by works, since in the participation of Christ, by which we are justified,

is contained not less sanctification than justification."[1]

Calvin, then, by no means confuses justification and sanctification. He does not, for example, suggest that the saints are justified, forgiven, by virtue of their sanctified nature. Oh no! But the same One Who bestows renewal, in the same free act, accounts His people: justified.

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1. Inst. III, 16,1."...quum fidem et bona opera necessario inter se cohaerere fateamur, in fide tamen, non operibus, iustificationem ponimus. Id qua ratione, facile explicare promptum est, si ad Christum modo convertamur, in quem dirigitur fides, et unde totam vim accipit. Quare ergo fide iustificamur? quia fide apprehendimus Christi iustitiam, qua una Deo reconciliamur. Hanc vero apprehendere non possis quin et sanctificationem simul apprehendas. Datus est enim nobis in iustitiam, sapientiam, sanctificationem, redemptionem (I Cor. 1:30). Nullum ergo Christus iustificat quem non simul sanctificet. Sunt enim perpetuo et individuo nexu coniuncta haec beneficia, ut quos sapientia sua illuminat, eos redimat; quos redimit, iustificet; quos iustificat, sanctificet.... Inter se distinguamus licet, inseparabiliter tamen utramque Christus in se continet. Vis ergo iustitiam in Christo adipisci? Christum ante possideas oportet. Possidere autem non potes, quin fias sanctificationis eius particeps, quia in frustra discerpi non potest. Quum ergo haec beneficia, nonnisi se ipsum erogando, fruenda nobis Dominus concedat, utrumque simul largitur: alterum nunquam sine altero. Ita liquet quam verum sit nos non sine operibus, neque tamen per opera iustificari; quoniam in Christi participatione, qua iustificamur, non minus sanctificatio continetur quam iustitia."

Now we must see precisely what is this justification bestowed by Christ. "A man is said to be justified in the sight of God," Calvin tells us, "who in the judgement of God is reputed righteous, and is accepted on account of [this] righteousness; for as iniquity is abominable to God, so no sinner can find favour in His sight so long as he is considered a sinner....On the other hand, the man is justified who is regarded not as a sinner, but as righteous, and as such stands acquitted at the judgement-seat of God."[1] Thus if a man is not a sinner he may be justified by works. But since no man, save One, is not a sinner, men must hope for another means of justification. And that hope rests precisely on that One Who was not a sinner. The hope of men is that God will accept them, forgive them, account them righteous, on the

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1. Inst. III, 11,2. "Iustificari coram Deo dicitur, qui iudico Dei et censetur iustus, et acceptus est ob suam iustitiam; sidquidem ut Deo abominabilis est iniquitas, ita nec peccator in eius oculis potest invenire gratiam, quatenus est peccator et quamdiu talis censetur....Iustificatur autem qui non loco peccatoris, sed iusti habetur, eoque nomine consistit coram Dei tribunali...."

basis of the One Who did not sin. Such justification is justification by faith. "A man will be justified by faith when, excluded from the righteousness of works, he by faith lays hold of the righteousness of Christ and clothed in it appears in the sight of God not as a sinner, but as righteous...this justification consists in the forgiveness of sins and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ."[1]

It is clear, now, why Calvin saw our justification in Christ's priestly work.[2] For Christ took our place as man so that what He did would be imputed to us by the Father and bestowed upon us by the Spirit of adoption. What did He do? Two points are of primary importance to recall. (1)In His humanity He voluntarily rendered affectionate and perfect obedience to the Father.[3]

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1. Inst. III, 11,2. "iustificabitur ille fide, qui operum iustitia exclusus Christi iustitiam per fidem apprehendit, qua vestitus in Dei conspectu non ut peccator, sed tanquam iustus apparet.... Eamque in peccatorum remissione ac iustitiae Christi imputatione positam esse dicimus."

2. Cf. Chapter One, Section 2.
3. Cf. pp. 36-37.

(2)By the sacrifice of His death He wiped away guilt and made satisfaction for sin.[1] These two points are not distinct for "from the moment He assumed the form of servant, He began in order to redeem us to pay the price of sin."[2] By being perfectly obedient, and receiving the punishment of disobedience, Christ substitutes His punishment for the punishment due us. He is our Substitute. God looks at us now not as we are *per se*, but He looks at us in Christ.[3] "The Father embraces us in Christ, as He clothes us with the innocence of Christ, and accepts it as ours, so that in consideration of it He regards us as holy, pure and innocent."[4]

The perfect obedience which Christ rendered, that perfect obedience which took Him finally to the Cross, is the righteousness God imputes to us. Two significant

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1. Cf. p.32 . Cf. *Inst.* II, 15,6.
2. *Inst.* II, 16,5.
3. *Inst.* III, 14,12.
4. Ibid. "nos in Christo complectitur pater: dum innocentia Christi nos induit, eamque fert nobis acceptam, ut eius beneficio pro sanctis puris et innocentibus nos habeat."

points about it must, therefore, be recalled. The obedience was (1)the obedience of the man Jesus[1] and (2)it was voluntary.[2]

(1)It is important to realize that the obedience Jesus Christ rendered was human obedience; for in becoming man, and obedient man, the Son acts for us; in taking on our sin He transfers to us His righteousness. We are men and if we are to have any righteousness it must be human righteousness. But all the righteousness we have is the imputed righteousness of Christ; this is why we are here emphasizing that the obedience Jesus Christ rendered was the obedience of His human nature. Thus Calvin teaches: "Christ justified us by His obedience to the Father, and, accordingly He does not perform this for us in respect of His divine nature, but by reason of the nature of the dispensation laid upon Him."[3]

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1. PP. 19,20,22.
2. P. 36.
3. Inst. III, 11,8. "nos iustificare quatenus obsequentem se patri praebuit; ac proinde non secundum divinam naturam hoc nobis praestare, sed pro dispensationis sibi iniunctae ratione."

(2)The importance of emphasizing the voluntary character of Christ's obedience[1] rests in the importance of proclaiming that Jesus (in love) maintained a perfect filial relation to the Father in both His life of obedience and in His submission to the judgement of the Father on sin. For it is this perfect obedience, this perfect filial affection given to God by a Man, that God accepts for us, as if it were our own; this is our justification. That is, "it is entirely by the intervention of Christ's righteousness that we obtain justification before God...man is not just in himself, but the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation, while he is strictly deserving punishment.../again/ our righteousness is not in ourselves, but in Christ; the only way we obtain righteousness is by being made partakers with Christ.../i.e./ we are accounted righteous only because His obedience is imputed to

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1. PP. 36-7.

us as if it were our own."[1] In sum: our justification is the reconciliation between God and Man Christ effected.[2] By expiating the sin that stood between God and man Christ restores men to God's favour and this is their justification[3] and/or their forgiveness.[4]

Two final points deserve attention. (1)While we said at the beginning of this section that justification is perfect from the outset, this does not mean that it does not continue throughout the whole of life. Thus, God not only justifies His saints, but continuously justifies their works - by pardoning whatever spots or

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1. Inst. III, 11,23. "sola intercessione iustitiae Christi nos obtinere, ut coram Deo iustificemur.... hominem non in se ipso iustum esse, sed quia Christi iustitia imputatione cum illo communicatur. Quod accurata animadversione dignum est....vides non in nobis, sed in Christo esse iustitiam nostram; nobis tantum eo iure competere quia Christi sumus participes.... asserere eo solo nos haberi iustos, quia Christi obedientia nobis accepta fertur, ac si nostra esset...."

2. Inst. III, 11,21.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

blemishes are found in them.[1] Thus, by the justifying work of God, the works of the saints may be said to be righteous; i.e., "our works are covered by His innocence and imputed righteous."[2] "Thus we may justly say, that not only ourselves, but our works also, are justified by faith alone."[3] Who can then speak meaningfully of the righteousness of works, when works are themselves righteous because of free justification and the faith that accepts it?[4]

(2)While faith knows and accepts free justification "justification by faith" by no means means that our faith justifies us. We already, of course, know this: (a)from Calvin's statement that our justification is in Christ's work and faith - the gift of the Spirit - but puts it on; and (b)from our discussion of Calvin on faith[5] where we saw that faith is but the empty

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1. Inst. III, 17,5.
2. Inst. III, 17,10.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. P. 88.

vessel into which Christ comes[1]; faith, per se, does not have saving power.[2] But since these comments are made in Calvin's chapter on "justification by faith" it is appropriate to conclude this topic with Calvin's full word: "God alone justifies. The same thing we likewise transfer to Christ, because He was given to us for righteousness; faith we but speak of as a kind of empty vessel, because we are incapable of receiving Christ, unless we are emptied and come with open mouth to receive His grace...faith...is only the instrument by which justification is received."[3] "Faith is not the material cause of our righteousness but receives Christ, Who is the material cause of our righteousness."[4]

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1. Inst. III, 11,10.
2. Inst. III, 11,7.
3. Ibid. "Deum unum iustificare...deinde hoc idem transferimus ad Christum, quia datus est nobis in iustitiam; fidem vero quasi vasi conferimus, quia nisi exinaniti ad expetendam Christi gratiam aperto animae ore accedimus, non sumus Christi capaces.... fidem...instrumentum est dumtaxat percipiendae iustitiae...."
4. Ibid. Cf. Inst. III, 11,23.

Section 3. Our Problem

We have seen that for Calvin justification is in Christ's priestly work and sanctification in His kingly work. These blessings are bestowed by the Spirit upon His people, who accept them in faith. That is, being incorporated into Christ by faith through the Spirit, God's people aspire to new life by mortifying their flesh, denying themselves, bearing the cross in the joy of the resurrection hope and in the knowledge of their sonship and the ever present Help of the Father; and God's people are forgiven their sins for Christ substituted His righteousness for theirs and the Father accepts them clothed in His righteousness.

Thus far Calvin has been our teacher. But one question has not yet been answered. Who is it that is incorporated into Christ and receives justification and sanctification? The elect! Calvin answers this question in this way, at the end of Book III. Who then are the elect that the Spirit places in Christ and who enjoy justification and sanctification?

Certainly, for Calvin, all men are not "elect", all men do not participate in Christ, in justification and sanctification. "It is plainly owing to the mere pleasure of God that salvation is spontaneously offered to some, while others have no access to it."[1] Why this should be the "good pleasure" of God is beyond human comprehension. "When men inquire into predestination let them remember that they are penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes...will enter an inextricable labyrinth."[2] Nevertheless, Calvin indicates, as we saw in Chapter Three, that the "good pleasure" of God is not arbitrary, but only seems so, since the wisdom and justice in election are hidden from human

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1. Inst. III, 21,1. "Quod si palam est Dei nutu fieri ut aliis ultro offeratur salus, alii ab eius aditu arceantur...."

2. Ibid. "meminerint, in praedestinationem dum inquirunt, se in divinae sapientiae adyta penetrare, quo si quis secure ac confidenter prorumpat, nec quo suam curiositatem satiet assequetur, et labyrinthum ingredietur cuius nullum reperiet exitum."

view. "Scripture clearly proves...that God by His eternal and immutable counsel determined once and for all those whom it was His pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was His pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on His free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom He dooms to destruction are excluded access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgement. In regard to the elect, we regard calling as the evidence of election and justification as another symbol of its manifestation, until it is fully accomplished in glory. But as the Lord seals His elect by calling and justification, so by excluding the reprobate either from the knowledge of His name, or the sanctification of His Spirit, He by these marks in a manner discloses the judgement which awaits them."[1]

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1. Inst. III, 21.7. "Quod ergo scriptura clare ostendit dicimus, aeterno et immutabili consilio Deum semel constituisse, quos olim semel assumere vellet in salutem, quos rursum exitio devovere. Hoc consilium quoad electos in gratuita eius

By the just and blameless Wisdom of God, God elects some and reprobates others. Now the Justice and Wisdom of God, for Calvin, are Christ as we saw in Chapters Two and One. Thus, by the hidden wisdom Calvin means the Christ hidden from us in Glory;[1] i.e., the Christ Whom we can not and will not see before the last time. But there is a flaw in this which Calvin himself reveals in saying: "[Since Christ] is the Eternal Wisdom, Immutable Truth, the Determinate Counsel of the Father, there is no room for fear that anything which He tells us will vary in the minutest degree from that Will of the Father after which we inquire."[2] Even without this explicit

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(1 cont.) misericordia fundatum esse asserimus, nullo humanae dignitatis respectu; quos vero damnationi addicit, his iusto quidem et irreprehensibili, sed incomprehensibili ipsius iudicio, vitae aditum praecludi. Iam vero in electis vocationem statuimus, electionis testimonium. Iustificationem deinde, alterum eius manifestandae symbolum, donec ad gloriam in qua eius complementum exstat pervenitur. Quemadmodum autem vocatione et iustificatione electos suos Dominus signat, ita reprobos vel a notitia sui nominis vel a spiritus sui sanctificatione excludendo, quale maneat eos iudicium istis veluti notis aperit."

1. Cf. Inst. III, 24,5.

2. Inst. III, 24,5. "sit aeterna patris sapientia, immutabilis veritas, fixum consilium, non est timendum ne quod suo sermone nobis enarrat, ab illa quam quaerimus patris voluntate vel minimum variet..."

statement we know from our discussion of Calvin's doctrine of the Word that the Word is the Sapientia et Voluntas of God, and that Word is Jesus Christ. Thus, Jesus Christ, as He makes Himself known in Scripture, and preaching is the Will of God. Nothing He tells us, varies in the slightest from the Will of the Father. Thus, the Will of God is revealed... nothing of importance is hidden. As J.K.S. Reid tells us: "The unknowable that remains hidden in God after His revelation in Christ is not an unillumined area, but an unfathomable depth. The incarnation gives us the key to all God's nature, or it is not the complete revelation which Christianity has always considered it to be. Moreover, since the revelation takes the form of a real incarnation, the human attributes which Christ assumes are, in their measure, and so far as they go, adequate."[1] Therefore we concur when Reid says "Calvin does not give good guidance when...he invokes the dark recesses, the divinae sapientiae adyta."[2] Reid may go too far in saying that for Calvin

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1. J.K.S. Reid, Op.Cit., P. 41.
2. Ibid.

this wisdom is out of Christ - behind Him, as it were - rather than an aspect of (the Ascended) Christ's hiddeness. But he is certainly right in saying the revelation of Christ is not different from Christ Himself and is totally adequate for teaching us God's nature. We can not fathom it, but what is hidden is God's depth, not any side of His nature.

What is the eternal wisdom of God? It is to be discovered in its activity - God's Word (God's Wisdom) is God's Act.[1] The Wisdom of God, the Word of God became man[2] and as the man Jesus He brought about, by His obedience, the reconciliation of God and man.[3] In Christ man is elected; there are no conditions on this election. Not just "some men" are elected, but man is elected. Thus, all men are freely given sanctification and justification since sanctification and justification has come to them a priori in Christ.[4]

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1. Comm. on Rom. 3:4, C.O. 49,48.
2. PP. 19-20.
3. PP. 35-36.
4. Whether all accept this acceptance and are with God eternally is not only beyond the scope of our discussion, but is a judgement that is to be left with God and not with us men.

In sum: Jesus Christ, the Wisdom of God, is Man - and what He does He freely does for man. God's Will and Wisdom is for man. In the existence of Jesus Christ the justification and sanctification of all God's creatures has been obtained;[1] and in Christ this is freely proclaimed and decreed.

Calvin delineates most wonderfully and helpfully sanctification and justification. He teaches us that "the Lord does not grant the enjoyment of [justification and sanctification] without bestowing Himself [therefore], He bestows [necessarily] both at once and never one without the other."[2] That is, Calvin teaches us that justification and sanctification are in Christ, therefore we must not separate them, yet we must distinguish them (as His Priestly and His Kingly work); he teaches that we receive these blessings because the Spirit incorporates us into Christ and thus we are forgiven and have new life in integrity and power.

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1. II Cor. 5:19 "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself..."

2. Inst. I, 16,1.

But Calvin we believe darkens this "good news" which is at the heart of his theology, i.e., reflected in his doctrine of the Word, when he restricts incorporation and its benefits to the elect; when he restricts God's action to something less than the return of man (and creation) to right relation with Him, and the restoration of man (and creation) to integrity. For when Calvin spoke repeatedly of "God's people", of "His people"*, Calvin was speaking of an "elect" who are designated as "elect", in order to distinguish them from "reprobate"; the word 'elect' for Calvin is by its very use at odds with a notion of "all" or "total".[1]

The reprobate are not incorporated into Christ by the Spirit Calvin teaches; thus Christ did not die for the reprobate; Christ did not transfer His obedience to them to be their righteousness; He did not pay the price by His life, and chiefly by His death, for their sin; He is not their Priest nor their King.

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1. Inst. III, 23,1. "quando ipsa electio, nisi reprobationi opposita, non staret."

* In our outline of his doctrine above.

Our final task, then, will be to review briefly Calvin's doctrine of justification and sanctification (and the life of the Christian man) and see right along the line what reformations in proclamation are necessary if we understand that Christ has a priori elected, justified and sanctified all, and not some. And this we must do for it is the "good news" that we have to tell the world today.

(1)The work of Christ Calvin did not limit, per se. That is, there is nothing in his proclamation of the Kingly and Priestly work of Christ that makes it applicable to only some. But Calvin makes clear in his chapters on election, as we have seen, that the Spirit Who incorporates men into Christ by granting them faith excludes others. Thus Calvin does not represent Christ's work as partial in itself, but nevertheless represents the outcome of His work as partial because the Spirit does not ingraft all into Christ, but positively excludes some.

What kind of Spirit is this? Can this Spirit be Christ's Spirit? "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." God became man for man. We have

learned this so well from Calvin! Christ's sanctification and justification is the sanctification and justification of man - of the new man. Christ effects this new ontic ground. Christ's Spirit could only exclude on the basis of some counsel behind Christ; but such a counsel is not! Therefore, the Spirit Whom Calvin has taught us is the Spirit of Christ can only be of Christ and subjectively fulfil in us what Christ objectively has done for us. The work of faith, the work of the Spirit, is as inclusive as the work of redemption and revelation, the work of the Word.

(2)The Spirit does not incorporate some men into Christ's work, but incorporates man. Christ with His Spirit is man for man. Christ is not Christ except that by His Spirit He is bound to all humanity. Thus, God turns to man, defying all our sin and thus justifies us all; and God turns man, defying all our sin, to Himself in Christ. Man has been converted to God; not some men, but man. Man has been accepted; man has been given newness of life and new power. He has but to grasp it! to grasp his conversion and forgiveness! There is no bad news in the Gospel.

(3)While there is no bad news in the Gospel the struggle with sarx, strangely, is not over. For many can not yet believe the good news that the invasion of sarx has been repelled. They keep on living as if sarx were still invading, and continue 'to give the Devil his due' as it were. Calvin gives good guidance to the Christian man at this point. How do we assure the neighbour that the power of sarx is defeated? by denying self and by bearing the cross. Of course the Christian will now deny himself, for when the Gracious loving Lord will reign, and the Christian knows He will, why would he seek another lord who can only be an ungracious tyrant? Further, the Christian shall bear the cross, for in doing so he points to the event that defeated sarx for all and thus bring the overwhelming Truth to those who believe the invasion is still going on.

(4)And Calvin is helpful in directing the Christian in his "little" struggle to be sustained by the "great" news. The resurrection, we say, going beyond Calvin but still basing our thinking on his understanding of the Revealed Word, was the total triumph for man

given by God. Only goodness and preservation are left for man. What can the Christian fear from sarx. And the Gracious Lord gives us a foretaste of that total triumph now. For, as Calvin said, the Christian experiences freedom from the curse and yoke of the law; and in prayer and worship He knows presently the Help that is all sufficient now and in the end - sufficient and total by the testimony of the Cross and resurrection.

(5)The Spirit of Christ is not combatting sarx here and there, i.e., in this elected person and that one. Rather Christ defeated the power of sarx on the Cross and brought new life. Christ now pours out His Spirit on all men in order to overcome in all men that desire to be still under the dominion of sarx; sarx although defeated is permitted by Christ to have a shadowy existence, for Christ wills that men positively choose their 'conferred' conversion. But Christ does not allow sarx the victory anywhere; Christ does not will to preserve some of creation; He has won it all and He now is only waiting for the men He has won to choose freely that victory He has won for them; i.e., Christ does not simply demand what He has won, but

lets men whom He has won now seek to win Him - He allows Himself to be graciously won.

(6)Calvin said Christ bestows Himself upon men. We say He bestows Himself upon man. Thus God has accepted the whole world in Christ and has begun to make all things new. The man who knows this, then, will not consider he is accepted by God because of his own integrity, for he will know that his integrity is not the cause of his acceptance, but is an additional gift from God; for Christ in bestowing Himself upon a man enables God to accept him; and in so bestowing Himself in the Spirit, He coincidentally moves a man by the Spirit to aspire after integrity of life. For who can learn that Jesus Christ gives Himself and all He did for us to us without in gratitude seeking to do the will of Him Who thus so graciously embraces us?

(7)We saw again in this chapter that it was out of filial affection that Christ maintained a perfect filial relationship with the Father in His life of obedience and in His submission to the judgement of the Father on

sin. It is this perfect filial relationship which Christ through His Spirit has given to man. All men are given this incomprehensibly Gracious status as "sons of God". The "gathered community" is that community that lives in the sure knowledge that they are "sons". It is not that all men are not "sons"; it is only that those in the community recognize and believe this. And this is precisely, then, the task of the gathered community: to tell all men about their wonderful status: they are "sons of God"; they are forgiven; they are given a new life - they have but to take it up, i.e., they have but to embrace Christ Who has already embraced them.

We would hope our treatment of Calvin here has not been pharisaical. It would be strange for us to have adopted such an attitude since it has been our point to show that our theological ground, and indeed the theological ground of all Reformed theology, follows the blue-print laid down by Calvin even where it goes beyond him. Moreover, his doctrine of the Word

provides us with a sure and steady norm for this necessary reform. Furthermore, Calvin's theology is such a model of lucidity that any one who would seek to think clearly in theology may learn from it. In every doctrine he presents the chief point with lucidity. To illustrate, we have only to end with a quote, in which he sums up in a few words the Christian life:

> "We are not our own...
> We are God's; to Him, then, as the
> only genuine end, let every
> part of our life be directed."[1]

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1. Inst. III, 7,1.

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A B S T R A C T

The purpose of this thesis is to attempt to answer the question: can Reformed theology today go the same fundamental way as Calvin and yet go further, i.e., let Calvin's theology extend itself and make itself explicit in the face of our theological problems? We think it can. We have chosen three areas in which to test this assertion, all of which are lively areas of discussion in modern theology: natural knowledge of God, history and ethics. In each of these areas we try first to see what Calvin said. Then we let Calvin's doctrine of the Word extend and make explicit his statements with regard to our modern problems in each area. We use Calvin's doctrine of the Word as norm, for the Word Itself is Calvin's norm, so what he taught about this Norm may be considered as normative for all his teaching. In sum, then, we let Calvin's doctrine of the Word clarify the Christological character of his doctrines of our natural knowledge of God, the Providence of God, the law of God and the life of the Christian man, in the face of contemporary theological discussion.

Chapter One

First we present the norm for the whole: Calvin's doctrine of the Word.(1)First we have to consider the Eternal Word. The Word is related to God as His Own Will and Wisdom and to man as God's Speech to them. This Word dwelled with Israel, as Yahweh, and is known to us as Jesus Christ. (2) The Word became flesh to redeem man and be again the Mediator between God and man Whom man would recognize. He must be both God and Man to fulfill the dual Office of Mediator and Redeemer. For who but God could conquer sarx; and unless He is man how could we have transferred to us what is His, sonship, and have transferred from us to Him what is ours: punishment and death? Thus Jesus Christ is One Person, Who is both God and Man; in Him the full Godhead is revealed.

To carry on the work of revelation and redemption Christ acted as Prophet, Priest, King and Redeemer. His obedience and submission to the Father in all this was a voluntary, affectionate and human action. In Him all parts of salvation are to be sought.

(3) In Scripture we have a first hand witness, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to the Person and Work of Christ and to His foreshadowing in Israel. In rendering this service of witness to the Servant it has primary

authority for us. But it is more than an inspired and first-hand witness. For Christ by His Spirit makes Himself present in its witness. Thus, there is both an objective and a subjective relation which Christ has to Scripture. This relation of Christ to Scripture we illustrate in two ways: (a) by an examination of Calvin's principles of interpretation, and (b) by an examination of how Calvin relates "law" and "Gospel", i.e., Old Testament and New Testament.

(4) The usual way Christ, the Word, comes to men now is through preaching. Three factors are involved if preaching is to be the vehicle of the Word: (1) the Spirit must present the Word through the words of the preacher; (2) the preaching must be based on the most reliable witness, i.e., Scripture; (3) those preaching must be called of God.

(5) Finally, the Word is accepted in faith. Faith is given us by the Holy Spirit Who is the interior witness, Who convinces the heart and mind. This faith is a knowledge, but is different from usual ways of knowing, for it involves the knowing of God's Will and Gracious promise.[1] It is a knowing which accepts God's Will and promise and embraces Him in Whom they are.

Chapter Two

By the Word through the Spirit we know God. Is there another source of knowledge of God? Calvin speaks of an innate sense of deity and "a knowledge of God conspicuous in the creation and continual government of the world". He gives evidences for the "innate sense", but then says that subsequent to the fall all misuse this knowledge. There is a revelation in creation, Calvin maintains, for God images Himself in ordo of creation. Creation is not continuous with God, but God uses it as a mirror. This image is Christ Himself; i.e., the works of God in creation are the manifestation of Christ's hands and feet. Calvin cites evidences of wisdom, righteousness and power that are manifested in the world. Prior to the fall man would have seen in this wisdom, righteousness and power the Wisdom, Righteousness and Power of God. Now man does not see God in creation; he is thus left without excuse for his ignorance of God and God's Will, for this knowledge is objectively available for every man. If man, however, will put on the eyeglasses of Scripture in faith he will have elucidated for him the certain marks which God has left of Himself upon His works.

Calvin clearly indicates that fallen man misuses the "innate sense" and the revelation in creation, and is rendered inexcusable for his ignorance of God. However, Calvin's doctrine of the Word, and some modern theologies like Barth's - as well, raise questions about the reality, per se, and therefore the possibility of "natural knowledge of God". We delineate three principles from Calvin's doctrine of the Word which seem to call into question the "innate sense of deity" and the revelation in creation. They are: (1) in speaking of man's knowledge of God we always begin with the Object of faith, not with faith itself; (2) Christ is the only Object in the world which can rightly be identified as God Himself; (3) revelation and redemption are not separate acts; revelation is the revelation of our redemption.

(1)Because Calvin speaks of God imaging Himself in the order of creation (and that image is Christ) he does, in fact, speak of the Object prior to speaking of faith in his discussion of revelation in creation; the innate sense of deity might then be understood as an innate apprehension of the Word imaged in the natural order, possible for unfallen man whose human nature thus participated rightly in the natural order.

(2) Since the world was made in and through Christ and He is imaged there, unfallen human nature, it might be possible to say, innately wishes to respond to Jesus Christ Who comes to it in the structure of its own being. Further, Jesus Christ is God's Wisdom, God's Righteousness and God's Power and thus unfallen man would have known Christ in knowing the Wisdom, Power and Righteousness reflected in the good order of God's creation.

(3) Christ is imaged in creation as the One He eternally is, the Redeemer. If unfallen man had an innate knowledge of Christ, he had an innate sense of Him as Redeemer. Similarly the content of the revelation of God in creation is the revelation of redemption.

Chapter Three

Calvin indicates that God's work of Providence finds its fulfillment in election. Does Calvin always include this material purpose in his formal arguments for God's preservation, concurrence and government? Under what we have called Calvin's discussion of preservation we discuss Calvin's treatment of evil. Calvin argues that God is almighty and therefore Satan is His servant; yet God is good. God is good because

He brings good out of evil, never willing evil Himself - although controlling it. We concur with Calvin but try to see more clearly, on the basis of his doctrine of the Word, that Christ controls Satan that through his agency He, Christ, might preserve; i.e., Christ uses Satan in order to destroy destruction. In order to be assured that Calvin's doctrine of God's preservation is the proclamation of Grace, and that nothing repugnant is int it, we must go beyond him and say on the basis of his doctrine of the Word that all are being preserved for Christ by Christ.

Under the heading God's concurrence we treated Calvin's discussion of freedom. Calvin argued that there are two orders of necessity, one natural and the other supernatural. Although the former rests in the latter because things seem contingent in the former God calls us to act responsibly there. The reality of our relative autonomy is testified to by the fact of what we have done with it; i.e., let sarx in. Thus, while God has fixed the boundaries of our life He entrusts us with the care of it. God and man, then, share, by God's Grace, the rule over the natural sphere. Thus Calvin upholds the Lordship of God and the responsibility of man. Nevertheless, Calvin's

doctrine of the Word must aid us in filling this doctrine with material content; it is all right to speak of causes, but we must understand that God concurs in the way He does because He wills the execution of His covenant. His way, then, with His creature (in the world as in the Church, for God is everywhere the same faithful God) is the way He has with a covenant partner. Christ is the Worker of God's Providence. His way is the way of love, and in terms of concurrence this means the way of co-operation (which means freedom).

Under the heading "God's government" we saw Calvin maintaining that God rules over history. He does not allow it to be controlled by fate - as the Stoics maintain - or by chance - as the Epicureans maintain. Because God rules there is purpose and meaning for each life and for all of history. But how does God rule? Calvin answers: through the mediation of the Son; but he did not develop this. We attempt this development on the basis of his treatment of preaching and faith in his doctrine of the Word. God governs by alluring men to Himself through preaching. I. Preaching (a) God's government is Spiritual, i.e., the Spirit makes the Kingly Word present in the words preached to the community; (b) God's government calls upon men; God makes men His co-workers; and (c) He calls them to be faithful to the

Word. II.Faith (a) By the Spirit men participate in God's government and (b) respond to His loving promise in love and become co-workers in His loving work. (c) In putting Christ on they are obedient to the Word. We see that it is these statements, which describe positively God's rule in the Word, that turn aside the Stoic and Epicurean pronouncements.

Chapter Four

We develop Calvin's doctrine of the law under four headings:

1. Law and the Lawgiver. Law is fundamentally: Old Covenant. Thus, law is revelation; the end of the law is the fulness of revelation (and righteousness) Jesus Christ. With the Coming of the New Covenant in Christ, the ceremonial and judicial laws of the Old Covenant were abrogated, but the moral law, as the true and eternal rule of righteousness, remains. The moral law has three continuing uses: conviction, restraint and guidance.

2. Law and Its Purpose. Christ is the end of the law. If we would be with Him we do so by forming our lives on the model of purity which Christ is and which the law deseribes. The purpose of the law is to direct us to sanctity of life, which consists in two

parts, which are delineated by the two tables of the law: the first table instructs us concerning the worship of God and the second instructs us concerning the love of neighbour. By following the second, the command to love the neighbour, we prove we are observing the first and principal command as well, for love of neighbour springs only from the love of and consecration to God. Why should men obey God at all - in what does the legitimacy of God's command consist? The basis rests in (a) the Grace of creation, (b) God's paternal kindness, and (c) God's redeeming work.

3. Law and the Spirit. (a) For those who have been placed in Christ by the Spirit the curse of the law is abrogated. They are now judged in terms of Christ's obedience and not in terms of their own. (b) Believers are free of the yoke of the law; now, moved by the Spirit, they wish to do those things the law commends - and they know their frail and faulty effort is acceptable to the Father. (c) The believer is relieved from all religious quests. One object is not holier than an other; everything in God's creation is to be used without trouble of mind. In sum: the Spirit frees the Christian from worry about (a) forgiveness, (b) the inadequacy of their works, and (c) proper forms.

4. Law and Righteousness. God is Himself the righteousness reflected in the law. This is fully disclosed in the Atonement. Thus, the absoluteness of the law can not be denied; God demands from us in His law absolute perfection, absolute spiritual righteousness. Christ does not abrogate the law but demands a new spiritual integrity. In this way the law discloses to us that we are not our own, but the Lord's.

Before discussing critically what Calvin has said on law, we review his teaching on law(as promise) and Gospel (as fulfillment) treated in Chapter One; law and Gospel are Scripture, but Scripture is the Word of God and therefore God's own good news to us and God's own claim upon us only insofar as Christ is present in it by the power of the Spirit. In the light of this wider discussion of Calvin's, we understand:

1. that it is not the law which convicts, restrains and guides but rather Christ Who is present by the Spirit in the law.

2. we are not called by a group of propositions to the love of God and neighbour, but God in the concreteness of our community life, as its Living Lord lays the commands of the law upon our hearts wherever there is need. We also understand the whole basis for the legitimacy of God's command is founded in His redeeming work.

3. the Spirit frees men from the curse of the law by showing them that the law is not 'rules and regulations' but the proclamation or vehicle in which Christ is present. The Spirit frees men from the yoke of the law by showing them Him, Who is our Gracious Lord, in it. Him, by the Spirit, they wish to obey when they see Him - 'rules and regulations' were the yoke. The Spirit frees men by revealing to them the Holy One of Israel, for the world is, then, so to speak, de-divinized; the holy need not be sought since the Holy One is known.

4. while Calvin helps us understand the ground of law in Atonement, his wider doctrine of the Word allows us to see it in light of the resurrection as well. In the resurrection not only does God vindicate His absolute righteousness but allows man to participate in this vindication and be found absolutely righteous, too. Anddo what he can, man can not now finally escape his righteousness, just as formerly he could not escape his unrighteousness.

Chapter 5

Before we may speak of the sanctified life three qualifications are necessary. First, we may not speak of sanctification without speaking of justification, since both, although distinct, come together in Christ.

Second, both our justification and sanctification are in Christ; our justification is Christ's Priestly work; our sanctification is Christ's Kingly work. Third, these works are not done apart from us but by the Holy Spirit we are bound to Christ in His work. By the Spirit Christ embraces us and gives us faith, and with this faith we embrace Him.

Sanctification is repentance; man seeing Christ is turned to Him and aspires to be with Him in holiness and leave sarx behind.

Calvin desires to set down a rule of life for the converted. Thus, he instructs us: be conformed to Christ - mortify the flesh, as Christ did, and the Father will conform you to His resurrection. Self-denial is the ground of Calvin's ethics and with it the affirmation that we are not our own masters, but the Lord is master. Calvin's ethics is positive, however, since this self-denial issues in charity to the neighbour. Even more profound than the work of this charity is the work of the Christian which helps God in His fight against sarx; the Christian helps God in His fight against sarx by bearing the cross - for by bearing the Cross God defeated sarx. Because the pattern is crucifixion - resurrection the Christian

can bear up under cross bearing for he knows not only of the ultimate triumph of cross bearing, but he already experiences newness of life in his freedom from the curse and yoke of the law and in the worship of the Father as a son.

The saint is never anxious about his own holiness; he knows he could never achieve any real holiness of his own before God; but he knows that he is clothed with Christ's righteousness, founded in Christ's human, voluntary obedience and submission, and therefore is acceptable to God and forgiven by Him. This very fact is what moves him to aspire to integrity, and he knows he can aspire because not only he, but all his works are accepted. For although justification is perfect from the outset (unlike sanctification), nevertheless God continually justifies men throughout their lives. This justification is, of course, not caused by faith, but rather Christ's justifying work is received in faith.

Calvin suggests that sanctification and justification are conferred only on some men. Christ's work is for all, but the Spirit only confers the benefits on some. Calvin's doctrine of the Word presents Christ as the Sole Counsel of God, and He is for man. The Spirit

is Christ's Spirit and does not act against Christ's Will, but subjectively fulfills it in us. Thus, justification and sanctification, we must say on the basis of Calvin's doctrine of the Word, are conferred on all men. Thus, we affirm that God turns to man (not just to some men), defying all our sin, and thus justifies us all; and God turns man (not just some men) to Himself, defying all our sin, and thus sanctifies us all. There is no bad news in the Gospel. Some, however, still live as if sarx was still a fearsome enemy. Thus the task of the Christian in His community is to tell the news of the total triumph of the resurrection - the news of freedom now. The Christian and the Church witness to this triumph through the witness of their integrity of life as 'sons'; they serve the Lord, not themselves; and they share in His Sonship (i.e., cross bearing). Thus Calvin's instruction for the life of the Christian man is just right; however, we are compelled by his doctrine of the Revealed Word to say that Christian witness proclaims a wider inclusive 'sonship'. For all men may say (and this is Grace):

> "We are not our own...
> We are God's; to Him, then, as the
> only genuine end, let every
> part of our life be directed."