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### PREPARATION

This chapter contains twelve sections, grouped into three main subject areas:

1. Assertion of the doctrine of final resurrection, 1-4
2. Objections of various classes of opponents to the doctrine refuted, 5-9
3. Man's life in the hereafter: eternal enjoyment of God's presence, or eternal misery in alienation from God, 10-12

### EXPLORATORY

1. What state, enjoyed by Christ, does our trust in him bring us into? (987, 20ff)
  - a. *Christ...brought us the light of life...we...by believing, pass out of death into life.*Where is Christ and, by implication, where must all who are, 'in him' also be? (987, 26)
  - a. *...in heavenly places*What is the benefit to us of understanding this fact and being assured of it? (987, 27)
  - a. *We, lack nothing for full happiness.*Because this fact is not yet realised in our experience, what do we need to do in order to keep its power alive in our lives? (987, 29f)
  - a. *...we must cling to what is elsewhere taught concerning the nature of hope.*What should Christians be constantly doing, as well as, *living sober, righteous and godly lives in this age*? (988, 4f)
  - a. *...await our blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of our great God, and of our saviour Jesus Christ.*What does this activity call for on our part? (988, 6 & 10)
  - a. *...more than common patience*
  - b. *...minds lifted up to heaven.*What danger do we face if we cease to focus on this blessed hope? (988, 7f)
  - a. *...we may...in our weariness reverse our course or desert our post.*What is often linked with this blessed hope by both Peter and Paul? (988, 13f)
  - a. *...faith and love*How does this linkage of faith and love to the heavenly hope explain the rarity of faith in this world? (988, 20ff)
  - a. *...nothing is harder for our slowness than to climb over innumerable obstacles in, pressing on toward the goal of the upward call.*What three classes of, innumerable obstacles, does Calvin list? (988, 22ff)
  - a. *...the huge mass of miseries that almost overwhelm us;*
  - b. *...the jests of profane men;*
  - c. *...above and below us, before and behind, violent temptations besiege us...*What circumstance causes, profane men, to jest? (988, 24ff)
  - a. *...when we, willingly renouncing the allurements of present benefits, seem to strive after a blessedness hidden from us as if it were a fleeting shadow.*

What is the only thing that will enable us to maintain our commitment to Christ even though, *violent temptations beseege us?* (988, 28ff)

- a. Our minds must be, *freed of earthly things and bound to the heavenly life, which appears to be far away.*

What, then, distinguishes those who have, fully profited in the gospel from those who, as yet, have not? (988, 30ff)

- a. *...he alone has fully profited in the gospel who has accustomed himself to continual meditation on the blessed resurrection.*

2. Why is meditating on the resurrection so essential? (989, 3f)

- a. *...they alone receive the fruit of Christ's benefits who raise their minds to the resurrection.*

How does Paul encourage us in this duty? (989, 4ff)

- a. *Paul holds out to believers this goal, to which he says he strives, forgetting all things until he attains it.*

To what dangers do we expose ourselves when we neglect this duty? (989, 7f)

- a. The world may, *lay hold on us*, leading to our becoming slothful, spiritually.
- b. With the result that, *we be grievously punished for our sloth...*

What characteristic distinguishes Christians who maintain their focus on their hope from others who do not have the same hope? (989, 9f)

- a. *...their conversation is in heaven, whence also they, await their saviour.*

3. How significant in the whole gospel scheme is the resurrection from the dead? (989, 33ff)

- a. *Paul rightly argues that, if the dead do not rise up again...the whole gospel is vain and fallacious, for our condition would be more pitiable than that of all other mortals, seeing that, exposed to the hatred and reproach of many, we are every hour in danger, yea, we are as sheep destined for the slaughter. Accordingly, the authority. Of the gospel would fall not merely in one part but in its entirety, which is embraced in our adoption and the effecting of our salvation.*

What phrase sets forth the gospel in its entirety? (990, 2)

- a. *...our adoption and the effecting of our salvation.*

Why has Calvin placed this subject in this part of, The Institutes? (990, 4ff)

- a. *I have deferred to this place my brief discussion of [the resurrection] for this purpose: that my readers may learn, when they have received Christ, the Author of perfect salvation, to rise up higher, and may know that he is clothed in heavenly immortality and glory so that the whole body may be conformed to the head.*

990, 6ff: *Scripture provides two helps by which faith may overcome this great obstacle.* What great obstacle? (990, 11f)

- a. *It is difficult to believe that bodies, when consumed with rottenness, will at length be raised up in their season.*

What two helps to our faith does scripture provide? (990, 18f)

- a. *...the parallel of Christ's resurrection;*
- b. *...the omnipotence of God.*

What two passages written by Paul does Calvin refer to, to show, *that now, having obtained immortality, [Christ] is the pledge of our coming resurrection, and, to separate him from ourselves is not permissible and not even possible, without tearing him apart?* (990, 24&26)

- a. 2 Corinthians 4:8-10;
- b. 1 Corinthians 15:16

What is it that Paul takes, *as an agreed principle?* (990, 30ff)

- a. *...it was not for himself alone that Christ was subjected to death, or that he obtained victory over death by rising again.*

What point, in relation to Christ's resurrection, does Calvin stress? (990, 32f; 991, 7ff, 12ff), 21f, 2ff, 24f & 26f))

- a. *...there was begun in the head what must be completed in all the members*
- b. *Now, that our fellowship with Christ in the blessed resurrection may not be doubtful, in order that we may be content with this pledge, Paul plainly declares that Christ is seated in heaven, and will come on the last day as judge to conform our lowly, inglorious body to his glorious body.*
- c. *Paul also teaches...that God raised his son from the dead, not to make known a single example of his power, but to show toward us believers the same working of the Spirit, whom he calls, life, while he dwells in us because he was given to the end that he may quicken what is mortal in us.*
- d. *Christ rose again that he might have us as companions in the life to come.*
- e. *He was raised by the Father, inasmuch as He was head of the church, from which the Father allows him in no way to be severed.*
- f. *He was raised by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Quickener of us in common with him.*
- g. *Finally, he was raised that he might be, the resurrection and the life.*

Is every component of our experience of death and resurrection exactly the same as Christ's? (991, 1f)

- a. *...it would not even be right for [us] to be made equal to him in all respects.*

In what respect does our experience of death and resurrection differ from Christ's? (991, 2ff)

- a. *It is said in the psalm: Thou wilt not allow thy meek one to see corruption.*

How does Calvin categorise this promise? (991, 4)

- b. *...this trust*

With what phrases does he distinguish between the absolute experience of, *this trust*, by Christ and our experience of it? (991, 4ff)

- a. *...a portion of this trust belongs to us according to the measure of what is bestowed*
- b. *...the full effect of it appeared in Christ alone, who, immune from all corruption, received back a perfect body.*

It would appear, at first sight, that the initial witnesses God chose of the resurrection were inadequate. How does God's wisdom manifest itself in this choice? (992, 5ff)

- a. They were the more effective and credible because of their initial unbelief and fear. 992, 32f: *...their unbelief contributed no little to our faith.*

4. It is a great challenge for us to believe in our own resurrection in the way that we should believe in it and to live in the light of it in the way that we should. Why is that? (993, 12f)

- a. *It is, an incalculable miracle, which by its greatness overwhelms our senses.*

What must we recognise before we can think of the resurrection in the way that we ought to think of it? (993, 10ff)

- a. *...nothing could be more unfitting than to be thinking of something that can happen in the course of nature.*

Nonetheless, there is one natural process that images the resurrection to us. What is that? (993, 17f)

- a. *In sowing [Paul] tells us, we discern an image of the resurrection, for out of corruption springs up grain.*

What do the statements of Isaiah, David and Job, quoted by Calvin in this section, show us about the resurrection? (993, 21ff)

- a. *...no one is truly persuaded of the coming resurrection unless he is siezed with wonder, and ascribes to the power of God its due glory.*

What do Ezekiel's and Christ's use of the resurrection demonstrate to us? (994, 10ff)

- a. *...it is for us the chief model of all the deliverances that believers experience in this world.*

What does Paul join with the promise of resurrection as a reason for us to, *eagerly triumph*?

- a. *He who has promised us a future life is able to prserve what has been entrusted.*

5. What value do people commonly place on the promise of resurrection? (994, 32ff)

- a. *...as if with deliberate intent to blot out all memory of resurrection, death has been called the bound of all things and the extinction of man..*

What common (in some parts of the world at least) practice lends the lie to the view that death is the end of everything? (995, 7f)

- a. *...the sacred and inviolable custom of burial*

If Satan had been to some extent successful in his attempts to befuddle, *men's senses to make them bury with the corpses the memory of resurrection*, while paganism held sway, what strategy did he employ once the true faith begun to be proclaimed? (995, 21)

- a. Chiliasm

What priciple does Calvin lay down for determining the truth or falsehood of those things that are necessarily outside of our experience? (995, 31ff)

- a. *Now all those matters which elude our gaze and far exceed the capacity of our minds must either be believed as from actual oracles of God or utterly cast away.*

What did the Chiliasts teach? (995, 21f)

- a. They, *limited the reign of Christ to a thousand years.*

This view seems to gain some support from Revelation 20:4. What is wrong with interpreting this passage in this way? (995, 25ff)

- a. *...the number, one thousand, does not apply to the eternal blessedness of the church but only to the various disturbances that awaited the church, while still toiling on earth.*
- b. *...all Scripture proclaims that there will be no end to the blessedness of the elect or the punishment of the wicked [Matt 25:41, 46].*

In essence, what does Chiliasm assert about believers? (995, 36f)

- a. *...they do not put on immortality.*

Chiliasm has two adverse implications (reproaches, in Calvin's terminology) for revealed truth.

What are they? (995, 36)

- a. If believers, *do not put on immortality, then Christ himself, to whose glory they shall be transformed, has not been received into undying glory.*
- b. *If their blessedness is to have an end, the Christ's Kingdom, on whose firmness it depends, is but temporary.*

Why are views that limit future blessedness in any way detrimental to a proper understanding of the grace of God and power of Christ? (996, 4ff)

- a. Because they limit its achievements. *...the grace of God and power of Christ, the fulfilment of which is realised only when sin is blotted out, death swallowed up, and everlasting life fully restored!*

Turning to the everlastingness of the punishment of the wicked, what makes eternal punishment the only proper outcome for temporal sin? (996, 13ff)

- a. *God's majesty, and also his justice, which they have violated by sinning, are eternal.*

Why is it unbearable blasphemy to think that eternal punishment is disproportionate for a temporal offence? (996, 18f)

- a. *God's majesty is so little esteemed, when the contempt of it is valued less than the loss of one soul.*

6. What are the two, *delusions*, dealt with in this section? (996, 23ff)

- a. *...souls would be resurrected with bodies.* This is what we usually now know as, 'soul sleep', in which the whole person goes into a sort of suspended animation between their death and the general resurrection.
- b. *Others, while conceding that spirits are immortal, have held that they are to be clothed with new bodies.* 'New', as opposed to, 'renewed'.

In the remainder of this section Calvin quotes many scriptures to prove that the teaching of scripture on the intermediate state is, *Far otherwise*, than the tenets of soul sleep would suggest.

7. In this section, Calvin turns his attention to the second of the two, *delusions*, introduced in section 6.

What is Calvin's fundamental conviction, that leads him to oppose the kinds of thinking advanced by the Manichees and others? (998, 25f)

- a. *...whatever now exists in us that is unworthy of heaven does not hinder the resurrection.*

998, 26 to 999, 14 With what arguments does Calvin respond to this delusion?

- a. The body plays a vital part in Christian discipleship or in allegiance to Satan. In the future state there must be a relationship between reward or punishment and the body in which the actions that qualified for reward and punishment were performed. Paul teaches as much in 2 Corinthians 5:10.
- b. The Christian life is described in 2 Corinthians 4:11 as, *the life of Christ...manifested in our mortal flesh.*
- c. Paul's wish that God would keep his readers', *bodies as well as their spirits sound*, until the day of Christ [1 Thess 5:23] is extremely appropriate in Calvin's view because, *it would be utterly absurd that the bodies which God has dedicated to himself as temples should fall away into filth without hope of resurrection!*

- d. *What of the fact that (our bodily parts) are also members of Christ? Or that God commands all their parts to be sanctified to him? Or that it is his will that his name be praised with men's tongues, that pure hands be lifted to himself, that sacrifices be offered? What madness is it for that part of man, deemed by the heavenly judge worthy of such shining honour, to be by mortal men reduced to dust beyond the hope of restoration?*

Even more clearly than the above inferences, scripture teaches plainly that the bodies we now have will be resurrected. For this perishable nature, *says Paul*, must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality, 1 Cor 15:53.

How does Tertullian assess the clarity of Paul's statement, quoted above? (999, 24f)

- a. *Indeed, he could not have spoken more precisely unless he had held his own skin in his hands.*

As well as the 1 Corinthians passage quoted above, what other passages does Calvin refer to and how does he interpret them to show that our present bodies, after undergoing a change, that will be resurrected? (999, 26ff)

- a. Isaiah 45:24, quoted in Rom 14:11. This passage teaches plainly that we are accountable for our lives, which would make no sense if we came before God to give an account of ourselves in a body that had had no part in our actions.
- b. Dan 12:2 shows that God, *does not call forth new matter from the four elements to fashion men, but dead men from their graves.*
- c. Matt 10:28. *...there would be no reason to fear unless the body we now bear were liable to punishment.*
- d. John 5:28-29

Assuming those who assert that resurrection bodies are brand new bodies, how would we have to interpret John 5:28-29? (1000, 11f)

- a. *...souls rest in the graves, that from there **they** may hearken to Christ* (emphasis mine)

What observation does Calvin make from the fall in support of the assertion that the resurrection will be granted to the bodies we now possess? (999, 38ff)

- a. *...if death, which takes its origin from the fall of man, is accidental, the restoration which Christ has brought belongs to that self-same body which began to be mortal.*

Beginning on 1000, 15, what is Calvin's final line of argument in this section?

- a. That our resurrection must mirror Christ's resurrection, which involved the restoration to life of the same body that he had before his crucifixion, not the creation of a brand new body.

What specific arguments does Calvin produce in support of his reasoning in this paragraph? (1000, 15ff)

- a. *...how will head and members match?*
- b. *Christ arose: was it by fashioning a new body for himself? No, as he had foretold, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*
- c. *And it would not profit us much if the body which had been offered as an atonong sacrifice had been destroyed and replaced by a new one.*
- d. *...nothing is less likely than that our flesh, in which we bear about the death of Christ himself, should be deprived of Christ's resurrection.*

- e. *...when Christ arose, many bodies of the saints...came out of the tombs...this was the prelude to the resurrection, or rather the pledge of it.*

8. What does Calvin admit to on 1000, 35?

- a. *annoyance*

What, in particular, gives rise to this annoyance? (1001, 1f)

- a. *sheer unbelief is the mother of this notion (ie the notion that, in the resurrection there will be a creation of new bodies, 1000, 38f)*

In 1001, 11ff Calvin asks a most powerful question, which is?

- a. *...how would it help to devote feet, hands, eyes and tongue to God's service if they were not to share in its fruit and reward?*

How do we know that people's observance of burial rites is important to God? (1001, 40ff)

- a. *...we see the Spirit no less attentive to the burial rites about to be narrated than to the chief mysteries of the faith.*  
b. *Christ commends this as no mean office, Matt 26:10*

Why are burial rites so significant? (1002, 1f)

- a. *...it raises our eyes from gazing upon a grave that corrupts and effaces everything, to the vision of renewal.*  
b. *...the very careful observance of this ceremony, which is approved in the patriarchs, is proof enough that it was to them a rare and precious aid to faith...Abraham would not have taken such meticulous care about his wife's tomb if religion and a value higher than this world, had not been set before his eyes...by adorning his wife's dead body with the signs of resurrection, he might strengthen his own faith and that of his household.*

Turning to the manner of the resurrection, with what Caution does Calvin begin? (1002, 26f)

- a. *It now remains for me to give **some suggestion** of the manner of resurrection. (emphasis mine)*

Why this caution? (1002, 27ff)

- a. *...because Paul, calling it, a mystery, urges us to sobriety and restrains us from philosophizing too freely and subtly.*

1002, 38f: *...although we shall retain the substance of our bodies, there will be a change...* What is the nature of the change? (1002, 40ff)

- a. *Therefore, that we may be raised, the corruptible body will not perish or vanish, but, having laid aside corruption will put on incorruption.*

Turning to the timing of this event, there will obviously be some believers who are alive at the time of the Lord's return. Paul teaches that though we shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed. It may be thought that there is a discrepancy between 1 Cor 15:51 and another passage of scripture. Which passage is that? (1003, 21f)

- a. *Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed for all men to die once.*

In Calvin's view the resolution of this apparent discrepancy is, 'easy'. What is it? (1003, 23f)

- a. *...where the state of nature is changed, there is an appearance of death, and it is aptly so called.*  
b. *...all are to be renewed by death when they strip off the mortal body*  
c. *...a severing of body and soul will not be necessary where the change is sudden.*

9. What problem arises from the thought that unbelievers also experience resurrection? (1003, 30ff)

- a. *...in Adam all were condemned to death (Romans 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22), but Christ came as, resurrection and life (Jn 11:25). Did he come to give life to all mankind without distinction?*

1003, 38ff: Calvin asserts that this, *ought not to seem so strange because in daily experience we observe what corresponds to it*. As well as heavenly joy, what else were we deprived of in Adam? (1003, 41)

- b. *...the whole world's inheritance*

What examples does Calvin give of things that we are disqualified from – and yet enjoy? (1003, 42; 1004, 1f)

- a. *...eating common food*
- b. *God, makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*

How does Calvin sum up the way God treats the undeserving? (1004, 2ff)

- a. *...with respect to the uses of the present life his inestimable liberality constantly flows in great plenty*
- b. *...the things proper to Christ and his members also pour forth abundantly upon the wicked.*

Is forgiveness included in the blessings experienced by those who do not believe? (1003, 36f; 1004, 5ff, 17ff)

- a. *...this fact remains firm: one will be a resurrection of judgment, the other of life, Jn 5:29*
- b. *...the things proper to Christ and his members also pour forth abundantly upon the wicked, not to become their lawful possession, but rather to render them inexcusable.*
- c. *The wicked often experience God's kindness, by remarkable proofs, so as sometimes to put in the shade all the blessings of the pious, yet these lead to their greater condemnation.*
- d. *...there is an incidental resurrection of the wicked in which they will be unwillingly haled before the judgment seat of Christ...*
- e. *...to be consumed by death would be a light punishment if they were not brought before the judge to be punished for their obstinacy, whose vengeance **without end or measure** they have provoked against themselves.*

1004, 11 – I have found this slightly alternative translation on a website: *Should it be objected, that the resurrection is **not properly compared** to fading and earthly blessings...*

Calvin obviously feels it is a proper comparison. Why is this? (1004, 13ff)

- a. *...they deserved the death of the devil, in which they would be utterly destroyed. Yet by God's wonderful plan, an intermediate state was found, so that apart from life they should live in death.*

In the matter of resurrection, where does Scripture place the emphasis? (1004, 27f)

- b. *Scripture more often sets forth resurrection, along with heavenly glory, to the children of God alone*

Why is this? (1004, 28f)

- c. *Christ came properly not for the destruction of the world but for its salvation.*

10. Given our inability to form an adequate conception of what the Bible tells us about future heavenly glory, how should we approach this subject? (1005, 7ff)

- a. *If God contains the fullness of all good things in himself like an inexhaustible fountain, nothing beyond him is to be sought by those who strive after the highest good and all the elements of happiness*

What passages of scripture teach that this is so? (1005, 12ff)

- a. *I am your very great reward, Gen 15:1.*
- b. *Jehovah is my portion...a goodly lot has fallen to me, Ps 16:5f.*
- c. *I shall be satisfied with thy countenance, Ps 17:15.*

What passage sums up for Calvin that God will be to believers all that they could ever want? (1005, 16f)

- a. *Peter declares that believers are called in this to become partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet 1:4.*

What conclusion do we draw from the fact that, *the Lord will share his glory, power, and righteousness with the elect – nay, will give himself to be enjoyed by them and, what is more excellent, will somehow make them to become one with himself?* (1005, 22ff)

- a. *...let us remember that every sort of happiness is included under this benefit.*

What tendency do we need to guard against, given that, *if our mental capacity be compared with the height of this mystery, we still remain at the very lowest roots?*

- a. *...we must all the more, then, keep sobriety, lest forgetful of our limitations we should soar aloft with the greater boldness, and be overcome by the brightness of the heavenly glory...we are titillated by an immoderate desire to know more than is lawful.*

If we indulge this tendency, what will be the result? (1005, 32)

- a. *...trifling and harmful questions repeatedly flow forth.*

Calvin turns now to the subject of the degrees of heavenly reward – and possibly adopts an emphasis that will surprise us.

What, *teaching of scripture*, on the subject of the heavenly experience should we regard as, above all controversy? (1005, 39f)

- a. *...there will not be an equal measure of glory in heaven*
- b. *...what Paul says does not apply indiscriminately to all: You are my crown and my glory, 1 Thess 2:20.*

What do those who, closely study the Scriptures, discern therein? (1006, 12f)

- c. *...they promise believers not only eternal life but a special reward for each.*

In what sense is heaven part of a continuum that begins on earth for believers? (1006, 16ff)

- d. *...as Christ begins the glory of his body in this world with manifold diversity of gifts, and increases it by degrees, so also he will perfect it in heaven.*

11. Nothing is really required from me as far as this section is concerned but let us strive to ensure that the last four lines do not apply to us:

*For few out of a huge multitude care how they are to go to heaven, but all long to know beforehand what takes place there. Almost all are lazy and loath to do battle, while already picturing to themselves imaginary victories.*

12. The torments of the wicked – *darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, unquenchable fire, an undying worm gnawing at the heart* – are we meant to understand these expressions literally? (1007, 32f)

a. *...their torments and tortures are figuratively expressed to us by physical things*

What is the intention of these expressions? (1007, 36ff)

a. *...the Holy Spirit certainly intended to confound all our senses with dread*

b. *...we ought especially to fix our thoughts upon this: how wretched it is to be cut off from all fellowship with God.*

c. *And not that only but so to feel his sovereign power against you that you cannot escape being pressed by it.*

Why is the image of fire appropriate for the wrath of God? (1008, 3f)

a. *...his displeasure is like a raging fire, devouring and engulfing everything it touches.*

How will those in hell perceive every aspect of their environment? (1008, 6ff)

a. *...they to whom the Lord will openly show his wrath will feel heaven, earth, sea, living beings, and all that exists aflame, as it were, with dire anger against them, and armed to destroy them.*

How does Calvin attempt to sum up the weight of this terror and unpleasantness? (1008, 22f)

b. *...it would be more bearable to go down into any bottomless depths and chasms than to stand for a moment in these terrors.*

How does the author of Psalm 90, in vv7ff apply these truths to himself and other believers? (1008, 27ff)

c. *...he urges his own worshippers on, the more because they are timid in this world, that he may inspire them, burdened with the cross, to press forward (cf Ps 90:12, So teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom)*

### **FOR REFLECTION**

1. 988, 6: For what do we need, more than common patience? Do we need it for living, *sober, righteous and godly lives*, or in order to keep our hope fixed on awaiting, *our blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of our great God, and of our saviour Jesus Christ*?
2. 988, 30: *...he alone has fully profited in the gospel who has **accustomed** himself to continual meditation on the blessed resurrection.* What steps can we take to accustom ourselves to doing this?
3. When we read, *a living dog is better than a dead lion* (Eccles 9:4) would we think, *Solomon expresses the commonly received opinion*, or would we think this is what the Bible actually teaches?
4. From the space given to it (1000, 34, *I am ashamed to use so many words in so plain a matter*) and the firmness with which he expresses himself we get the impression that Calvin views the identity of our present bodies with our resurrection bodies as an extremely important point of doctrine. Is he right to be so insistent? If so, why?