

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

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PREPARATION

1. This chapter contains references to, *The Schoolmen*. This term arises from a method of intellectual analysis called Scholasticism. There is an excellent Wikipedia article on the subject. Chief among the Schoolmen, who had become very influential in Calvin's day, was Thomas Aquinas. Peter Lombard was another.

Beveridge		McNeill
McNeill section heading: The object of faith is Christ		
1	A brief recapitulation of the leading points of the whole discussion. The scope of this chapter. The necessity of the doctrine of faith. This doctrine obscured by the Schoolmen, who make God the object of faith, without referring to Christ. The Schoolmen refuted by various passages.	The object of faith is Christ
McNeill section heading: Faith involves knowledge; the true doctrine obscured by the Scholastic notion of implicit faith		
2	The dogma of implicit faith refuted. It destroys faith, which consists in a knowledge of the divine will. What this will is, and how necessary the knowledge of it.	Faith rests upon knowledge, not upon pious ignorance
3	Many things are and will continue to be implicitly believed. Faith, however, consists in the knowledge of God and Christ, not in a reverence for the Church. Another refutation from the absurdities to which this dogma leads.	The Roman doctrine of "implicit" faith is basically false
4	In what sense our faith may be said to be implicit. Examples in the Apostles, in the holy women, and in all believers.	Even right faith is always surrounded by error and unbelief
5	In some, faith is implicit, as being a preparation for faith. This, however, widely different from the implicit faith of the Schoolmen.	"Implicit" faith as prerequisite of faith
McNeill section heading: Relation of faith to the Word and brief definition of faith		

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

6	The word of God has a similar relation to faith, the word being, as it were, the source and basis of faith, and the mirror in which it beholds God. Confirmation from various passages of Scripture. Without the knowledge of the word there can be no faith. Sum of the discussion of the Scholastic doctrine of implicit faith.	Faith rests upon God's Word
7	What faith properly has respect to in the word of God, namely, the promise of grace offered in Christ, provided it be embraced with faith. Proper definition of faith.	Faith arises from God's promise of grace in Christ
McNeill section heading: Various unacceptable significations of the term "faith"		
8	Scholastic distinction between faith formed and unformed, refuted by a consideration of the nature of faith, which, as the gift of the Spirit, cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection.	"Formed" and "unformed" faith
9	Objection from a passage of Paul. Answer to it. Error of the Schoolmen in giving only one meaning to faith, whereas it has many meanings. The testimony of faith improperly ascribed to two classes of men.	1 Corinthians 13:2 – a proof of the difference between "formed" and "unformed" faith
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14	Definition of faith explained under six principal heads. 1. What meant by <i>Knowledge</i> in the definition.	Faith as higher knowledge
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22	Another species of fear, arising from a consideration of the judgment of God against the wicked. This also faith overcomes. Examples of this description, placed before the eyes of believers, repress presumption, and fix their faith in God.	Right fear

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23	Nothing contrary to this in the exhortation of the Apostle to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Fear and faith mutually connected. Confirmation from the words of a Prophet.	"Fear and trembling"
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25	Confirmation of the preceding conclusion by a passage from Bernard.	Bernard of Clairvaux on the two aspects of faith
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28	How faith is said to have respect to the divine benevolence. What comprehended under this benevolence. Confirmation from David and Paul.	Faith assures us not of earthly prosperity but of God's favour
McNeill section heading: Basis of faith the free promise, given in the Word, of grace in Christ		
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30	Faith not divided in thus seeking a Free Promise in the Gospel. Reason. Conclusion confirmed by another reason.	Why faith depends solely on the promise of grace
31	The word of God the prop and root of faith. The word attests the divine goodness and mercy. In what sense faith has respect to the power of God. Various passages of Isaiah, inviting the godly to behold the power of God, explained. Other passages from David. We must beware of going beyond the limits prescribed by the word, lest false zeal lead us astray, as it did Sarah, Rebekah, and Isaac. In this way faith is obscured, though not	The significance of the Word for faith

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	extinguished. We must not depart one iota from the word of God.	
32	All the promises included in Christ. Two objections answered. A third objection drawn from example. Answer explaining the faith of Naaman, Cornelius, and the Eunuch.	The promise of faith fulfilled in Christ
McNeill section heading: Faith revealed in our hearts by the Spirit		
33	Faith revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit. 1. The mind is purified so as to have a relish for divine truth. 2. The mind is thus established in the truth by the agency of the Holy Spirit.	The Word becomes efficacious for our faith through the Holy Spirit
34	Proof of the former. 1. By reason. 2. By Scripture. 3. By example. 4. By analogy.	Only the Holy Spirit leads us to Christ
35	5. By the excellent qualities of faith. 6. By a celebrated passage from Augustine.	Without the Spirit man is incapable of faith
36	Proof of the latter by the argument <i>a minore ad majus</i> . Why the Spirit is called a seal, an earnest, and the Spirit of promise.	Faith is a matter of the heart
37	Believers sometimes shaken, but not so as to perish finally. They ultimately overcome their trials, and remain steadfast. Proofs from Scripture.	Doubt cannot smother faith
McNeill section heading: Refutation of Scholastic objections to this		
38	Objection of the Schoolmen. Answer. Attempt to support the objection by a passage in Ecclesiastes. Answer, explaining the meaning of the passage.	Scholastic error concerning the assurance of faith
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40	A third objection, impugning the final perseverance of the elect. Answer by an Apostle. Summary of the refutation.	The alleged uncertainty as to whether we will persevere to the end
McNeill section heading: Relation of faith to hope and love. (This is a continuation of the refutation of Scholastic objections, not an exposition of 1 Cor 13:13.)		
41	The definition of faith accords with that given by the Apostle in the Hebrews. Explanation of this definition. Refutation of	Faith according to Heb. 11:1

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	the scholastic error, that charity is prior to faith and hope.	(Faith and love)
42	Hope the inseparable attendant of true faith. Reason. Connection between faith and hope. Mutually support each other. Obvious from the various forms of temptation, that the aid of hope necessary to establish faith.	Faith and hope belong together
43	The terms faith and hope sometimes confounded. Refutation of the Schoolmen, who attribute a twofold foundation to hope—viz. the grace of God and the merit of works.	Faith and hope have the same foundation: God's mercy

EXPLORATORY

Section 1. The Object of faith is Christ

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| 1 | <p>A brief recapitulation of the leading points of the whole discussion. The scope of this chapter. The necessity of the doctrine of faith. This doctrine obscured by the Schoolmen, who make God the object of faith, without referring to Christ. The Schoolmen refuted by various passages.</p> | The object of faith is Christ |
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II: Although Calvin opens this section asserting the need for a, *clearer definition of faith*, he does not supply such a definition until the final sentence in section 7. Sometimes the process of establishing what something is, has to start with establishing what it isn't.

What three points does Calvin make, repeating, *what was explained before?* (542, 27ff)

- a. God lays down for us through the law what we should do; if we then fail in any part of it, that dreadful sentence of eternal death which it pronounces will rest upon us.
- b. ...it is not only hard, but above our strength and beyond all our abilities, to fulfil the law to the letter; thus, if we look to ourselves only, and ponder what condition we deserve, no trace of good hope will remain; but cast away by God, we shall lie under eternal death.
- c. ...there is but one means of liberation that can rescue us from such miserable calamity; the appearance of Christ the Redeemer, through whose hand the Heavenly Father, pitying us out of his infinite goodness and mercy, willed to help us; if, indeed, with firm faith we embrace this mercy and rest in it with steadfast hope.

Calvin describes the sentences quoted above as a recollection of something stated before (542, 26f). He is referring to book 2, chapter 8, section 3 (II.viii.3). The recollection in III.ii.1 of what he had

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stated in II.viii.3 is much more specific and fuller with regard to one of his three points. Which one is that? (cf. 370, 3ff with 543, 4ff)

- a. ...there is but one means of liberation that can rescue us from such miserable calamity; the appearance of Christ the Redeemer, through whose hand the Heavenly Father, pitying us out of his infinite goodness and mercy, willed to help us; if, indeed, with firm faith we embrace this mercy and rest in it with steadfast hope.

IJ: Please read the second paragraph in this section very carefully. Calvin says so much in this paragraph that we are familiar with that we might simply skim over it, nodding in agreement as we go. But he is actually making some very profound points in this paragraph, that we need to reflect upon and to thank God for as they sink in.

What is the outcome of faith for those who possess it? (543, 12f)

- a. ...those adopted by God as his children come to possess the heavenly kingdom

Why ought we to examine what this faith ought to be like? And why must we, *...scrutinise and investigate the true character of faith with greater care and zeal?* (543, 13ff)

- a. ...it is certain that no mere opinion or even persuasion is capable of bringing so great a thing to pass.
- b. ...because many are dangerously deluded today in this respect

IJ: *...no mere...persuasion* – What, then, is faith?

What did most people in Calvin's day (and many in our own day) understand by, 'Faith'? (543, 18f)

- a. ...nothing deeper than a common assent to the gospel history.

What institutions, in Calvin's view, should be providing much greater clarity on the subject of faith? (543, 19f)

- a. ...the schools (IJ: *this term refers to the respected theological institutions of Calvin's day that developed and defended Catholic doctrine. The Sorbonne would be a leading example.*)

Obviously, God is the object of faith (543, 20, cf. 543, 39, *Indeed, it is true that faith looks to one God*). Why does Calvin object to the sense in which, *they call God simply the object of faith?* (543, 20ff)

- a. ...they call God simply the object of faith, and by fleeting speculations...lead miserable souls astray rather than direct them to a definite goal.

Why is this the inevitable outcome of the Schools' focus? (543, 22f)

- a. "God dwells in inaccessible light" [1 Tim. 6:16]

How, then, can we achieve the absence of speculation that is required in order to know God with certainty? (543, 23f)

- a. Christ must become our intermediary

What words of Jesus teach us the necessity of him becoming our intermediary? (543, 24ff)

- a. ...he calls himself, "the light of the world" [John 8:12]

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- b. ...and elsewhere, "the way the truth and the life"; for no one comes to the Father, who is "the fountain of life" [Ps 36:9], except through him [John 14:6] because he alone knows the Father, and afterward the believers to whom he wishes to reveal him [Luke 10:22].

How does Paul teach the same thing? (543, 29ff)

- a. On this ground, Paul declares that he considers nothing worth knowing save Christ [1 Cor. 2:2].
- b. In the twentieth chapter of Acts he relates that he has preached "faith in...Christ" [v21].
- c. ...in another passage he has Christ speak as follows: "I shall send you among the Gentiles...that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the saints through faith that is in me" [Acts 26:17-18].
- d. Paul testifies that the glory of God is visible to us in His person, or – what amounts to the same thing – that the enlightening knowledge of the glory of God shines in his face [2 Cor. 4:6]

How, according to Calvin, does the gospel reconcile these two apparently irreconcilable things: Faith looks to one God yet the true God is unapproachable by us directly? (544, 39f)

- a. ...this must also be added. "To know Jesus Christ whom he has sent" [John 17:3]

If Christ had not beamed upon us where would God be now? (544, 2)

- a. ...hidden afar off

As it was the Father's purpose to reveal the entire Godhead through Christ, what was committed to Christ, *so that Christ, by communicating his Father's benefits, might express the true image of his glory* [Heb. 1:3]? (544, 3ff)

- a. For this purpose the Father laid up with his only-begotten Son all that he had to reveal himself in Christ

...the invisible Father is to be sought solely in this image. What image? (544, 8)

- a. Christ

What does Augustine teach about the goal of faith? (544, 11)

- a. ...he teaches that we must know our destination and the way to it.

In what ways is Christ both the destination and the way to that destination? (544, 14f)

- a. ...as God he is the destination to which we move; as man, the path by which we go. Both are found in Christ alone.

What quality of faith did Paul teach rests in Christ? (544, 18)

- a. ...all its stability

How does Peter, *most effectively connect both* (God and Christ)? 544, 19f)

- a. Peter, indeed, most effectively connects both, saying that through him we believe in God [1 Peter 1:21]

Sections 2-5. Faith involves knowledge; the true doctrine obscured by the Scholastic notion of implicit faith.

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2	The dogma of implicit faith refuted. It destroys faith, which consists in a knowledge of the divine will. What this will is, and how necessary the knowledge of it.	Faith rests upon knowledge, not upon pious ignorance
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This evil...must be attributed to the Schoolmen (544, 21). What evil? (543, 19ff)

- a. ...when faith is discussed in the schools, they call God simply the object of faith, and by fleeting speculations...lead miserable souls astray rather than direct them to a definite goal.

What have the Schoolmen done, that is so evil? (544, 22f)

- a. ...drawn a veil over Christ.

However, the Schoolmen have not stopped there. They have added to the above error. In what way have they done this? (544, 26f)

- a. ...they have fabricated the fiction of "implicit faith".

Bedecking (544, 27). What does, *bedecking*, mean in this context?

- a. *Dignifying, dressing up.*

How does implicit faith show itself? (545, 3f)

- a. ...to understand nothing, provided only that you submit your feeling obediently to the church?

What is the problem with implicit faith? (545, 4f)

- a. Faith rests not on ignorance, but on knowledge.

What is implied in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19? (¹⁸Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.) (545, 6ff)

- a. We do not obtain salvation either because we are prepared to embrace as true whatever the church has prescribed, or because we turn over to it the task of inquiring and knowing. But we do so when we know that God is our merciful Father, because of reconciliation effected through Christ, and that Christ has been given to us as righteousness, sanctification, and life.

What does Paul indicate by: *With the heart a man believes unto righteousness, with the mouth makes confession unto salvation* [Rom. 10:10, cf. Vg.]? (545, 17ff)

- a. ...it is not enough for a man implicitly to believe what he does not understand or even investigate. But he requires explicit recognition of the divine goodness upon which our righteousness rests.

3	Many things are and will continue to be implicitly believed. Faith, however, consists in the knowledge of God and Christ, not in a reverence for the Church. Another refutation	The Roman doctrine of "implicit" faith is basically false
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from the absurdities to which this dogma leads.

Calvin is prepared to acknowledge an implicit element in faith. How many things are accepted implicitly by us? (545, 22)

- a. ...most things

Given this fact, what is the best thing we can do as we go through life in ignorance of many things? (545, 24ff)

- a. ...we can do nothing better than suspend judgment, and hearten ourselves to hold unity with the church.

Although this is the best thing we can do, it leads to a danger, which is – what? (545, 26f)

- a. ...on this pretext...to label ignorance tempered with humility “faith”!

Why would it not be appropriate to label obedience to a church faith? (545, 28f)

- a. ...faith consists in the knowledge of God and of Christ [John 17:3], not in reverence for the church.

What are some of the outcomes of accepting the notion of implicit faith as defined by those who want to argue that faith can exist where knowledge doesn't? (545, 30ff)

- a. Anything at all, provided it be palmed off on them under the label “church2 – sometimes even the most frightful errors – the untutored indiscriminately seize upon as an oracle.
- b. ...heedless gullibility...is excused by them
- c. ...only on condition that “such is the faith of the church” does it definitely believe anything
- d. ...they fancy that in error they possess truth; in darkness, light; in ignorance, right knowledge.
- e. ...they do not ask whether faith is wrapped in many remnants of ignorance, but define right believers as those who go numb in their own ignorance, and even brag about it, provided they give assent to the authority and judgment of the church in things unknown to them.

What truth, regularly taught in scripture, contradicts this sort of implicit faith? (546, 9)

- a. ...understanding is joined with faith.

4	In what sense our faith may be said to be implicit. Examples in the Apostles, in the holy women, and in all believers.	Even right faith is always surrounded by error and unbelief
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Why is there among true believers such a thing as implicit faith? (546, 11ff, 18f)

- a. ...not only because many things are as yet hidden from us, but because surrounded by many clouds of errors we do not comprehend everything.
- b. ...until we put off the flesh we attain less than we should like.

The height of wisdom therefore becomes – what? (546, 14f)

- a. ...to go forward and, quietly and humbly, to strive still further.

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What is God's purpose in leaving us in ignorance in so many areas?

- a. With this bridle God keeps us within bounds, assigning to each his "measure of faith" [Rom 12:3] so that even the best teacher may be ready to learn.

What three lines of evidence does Calvin produce to support the view that in all believers much even of the faith that saves is implicit? (546, 24f; 34ff; 547, 14f)

- a. Remarkable examples of this implicit faith may be noted in Christ's disciples before they attained full enlightenment.
- b. Nor was it superstition that prompted the women to anoint with spices the corpse of a dead man for whose life there could be no hope. But although they had faith in the words of him whom they knew to be truthful, the ignorance that as yet occupied their minds so enveloped their faith in darkness that they were almost dumbfounded.
- c. ...unbelief is, in all men, always mixed with faith.

What, *remarkable examples of this implicit faith may be noted in Christ's disciples?* (546, 25ff)

- a. We see how with difficulty they taste even the first rudiments, halting over the slightest matters, and though hanging on their Master's words, making but little progress.
- b. ...when, warned by the women, they rush to the tomb, the resurrection of their Master seems to them like a dream [Luke 24:11-12; cf. John 20:8].

Why would it be wrong for us to conclude from the above that the disciples lacked true saving faith altogether at this time? (546, 30ff)

- a. Since Christ previously bore witness to their faith, it is wrong to say that they were completely devoid of it... unless they had been persuaded that Christ would rise again, all zeal would have failed them.

Turning to the implicit faith of the women, whence did it arise? (547, 8ff)

- a. ...there was in them a true but implicit faith because they had reverently embraced Christ as their teacher.

...they finally believed after they themselves had discovered the truth of Christ's words through the very fact of his resurrection. How are we to understand the women's finally coming to believe? (547, 5ff)

- a. Not that they then began to believe, but because the seed of hidden faith – which had been dead, as it were, in their hearts – at that time burst through with renewed vigour!

How did the women's faith progress? (547, 10ff)

- a. Then, taught by him, they were convinced he was the author of their salvation.
- b. And finally, they believed he came from heaven that, through the Father's grace, he might gather his disciples thither.

5	In some, faith is implicit, as being a preparation for faith. This, however, widely	"Implicit" faith as prerequisite of faith
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different from the implicit faith of the Schoolmen.

What, in the first sentence, tells us that Calvin is still dealing with, *implicit faith*, but that by, *implicit faith*, in this section he means something different to the sense in which he has used that term in sections 4 and 5? (547, 16f)

- a. We may also call that faith implicit which is still strictly nothing but the preparation of faith.

Whom does Calvin have in mind as exemplars of implicit faith in this sense? (547, 18ff, 24f, 33)

- a. ...very many believed who, caught up into wonderment by the miracles only, did not advance farther than to believe Christ the Messiah who had been promised, although they had not been imbued with even a trace of the gospel teaching.
- b. ...the court official who believed Christ's promise concerning the healing of his son
- c. ...the Samaritans

When scripture dignifies this kind of implicit faith with words such as, *faith*, and, *believed*, of what is it speaking? (547, 23f)

- a. ...only the beginning of faith

Calvin refers to John 4:50 and 53. Here are those verses in context: ⁴⁶ *So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.* ⁴⁷ *When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.* ⁴⁸ *Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."*

⁴⁹ *The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"*

⁵⁰ *Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.* ⁵¹ *And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!"*

⁵² *Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."* ⁵³ *So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.*

In what way does the belief referred to in verse 50 differ from the belief referred to in verse 53? (547, 29ff)

- a. ...he was so teachable and ready to learn that in the first passage his admission of belief signifies a particular faith, while in the second passage he is counted among the disciples who had enlisted with Christ

What qualifies people to be called, *believers*, in this sense? (547, 39f)

- a. They are ...inclined to hearken

As they are only inclined to hearken but not yet to believe in a saving way, how does this implicit faith differ from the implicit faith taught by Rome? (548, 1ff)

- a. ...this teachableness, with the desire to learn, is far different from sheer ignorance in which those sluggishly rest who are content with the sort of "implicit faith" the papists invent.

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How do Paul's words in 2 Timothy 3:7 eloquently make the same point as Calvin is now making? (548, 4ff)

- a. *...if Paul severely condemns those who "are always learning but never arrive at a knowledge of the truth", how much greater ignominy do those merit who deliberately affect complete ignorance!*

Summary: So far, we have met three kinds of implicit faith:

1. The Roman Catholic version, in which people are not required to know anything, just to submit in a trusting way to the teaching of the RC Church.
2. The believers' version, which has to exist in all Christians because of ignorance.
3. The 'faith' of those who are, *inclined to hearken*, but who are not yet saved. This implicit faith does not mature into saving faith in every case.

Sections 6 and 7. Relation of faith to the Word and brief definition of faith

6	The word of God has a similar relation to faith, the word being, as it were, the source and basis of faith, and the mirror in which it beholds God. Confirmation from various passages of Scripture. Without the knowledge of the word there can be no faith. Sum of the discussion of the Scholastic doctrine of implicit faith.	Faith rests upon God's Word
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How do we gain, *true knowledge of Christ*? (548, 8f)

- a. *...if we receive him as he is offered by the Father: namely, clothed with his gospel*

Is it essential to receive Christ as saviour in order to truly know and understand him? Is it not enough for us to recognise him simply as the goal of our faith? (548, 10ff)

- a. *...we cannot take the right road to him unless the gospel goes before us.*

What is so special about the gospel that makes receiving it the only way of access to the true knowledge of Christ? (548, 12)

- a. *...there, surely, the treasures of grace are opened to us*

How does Calvin quantify the benefit gained from Christ by those who do not receive him as saviour? (548, 13)

- a. *...little*

How do Paul's words in Ephesians 4:20-21 make the point that faith does not exist where there is no understanding? (548, 14)

- a. *Paul yokes faith to teaching, as an inseparable companion*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

In the second paragraph (begins 548, 17) Calvin makes another important point about faith – that it is, even in Scripture, associated with the preaching of the gospel in the New Testament era.

Compared to the Old Testament, *a fuller manifestation of Christ has been revealed in the gospel*, leading Paul to describe the gospel as, *the doctrine of faith* [cf. 1 Tim 4:6]. What possible implication of this observation does Calvin distance himself from? (548, 17ff)

- a. *I do not so restrict faith to the gospel without confessing that what sufficed for building it up had been handed down by Moses and the prophets.*

What does Paul mean when he writes in Romans 10:4 and Galatians 3:25 that, *by the coming of faith the law was abolished*? (548, 23ff)

- a. *He understands by this term the new and extraordinary kind of teaching by which Christ, after he became our teacher, has more clearly set forth the mercy of the Father, and has more surely testified to our salvation.*

Having stated his principle position – that faith rests upon knowledge and that the knowledge that faith rests upon is gained principally from the gospel – Calvin embarks on a more detailed repetition of this thoughts, feeling that, *if we descend by degrees from general to particular*, that it will be an easier and more suitable method. Sections 6 and 7 should really be thought of as one.

What is the starting point for this descent? (548, 28ff)

- a. *First, we must be reminded that there is a permanent relationship between faith and the Word.*

Calvin produces an impressive array of 20 scripture references, plus two whole chapters, to establish this first general point. List the first three texts quoted by Calvin:

- a. *Isaiah 55:3, "Hear me and your soul shall live".*
- b. *John 20:31, "These things have been written that you may believe"*
- c. *Psalms 95:7 (94:8, Vg.) "Today if you will hear his voice"*

What is the significance of, *hear*, stated in Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 95:7 and implied in John 20:31? (548, 37f)

- a. *"To hear" is generally understood as meaning to believe*

What distinguishing mark of a Christian corresponds to this thought? (548, 39ff)

- a. *...in the Book of Isaiah, God distinguishes the children of the church from outsiders by this mark: he will teach all his children [Isa. 54:13; John 6:45] that they may learn of him [cf. John 6:45].*

The interchangeableness of two words, as used by the gospel-writers, implies that Christians are learners as well as followers. What are the two words? (549, 4f)

- a. *...the Evangelists commonly use the words "believers" and "disciples" as synonyms.*

How vital is the Word to faith? (549, 14)

- a. *...take away the Word and no faith will then remain*

In the absence of input from God, *via* his Word, what will characterise 'faith'? (549, 11f)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...uncertain credulity and vague error of mind.*

What Pauline definitions of faith imply that it must be a response to truth taught by God? (549, 22ff)

- a. *Paul defines faith as that obedience which is given to the gospel [Rom. 1:5], and elsewhere praises allegiance to faith in Philippians [Phil 1:3-5; cf. I Thess. 2:13].*

Some people's definition of faith does not go far enough. How far does it go? (549, 26)

- a. *...knowing that God exists*

What more must faith grasp, if it is to be saving faith? (549, 27)

- a. *...what is his will towards us*

In the final paragraph in this section, Calvin starts to pull together his definition of faith, the need for which he stated at the beginning of the chapter. What is his definition of faith at this stage? (549, 30f)

- a. *...a knowledge of God's will toward us, perceived from his Word.*

This faith rests on a foundation. What is that foundation? (549, 32)

- a. *...a preconceived conviction of God's truth.*

Is it enough for us to hold this conviction merely academically? (549, 33ff)

- a. *...so long as your mind is at war with itself, the Word will be of doubtful and weak authority, or rather of none.*
- b. *And it is not even enough to believe that God is trustworthy [cf. Rom 3:3], who can neither deceive nor lie [cf. Titus 1:2], unless you hold to be beyond doubt that whatever proceeds from him is sacred and inviolable truth.*

7	What faith properly has respect to in the word of God, namely, the promise of grace offered in Christ, provided it be embraced with faith. Proper definition of faith.	Faith arises from God's promise of grace in Christ
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Is the above meant to imply that any scripture can serve to arouse faith? (549, 39f)

- a. *...man's heart is not aroused to faith at every word of God*

What two scripture passages does Calvin cite as examples of words of God that, *are so far from being capable of establishing faith that they can of themselves do nothing but shake it?* (550, 2ff)

- a. *God's word to Adam..."You shall surely die" [Gen. 2:17].*
- b. *God's word to Cain..."The blood of your brother cries out to me from the earth" [Gen 4:10].*

Does this observation permit us to believe that some scripture passages more than others are to be accorded the status of God's words? (550, 7ff)

- a. *...it is the function of faith to subscribe to God's truth whenever and whatever and however it speaks.*

What, then, qualifies a scripture passage to be regarded as encouraging to faith? (550, 8ff)

- a. *...we ask only what faith finds in the Word of the Lord upon which to lean and to rest.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Where our conscience sees only indignation and vengeance, how are we most likely to react to God? (550, 11)

- a. *...how can it fail to tremble and be afraid? or to shun the God whom it dreads?*

What is wrong with that? It is, after all, an appropriate and believing reaction to God's threatenings. (550, 12f)

- a. *...faith ought to **seek** God, not to shun him.*

Why have we not, so far, attained, a full definition of faith? (550, 15f)

- a. *...merely to know **something** of God's will is not to be accounted faith*

...what if we were to substitute his benevolence or his mercy in place of his will...? (550, 18f)

- a. *Thus, surely, we shall more closely approach the nature of faith;*

Why is this? (550, 20f)

- a. *...it is after we have learned that our salvation rests with God that we are attracted to seek him. (cf. 550, 13f, answer above)*

What scriptural declarations confirm to us that, *our salvation rests with God?* (550, 21f)

- a. *This fact is confirmed for us when he declares that our salvation is his care and concern*

What, then, if faith is to be encouraged, do we need to find in our Bibles? (550, 22ff)

- a. *Accordingly, we need the promise of grace, which can testify to us that the Father is merciful;*

What is so special to us about, *the promise of grace?* (550, 24f)

- a. *...we can approach him in no other way, and upon grace alone the heart of man can rest.*

What two divine qualities are commonly yoked in the Psalms, as if they were mutually connected? (550, 26f)

- a. *...mercy and truth*

To how many passages in the Psalms does Calvin allude, in support of this assertion? (550, 27ff)

- a. Twelve

Why do the Psalms, *commonly yoke these two?* (550, 28ff)

- a. *...it would not help us at all to know that God is true unless he mercifully attracted us to himself. Nor would it have been in our power to embrace his mercy if he had not offered it with his word*

What is necessary in order that our decision, *that God is well disposed toward us*, not to be a rash decision? (550, 42ff)

- a. *...it will be rash for us to decide that God is well disposed toward us unless he give witness of himself, and anticipate us by his call, that his will may not be doubtful or obscure*

What is, *the sole pledge of his love?* (551, 4f)

- a. *Christ, without whom the signs of hatred and wrath are everywhere*

As we contemplate God's goodness, why must doubt be excluded? (551, 6ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...the knowledge of God's goodness will not be held very important unless it makes us rely on that goodness.*
- b. *...doubt...is not in firm agreement, but in conflict, with itself.*

The state of our minds is, *blind and darkened*. We are, *far from penetrating and attaining even to perception of the will of God! And the heart, too, wavering as it is in perpetual hesitation, is far from resting secure in that conviction!* What, therefore, do we need in order for the Word of God to, *obtain full faith among us?* (551, 13ff)

- a. *...our mind must be otherwise illumined and our heart strengthened.*

Pulling all of Calvin's thought thus far together, how may we define faith? (551, 16ff)

- a. *...a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence toward us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit.*

8	Scholastic distinction between faith formed and unformed, refuted by a consideration of the nature of faith, which, as the gift of the Spirit, cannot possibly be disjoined from pious affection.	“Formed” and “unformed” faith
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You can find a useful, brief article about Scholasticism [here](#). When Calvin mentions, *the schools*, etc., it is the scholastic method and its conclusions that he has in mind.

It is important to note that the quest for the scholastic is to reconcile differences. As a method, it was not unopposed in its day. According to the article linked to above, Bernard of Clairvaux was an opponent of scholasticism.

Scholasticism is harmful because it seeks to find a kind of *via media* that includes all. Truth is meant to serve as a critique of error, it is not meant to be watered down by it.

Following their usual method of beginning by identifying apparently contradictory aspects of a concept, scholastics posited two sorts of faith. What were they? (551, 23)

- a. *...formed and unformed faith*

What characterises 'unformed' faith? (551, 25; 552, 26, 35)

- a. *...no fear of God, no sense of piety;*
- b. *...pious inclination...added to assent;*
- c. *A failure to apprehend...the sanctification of the Spirit;*

Whose role as, *the witness to us of our adoption*, is supplanted by this view? (551, 26f)

- a. *...the Holy Spirit*

How does the Holy Spirit bear this witness? (551, 27)

- a. *...by illumining our hearts unto faith*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

(IJ: Although Calvin writes, in 551, 30f, *We need no longer contend with their definition; our task is simply to explain the nature of faith as it is set forth in the Word of God*, he doesn't tear himself away from this particular fight just yet!)

What characteristics of unformed faith do Calvin's comments identify? (552, 1ff, 13; 553, 2)

- a. *...an assent by which any despiser of God may receive what is offered from Scripture*
- b. *...that cold quality*
- c. *...separated from a devout disposition*

What is the first thing scholasticism overlooks when it comes to faith? (552, 3ff, 9)

- a. *...first they ought to have seen whether every man attains faith by his own effort, or whether through it the Holy Spirit is witness of his adoption.*
- b. *...the unique gift of the Spirit.*

Because the scholastics do not identify the Holy Spirit as the originator of faith they waste time and energy discussing – what? (552, 5ff)

- a. *...they babble childishly in asking whether faith is the same faith when it has been formed by a superadded quality; or whether it be a new and different thing.*

If the scholastics had simply taken scripture as their authority, what would they have learned about faith? (552, 10f)

- a. *...the beginning of believing already contains within itself the reconciliation whereby man approaches God.*

If the scholastics had weighed Paul's saying, *With the heart a man believes unto righteousness*, what effect would it have had on them? (552, 13f)

- a. *...they would cease to invent that cold quality of faith.*

In this section's third paragraph Calvin moves on to a new line of argument which, if properly understood and followed through, *would have been sufficient to end the dispute*. What is this line of argument? (552, 16ff)

- a. *...very assent itself...is more of the heart than of the brain, and more of the disposition than of the understanding.*

How does Calvin support this understanding of assent? (552, 19ff)

- a. *...it is called "obedience of faith" [Rom 1:5]*
- b. *To this truth believers set their seal as if they have affixed their signatures, as John the Baptist testifies [John 3:33]. (John 3:33 – He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.)*

What conclusion of the scholastics does this understanding of, *assent*, render foolish? (552, 25f)

- a. *...faith is "formed" when pious inclination is added to assent.*

How does the, *assent that is revealed in the Scriptures*, differ from the assent of the scholastics? (552, 226f)

- a. *...even assent rests upon pious inclination.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

In the fourth paragraph Calvin produces, *another much clearer argument*. What is it (552, 34f)

- a. *...no one can duly know him without at the same time apprehending the sanctification of the Spirit.*
- b. *...faith rests upon the knowledge of Christ. And Christ cannot be known apart from the sanctification of his Spirit.*

Who or what is the object of faith? (552, 30)

- a. *...faith embraces Christ*

What Christ? (552, 30f)

- a. *Christ, as offered to us by the Father [John 6:29]* (John 6:29 reads: Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.")

What did the Father send the Son to be to us? (552, 31ff)

- a. *...he is offered not only for righteousness, forgiveness of sins, and peace, but also for sanctification [cf. 1 Cor. 1:30] and the fountain of the water of life [John 7:38; cf. ch.4:14]*

Can Christ be known by an individual who does not experience the sanctification of the Spirit? (552, 34ff)

- a. *...no one can truly know him without at the same time apprehending the sanctification of the Spirit*
- b. *...faith rests upon the knowledge of Christ. And Christ cannot be known apart from his Spirit.*

What follows from this understanding of what Christ is to true believers? (552, 34ff)

- a. *It follows that faith can in no wise be separated from a devout disposition.*

9	Objection from a passage of Paul. Answer to it. Error of the Schoolmen in giving only one meaning to faith, whereas it has many meanings. The testimony of faith improperly ascribed to two classes of men.	1 Corinthians 13:2 – a proof of the difference between "formed" and "unformed" faith
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(IJ: In this passage, Calvin presents and critiques an example of scholasticism at work. In its attempt to reconcile all that lays claim to being faith it thinks it finds support in the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 13. In these verses, as understood by the scholastics, Paul appears to imply that faith can exist in an incomplete state, separate from love.)

What is the implication of the Scholastics' approach to 1 Corinthians 13:2? (553, 5f)

- a. *...they would de-form faith by depriving it of love*

What leads them to make this mistake? (553, 6f, 24ff)

- a. *...they do not consider what the apostle means by "faith" in this passage*
- b. *...the whole error of these men lies in that, although the meanings of "faith" are diverse, they do not observe the diversity of the thing signified therein, but dispute as if the acceptance of the word were everywhere the same.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

What is Paul's subject in 1 Corinthians 12 and 13 (IJ: and 14)? (553,8)

- a. *...the various gifts of the Spirit – including the divers kinds of tongues, powers and prophecy [1 Corinthians 12:4-10]*

Paul not only taught the Corinthians about these gifts but exhorted them to – what? (553, 10ff)

- a. *...to "seek after the better of these gifts," thereby to render greater benefit and advantage to the whole body of the church*

However, even that is not enough, because he adds that he will show – what? (553, 12f)

- a. *... "a still more excellent way" [1 Cor. 12:31]*

Why is the way of love, *more excellent*? (553, 13ff)

- a. *All such gifts, however excellent they may be in themselves, are still to be considered as nothing unless they serve love. For they were given for the edification of the church, and unless they contribute to this they lose their grace.*

How does Paul prove that love is more excellent? (553, 17ff)

- a. *To prove this, Paul elaborates by repeating those same gifts which he had enumerated before, but under other names. Moreover, he uses the terms "powers" and "faith" for the same thing, that is, for the ability to work miracles.*

So when, in 1 Corinthians 13:2, Paul mentions faith, what does he mean by it? (553, 21ff)

- a. *...a special gift of God, which any impious man can brag about and abuse, as the gift of tongues, as prophecy, as the other graces.*

Why is Calvin (and, by implication, Paul) prepared to call this, *gift of God, which any impious man can brag about and abuse*, faith? (553,30ff)

- a. *...we concede, for the purpose of instruction, that there are divers forms of faith.*
- b. *...we wish to show what kind of knowledge of God can exist among the impious*

Is this 'faith' of the impious essentially the same as the faith of the pious, just less formed, as the Scholastics asserted? (553, 33f)

- a. *...there is only one kind of faith among the pious – as scripture teaches.*

As far as Calvin's experience of Europeans is concerned, what is he able to affirm that, *most people believe*? (553, 35f)

- a. *...that there is a God*
- b. *...and they consider that the gospel history and the remaining parts of the Scripture are true*

Is this faith? (553, 37ff)

- a. *Such a judgment is on a par with the judgments we ordinarily make concerning those things which are either narrated as having once taken place, or which we have seen as eyewitnesses.*

What do those who go further believe? (554, 1ff)

- a. *...holding the Word of God to be an indisputable oracle, they do not utterly neglect his precepts, and are somewhat moved by his threats and promises.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Is this faith? (554, 4ff)

- a. *To such persons an ascription of faith is made, but by misapplication, because they do not impugn the Word of God with open impiety, or refuse or despise it, but rather pretend a certain show of obedience.*

10	View to be taken of this. Who those are that believe for a time. The faith of hypocrites. With whom they may be compared.	What is called "unformed" faith is only an illusion of faith
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How does Calvin characterise, *unformed faith*? (554, 8ff)

- a. *...this shadow or image of faith*
- b. *...of no importance*
- c. *...does not deserve to be called faith*
- d. *...far removed from the solid reality of faith*

Whom does Calvin choose as an example of a 'believer' to illustrate the points he wants to make? (554, 12)

- a. *Simon Magus*

How does Simon illustrate the spurious nature of 'unformed faith'? (554, 11ff)

- a. *It is said that even Simon Magus believed [Acts 8:13], who a little later nevertheless betrayed his unbelief [Acts 8:18].*

Could it be the case that Calvin misunderstands Simon? Might it have been the case that, all along, Simon, *pretended in words a faith that he did not have in his heart*? (554, 16ff)

- a. *...we do not understand the statement as do some, who hold that he pretended in words a faith that he did not have in his heart. Rather, we consider that, conquered by the majesty of the gospel, he showed a certain sort of faith, and thus recognised Christ to be the author of life and salvation, so that he willingly enlisted under him.*

There is a class of gospel-hearer in Luke who are said to believe for a while [Luke 8:13]. What happens to their belief? (554, 21ff)

- a. *...the seed of the Word is choked before it bears fruit, or immediately withers and dies even before it takes any root [Luke 8:6-7].*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

a.

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| 11 | Why faith attributed to the reprobate. Objection. Answer. What perception of grace in the reprobate. How the elect are distinguished from the reprobate. | "Faith" even among the reprobate? |
|----|--|-----------------------------------|

9. What parable does the second paragraph in this section bring to mind?

a. The parable of the soils/the sower.

10. What gift do some of the reprobate receive? (556, 1)

a. *...the gift of reconciliation.*

In what form do they receive it? (556, 1f)

a. *...confusedly and not distinctly enough.*

How does this gift manifest itself? (555, 9, 32,

- a. They are, *sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect.*
- b. They, *receive...a confused awareness of grace.*
- c. They, *believe that God is merciful towards them.*
- d. *...they seem...to have a beginning of faith.*
- e. *God illumines their minds enough for them to recognise his grace. He...manifests to them his mercy for the time being.*

What are the differences between the gift of reconciliation as given to the reprobate and to the elect? (555 & 556, 1-17)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. ...only the elect...loudly cry Abba, Father;
- b. ...the reprobate never receive anything but a confused awareness of grace...they grasp a shadow...
- c. ...the Spirit...seals forgiveness of sins in the elect alone, so that they apply it by special faith to their own use.
- d. ...the reprobate...do not attain the full effect and fruition thereof.
- e. ...believers are taught to examine themselves carefully and humbly, lest the confidence of the flesh creep in and replace assurance of faith.

12	Why faith is temporary in the reprobate, firm and perpetual in the elect. Reason in the case of the reprobate. Example. Why God is angry with his children. In what sense many are said to fall from faith.	True and false faith
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12. What, differs much from, *faith*? (556, 20)

- a. ...*the awareness of divine love.*

In what respects do the two differ? (556, 27ff)

- a. ...*the reprobate...tarry in but a fleeting awareness...like a tree not planted deep enough to put down living roots. For some years it may put forth not only blossoms and leaves, but even fruits; nevertheless, it withers after the passage of time.*
- b. ...*however deficient or weak faith may be in the elect, still, because the Spirit of God is for them the sure guarantee and seal of their adoption the mark he has engraved can never be erased from their hearts.*

What is a mark of true faith, present only in the elect? (557, 24ff)

- a. ...*they conceive him to be at once angry and merciful toward them, or toward their sins...they unfeignedly pray that his wrath be averted, while with tranquil confidence they nevertheless flee to him for refuge.*

What evidence is there that Christ himself encountered false faith? (557, 32ff)

- a. Jn 2:24-25.

As well as those who possess true faith, Calvin mentions in this section two types of people who do not have true saving faith. In what way do these two types of unbeliever differ? (557, 28ff; 558, 7ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...some are not pretending a faith...carried away with a sudden impulse of zeal, they deceive themselves...indolence so fills them that they do not rightly examine their hearts as they should.*
- b. *There is a grosser kind of lying in others, who are not ashamed to mock God and men...impiously profane faith on this deceitful pretext...many boldly boast of what they do not have...vain pretense.*

What faculty do we possess that, if we treat it with respect, will provide the environment for faith to be preserved and to develop as it should? (558, 13f)

- a. *...a good conscience...*

13	Various meanings of the term faith. 1. Taken for soundness in the faith. 2. Sometimes restricted to a particular object. 3. Signifies the ministry or testimony by which we are instructed in the faith.	Different meanings of the word "faith" in Scripture
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13. Calvin tells us in this section that, 'faith' does not always mean the same thing in scripture. How many meanings does he discern? (whole of section 13)

- a. Five

What are they?

- a. *...sound doctrine*
- b. *Faith that is...confined to a particular object.*
- c. *...the gift of performing miracles...possessed by...certain ones...who have neither been regenerated by the Spirit of God nor zealously worship Him.*
- d. *...the teaching whereby we are established in faith.*
- e. *...faith is improperly transferred to a false profession or a lying label.*

14	Definition of faith explained under six principal heads. 1. What meant by Knowledge in the definition.	Faith as higher knowledge
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14. What is, the definition of faith, to which Calvin refers in this section? (551, 15ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded on the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed to our hearts through the Holy Spirit.*

What is the chief element in, *the knowledge of faith*? (560, 17)

- a. Assurance

What comes second, as far as Calvin is concerned? (560, 18)

- a. Comprehension.

- | | |
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| 15 | <p>Why this knowledge must be sure and firm. Faith implies certainty</p> <p>Reason drawn from the consideration of our weakness. Another reason from the certainty of the promises of God.</p> |
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15. *Faith is not content with a doubtful and changeable opinion, so it is not content with an obscure and confused conception.* This is true in relation to one subject in particular, which is - what? (560, 27)

- a. *...God is faithful.*

Why do we have a hard struggle to persuade ourselves that this is so? (560, 24)

- a. *...unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts.*

What does Calvin mean by, *reality itself* (560, 27f)?

- a. Experience

What instrument that God uses to foster steadfast and clear faith does Calvin mention in particular? (560, 30)

- a. The Word of God.

What is the role of the Word of God in relation to deeply rooted unbelief? (560, 30)

- a. To be a cure.

How does the Holy Spirit indicate the importance of the Word of God in this process? (560, 29f)

- a. *...the Holy Spirit with such notable titles ascribes authority to the Word of God.*

What examples of, notable titles, does Calvin give? (560, 32ff)

- a. *...pure words;*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- b. *...purified seven times;*
- c. *...purified (twice);*
- d. *...a shield to all those who trust in him.*

What passage of scripture gives this subject an extended treatment? (560, 38)

- a. Ps 119.

When God commends his own word in such terms as Calvin has noted, what is he also doing? (560, 40ff)

- a. Rebukng us for our unbelief.

With what intention? (561, 1f)

- a. *...to uproot perverse doubts from our hearts.*

What is the problem with the reasoning that Calvin outlines in 561, 3-11?

- a. *...it stops in mid course.*

Is it wrong to reason in this way? (561, 12)

- a. It is not wrong, it is...*only half.*

Does reasoning in this way indicate the presence of saving faith, or its absence? (561, 23ff)

- a. *...there is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God's presence.*

How do Paul's words, Eph :12, support Calvin's view? (561, 19ff)

- a. Boldness arises from confidence. Confidence itself arises from faith.
Therefore faith begets confidence, not doubts.

16	The leading point in this certainty. Its fruits. A description of the true believer.	Certainty of faith
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16. What is the distinguishing characteristic of true faith, as far as Calvin is concerned in the opening lines of this section?

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers us as true only outside ourselves, but not at all in us; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them.*

What does this lead to, *at last*? (561, 32)

- a. *...that confidence which Paul elsewhere calls, "peace".*

What fruit do we gather from a thorough comprehension of the goodness of God? (562, 24)

- a. *...great assurance.*

Calvin has an interesting way of describing how this, *great assurance*, shows itself in 562, 3ff. What is it?

- a. *...a believer, convinced by a firm conviction that God is a kindly and well-disposed father towards him, **promises himself** all things on the basis of his generosity;...relying upon the promises of divine benevolence...lays hold on an undoubted expectation of salvation.*

As well as assurance, what does Calvin, following the author of the letter to the Hebrews, link faith with? (562, 10f)

- a. Hope

17	An objection to this certainty. Answer. Confirmation of the answer from the example of David. This enlarged upon from the opposite example of Ahab. Also from the uniform experience and the prayers of believers.	Faith in the struggle against temptation
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17. What impression that may have been given up to this point is Calvin concerned to correct in this section? (562, 32ff)

- a. *...while we teach that faith ought to be certain and assured, we cannot imagine any certainty that is not tinged with doubt, or any assurance that is not assailed by some anxiety.*

What limitation does Calvin place on the effect of doubt in the life of the true believer? (562, 38ff)

- a. *...we deny that, in whatever way [believers] are afflicted, they fall away and depart from the certain assurance received from God's mercy.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Calvin quotes six passages from the Psalms to show that David experienced, at times, very serious doubts, even to the point of feeling that he must be condemned. He does this to show that this is the common experience of believers.

To what extent were doubts a feature of David's experience? (563, 35f)

- a. *David...confesses himself to be repeatedly subject to many troublesome emotions.*

How did the vigour of David's faith show itself, even in the face of doubts as strong as these? (563, 26f)

- a. *...it strives against every burden and raises itself upward.*

How do we know this is true? (563, 36ff)

- a. *...David...displeased with himself for these weaknesses...earnestly strives to correct them.*

In what ways is Ahaz contrasted with David? (563, 39ff)

- a. Ahaz derived no strength from God's promise but responded to it with unbelief.
- b. Ahaz, *...tremble(d) and turn(ed) aside from God...not open(ing) the door for himself by faith.* Believers cling to God's word, *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.*

What does this last phrase teach us about the effect that temptations and trials can have on believers? (564, 11f)

- a. *...they sometimes become dumb as if their faith had been laid low.*

In these circumstances how does true faith show itself? (564, 12f)

- a. *...they do not fail or turn their backs, but persevere in their struggle. And by prayer they spur on their sluggishness, lest, at least (at last?), out of self-indulgence they become benumbed.*

18	For this reason the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit in the soul of the believer described. The issue of this conflict, the victory of faith.	The conflict in the heart of the believer
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Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

18. It is useful to follow the footnotes to II.I.9, II.ii.27 and II.iii.1.

How many sources does Calvin identify for the conflicting emotions and impulses that believers experience? (564, 19ff)

a. Four

What are they?

- a. We are, *partly imbued with sweetness from (our) recognition of the divine goodness;*
- b. We, *partly grieve in bitterness from (our) awareness of (our) calamity.*
- c. We, *partly rest upon thee promise of the gospel, partly tremble at the evidence of (our) own iniquity;*
- d. We, *partly rejoice at the expectation of life, partly shudder at death.*

What gives rise to these inconsistencies and conflicts? (564, 23f)

- a. *...imperfection of faith...it never goes so well with us that we are wholly cured of the disease of unbelief and entirely filled and possessed by faith.*

What would it be wrong to conclude from the inevitability of this conflict? (564, 31ff)

- a. *...that faith does not rest in a certain and clear knowledge, but only in an obscure and confused knowledge of the divine will towards us.*

19	On the whole, the faith of the elect certain and indubitable. Conformation from analogy.	Even weak faith is real faith
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19. Even if our faith is accompanied by a large degree of obscurity, what is the minimum benefit it will bring if it is genuine? (565, 18ff)

- a. *...however much we are shadowed on every side with great darkness, we are nevertheless illumined as much as need be for firm assurance...*

20	Another confirmation from the testimony of an Apostle, making it apparent, that, though the faith of the elect is as yet imperfect, it is nevertheless firm and sure.	The weakness and strength of faith
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Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

20. How much of God's revelation do we come to understand as a result of our faith? (565, 26)

- a. *...a tiny portion*

What should this realisation motivate us to do? (565, 30)

- a. *...constantly keep at learning.*

Its smallness notwithstanding, what does that tiny portion achieve in us? (566, 3f)

- a. *...we behold God's glory with such effect that we are transformed into his very likeness.*

The process of transformation goes on in a far from perfect environment. Our knowledge is held within, *wrappings of ignorance*. Which two of our faculties find this ignorance conducive to their own natural inclinations? (566, 6&9)

- a. *...our heart;*
- b. *...our conscience.*

What is it about our heart that inclines it to align itself with our ignorance? (566, 6f)

- a. *...its own natural instinct towards unbelief*

Why does our conscience add to our problems? (566, 10)

- a. Because it is, *weighed down with a mass of sins.*

Out of these two - heart and conscience - which plays the most significant part? (566, 9)

- a. *...especially our conscience*

In addition to the input into this situation from our hearts and our consciences what else do we have to contend with? (566, 8f)

- a. *...innumerable and varied temptations that constantly assail us with great violence.*

Unbelief - our heart's natural inclination - aims to do what with regard to faith? (566, 14)

- a. *...overthrow it.*

What does unbelief seek to put in place of faith? (566, 15ff)

- a. The thought that God is, *against us and hostile to us*, meaning that, *we should not hope for any help from him, and should fear him as if he were our deadly enemy.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- 21 A fuller explanation of the nature of faith. 1. The word of God as the shield of faith. When the believer is shaken with fear, he retakes himself to the bosom of a merciful God. 2. He does not even shun God when angry, but hopes in him. 3. He does not suffer unbelief to reign in his heart. 4. He opposes unbelief, and is never finally lost. 5. Faith, however often assailed, at length comes off victorious.

21. What is the believer's relation to unbelief? (567, 12ff)

- a. *Unbelief does not hold sway within believers' hearts but assails them from without.*

When under attack, to what does faith turn for strength and weaponry? (566, 19)

- a. *...the Word of the Lord*

What thoughts and arguments does faith draw from God's word with which to oppose the particular classes of temptation that Calvin mentions? (566, 19ff)

- a. If temptation suggests to us that God is our enemy, *faith...replies that while he afflicts us he is also merciful...his chastisement arises out of love rather than wrath.*
- b. If we are, *stricken by the thought that God is Avenger of iniquities*, faith responds with: *his pardon is ready for all iniquities whenever the sinner betakes himself to the Lord's mercy.*

What will the godly mind never allow temptation to deprive itself of? (566, 28)

- a. *...assurance of divine mercy.*

What effect do the assaults on faith have? (566, 30)

- a. They strengthen, *the certainty of this assurance.*

How does this strengthening of the certainty of the assurance of divine mercy show itself? (566, 30ff)

- a. *...while the saints seem to be very greatly pressed by God's vengeance, yet they lay their complaints before him.*

What striking picture does Calvin use to show the tenacious hold that faith has on the believer's heart? (567, 1f)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...the root of faith can never be torn from the godly breast.*

567,6 *...this example...* Is Calvin referring to something that he has already written or to what follows?

- a. What follows.

What follows? (567, 8ff)

- a. Job's assertion that even death will not overcome his trust in God.

What characteristic, shared with the Word of God, do Job's words display? (567, 6)

- a. Incorruptibility

Whence does faith derive this incorruptibility? (567, 6f)

- a. *...the Word, which is an incorruptible seed, brings forth fruit like itself, whose fertility never wholly dries up and dies.*

What limits does this place on the achievements of unbelief? (567, 12ff)

- a. *Unbelief...does not mortally wound (believers) with its weapons but merely harrasses them, or at most so injures them that the wound is curable.*

What does the role played by faith cause Paul to liken it to? (567, 16)

- a. *...our shield*

How does Calvin develop this picture - in what specific ways does faith act like a shield? (567, 16ff)

- a. *When held up against weapons it so receives their force that it either completely turns them aside or at least weakens their thrust.*
- b. *...faith shaken is like a strong soldier forced by the violent blow of a spear to...give ground a little.*
- c. *...faith wounded is as if the soldier's shield were broken at some point from the thrust of the spear, but not in such a manner as to be pierced.*

In what experience does faith play its most vital strengthening role? (567, 25f, cf 11)

- a. Death

What phrase, taken from 1 John, does Calvin employ that indicates the extent of the victory that faith achieves? (567, 38 & 41)

- a. *...it will prevail over the entire world.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

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| 22 | Another species of fear, arising from a consideration of the judgment of God against the wicked. This also faith overcomes. Examples of this description, placed before the eyes of believers, repress presumption, and fix their faith in God. | Right fear |
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22. Calvin turns in this section to, another kind of "fear and trembling". What was the first kind? (567, 27ff)

- a. The fear and trembling aroused by the prospect of death.

What is the purpose of the other kind of fear and trembling to which Calvin turns in this section? (568, 25ff)

- a. *...to restrain presumption, which sometimes creeps upon the saints from the vestiges of the flesh, in order that it may not play the wanton in vain confidence.*

What does Calvin contrast this effect of Godly fear with? (568, 28f)

- a. The fear that so disheartens the conscience, *that it cannot rest with full assurance in God's mercy.*

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 23 | Nothing contrary to this in the exhortation of the Apostle to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Fear and faith mutually connected. Confirmation from the words of a Prophet. | "Fear and trembling" |
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23. Calvin turns now to a third kind of fear, the, *fear and trembling*, mentioned by Paul in Phil 2:12

What is meant by this fear? (569, 1f, 8, 14f)

- a. *We, honour the Lord's power, while greatly abasing ourselves.*
- b. It is, *reverent*.
- c. It, *renders us more cautious*, but does not, *afflict us and cause us to fall*.

What use is this fear? (569, 2ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...distrust of ourselves, and the anxiety occasioned by the awareness of our ruin...moves us to repose our assurance and certainty of mind in the Lord*

What brings us to understand our ruin? (569, 10f)

- a. *God's majesty...by its splendour (we) understand how great is our own filthiness.*

In what ways does this fear work? (569, 15ff)

- a. *...the mind confused in itself recovers itself in God, cast down in itself is raised up in him, despairing of itself is quickened anew through trust in him.*

24	This doctrine gives no countenance to the error of those who dream of a confidence mingled with incredulity. Refutation of this error, from a consideration of the dignity of Christ dwelling in us. The argument retorted. Refutation confirmed by the authority of an Apostle. What we ought to hold on this question.	The indestructible certainty of faith rests upon Christ's oneness with us
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24. In this section, Calvin takes issue with a view that not only vacillates between assurance and despair but that actually hold that this vacillation is the true Christian position.

How does he deliver the *coup de grace* to this position? (570, 19)

- a. *As if we ought to think of Christ, standing afar off and not rather dwelling in us!*

In what two ways does Christ cleave to us? (570, 43f)

- a. *...An indivisible bond of fellowship;*
 b. *...A wonderful communion, day by day, by which, he grows more and more into one body with us, until he becomes completely one with us.*

25	Confirmation of the preceding conclusion by a passage from Bernard.	Bernard of Clairvaux on the two aspects of faith
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Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

25. What two possible relationships to God does Bernard of Clairvaux distinguish between in order to give validity, meaning and worth to Christians? (571, 34)

- a. *Before* God and *within* God.

What is equivalent to being, *before*, God? (571, 35)

- a. Being exposed to, *the judgment of (God's) truth*.

What is equivalent to being, *within*, God? (571, 35f)

- a. Experiencing, *the intention of (God's) faithfulness*.

What do we contribute to this relationship, that plays a part in bringing it about or maintaining it? (571, 18f, 39ff; 572, 16f)

- a. *...all our righteous acts...are...like, 'the rag of a menstrous woman'.*
- b. *...as regards (ourselves, we) are not... 'Not of their works' of righteousness, 'but of him who calls'.*
- c. *We are, but by his dignifying us, not by our own dignity.*

Even though the opposition between the outworking of God's wrath and his mercy seems to imply that they would be implacably opposed to one another, how does Bernard demonstrate that they are not? (572, 1ff)

- a. *...this connection between the two...is wonderful. Surely those things which are connected do not destroy one another!*

26 True fear caused in two ways—viz. when we are required to reverence God as a Father, and also to fear him as Lord. Fear of God and honour of God

26. How does Calvin define, '*fear of God*'? (572, 31f)

- a. *...a reverence compounded of honour and fear.*

Whence, *honour*? (572, 27f)

- a. God is our Father.

Whence, *fear*? (572, 29)

- a. God is our Lord.

How do these two ways of thinking about God - father and Lord - work together in our lives to produce the fruit of righteousness? (572, 34ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...he who ponders within himself what God the father is like toward us has cause enough, even if there be no hell, to dread offending him more gravely than any death.*
- b. *But also - such is the wanton desire of our flesh to sin without restraint - in order to check it by every means we must at once seize upon this thought: that the Lord...abhors all iniquity.*

27	Objection from a passage in the Apostle John. Answer founded on the distinction between filial and servile fear.	Childlike and servile fear
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27. Why does Calvin turn in this section to 1Jn 4:18?

- a. Because it appears to contradict what he has been saying in support of fear. He is dealing with a potential objection.

How does he deal with this potential objection? (573, 7)

- a. By distinguishing between, *the dread arising from unbelief*, and, *believers' fear*.

What characterises, *the dread arising from unbelief*? (573, 8ff, 24ff)

- a. *...the wicked fear God not because they are afraid of incurring his displeasure, if only they could do so with impunity; but because they know him to be armed with power to take vengeance, they shake with fright on hearing of his wrath. And they so fear his wrath because they think it hangs over them, because they expect that at any moment it will fall upon their heads.*
- b. *...it rarely happens that the wicked are aroused by simple threats alone...when God thunders from heaven, slow and sluggish in their hardness they persist in their stubbornness...once struck by his hand they are compelled, whether they will or not, to fear.*

What characterises, *believers' fear*? (573, 14ff, 29f)

- a. *...believers...fear offending God more than (they fear) punishment*
- b. Caution
- c. *...the free and voluntary fear that befits children.*

What term does Calvin seem to prefer for the fear experienced by unbelievers? (573, 29)

- a. Servile

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Are there only two kinds of fear? (573, 30ff)

- a. *Others subtly interpolate an intermediate kind of fear.*

How would you describe this, *intermediate kind of fear*? (573, 31ff)

- a. It starts out as servile fear but leads its subject to, *accede willingly to a proper fear of God.*

28	How faith is said to have respect to the divine benevolence. What comprehended under this benevolence. Confirmation from David and Paul.	Faith assures us not of earthly prosperity but of God's favour
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28. What phrase that Calvin uses sums up the benefits we receive as a result of being saved? (574, 4f)

- a. *...he has abolished all enmities and received us into grace.*

What benefits that flow from this do believers prize most highly? (574, 14f, 16f)

- a. *...however many things fail us that have to do with the maintenance of this life, God will never fail.*
- b. *...the expectation of the life to come...placed beyond doubt through the Word of God.*

What things does faith not promise itself with the same sense of certainty as the benefits listed above? (574, 11f)

- a. *...length of years or honour or riches in this life.*

Why, if faith has, *firm assurance of all good things*, does it not lay claim also to the things just mentioned? (574, 10)

- a. Because these are nowhere promised to all believers in the Word.

If we do experience one or more of these things, is it right for us to trace that experience to God's grace or simply to the outworking of second causes? (574, 6f, 7ff, 21ff, 23ff)

- a. *...no danger remains to prevent all things from prospering to us...*
- b. *Faith...has promises of the present life and of that which is to come.*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- c. *...the grace of God: from this fountain every sort of good thing flows unto us.*
- d. *...in the scriptures we are recalled to the love of the Lord whenever whenever mention is made not only of eternal salvation but of any good we may have.*

Even if we could have all that we could wish for, it could still be the case that our happiness, *will be accursed and therefore miserable*. Why is this? What, if it is missing, will make it so? (574, 30)

- a. Certainty about, *God's love or hatred*.

What difference will it make if we are certain that, *in fatherly fashion God's countenance beams upon us*? (574, 32)

- a. *...even our miseries will be blessed.*

What does Paul, *heap up*, nonetheless glorying, *that we are not separated from God's love through them*? (574, 34)

- a. *...all* adverse things.

How is this conviction reflected in Paul's prayers? (574, 35f)

- a. *Paul*, always begins his prayers with God's grace, whence flows all prosperity...

How does David, some 1,000 years earlier than Paul, make the same point? (574, 37f)

- b.
- a. *...against all terrors that disturb us* David sets God's favour alone.

29	Of the Free Promise which is the foundation of Faith. Reason. Confirmation.	God's promise the support of faith
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29. Fundamentally, what is it that faith seeks from God and in God? (575, 7)

- a. *...life*

What utterances of God do not lead to life? (575, 8)

- a. *...commandments or declarations of penalties.*

Wherein is life to be found? (575, 1)

- a. *...the freely given promise of God.*

Does faith, then, disregard God's other utterances, his commandments & threatenings etc? (575, 4f)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. ...it also obediently receives his commandments, observes his prohibitions, heeds his threats.

Does faith's obedience to God's commands, observance of his prohibitions and sensitivity to his threats contribute also to our obtaining salvation? (575, 5ff)

- a. ...faith properly begins with the promise, rests in it, and ends in it.

With what are we to strengthen faith?

- a. ...the promise of salvation...willingly and freely offered to us by the Lord.

What, in us, moved God to devise and effect a plan of salvation and to make this freely offered promise of forgiveness to us? (575,14f)

- a. ...our misery rather than our deserts

30	Faith not divided in thus seeking a Free Promise in the Gospel. Reason. Conclusion confirmed by another reason.	Why faith depends solely on the promise of grace
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30. NB footnote 44, in which Pighius's charge against Calvin is that Calvin's definition of faith tended towards, *a false security*. From this it would appear that Pighius charged Calvin with defining faith too narrowly, emphasising trust in God's free promise too exclusively, without due regard to the need for obedience.

Calvin declares his, *purpose in discussing faith*, which is – what? (576, 24)

- a. ...that we may grasp the way of salvation

What, in Calvin's view, is it necessary for faith to achieve in order to save? (576, 14ff)

- a. *The attainment of*, the freely given promise.
- b. *It must*, join us to Christ, *in order to*, reconcile us to God.

What areas of agreement does Calvin find with Pighius? (576, 6ff)

- a. ...God's truth...is the common object of faith, whether he threaten or hold out hope of grace...threats ought not to be excluded from the definition of (faith). This is true.

What is he anxious to deny? (576, 19ff)

- a. *That someone who*, believes that God both justly commands all that he commands and truly threatens, *should be thought of as a believer*.

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Why is he anxious to preserve this distinction? (576, 24)

a. ...that we may grasp the way of salvation.

- | | |
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| 31 | <p>The word of God the prop and root of faith. The significance of the Word for faith</p> <p>The word attests the divine goodness and mercy. In what sense faith has respect to the power of God. Various passages of Isaiah, inviting the godly to behold the power of God, explained. Other passages from David. We must beware of going beyond the limits prescribed by the word, lest false zeal lead us astray, as it did Sarah, Rebekah, and Isaac. In this way faith is obscured, though not extinguished. We must not depart one iota from the word of God.</p> |
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31. What illustration does Calvin use to show the dependence of faith on the Word? (576, 34f)

a. ...*faith needs the Word as much as fruit needs the living root of a tree.*

Why is this? (577, 1ff)

a. *The knowledge of God and of his goodness, does not arise out of anyone's imagination, but only so far as God himself is witness...*

What two convictions in particular does Calvin identify as being necessary for us to steadfastly believe in order for faith to bear its proper fruit in our lives? (577, 8 & 35)

- a. ...God's power.
- b. ...his effectual might.

Why does Calvin say that Abraham's belief that God was mighty appeared to be no more than a barren commonplace? (577, 18ff)

a. All of us will confess that God is able to do whatever he wills; but when the slightest temptation strikes us down in fear and stuns us with fright, from this it is plain that we detract from God's might, preferring to it the threatening of Satan against his promises.

What was different about Abraham's belief in God's might, and Paul's in 2 Tim 1:12?

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. ...they who magnify (God's might) as it deserves have made no slight progress in faith.

What strategy did Isaiah adopt, when wishing to impress the certainty of salvation upon the hearts of the people? (577, 24f)

- a. He...grandly discusses God's boundless power.

In what two ways does piety benefit from an understanding of God's might and maintain the thought of it in a powerful and lively way? (577, 36ff)

- a. It...always adapts it to use and need.
- b. It...especially sets before itself the works of God by which he has testified that he is the Father.

What do the scriptures frequently mention as an example of the latter? (577, 39)

- a. ...redemption

What aspect of their redemption should have strengthened the faith of the Israelites? (577, 40f)

- a. ...God...had once for all been the author of salvation

What belief should this have given rise to in their hearts? (577, 41)

- a. God...was to be its eternal guardian

Without the Word, what, at best, will our convictions about God's power be? (578, 8)

- a. ...fleeting

Calvin now turns to Sarah and Rebecca (and Isaac, briefly) as examples of – what? (578, 13f)

- a. People who...were fired with a zealous faith and (yet) went beyond the limits of the Word.

What conclusions does Calvin draw from these records? (578, 33f, 39ff, 43, 44f)

- b. ...errors are often mingled with faith, yet in such a way that when it is a true faith it always holds the upper hand.
- c. ...how slippery are the turnings of the human mind, as soon as it relaxes its control in the slightest degree.

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- d. ...how carefully we ought to wait upon God's voice;
- e. ...faith vanishes unless it is supported by the Word.

32	All the promises included in Christ. Two objections answered. A third objection drawn from example. Answer explaining the faith of Naaman, Cornelius, and the Eunuch.	The promise of faith fulfilled in Christ
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32. What is the link between all of God's promises and Christ? (579, 11f, 29f & 31f)

- a. *...there is no promise of his which is not a testimony of his love...any promise whatsoever is a testimony of God's love toward us...it is indisputable that no one is loved by God apart from Christ.*

How should we acknowledge this link? (579, 39f)

- b. *...we should turn our eyes to him as often as any promise is offered to us.*

33	Faith revealed to our minds, and sealed on our hearts, by the Holy Spirit. 1. The mind is purified so as to have a relish for divine truth. 2. The mind is thus established in the truth by the agency of the Holy Spirit.	The Word becomes efficacious for our faith through the Holy Spirit
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33. What two operations of the Holy Spirit are necessary for faith to come into being and to remain in vigour? (581, 1ff, 8f)

- a. The mind must be, *illuminated by the Spirit of God...the mind of man is purged so as to be able to taste the truth of God.*
- b. The heart must be, *strengthened and supported by his power...his heart is established therein.*

Why is this? (580, 34ff)

- a. *...our blindness and perversiity, prevent the Word from engendering faith.*
- b. *...our mind has such an inclination to vanity that it can never cleave fast to the truth of God.*
- c. *...it has such a dullness that it is always blind to the light of God's truth.*
- d. *...faith is much higher than human understanding.*

The Schoolmen (we might call them formalists or those who understand being Christian to consist in no more than formal assent to a creed and acceptance of the authority of

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Church leaders) err, in that they identify faith with, *a bare and simple assent*. Whence does this, *bare and simple assent arise?* (581, 5f)

- a. *...out of knowledge.*

What do they, leave out? (581, 6)

- a. *...confidence and assurance of heart.*

As well as initiating faith, what does the Holy Spirit do? (581, 10f)

- a. *...increases it by degrees, until by it he leads us to the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Why does Calvin feel that he needs to, explain how Paul teaches that the Spirit is given by the hearing of faith? (581, 21)

This, indeed is considered most paradoxical: when it is said that no one, unless faith be granted to him, can believe in Christ [Jn 6:65]. What is Calvin's explanation of this paradox? (581, 15ff)

- a. *If there had been only one gift of the Spirit, it would have been absurd of Paul to call the Spirit the, "effect of faith" since he is its author and cause.*
- b. *...he ascribes to faith those things which prepare us to receive...the gifts with which God adorns his Church and brings it to perfection by continual increase of faith.*

34	Proof of the former. 1. By reason. 2. By Scripture. 3. By example. 4. By analogy.	Only the Holy Spirit leads us to Christ
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34. What is Calvin's principal point in this section? (582, 30ff)

- a. *The Word of God, cannot penetrate into our minds unless the Spirit, as the inner teacher, through his illumination makes entry for it.*

What is the first step that we can - and do - take towards growth in understanding the things that the Holy Spirit teaches? (581, 34ff)

- a. *...to renounce...man's discernment...for, like a veil cast over us, it hinders us from attaining the mysteries of God...*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

What happens when we come to Christ? (582, 15)

- a. ...we are lifted up in mind and heart above our understanding.

What is the evidence for this statement? (582, 16ff)

- a. *...the soul, illumined by him, takes on a new keenness...to contemplate the heavenly mysteries, whose splendour had previously blinded it.*
- b. *...man's understanding...then at last truly begins to taste those things which belong to the Kingdom of God, having formerly been quite foolish and dull in tasting them.*

How do we know that these changes came about only by the work of the Holy Spirit? (582, 22ff)

- a. *Christ, in clearly interpreting the mysteries of the kingdom to two disciples, makes no headway until he "opens their minds to understand the scriptures".*

35	5. By the excellent qualities of faith. 6. By a celebrated passage from Augustine.	Without the Spirit man is incapable of faith
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35. This section requires nothing from me.

36	Proof of the latter by the argument <i>a minore ad majus</i> . Why the Spirit is called a seal, an earnest, and the Spirit of promise.	Faith is a matter of the heart
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36. How do we know that the Word of God has been received by faith? (583, 33ff)

- a. *...it takes root in the depth of the heart that it may be an invincible defence to withstand and drive off all the stratagems of temptation.*

Why is the work of the Spirit in the heart a much clearer manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power than his work in the mind? (583, 38f)

- a. *...the heart's distrust is greater than the mind's blindness.*

37	Believers sometimes shaken, but not so as to perish finally. They ultimately overcome	Doubt cannot smother faith
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Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

their trials, and remain steadfast. Proofs from Scripture.

37. How should we apply the Biblical assurance that faith will always emerge triumphant at last? (584, 36f)

a. *Be still before Jehovah and wait...for him.*

38 Objection of the Schoolmen. Answer. Attempt to support the objection by a passage in Ecclesiastes. Answer, explaining the meaning of the passage.

38. This section requires no input from me, particularly as Calvin writes that he deals with these matters more thoroughly elsewhere (III.xv, according to the editor).

39	Another objection, charging the elect in Christ with rashness and presumption. Answer. Answer confirmed by various passages from the Apostle Paul. Also from John and Isaiah.	The Christian rejoices in the indwelling of the Spirit
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39. What viewpoint is Calvin contending with in this section? (586, 4f)

a. *...it is a matter of rash presumption for us to claim an undoubted knowledge of God's will.*

How does Calvin respond to this accusation? (586, 5ff)

- a. By acknowledging that our accusers would have a point if our claims were based exclusively on our own conjecture.
- b. By pointing out that our claims are the same as those of the apostle Paul and that Paul put the same claims in the mouth of fellow Christians by using the words, *we*, and, *us*.
- c. By pointing out his accusers' inconsistency. If people regard the Word of God as falsehood, uncertain or ambiguous, our accusers would be the first to accuse them of sacrilege. In turn, they round on us with an accusation of presumption, when all we are doing is agreeing with it and affirming its certainty.

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

What do people who, cry aloud that it is great temerity on our part that we thus dare to glory in the Spirit of Christ, reveal about themselves? (586, 19f)

- a. *...they...trip over the first rudiments of Christianity.*

Is it believable that people who are so honoured by each other and by the world should err so grievously? (586, 20f)

- a. *Surely, it would not have been credible to me, if their extant writings did not attest to it.*

What two errors, implicit in the views of our critics, does Calvin express explicitly? (586, 31ff)

- a. They, devise a Christianity that does not require the Spirit of Christ.
- b. They, *invent a hope*, that can be enjoyed by those who do not, *feel the Spirit dwelling*, within.

How does Calvin deal with the objection advanced by those who concede the desirability of our being endowed with the Spirit but who nonetheless affirm that, it is a matter of modesty and humility not to be sure of it? (587, 1ff)

- a. He produces five scripture references in which the New Testament either calls on us to be certain about the Spirit's indwelling or affirms that it is so.

How vitally important is it that those who profess to be Christians can speak with confidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling?

- a. *...it is a token of the most miserable blindness to charge with arrogance Christians who dare to glory in the presence of the Holy Spirit, without which glorying Christianity itself does not stand.*

What is the reason that those who have a professional interest in defining what is Christian and give much time to thinking about it can be so ignorant of such a fundamental truth? (587, 16f)

- a. *My Spirit was unknown to the world; he is recognised only by those among whom he abides. (Jn 14:17)*

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

40	A third objection, impugning the final perseverance of the elect. Answer by an Apostle. Summary of the refutation.	The alleged uncertainty as to whether we will persevere to the end
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40. Why is the view that we can only be assured of salvation for now, not for the future, *absurd*? (588, 2f)

a. ...by its very nature [faith] looks to a future immortality after this life is over.

41	The definition of faith accords with that given by the Apostle in the Hebrews. Explanation of this definition. Refutation of the scholastic error, that charity is prior to faith and hope.	Faith according to Heb. 11:1 (Faith and love)
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41. What is Calvin's purpose in this section? (590, 4f)

a. That we might understand, *what faith itself is*.

What is the foundation of faith? (588, 11f)

a. ...the substance of the promise on which it rests.

How is Calvin's definition of faith essentially the same as, *the apostle's definition*, in Hebrews 11:1 (*hypostasis* is the word translated, *substance*, in Hebrews 11:1)? (588, 15ff)

c.

d.

a. According to Hebrews 11:1 faith provides, a sort of support upon which the Godly mind may lean and rest.

b. It is as if he (ie *the author of Hebrews*) were to say that faith itself is a sure and secure possession of those things which God has promised us. *This is equivalent to Calvin's*, firm and certain knowledge.

The debate about the meaning of, *hypostasis*, and, *elenchos*, and the best way to translate Hebrews 11:1 continues today. If you are interested, click [here](#) for one person's thoughts. Following the link in that post to the *Better Bibles* site or Googling will uncover many more.

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Calvin opts for the more objective, *substance*, over, *confidence*, without dismissing the latter altogether.

From the phrase, *On the other hand...* in line 24 Calvin turns to the theological and pastoral application of the point he is making. This is probably of greater interest to us, although we should not dismiss the debate about the correct translation, as though it doesn't matter to us whether or not our views are founded on scripture as originally given. Nothing could be more important.

(I am not sure if Calvin's reference to Paul in line 24 (and in 589, 2) is intended to imply that he thought of Paul as the author of Hebrews or whether is anticipating the quotation from Romans 8:24, line 33ff.) What is Paul's principle point about faith in Romans 8:24 and, possibly, Hebrews 11:1? (588. 25ff)

- a. ...even to the last day...the things pertaining to our salvation are too high to be perceived by our senses...

What is necessary therefore, if we are to, *possess these things* (would it be better to think of these things as possessing us?)? (588, 29ff)

- a. *We need to...*transcend all the limits of our senses and direct our perception beyond all things of this world and, in short, surpass ourselves.

Why does the above necessity require the things to which our certainty relates to be in our futures, rather than in our present experiences? (588, 29f)

- a. *We can only*, possess these things, *if we*, transcend all our senses...

In addition to his principle definition of faith (reproduced at the top of this page) and consistent with it, what further definition of faith does Calvin give us in this section? (589, 2ff)

- e.
- f.

- a. ...faith is an evidence of things not appearing, a seeing of things not seen, a clearness of things obscure, a presence of things absent, a showing forth of things hidden.

How does God's promise, once we grasp it by faith, affect us emotionally? (589, 13ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. ...that abundant sweetness which God has stored up for those who fear him cannot be known without at the same time powerfully moving us...it utterly ravishes him and draws him to itself.

Calvin quotes Bernard of Clairvaux to demonstrate that, despite the contrary affirmations of 'The Schoolmen' (the recognised authorities in the Catholic Church of his day, who would probably have spoken of Bernard with respect) the correct order in which to think of faith and love is faith first. How does the quotation from Bernard support this view?

- a. God's mercy, *is the only factor that determines whether an individual receives forgiveness of sins or not;*
- b. *The only good works we can carry out are given to us by God;*
- c. *Eternal life cannot be merited by any good works. That also must be, given free.*

What does Bernard go on to say, that may appear to contradict the three points above? (589, 31f)

- a. ...these things (ie *love and hope*)...are a beginning of faith.

(The full quotation from Bernard is: *Truly, these things about which we have just spoken, do not in any way suffice, but should be taken as the beginning and as a foundation of faith.* Some scholars allege that Calvin omits, *as a foundation*, and any reference to it, because it contradicts his belief that faith can have only one foundation or cause in the individual - God's election. I dispute this charge that Calvin quotes selectively from Bernard, deliberately treating a phrase that appears not to offer his views Bernard's support as though it's not there. I think if Calvin wanted to omit whatever in Bernard seemed inconvenient to him that he would have omitted any reference to this quotation at all. I also think he covers his understanding of Bernard on this point in lines 32-35, attributing to Bernard the following views: *in believing that sins cannot be forgiven except by God, we ought at the same time to believe that they are forgiven, so long as we are persuaded also by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that salvation is stored up for us. And because God himself forgives sins, gives merits and gives back rewards, we must also believe that we cannot take a firm stand in this beginning.* This issue is, therefore, whether these phrases of Calvin correctly interpret Bernard's position. If so, is Bernard being inconsistent with them, when describing love as, *a foundation of faith*, or is Calvin right to interpret Bernard at this point in a way that is consistent with what he (Bernard) says elsewhere?)

- | | |
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| 42 | Hope the inseparable attendant of true faith. Faith and hope belong together Reason. Connection between faith and hope. |
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Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

Mutually support each other. Obvious from the various forms of temptation, that the aid of hope necessary to establish faith.

42. Why must faith engender, and *bring forth hope from itself*? (590, 10ff)

- a. *...if faith...is a sure persuasion of the truth of God...then those who have grasped this certainty assuredly expect the time to come when God will fulfil his promises...*

What is the implication of this for 'faith' that is not accompanied by hope? (590, 9)

- a. *...we are convicted of having none.*

List the couplets that Calvin gives, showing how faith and hope complement each other: (590, 17ff)

- a. *...faith believes God to be true, hope awaits the time when his truth shall be manifested;*
- b. *...faith believes that he is our Father, hope anticipates that he will ever show himself to be a Father toward us;*
- c. *...faith believes that eternal life has been given to us, hope anticipates that it will some time be revealed;*
- d. *...faith is the foundation upon which hope rests, hope nourishes and sustains faith.*

Calvin shows how hope, *nourishes and sustains faith*, with four examples of the way faith is served by hope. What are they? (590, 27ff)

- a. *...hope...**restrains faith** that it may not fall headlong from too much haste.*
- b. *Hope **strengthens faith**, that it may not waver in God's promises, or begin to doubt concerning their truth.*
- c. *Hope **refreshes faith**, that it may not become weary.*
- d. *(Hope) **sustains faith** to the final goal, that it may not fail in mid course.*

How does Calvin sum up the services that hope provides to faith? (590, 33ff)

- a. *In short, be unremitting renewing and restoring, it invigorates faith again and again with perseverance.*

Why is, *the support of hope necessary to establish faith*? (590, 37ff)

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

- a. *...many forms of temptation assail and strike those who have embraced the Word of God.*

What three forms of temptation in particular does Calvin have in mind here? (591, 2ff)

- a. *Those that arise from the deferral of God's promises;*
 b. *Those that arise from God exhibiting, open indignation toward us;*
 c. Scoffers also rise up...

In what ways does hope provide the remedy to these temptations? (591, 15f)

- d. *It enables us to so fix, upon the contemplation of eternity as to reckon a thousand years as one day.*

43	The terms faith and hope sometimes confounded. Refutation of the Schoolmen, who attribute a twofold foundation to hope—viz. the grace of God and the merit of works.	Faith and hope have the same foundation: God's mercy
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43. In what two ways does scripture exhibit the close connection between faith and hope? (591, 17ff)

- a. It sometimes uses the two words interchangeably;
 b. It sometimes joins them together.

FOR REFLECTION

1. In the first section of this chapter, Calvin is remarkably contemporary. Does contemporary new age thinking acknowledge the need for a mediator?
2. To what extent does my ineffectiveness in the Christian life proceed from warfare in my mind about, 'whatever proceeds from him is sacred and inviolable truth.' (aka unbelief).
3. Do you recognise, 'unformed' faith, even though you may not use that term?
4. On 559, 7ff Calvin teaches that one of the meanings of, 'faith', in the New Testament is, '...the teaching whereby we are established in the faith', and says that this is the sense in which it is used in 1 Corinthians 13:10. Is he right to say that that is its meaning in that passage?

Calvin's definition of faith (essential for all that follows): *a firm and certain knowledge of God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit.*

5. In the introduction, I asked how you would define, 'faith'. Now that you have read this chapter, how do you think Calvin would define it? Are there any differences between your definition of faith and Calvin's definition?