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PREPARATION

1. In how many respects does the Old Testament differ from the new? (449, sub-heading immediately below the chapter title)
 - a. *...five* (this is according to McNeill's headings. On 450, 2f Calvin tells us, *they are four in number*, although he adds: *If anyone wants to add a fifth difference, I shall not object at all.*)
2. What are they? (450, 10ff; 453, 7ff; 456, 456, 7ff, NB 18ff; 458, 1ff; 460, 15ff)
 - a. *...the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites.*
 - b. *...in the absence of reality, it (ie the Old Testament) showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present.*
 - c. *From these words (Jer 31:31-34, as quoted by Calvin – with a slight change of order – immediately above) the Apostle (Paul) took occasion to make a comparison between the law and the gospel, calling the former literal, the latter spiritual doctrine; the former he speaks of as carved on tablets of stone, the latter as written upon men's hearts; the former is the preaching of death, the latter of life; the former of condemnation, the latter of righteousness; the former to be made void, the latter to abide [II Cor 3:6-11]...the law contains here and there promises of mercy, but because they have been borrowed from elsewhere, they are not counted as part of the law, when only the nature of the law is under discussion. They (ie Paul and Jeremiah) ascribe to it only this function: to enjoin what is right, to forbid what is wicked; to promise a reward to the keepers of righteousness, and threaten transgressors with punishment; but at the same time not to change or correct the depravity of heart that by nature inheres in all men.*
 - d. *Scripture calls the Old Testament one of "bondage" because it produces fear in men's minds; but the New Testament one of "freedom" because it lifts them to trust and assurance.*
 - e. *...until the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of his grace..."But when the fullness of time came" [Gal 4:4] which was appointed for the restoration of all things, he was revealed as the reconciler of God and men; "the wall" that for so long had confined God's mercy within the boundaries of Israel "was broken down [Eph 2:14].*

EXPLORATORY

1. What do the five differences listed pertain to? (450, 5)
 - a. *...the manner of dispensation.*

What do they not pertain to? (450, 5)

- a. *...the substance*

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Understanding this distinction between, *the manner of dispensation*, and, *the substance*, enables us to identify two characteristics that unite the Old and New Testaments. What are they? (450, 7ff)

- a. *...the promises of the Old and New Testaments*
- b. *...the same foundation of these very promises, Christ*

What is the first difference between the Old and New Testaments? (450, 10ff)

- a. *...the Lord of old willed that his people direct and elevate their minds to the heavenly heritage; yet, to nourish them better in this hope, he displayed it for them to see and, so to speak, taste, under earthly benefits. But now that the gospel has more plainly and clearly revealed the grace of the future life, the Lord leads our minds to meditate upon it directly, laying aside the lower mode of training that he used with the Israelites.*

If we do not, *pay attention to this plan of God*, what mistake will we make? (450, 18ff)

- a. *Those who do not pay attention to this plan of God think that the ancient people did not transcend those benefits promised to the body.*

(IJ: Calvin is making an important, yet subtle, distinction. He recognises that when, in the Old Testament, God promised to reward his people the rewards that he spoke of were often the things that, in this world, people desire and even strive for, *ie*, victory over enemies, material prosperity, health and long life etc. In the previous chapter, Calvin demonstrated, often by citing the words of the Old Testament saints themselves, that their lives often did not consist of those things. By their own testimony, their lives were hard and demanding and their longings were unfulfilled, nonetheless they regarded God as faithful. Calvin's solution to this problem is to say that God set before them in his promises images of things that they would have longed for in order to excite their longing but that neither he nor they expected fulfilment to take a literal form.

This is different to the way in which, today, the Old Testament is often contrasted with the New. It is usual for us to say that in the Old Testament God's blessing literally took the physical and material form of the promises.)

450, 25: *They see herein almost the sum total of the blessings and curses uttered by Moses*. To what does, *herein*, refer? (450, 20ff)

- a. *...the land of Canaan is very often characterised as the excellent and even the sole reward for the keepers of God's law.*
- b. *...the Lord threatens the transgressors of his law with nothing harsher than expulsion from possession of this land, and dispersion into foreign regions [cf. Lev 26:33; Deut 28:36].*

What do those who, *see herein almost the sum total of the blessings and curses uttered by Moses*, *...unhesitatingly conclude*? (450, 27f)

- a. *...the Jews were set apart from all other peoples not for their own benefit but for that of others*

Who are the, *others*? (450, 29)

- a. *...the Christian Church*

Staying with those who, *see herein almost the sum total of the blessings and curses uttered by Moses, what, sort of dispensation* (450, 34) do they fail to consider? (450, 31ff)

- a. *God, in conferring all these earthly benefits on them, determined to lead them by his own hand to the hope of heavenly things.*

What do those with whom Calvin is contending teach with regard to the Israelites' enjoyment of earthly benefits and the way such benefits were held out to them in God's promises? (450, 36ff)

- a. *...the Israelites deemed the possession of the Land of Canaan their highest and ultimate blessedness, and that **after the revelation of Christ** it typified for us the heavenly inheritance.*

In what way does Calvin's understanding contrast with that thought? (450, 39ff)

- a. *...in the earthly possession they enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven.*

2. (IJ: Although, in McNeill, the heading to this section is over 2 lines long, do not be distracted by it. When Calvin opens this section with the word, *This*, he is referring back to the conclusion of the previous section. The headings are a later addition.)

To what does, *this* (451, 4) refer? (450, 39)

- a. *...in the earthly possession they enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven.*

In support of this assertion Calvin refers to Galatians 4:1-2, describing what Paul is doing in that passage as a, *comparison*. To what does Paul compare the nation of Israel? (451,6ff)

- a. *...a child heir, not yet fit to take care of himself, under the charge of a guardian or tutor to whose care he has been entrusted.*

Calvin draws two conclusions from Paul's use of this particular picture. What are they? (451, 10ff)

- a. *...the same inheritance was appointed for them and for us*
- b. *The same church existed among them, but as yet in its childhood.*

Calvin asserts that, under the promise to the Patriarchs of the land of Canaan, *a higher promise was given, attesting that the land was not God's supreme benefit*. What example does he give of the higher promise? (451, 24ff)

- a. *Abraham is not allowed to sit idly by when he receives the promise of the land, but his mind is elevated to the Lord by a greater promise. For he hears: "I am your protector, Abraham; your reward shall be very great" [Gen. 15:1]*

Here we see that for Abraham his final reward is put in the Lord alone – so as not to seek a fleeting and elusive reward in the elements of this world [cf. Gal. 4:3], but an imperishable one.

Why did God add to this promise the promise of the land? (451, 31f)

- a. *...solely as a symbol of his benevolence and as a type of the heavenly inheritance.*

Calvin now produces supporting evidence from David, another Old Testament saint. To what passages in the Psalms does he refer? (451, 36ff)

- a. *Psalm 73:26, cf. Ps 84:2*
- b. *Psalm 16:5*
- c. *Psalm 142:5*

How do we know that true Old Testament saints, such as Abraham and David, grasped what God was really saying to them? (452, 3f)

- a. *Those who dare speak thus surely profess that in their hope they transcend the world and all present benefits.*

When the prophets use the earthly type rather than the heavenly reality, how are we to understand their words? (452, 4ff)

- a. *...the prophets more often represent the blessedness of the age to come through the type that they had received from the Lord. In this sense we are to understand these sayings : "The godly will possess the land" by inheritance [Prov. 2:21 p.], but "the wicked will perish from the earth" [Job 18:17; cf. Prov. 2:22; cf. Ecclus 41:9, Vg.; cf. ch. 41:6, EV]*

(II: For those of you who don't have your copy of the Vulgate to hand, here's the Douay-Rheims translation of Ecclesiasticus 41:9: *The inheritance of the children of sinners shall perish, and with their posterity shall be a perpetual reproach.* Here's 41:6: *And what shall come upon thee by the good pleasure of the most High? Whether ten, or a hundred, or a thousand years.*)

- b. *In many passages of Isaiah we read that Jerusalem will abound with all kinds of riches, and Zion shall overflow with plenty of all things [cf. Isa. 35:10; 52:1ff; 60:4ff; ch. 62]. **We see that all these things cannot properly apply to the land of our pilgrimage, or to the earthly Jerusalem, but to the true homeland of believers, that heavenly city wherein "the Lord has ordained blessing and life forevermore" [Ps. 133:3].***

3. How does Calvin sum up the particular difference between Old and New Testaments that he has been dealing with in sections 1-3 (*...this dispensation of God which I have noted*)? (453, 1ff)

- a. *He willed that, for the time during which he gave his covenant to the people of Israel in a veiled form, the grace of future and eternal happiness be signified and figured under earthly benefits, the gravity of spiritual death under physical punishments.*

What is the first difference between Old and New Testament saints noted by Calvin in this section? (452, 17f)

- a. *...the saints under the Old Testament esteemed mortal life and its blessings more than we ought today.*

What did Old Testament saints know and bear in mind even as they contemplated God's promises? (452, 19f)

- a. *...they well knew they were not to stop there as at the end of their race*

If they realised that the earthly blessings that so many of God's promises were just pictures of heavenly realities, why were the promises so precious to them, and even so motivational? (452, 20ff)

- a. *...because they recognised what the Lord had imprinted on them to be marks of divine grace to train them according to the measure of their weakness, they were attracted by its sweetness more than if they had contemplated his grace directly.*

In addition to the good and attractive things offered by this world, what else did God use and what did it signify? (452, 24ff)

- a. *...as the Lord, in testifying his benevolence toward believers by present good things, then foreshadowed spiritual happiness by such types and symbols, so on the other hand he gave, in physical punishments, proofs of his coming judgment against the wicked. Thus, as God's benefits were more conspicuous in earthly things, so also were his punishments.*

What do, *the ignorant*, make of the fact that God employed striking earthly imagery when all the time he was intending people to understand that he was referring to eternal rather than temporal realities? (452, 29ff)

- a. *The ignorant, not considering this analogy and congruity, to call it that, between punishments and rewards, wonder at such great changeableness in God. He, who once was prompt to mete out stern and terrifying punishments for every human transgression, now seems to have laid aside his former wrathful mood and punishes much more gently and rarely.*

Calvin gives an extreme example of an inference made by, *the ignorant*, when they consider the apparent changeableness of God, as he is revealed in the Old and New Testaments. What example does Calvin give? (452, 35ff)

- a. *...they even go so far as to imagine different Gods for Old and New Testaments*

(IJ: In case we think Calvin is making this up, he refers to the Manichees, whose descendants, *the ignorant*, in this area, are. McNeill also gives a reference to a work by Servetus, so Calvin was addressing something that was still alive in his day. Hardly in the same league academically, I remember precisely this view being advanced to me by my own mother, contrasting Jesus with the God of the Old Testament as though they were completely different from each other and not connected in any way at all. My mother, at the time, was a regular attender at her Parish Church.)

What is the answer to this view? (452,37ff)

- a. *...we shall readily dispose of these misgivings if we turn our attention to this dispensation of God which I have noted. He willed that, for the time during which he gave his covenant to the people of Israel in a veiled form, the grace of future and eternal happiness be signified and figured under earthly benefits, the gravity of spiritual death under physical punishments.*

4. With this section we transition from the first difference between Old and New Testaments to the second, which is...? (Section heading & 453, 7ff)

- a. *Truth in the OT (is) conveyed by images and ceremonies, typifying Christ.*
- b. *...in the absence of the reality, (the Old Testament) showed but an image and shadow in place of the substance; the New Testament reveals the very substance of truth as present.*

Where in the Bible do we find the fullest discussion of this difference? (453, 12)

- a. *The Letter to the Hebrews*

Against whom was the author of the Letter to the Hebrews arguing? (453, 13ff)

- a. *...those who thought that the observances of the Mosaic law could not be abolished without ruining the whole religion along with them.*

By what stages does the author of Hebrews arrive at the conclusion that the law is ...the shadow of good things to come, not ...the living likeness of the things themselves? (453, 16ff)

- a. *...he assumes what the prophet David foretold concerning Christ's priesthood [Ps 110:4; Heb 7:11]...Christ was given an eternal priesthood...that priesthood in which day after day one priest succeeded another, was abolished.*
- b. *He proves that the institution of the new priesthood will prevail because it was established by an oath [Heb 7:21].*
- c. *...in this transformation of the priesthood the covenant was also changed [Heb 8:6-13].*
- d. *He declares that this was necessary because the law in its weakness could not lead to perfection [Heb 7:19]...the nature of this weakness:*
 - i. *...the law had outward physical acts of righteousness that could not make those who observed them perfect according to conscience.*
 - ii. *...through animal sacrifices it could neither blot out sins nor bring about true sanctification.*
- e. *He therefore concludes that there was in the law "the shadow of good things to come" not "the living likeness of the things themselves" [Heb. 10: p.].*

What conclusion does the author of the Letter to the Hebrews come to about the law's sole function? (453, 32ff)

- a. *...its sole function was to be an introduction to the better hope that is manifested in the gospel [Heb. 7:19; and Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:11; 9:9; 10:1].*

If, as Calvin asserts, the Mosaic institutions were just, *solemn symbols*, of the, *eternal and never-perishing*, covenant that was, *finally confirmed and ratified*, in Christ, when he appeared, why does God so very often in the Old Testament, refer to his 'covenant'? (454, 15ff)

- a. *...these were only the accidental properties of the covenant, or additions and appendages, and in common parlance, accessories of it. Yet because they were means of administering it, they bear the name "covenant," just as is customary in the case of the other sacraments.*

Calvin has been drawing his argument from Hebrews 7&8. *In this passage "Old Testament" means – what?* (454, 20ff)

- a. *...the solemn manner of confirming the covenant, comprised in ceremonies and sacrifices*

Why does the author of the Letter to the Hebrews contend that the old covenant, *ought to be terminated and abrogated*? (454, 23ff)

- a. *Because nothing substantial underlies this unless we go beyond it*
- b. *...to give place to Christ, the sponsor and mediator of a better covenant [cf. Heb. 7:22]; whereby he imparts eternal sanctifications once and for all to the elect, blotting out their transgressions, which remained under the law.*

When did that covenant become, *new and eternal*? (454, 34f)

- a. *Only after it was consecrated and established by the blood of Christ*

How did this fact lead the Lord Jesus to refer to the cup that he gave to his disciples at the last supper? (454, 36)

- a. *...the cup of the New Testament in my blood [Luke 22:20 p.].*

5. Why would it have been inappropriate for the new dispensation to be revealed sooner than it was? (455, 3f)
 - b. Because *...the sun of righteousness* had not yet, *arisen*.
Who is glorified by this delay, and how?
 - a. Christ;
 - b. Because the fulness of revelation, effectiveness and global reach of the covenant is associated with him.
6. What objection does Calvin anticipate in this section? (455, 23ff)
 - a. OT saints, such as Abraham and many of the prophets, excelled in NT qualities such as faith.
 - b. What is Calvin's four-point response to this objection? (455, 27ff)
 - c. These examples are not typical.
 - d. *...Even their preaching is obscure...and embodied in types*
 - e. *...Inasmuch as they depended for revelation on the common tutelage of the people, they also are to be classed as children.*
 - f. *...No-one then possessed discernment so clear as to be unaffected by the obscurity of the time.*
7. The third difference between the Old and New Testaments is...? (456, 20)
 - a. *...The former is literal, the latter spiritual doctrine.*
Who introduced this distinction, and where? (456, 25)
 - a. The apostle Paul;
 - b. 2 Cor 3:6
 What are Paul and Jeremiah's five areas of comparison and contrast between the Old Testament and the New? (456, 20ff)
 - a. Literal doctrine v spiritual;
 - b. Carved on stone v written on hearts;
 - c. Preaching of death v life;
 - d. Condemnation v righteousness;

e. Being made void v abiding.

What prompts Paul, in his discussion of the law in 2 Cor 3, to emphasise strongly the problems associated with the law and none of the benefits? (456, 30ff)

a. The controversy he was engaged in with those who wanted to imitate Old Testament practices.

8. What does Calvin mean by *...the Old Testament...was published without the working of the Spirit?*

a. By 'the Old Testament' he means the New Covenant as it was administered before Christ.

People could practice an outward conformity to the covenant without experiencing the Holy Spirit's work in their hearts.

Calvin lists three points of contrast 'in detail' in this section. What are they? (457, 8ff, 11ff I 19ff)

a. The letter v the Spirit;

b. The Old brings death, the New is the instrument of life;

c. The Old had to die and vanish with time because it only borrowed and derived its legitimacy from the New. When the substance of the New appeared it could not continue.

What conclusion does Calvin draw about OT ceremonies from the abrogation of the ceremonies at Christ's appearance? (457, 29f)

a. The ceremonies...*had the cause of their weakness in themselves.*

9. We now transition to the fourth point of contrast between the Old Testament and the New, which is...? (458, 1ff)

a. Bondage and freedom.

What parallels does Paul draw on when he uses Hagar I Sarah allegorically as an illustration of the relationship between law I gospel? (458, 17ff)

a. Hagar was a bondservant - her child could not inherit therefore. There was no question as to Isaac's entitlement because of his mother's status as Abraham's wife.

Did the fact that the Patriarchs had a gospel-based relationship with God exempt them from the bondage of the law? (457, 32ff)

a. The gospel blessings they experienced did not arise to any degree from the law. They were not exempted from the fear that the law could induce and they had to observe its ceremonial requirements.

10. On what does Calvin state his agreement with Augustine? (459, 29 I preceding)

a. That genuine saints who lived in the Old Testament era were saved through the work of the same mediator and Spirit and on the basis of the same covenant as New Testament believers.

In what area does Calvin differ from Augustine? (459, 32ff)

a. Calvin does not feel that the Old Testament saints were freed from the rigours of the dispensation under which they lived to the same extent as Augustine appears to.

11. We now transition to the fifth - and final - difference, which is? (460, 15)

a. *...Until the advent of Christ, the Lord set apart one nation within which to confine the covenant of his grace.*

12. What are the two major differences between the salvation of gentiles in the Old Testament and in the New? (462, 1ff)
- Very many more gentiles are called in the New Testament than in the Old.
 - In the Old Testament those gentiles who were called were customarily joined to Israel, in the New gentile nationality is not inferior to Jewish.
13. To what objection is Calvin responding in this section? (462, 20ff)
- It would be inconsistent of God to...*permit such a great change, disapproving afterward what he had once commanded and commended.*
- What varied from age to age, under God's direction? (462, 24)
- ...*forms*
- What remained the same? (463, 5ff)
- ...*he taught the same doctrine to all ages*
 - He...*has required the same worship of his name that he enjoined from the beginning.*
- What two analogies does Calvin use to 'justify' the differences between God's requirements in different ages and circumstances? (462, 25ff)
- A farmer's doing different things in different seasons;
 - A father adopting different strategies with the same child, at different stages of the child's development.
14. In this section, Calvin responds to those who cannot accept that God should act in any way other than that which seems reasonable and consistent to them. How does Calvin respond? (463, 16ff)
- God does act in ways that seem to us to involve change and even contradiction (sometimes it's Summer, sometimes it's Winter) but he has his own reasons for doing so, whether or not we can understand or appreciate them.
- What is the real objective of those who raise such objections as Calvin is responding to in this section? (464, 8ff)
- ...*to trouble the simple-minded and to make them doubt either the righteousness of God or the trustworthiness of scripture.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. It is obvious that many people in OT times did not make the connection between the earthly temporal blessings that God gave and the spiritual and eternal blessings that they were meant to ascend to in their thinking. What does this teach us about human nature and, by implication, about ourselves and temptations to which we are prone?

But suppose that our opponents object that, among the Israelites, the holy patriarchs were an exception: since they were obviously endowed with the same Spirit of faith as we, it follows that they shared the same freedom and joy. To this we reply: neither of these arose from the law. But when through the law the patriarchs felt themselves both oppressed by their enslaved condition, and wearied by anxiety of conscience, they fled for refuge to the gospel. It was therefore a particular fruit

of the New Testament that, apart from the common law of the Old Testament, they were exempted from those evils. Further, we shall deny that they were so endowed with the spirit of freedom and assurance as not in some degree to experience the fear and bondage arising from the law. For, however much they enjoyed the privilege that they had received through the grace of the gospel, they were still subject to the same bonds and burdens of ceremonial observances as the common people. They were compelled to observe those ceremonies punctiliously, symbols of a tutelage resembling bondage [cf. Gal. 4:2-3]; and the written bonds [cf. Col. 2:14], whereby they confessed themselves guilty of sin, did not free them from obligation. Hence, they are rightly said, in contrast to us, to have been under the testament of bondage and fear, when we consider that common dispensation by which the Lord at that time dealt with the Israelites.