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Note, the Q&A for secs 1-11 need re-working

## INTRODUCTION

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1. What view is Calvin countering in this section? (316, section 1 heading)
  - a. That sin, if it is a necessity, cannot make people guilty. Conversely, if it is not a necessity men and women must have the ability not to do it.

By what two-stage method is this view advanced? (317, 1ff)

- a. Caricature;
- b. They deploy those scriptures that seem to support their view.

What caricature do they draw? (317, 5f)

- a. They falsely represent the position Calvin and his orthodox Christian forbears such as Augustine have taken as implying that man, because he sins of necessity does not also sin voluntarily. They then go on to argue that compulsion removes guilt.
- b. The only alternative to this view, they say, is that man sins voluntarily, in which case he must be able not to sin, should he so choose.

Calvin considers that in II.3.5 – **to which we now turn** – he has shown that the above dichotomy does not express everything that needs to be understood in order that we might have an adequate grasp of this subject.

The following questions are based on II.3.5.

How does Calvin demonstrate that the human will cannot relate to saving good in a positive way, either by desiring good or by applying itself to making saving good a reality in our lives? (294, 15ff)

- a. By noting that even beginning to desire that which saves is the beginning of conversion to God.
- b. The Bible, in such passages as Jeremiah 31:18 and 11 makes it plain that only God converts. Men and women do not take even the very first steps on the road to conversion themselves.

Does this imply any unwillingness on our part, any lack of desire, to believe error and live disobediently? (294, 35)

- a. No, on the contrary...*the will remains, with the most eager inclination disposed and hastening to sin.*

What two conclusions does Calvin draw (in agreement with Bernard) from this observation? (294, 36f)

- a. *...man...was not deprived of will;*
- b. *...man...was...deprived of soundness of will.*

What is a more modern term for 'soundness'?

- a. Health.

We go wrong at this point if we fail to distinguish between – what? (295, 8)

a. *...necessity and compulsion.*

What is the distinction between necessity and compulsion that we have to bear in mind?

a. Necessity can arise from internal factors and be perfectly consistent with our own wills, whereas compulsion arises from external factors.

What two personal beings does Calvin point to in order to substantiate his point? (295, 8f)

a. God and the devil.

What, in God and the devil, does Calvin point to in order to demonstrate the difference between necessity and compulsion? (295, 8f)

a. *Is not God of necessity good? Is not the devil of necessity evil?*

From what, in God, does this necessity arise? (295, 10 & 16)

a. From his divinity, which contains within itself...*his boundless goodness.*

Does any of this imply compulsion?

a. No.

From what, in the devil, does the necessity to do evil arise? (295, 11)

a. *...his fall.*

If the devil's fall did not make him subject to compulsion what principle was introduced into his psychology as a consequence of the fall that removed his ability to choose good, going forward from that point? (295, 24)

a. *...the corruption that followed as a punishment.*

Human (and Satanic) inability to choose good arises therefore from the way the will has been corrupted by sin. Sinful choices are a necessity that arises from what we have become, not from outward compulsion. In Calvin's mind this is an important distinction.

How does this distinction enable Calvin to counter the argument that people cannot be held accountable for sins that they have no option but to commit? (317, 25f)

a. *...it is clear that he who sins of necessity sins no less voluntarily.*

What about the other side of this coin – the argument that if people are accountable, sin must be voluntary and therefore avoidable? (317, 32f)

a. *...the second part of their syllogism is defective...we proved above that something not subject to free choice is nevertheless voluntarily done.*

2. To what objection is this section a response?

a. *Reward and punishment lose their meaning if man's will is not free from all necessity.*

Whom does Calvin credit with the original formulation of this objection? (318, 6)

a. Aristotle

What circumstance needs to exist for our sins to merit punishment? (318, 14)

a. Sins must be committed...*by voluntary desire.*

Is there a link between rewards and our merits? (318, 16ff)

a. *...it is a great absurdity for us to admit that they depend on God's kindness rather than our own merits.*

What is Calvin's starting point when thinking about the relationship between grace, merits and rewards? (318, 29)

a. God...*finds all men sinners.*

What, then, is the source of our merits? (319, 6)

- a. *...grace does not arise from merit, but merit from grace.*

From what teachings of the apostle Paul does Calvin derive the views put forward in this section? (319, 17ff)

- a. *Why, then, according to the apostle, are believers crowned? Because they have been chosen and called and justified by the Lord's mercy, not by their own effort.*

3. Chrysostom's view is that choosing between good and evil (which is what it feels like we do) must imply that we have a free will. He seems, from what Calvin says, to hold this view because the alternative is, to his mind, unacceptable. The alternative would be that our choices arise from our natures. In that case those who make evil choices must be evil through and through, those who make good choices would be good through and through. Neither of these statements chime with our experience of ourselves or of others.

Prosper of Aquitaine's view seems to arise from the fact that people backslide and apostasies. He feels this must be an argument for free will because otherwise it would not happen. How would Christians, whose will must have come under God's control for them to become Christians in the first place, apostasise unless God had left them some freedom of will to do so?

Calvin is not convinced. Where does he turn for a reliable analysis of these phenomena? (320, 4)

- a. To the Bible, specifically Romans 3.

What 2 doctrines are revealed in Romans 3 that give us a clear understanding of the phenomena that Chrysostom and Prosper of Aquitaine observed but failed to accurately diagnose? (320, 5ff)

- a. All people are *...depraved and given over to wickedness...all of us are by nature suffering from the same disease;*
- b. *...only through God's mercy...not all remain in wickedness...only those whom it pleases the Lord to touch with his healing hand will get well.*

Why did they go wrong at this point? (320, 2)

- a. They were, *forgetful.*

If God does not heal, is he the cause of decay? (320, 11)

- a. No, people *...waste away in their own rottenness.*

320, 12: *...there is no other reason...* No other reason than – what?

- a. No other reason for people's choice of saving actions and discipleship than God's election and subsequent intervention in people's lives.

Why does God distinguish between people in this way? (320, 15ff)

- a. To provide examples of the difference that his grace makes.

4. What objection does Calvin deal with in this section? (320, 22f)

- a. The presence and prevalence of exhortations and admonitions in scripture implies that the objects of them have the power to obey, without divine enabling.

What did Christ say that disproves the position Calvin is attacking? (321, 3)

- a. *Without me you can do nothing,* Jn 15:5.

Does Christ, on this account, not rebuke, exhort etc? (321: 4ff)

- a. No.

5. In this section, Calvin gives 4 uses of exhortation, given that it cannot impart the power to obey. What are they? (321 ff)

- a. A testimony against the ungodly when they come to God's judgment seat;
- b. A revelation of the will of God to the elect;
- c. A stimulus to godly desires;
- d. A means whereby the lust for iniquity and its *envenomed sweetness* is removed;

In what two ways does God work in his elect? (322, 27f)

- a. Internally, through his Spirit; Externally, through his word.

In what ways does he work in his elect through his Spirit? (322, 28f)

- a. *...illuminating their minds and forming their hearts to the love and cultivation of righteousness, he makes them a new creation.*

In what ways does he work in his elect through his word? (322, 30ff)

- a. *...he arouses them to desire, to seek after, and to attain that same renewal.*

What purposes do the exhortations of God's word serve in the reprobate? (322, 34f)

- a. *...today to press them with the witness of conscience, and in the Day of Judgment to render them the more inexcusable.*

6. With this section, we enter the second division of this chapter.

How were the arguments to which Calvin responded in the first division classified? (316)

- a. Answers to arguments for free will alleged on the grounds of common sense.

How are the arguments to which Calvin responds in this division classified? (323)

- a. Answers to arguments for free will based on the interpretation of the law, promises and rebukes of scripture.

This section provides an introduction to the whole division. It does not deal directly with any of the arguments drawn from the interpretation of the law, promises and rebukes of scripture but classifies the arguments into three groups.

What do the proponents of free will see as their strongest support? (323, 16ff)

- a. God's precepts.

What inference do they draw about the commands themselves from the fact that God issues them? (323, 17f)

- a. They are *...accommodated to our capacities.*

As the proponents of free will survey God's commands, what are, in their view, the two possible inferences that it is legitimate to draw? (323, 20ff)

- a. *...God is mocking us...or*
- b. *...he requires only what is within our power.*

Calvin asserts that we can divide the precepts that are used in support of the notion of free will into what three groups? (323, 24ff)

- a. Those that *...require man to turn towards God;*
- b. Those that *...speak of observing the law;*
- c. Those that *...bid man to persevere in God's grace once it has been received.*

What two-stage method will Calvin adopt for his response? (323, 27ff)

- a. General discussion;

b. Interaction with particulars.

Those who assert that men and women in their natural state must be capable of obeying God's laws feel that the alternative is – what? (323, 35f)

a. *...the law was given without purpose.*

What is Calvin's purpose in quoting Paul's statements in Galatians and Romans? (323, 37ff)

a. The verses quoted show that the law's purposes are not necessarily to be a rule of life.

What purpose is stated in:

a. Galatians 3:19?

a. To expose the true nature of human behaviours that are transgressions of God's will;

b. Romans 3:20?

a. To give to men and women, whose natural tendency is to regard all that they do as being in accordance with the purposes for which life was given to them, the knowledge that some(?) of their actions are sinful.

c. Romans 7:7-8 and 5:20?

a. To engender sin.

How does Calvin sum up our relationship to the law and the law's purpose in the light of the verses he has quoted? (324, 2ff)

a. *Was the law to be limited to our powers so as not to be given in vain? Rather, it was put far above us, to show clearly our weakness!*

What is ...Paul's definition of the law, its purpose and fulfilment? (324, 5)

a. Love

Does Paul rely simply on exhortation to produce love, or does he look to another spring to be the source of it? (324, 6ff)

a. *...the law sounds in our ears without effect unless God inspires in our hearts the whole sum of the law.*

7. Calvin tells us, at the beginning of the next section, that what he asserts in section 7 will be more clearly seen from a detailed examination. Section 7, therefore, should be regarded as a section in which certain things are asserted, that will be defended more explicitly in subsequent sections.

Calvin has drawn our attention to specific scripture statements that tell us that the law was not simply given, at any time, to be a rule of life but to set the standard by which the rightness and wrongness of our actions is to be judged. Commands are always joined with – what – to teach us that we do not have natural power to obey? (324, 21ff)

a. Promises

What do the proponents of human ability think that this implies? (324, 32)

a. That we are stocks and stones.

How does Calvin respond to this view? (324, 33ff)

a. By asserting it is not what he teaches;

a. God's commands teach unbelievers the true nature of their lusts and confirm their guilt;

b. God's commands teach believers the same thing and stir them to take refuge in grace.

8. In this section, Calvin returns to the three-fold division in the commands of God that he set out in section 6.

How is Calvin enabled in this section, subsection (1) to state so firmly his conclusion – *away with those who infer from the precepts that man is perhaps capable of obedience?* (325, 21ff)

- a. Certain things are commanded that are also promised. The fact that they are promised and described as things that God does means that we should not interpret the fact that we are commanded to do them as implying capability on our part – otherwise what need would there be of the promises of God.

Subsection (2) deals not with being converted but with observing God's law. Why do God's various commands not imply an ability on our part to obey? (326, 1ff)

- a. *But there are countless passages that bear witness that whatever righteousness, holiness, piety, and purity we can have are gifts of God.*

Subsection (3) deals with perseverance. Again, he follows the same line of reasoning, *ie* what is commanded or whatever we are exhorted to, we are enabled to do only by the grace of God.

9. Jer 31:32f. What is needed for the covenant God promises to establish with Israel to be effective? (326,39f)

- a. The Spirit of God must enter into their hearts.

Zech 1:3. Why does this verse not imply that man must do something, unaided, before God will convert him? (327, 1ff)

- a. God's conversion, in this verse, does not signify the converting work he does in man but his testimony, borne through prosperity, that their ways please the Lord.

10. This section deals with those passages in which blessing is promised to us provided we meet certain conditions. Again, those who argue that such passages imply an ability on our part to meet the conditions unaided claim that such promises are meaningless if we are unable to meet the conditions. Calvin says that, for the unbeliever, these passages have another purpose than to promise blessing on certain conditions. What is that purpose? (328, 9f)

- a. To testify to them of their unworthiness to obtain the blessing.

What purpose do these passages have for believers? (328, 19f)

- a. Believers are stimulated to implore his grace, so that they may be enabled to meet the conditions to which his blessing is attached.

11. To what cause should unbelievers trace God's reproofs? (329, 21)

- a. *...their own perverse will.*

How should unbelievers profit from God's reproofs? (329, 28f)

- a. *...they may learn in calamities to accuse and loathe their own worthlessness rather than to charge God with unjust cruelty.*

Turning to believers, what are the points Calvin makes in connection with sloth? (330, 24ff)

- a. Paul assigns tasks so as to create an opposition to sluggishness;
- b. The capacity to carry out the tasks assigned is supplied from heaven;
- c. Peter also seeks to arouse the indolence of the flesh – *by which faith is often choked.*
- d. Even the earnestness that Paul enjoins comes from God.

The Q&A for the first 11 sections of this chapter need re-working.

12. This section begins the final high-level division of this chapter. What class of arguments are brought forth and refuted in this section? (Section heading, below 331, 13)

- a. *Arguments based on special passages and incidents in scripture.*

Why do Calvin's opponents cite Deuteronomy 30:11-12, 14? (331, 15)

- a. *It ....seems to be strongly opposed to {Calvin's} explanation*

Calvin's opponents make an assumption about the interpretation of these verses, which is – what? (331, 20f)

- a. *The words are ...spoken concerning the bare precepts (ie, God's commandments)*

If Calvin's opponents are right in this assumption, how might he try to ...*dodge the issue*? (331, 23ff)

- a. *...by contending that this has to do with man's capacity and disposition to understand the commandments, not with his ability to observe them*

Calvin has two reasons for rejecting this approach. What are they? (331, 25ff)

- a. *...perhaps some scruple would thus also remain (ie, it is not a wholly convincing line of argument.)*
- b. *...the apostle, our sure interpreter, removes every doubt when he declares that Moses here spoke of the teaching of the gospel {Rom 10:3}.*

What possible response could Calvin's opponents make to his use of Romans 10:3? (331, 29f)

- a. *Paul violently twisted these words to make them refer to the gospel.*

Calvin makes a two-fold response to this assertion. What is it? (331, 30ff)

- a. *...such a man's boldness will not be lacking in impiety*
- b. *...we have a means of refuting him apart from the apostle's authority. For if Moses was speaking of the precepts only, he inspired in the people the vainest confidence. (Beveridge: he was only inflating the people with vain confidence.)*

How can Calvin be so sure of the second assertion, immediately above? (331, 34ff)

- a. *...what else would they have done but dash into ruin, if they had set out to keep the law by their own strength, as if it were easy for them? Where is that ready capacity to keep the law, when the only access to it lies over a fatal precipice?*
- b. *...a few verses before he had also taught that our hearts must needs be circumcised by God's hand for us to love him [Deut 30:6]. He therefore lodged that ability, of which he immediately thereafter speaks, not in the power of man, but in the help and protection of the Holy Spirit, who mightily carries out his work in our weakness.*

What conclusion does Calvin therefore draw about the true meaning of this passage? (332, 9ff)

- a. *...we are not to understand this passage as referring simply to the precepts, but rather to the promises of the gospel; and they, far from establishing in us the capacity to obtain righteousness, utterly destroy it.*

13. Hosea 5:15. What is the line of reasoning employed by those who use this passage in support of man's ability, unaided, to seek God? (332, 24ff)

- a. *It would be a ridiculous thing...if their minds were not capable of inclining either way through their own natural ability.*

Calvin's view is that, in the light of their assertion, his opponents must adopt one of two positions. What are the two positions? (332, 30f & 32f)

- a. *...this people, forsaken by God, can of themselves set their minds on a conversion.*
- b. *...God's grace is necessary for conversion.*

What is his view of the first position? (332, 32)

- a. *It flies ...in the face of all scripture.*

What is his view of the second position? (332, 33f)

- a. *...what quarrel do they have with us?*

What quarrel do they have with us? (332, 34f)

- a. *...they concede grace to be necessary in such a way as to preserve to man his own ability.*

How does Calvin demonstrate that Hosea 5:15 does not prove human ability? (332, 32ff & 333, 20f)

- a. *...If they mean that this people, forsaken by God, can of themselves set their minds on a conversion, they are doing so in the teeth of all scripture.* (II: Calvin is resorting in this sentence to what is known as 'The Analogy of Faith'. This principle is the most fundamental of all principles of interpretation [Biblical interpretation is the science of Hermeneutics]. It is expressed by the apostle Peter in 2 Peter 1:20: *knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.* Put very briefly, what Peter is saying is that no verse or any other part of scripture is to be interpreted in a way that is inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible as a whole. Calvin is applying this principle to his opponents' interpretation of Hosea 5:15.)
- b. *...he does it for no other purpose than to compel us to recognise our own nothingness.*

Calvin's point is that too much is being read into this passage if it is used as a proof text for human ability. Hosea 5:15 does not address the question of what man is capable of but merely describes what God will do. The consequences of God's withdrawal of himself will show that unaided human beings are not capable of any saving thing if left to themselves.

What, then, do these expressions signify? (333, 4ff)

- a. *Inasmuch as warning, urging and rebuking have no effect upon this stubborn people, I shall withdraw for a little while and quietly permit them to be afflicted. I shall see whether at any time after long calamities the remembrance of me lays hold on them so that they seek my face.*
- b. *The Lord's going far away signifies his withdrawal of prophecy from them*
- c. *His considering what men might do means that for a time he quietly and as it were secretly tries them with various afflictions.*

What is God's objective in dealing with us in this way? (333, 12f)

- a. *...to make us more humble*

How does this increase in humility come about? (333, 13ff)

- a. *We discover that ...we would sooner be beaten down by the lashes of adversity than be corrected if he did not by his Spirit render us teachable.*

The proponents of free will understand Hosea 5:15 to imply that *...we have some power of free will for (God) to observe and test*. What concluding assertion does Calvin make in response to this? (333, 20f)

- a. *...he does it for no other purpose than to compel us to recognise our own nothingness.*

14. (IJ: The next passage that Calvin deals with is Genesis 4:7 but it is not introduced until section 16. In this section and the next Calvin deals with an assertion made by those who ascribe some capacity to men and women to act, unaided, in a Godly way. The assertion is that God recognises our works as our works and rewards us for them. They must therefore, to some extent at least, be our works, not merely God's works.)

Calvin begins by setting out his opponents' position, which arises because of – what? (333, 22f)

- a. *...the manner of speaking customary both in the scripture and in the words of men*

What is it about this manner of speaking that makes people feel that some credit for our righteous acts is ours? (333, 23ff)

- a. *...good works are indeed called "ours"; and we are credited just as much with doing what is holy and pleasing to the Lord, as with committing sins.*

How does Calvin sum up his opponents' conclusion in 333, 27?

- a. *...some part in righteous acts ought to be assigned to us.*

They come to this conclusion because of the way in which acts other than righteous acts are wholly assigned to us in scripture. What acts are assigned wholly to us? (333, 26)

- a. *...sins are rightly imputed to us as coming from ourselves*

Calvin's opponents have a second line of argument, which is – what? (333, 28ff)

- a. *...it would not be consonant with reason to say that we do those things which we are incapable of carrying out by our own effort and are moved like stones by God to do so.*

What conclusion do Calvin's opponents draw from this line of argument? (333, 31f)

- a. *...although we give the primary part to God's grace, yet those expressions indicate that our effort holds second place.*

Of these two lines of argument, which does Calvin regard as the strongest? (334, 1)

- a. *...the second objection is a little stronger*

On this basis, he deals with the first objection (*ie*, that our good works are called, 'ours') in 8 lines at the foot of p333.

What does Calvin point out to those who *...simply urge that good works are called "ours"*? (333, 34f)

- a. *...the bread that we petition God to give us is also called "ours" [cf. Matt 6:11]*

What question does Calvin put to his opponents on the basis of this observation? (333, 35f)

- a. *What does the possessive pronoun "ours" signify...?*

What does it signify? (333, 36ff)

- a. *...what is otherwise by no means due us becomes ours by God's loving-kindness and free gift*

In Calvin's view, this observation leaves his opponents with two options (assuming of course that consistency is as important to them as it is to Calvin). What are their two options? (333, 38ff)

- a. *...they must either:*
  - a. *...ridicule the same absurdity in the Lord's prayer, or*
  - b. *...recognise that good works, in which we have nothing of our own save by God's bounty, are not foolishly called "ours".*

Turning now to the second objection, what scriptural statements give rise to it? (334, 1ff)

- a. *Scripture often affirms that we ourselves worship God, preserve righteousness, obey the law, and are zealous of good works.*

What line of reasoning do Calvin's opponents employ as a result of these scriptural affirmations? (334, 3ff)

- a. *Since these are the proper functions of the mind and will, how can one refer them to the Spirit and at the same time attribute them to ourselves, unless our zeal shares something of the divine power?*

What do we need to, *duly reflect upon*, in order to be able to, *easily dispose of these trifling objections*? (334, 8)

- a. *...the way in which the Spirit of the Lord acts upon the saints.*

Is it Calvin's position that, *God moves man just as we throw a stone*? (334, 9ff)

- a. *That comparison...does not apply. For who is such a fool as to assert that God moves man just as we throw a stone?*
- b. *...nothing like this follows from our teaching*

What motivates those who ascribe this position to Calvin? (334, 9)

- a. *Spite*

Pressing home his rejection of this comparison, what functions does Calvin ascribe to mankind's natural faculties? (334, 12f)

- a. *...approving and rejecting, willing and not willing, striving and resisting*

What do mankind's natural faculties in their present corrupted state...

*...Approve and reject? (334, 14)*

- a. *...approving vanity and rejecting perfect good*

*...Will and not will? (334, 14f)*

- a. *...willing evil and not willing good*

*...Strive towards and resist? (334, 15f)*

- a. *...striving towards wickedness and resisting righteousness*

Is God involved in these processes or does he make use of them in any way? (334, 16ff)

- a. *If he wills to utilise such depravity as the instrument of his wrath, he directs and disposes it as he pleases to carry out his good works, through man's corrupt hand.*

Although unbelievers cannot help serving God if he chooses to use them, does this mean that it is proper to compare them merely to a stone in flight? (334, 19ff)

- a. *Shall we then compare a wicked man, who thus serves God's might while he strives to obey only his own lust, to a stone set in motion by an outside force, and borne along by no motion, sensation, or will of its own? We see how great the difference is.*

If it is inappropriate to compare the actions of the wicked to a stone in flight, even when those actions achieve the outcomes determined by God, what contribution to those actions is made by an unbeliever's natural faculties? (334, 19ff)

- a. *...a wicked man...strives to obey only his own lust*

This more thorough examination of how our natural faculties work and how they are used by God enables Calvin to state clearly how wrong it is to assert that he teaches that God uses unbelievers in just the same way as we might throw a stone - *We see how great the difference is.* (334, 23)

In this section's final paragraph Calvin turns to the way in which God works in Christians (*good men*, line 24) to bring about good actions.

On what faculty in particular does God act to bring forth right actions from us? (334, 26)

- a. *...their will*

In what three ways does God work on and through our wills when he establishes his kingdom in us? (334, 25ff, 28f & 30f)

- a. *When the Lord establishes his kingdom in them, he restrains their will by his Spirit that it may not according to its natural inclination be dragged to and fro by wandering lusts.*
- b. *That the will may be disposed to holiness and righteousness, he bends, shapes, forms, and directs it to the rule of his righteousness.*
- c. *That it may not totter and fall, he steadies and strengthens it by the power of his Spirit.*

Calvin quotes approvingly from Augustine at this point. How does Augustine avoid the charge that he is teaching that *...we are acted upon and do not act ourselves?* (334, 34ff)

- a. *The Spirit of God who acts upon you is the helper of those who act. The name 'helper' indicates that you also do something.*

Why must it be the case that *...man's action is not taken away by the movement of the Holy Spirit?* (334, 38f)

- a. *...because the will, which is directed to aspire to good, is of nature*

However, there is something we need to avoid. What is it? (334, 39ff)

- a. *...when he directly adds that from the word "help" it can be inferred that we also do something, we must not so understand it as if something were to be attributed to each of us separately. (I.e, separately from God's working in us and on our wills.)*

Why did Augustine speak as he did? (335, 2f)

- a. *...in order not to encourage indolence in us*

Calvin produces two further quotations from Augustine, to prove that he understands him correctly. What are they? (335, 4 & 5f)

- a. *To will is of nature, but to will aright is of grace*
- b. *Unless God helps, we shall be able neither to conquer nor even to fight.*

15. How should we define, 'God's grace' when we are discussing the change produced in us by regeneration? (335, 8f)

- a. *...the rule of the Spirit to direct and regulate man's will.*

Why does regeneration start with God wiping out what is ours? (335, 9ff)

- a. *The Spirit cannot regulate without correcting, without reforming, without renewing...He cannot carry out those functions without moving, acting, impelling, bearing, keeping.*

How does this understanding of the Spirit's work on our wills enable us to regard the same actions as both ours and God's but in a way that ascribes any credit for them entirely to him? (335, 13ff)

- a. *...we are right in saying that all the actions that arise from grace are wholly his. Meanwhile we do not deny that what Augustine teaches is very true: "Grace does not destroy the will but rather restores it". The two ideas are in substantial agreement.*

If we see God's grace and our wills acting together in such a way that our wills make a contribution of their own, without the Holy Spirit's restoring work (which consists of all the things mentioned above: *moving, acting, impelling, bearing, keeping*) what are we doing to grace? (335, 28ff)

- a. ***...any mixture of the power of free will that men strive to mingle with God's grace is nothing but a corruption of grace. (This reminds me of a sermon I heard in February 2014, in which the preacher, referring to the grace of God in salvation, said: *If you add to it, you take away from it.*)***

The discussion of Hosea 5:15 is now concluded (just in case you have forgotten that's what we have been doing).

16. What verse are we now turning to and, in Calvin's translation what does it say? (336, 7)

- a. *Genesis 4:7: Its appetite will be under you, and you shall master it. (I'm not sure if that's Calvin's own translation or the English translation of the Vulgate. I don't have access to the Vulgate but I think the Douay-Rheims translation is the Vulgate in English. Genesis 4:7 in that version reads: *If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? but if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? but the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it.*)*

To follow Calvin's argument in this first paragraph, you will need to have Genesis 7 open in front of you.

How do the proponents of free will apply this verse? (336, 7ff)

- a. *This they apply to sin, as if the Lord had promised Cain that the power of sin would not have the upper hand in his mind, if he willed to work toward conquering it.*

(IJ: I imagine that Calvin's interpretation of this passage will be new to most of us. It is not the only interpretation that applies the 'it' of Genesis 4:7 to something other than sin. Another interpreter, Faber, applies 'it' to a sin offering: *If thou doest not well, at the door a sin-offering is couching.*

Calvin goes into more detail in his commentary on Genesis 4:7. He points out that:

1. In the Hebrew language 'sin' is a feminine word, yet in this phrase two masculine relative pronouns are used. He says he 'omits to notice' this but he mentions it nonetheless. I presume by omitting to notice he means that he notices it in passing but is not building his case on it.
2. He understands the phrase: *you shall master it* as meaning that:
  - a. Cain had been displaced by Abel because his unacceptable offering had lost him the honour that should have attached to him as the first-born. God is rebuking Cain because he had not behaved consistently with his status. His younger brother had set him the example. Cain had despised his status in the family.
  - b. Cain could regain his rightful place by 'doing well', *ie* by valuing gratefully the privilege that was his as the first-born and acting accordingly by setting the example to Abel when it came to worshipping God.
  - c. If he did not do that Abel would be pre-eminent in God's eyes and in God's purposes. It was Abel, or more properly Abel's obedience, that was crouching at the door and gaining him favour in God's eyes.
  - d. If Cain did well, he would master Abel and be living in accordance with God's intention for him. [In fact, if Cain became a Godly man there would be harmony, not rivalry between them but Cain would nonetheless have seniority because he was the first-born.]
  - e. This interpretation is consistent with Genesis 3:16, *thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee.* [Douay-Rheims again])

Having made his point about the correct interpretation of this verse, Calvin recognises that this is a matter of interpretation and proceeds in a way that implies that he cannot be 100% dogmatic about his opinion. Why do I say this? (336, 20ff)

- a. *...lest we seem to espouse this interpretation because the other one is contrary to our view, well, let us concede to them that God was speaking here of sin.*

Making this concession leaves interpreters with two alternatives, which are – what? (336, 22f)

- a. *If this is so, then the Lord is either promising or commanding what he here declares*

If he is commanding, does it follow that this is a command that can be obeyed by us in our natural, fallen state? (336, 23ff)

- a. *If he is commanding, we have already demonstrated that no proof of human capacity follows.*

How do we know that he was not making a promise to Cain? (336, 25ff)

- a. *If he is promising, where is the fulfilment of the promise when Cain yields to sin, which he ought to master?*

What do those who want to claim that God's words were a promise to Cain say, in order to explain their lack of fulfilment? (336, 27ff)

- a. *...there is a tacit condition included in the promise, as if it were said: "If you fight, you will achieve victory".*

How does Calvin rate this assertion of a tacit condition? (336, 29)

- a. *evasion*

What are those who assert that Genesis 4:7 is a promise evading? (336, 30ff)

- a. *...the form of speech is imperative;*
- b. *...the matter itself and the principles of grammar*

17. What verse, offered by Calvin's opponents as a proof text for their position, do we turn to next? (336, 36ff)

- a. *So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy,*  
Rom 9:16.

What notion do Calvin's opponents derive from these words? (337, 1ff, 20ff)

- a. *...there is something in man's will and effort which, although feeble in itself, when aided by God's mercy does not fail to yield a favourable outcome.*
- b. *It depends not upon him who wills nor on him who runs; therefore there is some will, there is some running.*

Calvin accuses his opponents of rashly misinterpreting this passage. What mistake do they make? (337, 4f)

- a. They fail *...soberly to weigh what matter Paul is discussing here.*

What matter is Paul discussing here and what does he say about it? (337, 9ff)

- a. *...salvation*
- b. *...salvation has been prepared only for those whom the Lord deems worthy of his mercy, while ruin and death remain for all those whom he has not chosen.*
- c. *Paul had pointed out the destiny of the wicked by the example of Pharaoh [Rom 9:17]*
- d. *He had also confirmed by the testimony of Moses the certainty of free election: "I shall have mercy on whom I shall have mercy" [Rom 9:15; Ex 33:19]*

*...it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.* To what does, 'it' refer? (337, 9)

- a. *...salvation*

*...if it were understood this way – that will and effort are not sufficient because they are unequal to such a load – what Paul said would have been inappropriate.* Why is this?

- a. Because our salvation *would* depend on our willing and our effort, it would just not be wholly accomplished by it.

What one word, used by Calvin in 337, 24 brings out the difference between his opponents' position and Paul's 'simpler' meaning?

- a. *Only. (**Only** the mercy of the Lord is here.)*

Calvin asserts that those who interpret Romans 4:7 as teaching that our will and our efforts play some part in our salvation, would not apply the same thought process to Titus 3:4-5 and that therefore they should not apply it to Romans 4:7. If they did interpret Titus 3:4-5 in the same way as they interpret Romans 4:7 how would their reasoning run? (337, 32ff)

- a. *...we do some good works, because Paul denies that we attain to God's goodness by virtue of the works that we have done.*

Again, if we follow his opponents' interpretation of Romans 4:7, what would that imply about the part played in our salvation by God's mercy? (337, 40f)

- a. *...it does not depend upon God's mercy, because it would not act alone*

Guided by the correct interpretation of Romans 4:7, how should we interpret 1 Corinthians 3:9? (338, 8ff)

- a. *...they are called "co-workers" not because they bring anything of themselves, but because God uses their work after he has rendered them capable of it and has furnished them with the necessary gifts*

18. The passage under consideration in this section is – what? (338, 20)

- a. *Ecclesiasticus 15:14-17*

This passage reads (Jerusalem Bible):

*He himself made man in the beginning, and then left him free to make his own decisions. If you wish, you can keep the commandments, to behave faithfully is within your power.*

*He has set fire and water before you; put out your hand to whichever you prefer. Man has life and death before him; whichever a man likes best will be given to him.*

What is Calvin's first objection to the use of this text as a proof text for free will? (338, 12ff)

- a. *...a writer whose authority is known to be in doubt*
- b. *Granting that we do not reject this author – although we have a perfect right to do so*
- c. *...I am answering not only my opponents but also Ecclesiasticus himself, whoever he may be: If you wish to teach man to seek in himself the capacity to acquire salvation, we do not esteem your authority so highly that it may in the slightest degree raise any prejudice against the undoubted Word of God*

How does Calvin summarise these verses? (338, 15ff)

- a. *Immediately after man was created, God left him in the power of his own counsel. Commandments were given to him. If he kept the commandments, they would keep him as well*

Calvin has no problem with the thought that man received the capacity to obtain life or death.

When did we receive this capacity? (338, 21)

- a. *...at his creation*

Is this still true of us? (338, 22ff)

- a. *...he has lost this capacity. Surely it is not my intention to contradict Solomon, who declares that "God made man upright, but he has sought out many devices for himself" Ecclesiastes 7:29.*
- b. *...because man, in his degeneration, caused the shipwreck both of himself and of all his possessions, whatever is attributed to the original creation does not necessarily apply forthwith to his corrupt and degenerate nature.*

What interpretation of Ecclesiasticus 15:14-17 would Calvin be prepared to agree with? (338, 34ff)

- a. *...suppose you strive simply to repress the evil inclination of the flesh, which tries vainly to defend itself by transferring its vices to God, and for this reason you answer that uprightness was implanted in man that thereby it might be clear that he is the cause of his own ruin. I willingly assent to this*

Calvin's assent to this interpretation is conditional – on what? (339, 2ff)

- a. *I willingly assent to this, provided you and I agree that man has now been deprived through his own fault of those adornments with which the Lord in the beginning arrayed him.*

19. What passage is in view in this section? (339, 7ff)

- a. *Christ's parable of the traveller, whom thieves cast down half alive on the road [Luke 10:30]*

According to *almost all* writers what does the traveller falling among thieves represent? (339, 10)

- a. *...the calamity of the human race*

What position is built upon this understanding? (339, 12ff)

- a. *...man is not so disfigured by the robbery of sin and the devil as not to retain some vestiges of his former good, inasmuch as he is said to have been left "half alive." For unless some portion of right reason and will remained, how could there be a half life?*

What method of interpretation is being adopted by those who interpret the parable in this way? (339, 17)

- a. *...allegory*

What does Calvin think of the way his opponents apply this method to this passage? (339, 18ff)

- a. *...no doubt the fathers devised this interpretation without regard to the true meaning of the Lord's words.*
- b. *...this falsehood*

What takes precedence over the allegorical method and what limit applies to it? (339, 20f)

- a. *...the rule of Scripture*
- b. *Allegories ought not to...suffice as the foundation for any doctrines*

Applying the rule of Scripture to the subject of man's present condition, what must we recognise? (339, 23ff)

- a. *The Word of God does not leave a "half life" to man, but it teaches that he has utterly died as far as the blessed life is concerned. Paul does not call the saints "half alive" when he speaks of our redemption, "Even when we were dead...he made us alive" [Eph 2:5].*

Even if Calvin were to accept that men and women outside of Christ are half alive, wherein does the half of life that they possess consist? (340, 6ff & 16ff)

- a. *...he has a mind capable of understanding, even if it may not penetrate to heavenly and spiritual wisdom.*
- b. *He has some judgment of honesty*
- c. *He has some awareness of divinity, even though he may not attain a true knowledge of God*
- d. *...the mind of man has been so completely estranged from God's righteousness that it conceives, desires, and undertakes, only that which is impious, perverted, foul, impure and infamous.*

- e. *The heart is so steeped in the poison of sin, that it can breathe out nothing but a loathsome stench.*
- f. *...if some men occasionally make a show of good, their minds nevertheless ever remain enveloped in hypocrisy and deceitful craft, and their hearts bound by inner perversity.*

How does Augustine sum up what the man in the parable lost? (340, 12ff)

- a. *...the free goods upon which salvation depends were taken away from man after the Fall, while the natural endowments were corrupted and defiled.*

#### **FOR REFLECTION**

320. If Calvin is right to ascribe the cause of God's electing some and not others to his desire to show the effects of both the presence and absence of his grace - what should be the practical effect of this on all?

325. If our confidence when it comes to obedience arises from God's promises, not from our own abilities, how should we react to the commands of God?