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PREPARATION

Familiarise yourself with the concepts of types and antitypes.

EXPLORATORY

1. Calvin opens his treatment of the law by reminding us of the preceding chapter, in which statements made by a, *continuing succession of witnesses*, had been, *reviewed*. The purpose of this review was to demonstrate that, throughout Old Testament history, the favour of God rested on those who were represented to God by a Mediator. This mediator had to be recognised as such by God. His status in God's sight was the sole determining factor when it came to his people's relationship with God.

By opening this chapter in this way he places the law firmly in the context of the gospel. This is important because there are those who teach that salvation is a matter of law-keeping. At various times, the laws have changed as God's commands have taken different forms (in the Garden of Eden, the law was 'do not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'; Later, circumcision became the condition of salvation, then the ten commandments, etc., etc.) Each of these times is known as a 'dispensation'. Hence the term, 'dispensationalism'. On this view, in our era the Ten Commandments have been replaced by one – believe in Jesus.

However – and this is something Calvin never allows us to forget – there has only ever been one way of salvation, *via* the mediator, Christ Jesus, who saved us by meeting the demands of God's law on our behalf, by dying on the cross and by rising again for our justification.

How does Calvin express the purpose for which the law was added, both negatively and positively? (348,10ff & 17ff)

- a. *...this was not done to lead the chosen people away from Christ*
- b. *...not rather to hold their minds in readiness until his coming; even to kindle desire for him, and to strengthen their expectation, in order that they might not grow faint by too long delay.*
- c. *Moses was not made a lawgiver in order to wipe out the blessing promised to the race of Abraham. Rather we see him repeatedly reminding the Jews of that freely given covenant made with their fathers of which they were the heirs. It was as if he were sent to renew it.*

What are the elements of the law? (348, 15ff)

- a. *...not only the Ten Commandments...but the form of religion handed down by God through Moses.*

(IJ: The above is an important question. Following the Puritans, reformed Christians today in Britain and the US tend to divide the law into three – the Moral, Civil and Ceremonial Law. The Moral Law is the Ten Commandments; The Civil Law is the code that governed Israel's life as a nation, covering things like inheritance rights, reparation for damages etc.; The Ceremonial Law

consists of the instructions for worship, sacrifices, the priesthood etc., what Calvin calls the, *cultus of the law* (349, 5).

This distinction has the merit of enabling us to 'pigeonhole' the various elements of the law and to classify some laws as permanent and abiding (the Moral Law) and others as coming to an end with Christ and the establishment of the worldwide New Testament Church. It is a useful distinction but, IMHO, it does not clear up quite as neatly as its proponents claim all the difficulties surrounding how we understand law. The most notable example of this is how we regard the Sabbath.)

In what way was the, *freely given covenant made with their fathers...very clearly revealed in the ceremonies?* (349, 1ff, 21f & 23ff)

- a. *...what is more vain or absurd than for men to offer a loathsome stench from the fat of cattle in order to reconcile themselves to God?*
- b. *...what is more vain or absurd than...to have recourse to the sprinkling of water and blood to cleanse away their filth?*
- c. *In short, the whole cultus of the law, taken literally...will be utterly ridiculous.*
- d. *...if the forms of the law be separated from its end, one must condemn it as vanity.*
- e. *God did not command sacrifices in order to busy his worshippers with earthly exercises. Rather, he did so that he might lift their minds higher.*

If we are not to take literally the connection between the offering of animals and the sprinkling of water and blood with forgiveness, how are we to understand and interpret these ceremonies? (349, 6f)

- a. *...as shadows and figures corresponding to the truth*

God ordered, *Moses to make everything pertaining to the Tabernacle in accordance with the pattern shown him on the mountain [Ex 25:40]*. What does this imply about what Moses saw? (349, 12)

- a. *It was ...something spiritual*

(II: On line 23 Calvin introduces the word, *type*. As footnote 2 explains, this understanding of the ceremonies and of other features of the Old Testament has gone on to occupy an important place in Reformed Christianity's approach to the Old Testament. Jonathan Edwards, for example, tells us that types can be ceremonies, people and/or events. Types are not the same as allegories, in which principles clearly taught elsewhere in scripture are illustrated by people and events in the Old Testament.

Types only exist because of the reality to which they point. If there was not going to be any Calvary there would have been no Tabernacle.)

What is it about God's nature that requires us to look beyond the physical aspects of the ceremonies to the spiritual reality to which they pointed? (349, 26)

- a. *...it is spiritual*

What follows from recognising that God's nature is spiritual? (349, 26f)

- a. *...only spiritual worship delights him*

Many statements of the prophets attest to this and charge the Jews with stupidity. What specific stupidity is Calvin referring to here? (349, 28f)

- a. *...they think some sacrifice or other has value in God's sight.*

Did the prophets do this with the intention of detracting something from the law? (349, 30ff)

- a. *Not at all. But since they were true interpreters of it, they desired in this way to direct men's eyes to the objective from which the common people were straying.*

So far we have seen that the ceremonies pointed away from themselves to Calvary because of, i) Moses was shown Calvary on the mountain (Exodus 25:40 and Hebrews 8:5); ii) The prophets' interpretations of the law. In line 33ff, Calvin produces a third line of evidence, which is – what? (349, 33)

- a. *...the grace offered the Jews.*

In what is this grace seen? (349, 35f)

- a. *Moses proposed to them as the purpose of adoption, that they should be a priestly kingdom unto God [Exodus 19:6]*

This priestly and royal status, *they could not have attained to if a greater and more excellent reconciliation than that procured by the blood of beasts had not intervened.* How do we know this is true? (350, 2ff)

- a. *Because of hereditary taint, all of Adam's children are born in bondage to sin. What, then, is less fitting than for them to be elevated to royal dignity, and in this way to become partners in God's glory, unless such pre-eminent good came to them from some other quarter?*
- b. *Also, how could the right of priesthood thrive among them, abominable as they were to God in the filth of their vices, were they not consecrated in the sacred Head?*

How do we know that this promise of God to the Jews is now enjoyed by Christians? (350, 9ff)

- a. *Peter neatly turns that saying of Moses, teaching that the fullness of grace that the Jews had tasted under the law has been shown forth in Christ*

Instead of telling Christians that they were, *a kingdom of priests* (Exodus 19:6) he tells us that we are, *a royal priesthood* (1 Peter 2:9). What, according to Calvin, is the significance of this reversal of the order of kings and priests? (350, 12ff)

- a. *In inverting the words he means that those to whom Christ has appeared through the gospel have obtained more than their fathers did.*

In what way have we obtained more than the Jews? (350, 14ff)

- a. *..all have been endowed with priestly and kingly honour, so that, trusting in their Mediator, they may freely dare to come forth into God's presence.*

What point has Calvin been driving at in this section? (348, 8ff)

- a. *The law was added about four hundred years after the death of Abraham [cf Gal 3:17]. From that continuing succession of witnesses which we have reviewed it may be gathered that this was not done to lead the chosen people away from Christ; but rather to hold their minds in readiness until his coming; even to kindle desire for him, and to strengthen their expectation, in order that they might not grow faint by too long delay.*

2. Calvin opens this section by drawing our attention to something we might not readily think of as, *a part of the law.* What is that? (350, 18f)

- a. *...the kingdom finally established within the family of David*

How can he be so sure? (350, 19f)

- a. The provisions for kingship in Israel were, *contained under the administration of Moses.*

(IJ: The principles governing kingship in Israel are set out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.)

In what two institutions did God give the Jews a, *double mirror*, that contained the reflection of Christ? (350, 21ff)

- a. *...both among the whole tribe of Levi* (who officiated in the temple and at the ceremonies Calvin has already alluded to) *and among the posterity of David, Christ was set before the eyes of the ancient folk as in a double mirror.*

Why was it necessary that Christ should continually be set forth to the Jews? (350, 23ff)

- a. *...men enslaved by sin and death and polluted by their own corruption could not otherwise have been kings and priests before God.*

What statement of Paul's is supported by Calvin's understanding of the role of the law? (350, 26ff)

- a. *...the Jews were kept under the charge of a "tutor" [Gal 3:24] until the seed should come for whose sake the promise had been given.*

How do, *the many testimonies of the prophets*, bear out the thought that the law was given to maintain hope in the coming of Christ? (350, 33ff)

- a. *...even though they (ie the Jews) had to come forth daily with new sacrifices to appease God, yet Isaiah promises that all their evil deeds will be atoned for by a single sacrifice [Isaiah 53:5].*
b. *Daniel agrees with this [Dan 9:26-27]*
c. *Priests designated from the tribe of Levi customarily entered the sanctuary. But of only one priest it was once said that he was divinely chose with a solemn oath to be "a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek [Ps 110:4; cf Heb. 5:6; 7:21].*
d. *There was an anointing with visible oil; in a vision Daniel proclaimed that there would be another sort of anointing [Dan 9:24].*

How does the author of the letter to the Hebrews reflect this understanding of the ceremonies? (351, 6ff)

- a. *...the author of the Letter to the Hebrews points out fully and clearly in chapters 4 to 11 that the ceremonies are worthless and empty until the time of Christ is reached.*

What is the meaning of Romans 10:4? (351, 13ff)

- a. *...righteousness is taught in vain by the commandments until Christ confers it by free imputation and by the Spirit of regeneration.*

Why does Paul call Christ the fulfilment or end of the law? (351, 17ff)

- a. *...it would be of no value to know what God demands if Christ did not succour those labouring and oppressed under its intolerable yoke and burden.*

What is the meaning of Galatians 3:19? (351, 19ff)

- a. *..."the law was put forward..." ...in order to humble men, having convinced them of their own condemnation.*

The law is not only viewed by Calvin in a negative way. In 351, 31f he writes: *...in the law we are taught the perfection of righteousness*. Why, then, was it necessary for Paul to emphasise so strongly what the law could not do? (351, 24f)

- a. *He was disputing with perverse teachers who pretended that we merit righteousness by the works of the law. Consequently, to refute their error he was sometimes compelled to take the bare law in a narrow sense, even though it was otherwise graced with the covenant of free adoption.*

3. (IJ: To some extent I part company with Calvin in this section. He quotes Deut 30:19, linking the setting forth of life and death to Israel with the publication of the law. In other words, Calvin sees Deut 30:19 as a promise that life would be obtained by us if we perfectly kept the law. Disobedience to the law is death. Yet in Deut 29:1 we read: *These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.*

Horeb is Sinai, the mountain where Moses was shown Calvary and received the Ten Commandments and all the other elements of the law. The setting forth of life and death in Deuteronomy 30 is in the context of this other covenant, not in the context of the giving of the law.

Unlike Sinai, where the people were absolutely terrified, the Deuteronomy 29 & 30 covenant is a truly gracious covenant, promising restoration to the repentant and life to those who love God.

When Paul, in Galatians 3:12 refers to the promise attached to the law, it is not the setting forth of life and death that he refers to, but, *The man who does them shall live by them*.

It seems to me that Calvin is confusing two covenants here, possibly because of his confusion of Christianity with an Old Testament theocratic ethos.)

What does the law, correctly understood (Romans 7:7-10) reveal to us about ourselves? (351, 29)

- a. *...our guilt*

Does a knowledge of the moral law help us? (351, 30f)

- a. *...by our instruction in the moral law we are rendered more inexcusable.*

Why is this? (351, 31ff)

- a. *...in the law we are taught the perfection of righteousness...the complete observance of the law is perfect righteousness before God. By it man would evidently be deemed and reckoned righteous before the heavenly judgment seat.*

How does, *the feebleness of the law*, show itself (352, 5ff)

- a. *Because observance of the law is found in none of us, we are excluded from the promises of life, and fall back into the mere curse.*

...a man may indeed view from afar the proffered promises, yet he cannot derive any benefit from them. What conclusion should a person who is thus viewing the promises draw? (352, 12ff)

- a. *...from the goodness of the promises he should the better judge his own misery, while with the hope of salvation cut off he thinks himself threatened with certain death.*

4. What state of mind will be induced in us if we, *look only upon the law*? (352,19f)
- a. *...if we look only upon the law, we can only be despondent, confused, and despairing in mind*

Why is this the only outcome that looking, *only upon the law* can produce? (352,20ff)

- a. From the law, *all of us are condemned and accursed [Gal 3:10]. And it holds us far away from the blessedness that it promises to its keepers.*

Does this mean that the promises attaching to perfect obedience to the law have been given in vain and only to mock us? (352, 29ff)

- a. *...they have not been given in vain. For when we have learned that they will be fruitless and ineffectual for us unless God, out of his free goodness, shall receive us without looking at our works, and we in faith embrace that same goodness held forth to us by the gospel, the promises do not lack effectiveness even with the condition attached. For the Lord then freely bestows all things upon us so as to add to the full measure of his kindness this gift also: that not rejecting our imperfect obedience, but rather supplying what is lacking to complete it, he causes us to receive the benefit of the promises of the law as if we had fulfilled their condition.*

5. In this section Calvin concludes his assertion that keeping God's moral law is impossible. With whom does he take issue? (353, 3)

- a. Jerome

How did Jerome seek to establish the possibility of our keeping God's moral law? (353, 6)

- a. By weaving, *long circumlocutions of various kinds of possibilities.*

Calvin cuts through this approach with a simple definition of *impossibility*, which is – what? (353, 7f)

- a. *I call "impossible" what has never been, and what God's ordination and decree prevents from ever being.*

IN support of this position Calvin quotes or refers to 12 passages of scripture. Referring to Augustine's dispute with the Pelagians, Calvin articulates an immensely important principle. What principle is that? (354, 1f)

- a. ***...it is ill-advised to pit God's might against his truth.***

None of the scriptures quoted or referred to by Calvin up to this point explicitly use the word *impossible*. Which passage does use the word and explicitly state what Calvin has been affirming? (354, 6f)

- a. Matt 19:26 *With man this is impossible but with God all things are possible*

This particular sub-section, comprising sections 3-5, is now ended. Sections 6-9 make a different point – *The law shows the righteousness of God, and as a mirror discloses our sinfulness, leading us to implore divine help.*

6. How many *functions* and uses does Calvin ascribe to the law in 354, 19)

- a. *...three*

What are they? (354, 20ff; 358, 18ff; 360, 16ff & 19ff)

- a. *...while it shows God's righteousness, that is, the righteousness alone acceptable to God, it warns, informs, convicts, and lastly condemns, every man of his own unrighteousness.*
- b. *...at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law.*
- c. *The third and principal use, which pertains more clearly to the proper purpose of the law, finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For even though they have the law written and engraved upon their hearts by the finger of God [Jer 31:33; Heb 10:16], that is, have been so moved and quickened through the directing of the Spirit that they long to obey God, they still profit by the law in two ways.*
 - a. *Here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire,*
 - b. *...because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law*

What is the first thing Calvin mentions that the law has to convict us of? (355, 2)

- a. *...insane confidence in (our) own mental powers.*

How is this insane confidence maintained by us? (355, 2ff)

- a. *...(we) can never be induced to recognise their slenderness as long as (we measure) them by a measure of (our) own choice.*

Calvin mentions another disease that can only be cured by the law's convicting function. What is it? (355, 12)

- a. *...pride.*

How do we nourish and support pride in ourselves? (355, 13ff)

- a. *So long as he is permitted to stand upon his own judgment, he passes off hypocrisy as righteousness; please with this, he is aroused against God's grace by I know not what counterfeit acts of righteousness.*

What discovery so we make if God compels us to weigh our lives *in the scales of the law, laying aside all that presumption of fictitious righteousness?* (355, 18ff)

- a. *...he discovers that he is a long way from holiness, and is in fact teeming with a multitude of vices, with which he previously thought himself undefiled.*

How deceptive is covetousness? (355, 25f)

- a. *It destroys wretched man so secretly that he does not even feel its fatal stab.*

7. If the law (without the gospel) is our mirror what three things do we see reflected in it? (355, 27ff)

- a. *...our weakness*
- b. *...the iniquity arising from this*
- c. *...the curse coming from both*

Calvin quotes a number of statements made by the apostle Paul that shows the law has this convicting function. What are they? (355, 34ff)

- a. *Through the law comes the knowledge of sin [Rom 3:20]*
- b. *Law slipped in, to increase the trespass [Rom 5:20]*
- c. *...thus it is "the dispensation of death" [2 Cor 3:7] that "brings wrath" [Rom 4:15], and slays.*

Is being brought under conviction of sin a sign of spiritual progress? (355, 39ff)

- a. *There is no doubt that the more clearly the conscience is struck with awareness of its sin, the more the iniquity grows. For stubborn disobedience against the Lawgiver is then added to transgression.*

Does the law offer any assistance to somebody under conviction of sin? (356, 2f)

- a. *...of itself the law can only accuse, condemn, and destroy.*

Calvin is at pains to point out that the above observation does not – what? (356, 5f)

- a. *...dishonour the law, nor detract at all from its excellence*

Given that the law is excellent and honourable, whence arises our problems with it? (356, 6, 8f)

- a. *...our will*
- b. *...our carnal and corrupted nature*

When our carnal and corrupted nature encounters God's law, what does it do? (356, 9f)

- a. *It ...contends violently against God's spiritual law and is in no way corrected by its discipline*

What impact does the way that we naturally react to the law have on the law's function? (356, 10ff)

- a. *...the law which had been given for salvation, provided it met with suitable hearers, turns into an occasion for sin and death.*

The law reveals God's righteousness. In doing that, what does it also do? (356, 13ff)

- a. *...the more clearly it reveals God's righteousness, conversely the more it uncovers our iniquity. The more surely it confirms the reward of life and salvation as dependant upon righteousness, the more certain it renders the destruction of the wicked.*

How do the points made so far by Calvin in relation to the law benefit us ('us' meaning born again Christians)? (356, 18f)

- a. *These maxims...are of the greatest value in more clearly commending God's beneficence.*

How is God's beneficence more clearly commended by the law? (356, 19ff)

- a. *...it is clear that by our wickedness and depravity we are prevented from enjoying the blessed life set openly before us by the law. Thereby the grace of God, which nourishes us without the support of the law, becomes sweeter, and his mercy, which bestows that grace upon us, becomes more lovely.*
- b. *From this we learn that he never tires in repeatedly benefiting us and in heaping new gifts upon us.*

8. If God's law comes to us in its full force, as it did to Paul in Romans 7, it is a profoundly disturbing experience. When God applies his law forcefully to our hearts various reactions are possible. What kind of reaction does not benefit us and what kind of reaction does benefit us? (356, 28ff; 357, 1ff)

- a. *...this is not done to cause us to fall down in despair or, completely discouraged, to rush headlong over the brink*
- b. *...dismissing the stupid opinion of (our) own strength, (we) come to realize that (we) stand and are upheld by God's hand alone; that, naked and empty-handed, they flee to his mercy, repose entirely in it, hide deep within it, and seize upon it alone for righteousness and merit*

Why are unbelievers who are brought under conviction terrified to the point of despair? (356, 31f)

- a. *...because of the obstinacy of their heart.*

9. Calvin opens this section by amassing supporting statements from Augustine. I recommend you to meditate on them. They are very helpful.

Of the three functions of the law, which one do Augustine's words help us to appreciate? (358, 7)

- a. *...this first function of the law*

(IJ: In line 7 Calvin uses a term that we may not have encountered previously: *the reprobate*. This is another term for those who do not believe the gospel, but it says more about them than simply that they do not believe. Reprobation is something that God does but Christians disagree about exactly what it means. Some feel that to protect God's good name it is necessary to view reprobation simply as God passing over some people rather than acting to save them. Calvin, who cannot conceive of anything happening outside of God's control, goes further. We will see later in the Institutes that he does believe in a 'double-decree' whereby God chooses the lost as well as the saved. The effect as far as people is concerned is the same but each position leads to a different view of God's sovereignty.)

10. We move now to the Law's second function, which is = what? (358, 18ff)

- a. *...at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats of the law.*

How does this restraining function of the law work in the unregenerate? (358, 21ff)

- a. *...they are restrained not because their inner mind is stirred or affected, but because, **being bridled, so to speak**, they keep their hands from outward activity, and hold inside the depravity that otherwise they would wantonly have indulged.*

Alongside this outward conformity to God's law, what feelings towards God and his law exist in the heart of the unregenerate? (358, 28ff)

- a. *...they do not have hearts disposed to fear and obedience toward God. Indeed, the more they restrain themselves, the more strongly are they inflamed; they burn and boil within,*

and are ready to do anything or burst forth anywhere – but for the fact that this dread of the law hinders them...they also hate the law itself, and curse God the Lawgiver.

(IJ: Obviously, such hatred and cursing does not take an open form. What does it look like in our society today?)

Why does God tolerate this, *constrained and forced righteousness*? (359, 3ff)

- a. *It, is necessary for the public community of men.*

If the law did not carry out this outwardly restraining function what would happen? (359, 5ff)

- a. *...everything, would be, tumultuously confounded. This would happen if everything were permitted to all men.*

What does 1 Timothy 1:9-10 show? (359, 23f)

- a. *...the law is like a halter to check the raging and otherwise limitlessly ranging lusts of the flesh.*

11. *There are two kinds of men whom the law leads by its tutelage to Christ.* What characterises the first kind? (359, 29ff)

- a. *...because they are too full of their own virtue or of the assurance of their own righteousness, they are not fit to receive Christ's grace unless they first be emptied.*

How does the law bring such people to a right frame of mind? (359, 32ff)

- a. *...through the recognition of their own misery, the law brings them down to humility in order thus to prepare them to seek what previously they did not realise they lacked.*

What is the law to the second kind of person? (359, 35ff)

- a. *...a bridle to restrain them from so slackening the reins of the lust of the flesh as to fall clean away from all pursuit of righteousness.*

What danger confronts the soul whose lusts are unconstrained? (360, 2f)

- a. *...forgetfulness and contempt of God.*

Calvin describes how those who become Christians are kept safe from this particular danger through the influence of his law upon them even while unregenerate. Even though the law, working in this way, does not immediately bring us under conviction to Christ it is still useful to those who will later become Christians. How is it useful to them? (360, 7ff)

- a. *This is not that chaste and pure fear such as ought to be in his sons, but a fear useful in teaching them true godliness according to their capacity.*

...all who have at any time groped about in ignorance of God will admit that it happened to them in such a way that the bridle of the law restrained them in some fear and reverence toward God until, regenerated by the Spirit, they began wholeheartedly to love him. Do you agree?

12. In how many ways do believers profit by the law of God? (360, 23)

- a. *...in two ways*

What are the two ways in which believers profit from God's law? (360, 24f & 34ff)

- a. *Here is the best instrument for them to learn more thoroughly each day the nature of the Lord's will to which they aspire*

- b. *...because we need not only teaching but also exhortation, the servant of God will also avail himself of this benefit of the law.*

Why do even believers need God's law to instruct them? (360, 31ff)

- a. *...no man has heretofore attained to such wisdom as to be unable, from the daily instruction of the law, to make fresh progress toward a purer knowledge of the divine will.*

How is the servant of God to be exhorted by God's law? (360, 36)

- a. *...by frequent meditation upon it*

What will the believer who frequently meditates on God's law receive from that practice? (360, 36ff)

- a. He/She will be:
 - a. *...aroused to obedience*
 - b. *...strengthened in it*
 - c. *...drawn back from the slippery path of transgression*

Calvin likens the law's work in the life of the believer to two things. What are they? (361, 6ff)

- a. The law:
 - a. *...is like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work*
 - b. *...remains a constant sting, that will not let him stand still*

For the law to be profitable to us in the ways outlined, what do we need God to instil in us? (361, 19)

- a. *...a readiness to obey.*

How do we know from in the passages from the Psalms Calvin has quoted and alluded to, that the Psalmist, *lays hold not only of the precepts but the accompanying promise of grace, which alone sweetens what is bitter?* (361, 21ff)

- a. *...what would be less lovable than the law if, with importuning and threatening alone, it troubled souls through fear, and distressed them through fright?*

Whom did David apprehend in the law, without whom there would have been, *no delight or sweetness?* (361, 24)

- a. *...the Mediator*

13. What distinction do we need to bear in mind when interpreting and applying 2 Corinthians 3:7? (361, 31ff)

- a. *Moses has admirably taught that the law, which among sinners can engender nothing but death, ought among the saints to have a better and more excellent use.*

What example does Calvin employ that implies this distinction? (361, 33ff)

- a. *When about to die, he decreed to the people as follows: "Lay to your hearts all the words which this day I enjoin upon you, that you may command them to your children, and teach them to keep, do, and fulfil all those things written in the book of this law. For they have not been commanded to you in vain, but for each to live in them." [Deut 32:46-47]*

How has the role of God's law changed for us because we have become believers? (362, 14ff)

- a. *...the law is not now acting toward us as a rigorous enforcement officer who is not satisfied unless the requirements are met. But in this perfection to which it exhorts us, the law points out the goal toward which throughout life we are to strive.*

In what way does the law encourage us to maintain our commitment to its standards? (362, 20ff)

- a. *...this whole life is a race [cf 1 Cor 9:24-26]; when its course has been run, the Lord will grant us to attain that goal to which our efforts now press forward from afar.*

14. What is the subject of this section? (362, 28)

- a. *I am still speaking of the moral law*

For believers, what does the moral law no longer do? (362, 24, 30ff)

- a. *...bind their consciences with a curse*
- b. *...it is not for them what it formerly was: it may no longer condemn and destroy their consciences by frightening and confounding them*

What does the moral law do for believers? (362, 23ff, 363, 15ff)

- a. *...the law has power to exhort believers*
- b. *This is...a power...to shake off their sluggishness, by repeatedly urging them, and to pinch them awake to their imperfection.*
- c. *...through Christ the teaching of the law remains inviolable; by teaching, admonishing, reproving, and correcting, it forms us and prepares us for every good work [cf 2 Timothy 3:16-17].*

What opinion about Christ's teaching, called by Calvin, *a false interpretation*, was, prevalent among the Jews? (363, 1f)

- a. *...the notion that he would abolish the law*

How did Christ respond to this interpretation of his teaching? (363, 1)

- a. *...he...refuted the notion that he would abolish the law*

How do we avoid misinterpreting Christ's and Paul's teaching on the place of the law in our lives? (363, 6ff)

- a. *...to avoid stumbling on the same stone, let us accurately distinguish what in the law has been abrogated from what still remains in force*

15. What is the condition of all who seek to establish a relationship with God on their obedience to his law? (363, 23ff)

- a. *All who are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be every one who does not fulfill all things' [Gal 3:10; Deut 27:26]*

What, therefore, is necessary if we are to be saved? (363, 28ff)

- a. *...we must be released from the bonds of the law, unless we wish to perish miserably under them.*

What form does the curse of the law take in this life? (363, 31ff)

- a. *...harsh and dangerous requirements, which remit nothing of the extreme penalty of the law, and suffer no transgression to go unpunished.*

How are we redeemed from this curse? (363, 34)

- a. *Christ was made a curse for us*

What is the outcome of Christ's taking our place in this way? (363, 40ff)

- a. *That we should not be borne down by an unending bondage, which would agonise our consciences with the fear of death.*

Does this mean we can completely disregard the law's requirements? (364, 2ff)

- a. *...no part of the authority of the law is withdrawn without our having always to receive it with the same veneration and obedience.*

16. What is the subject of this section? (364, 5)

- a. *The ceremonies*

In what way does Calvin qualify his statement that, *Christ by his coming has terminated them?* (364, 7f)

- a. *...but has not deprived them of anything of their sanctity; rather he has approved and honoured it.*

What was the purpose of the ceremonies? (364, 8ff)

- a. *...the ceremonies would have provided the people of the Old Covenant with an empty show if the power of Christ's death and resurrection had not been displayed therein*

If the ceremonies had not come to an end with Christ, what would be our position? (364, 11ff)

- a. *...if they had not ceased, we would be unable today to discern for what purpose they were given. (IJ: I take it by this that Calvin means that we would not know to what they pointed.)*

Not that the holy patriarchs were without the preaching that contains the hope of salvation and of eternal life, but – what? (364, 28f)

- a. *They only glimpsed from afar and in shadowy outline what we see today in full daylight.*

What effect has the death of Christ had on the ceremonies? (364, 37ff)

- a. *...although the rites of the law have ceased to be observed, by their termination one may better recognise how useful they were before the coming of Christ, who in abrogating their use has by his death sealed their force and effect.*

17. Why is the interpretation of Colossians 2:13-14 (*And you, when you were dead in your sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh; he hath quickened together with him, forgiving you all offences: Blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And he hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross*) of slightly greater difficulty than the interpretation of other passages that refer to the abolition of the law? (365, 9f)

- a. *This statement seems to extend the abolition of the law to the point that we now have nothing to do with its decrees*

Interpreters of this passage have adopted three different positions with regard to its application. What are those three positions? (365, 11ff, 14f; 366, 20ff)

- a. Some ...*understand it simply of the moral law, whose inexorable severity rather than its teaching they interpret as abolished.*
- b. Others...*perceive that...Paul's words...apply properly speaking to the ceremonial law;*
- c. *The apostle rightly, therefore, calls the ceremonies "written bonds against" those observing them, since through such rites they openly certify their own condemnation and uncleanness [cf Heb 10:3]. (Heb 10:3 says: But in them there is made a commemoration of sins every year.)*

Let's work our way through these views, one by one.

What is Calvin's estimate of the first position? (365, 11)

- a. They are **mistaken** who understand it simply of the moral law

What is his estimate of the second position? (365, 13, 22f)

- a. Those who adopt it ...*more carefully* (weigh) *Paul's words.*
- b. ...*the second group of expositors rightly criticizes the first*
- c. *But the second group also still does not seem to explain the meaning of the apostle very well.*

What is the outcome of their ...*more carefully weighing Paul's words*? (365, 13f)

- a. They ...*perceive that these apply properly speaking to the ceremonial law*

What evidence do those who adopt the second position bring forth? (365, 15f)

- a. ...*they point out that the word "decree" is used in Paul more than once.*
- b. ...*he also addresses the Ephesians thus: "He is our peace, who has made us both one...abolishing...the law of commandments resting on decrees, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two" [Eph 2:14-15].*

Are Calvin and 'the second group' in agreement about the meaning of 'decrees' in Ephesians 2:14-15? (365, 20ff)

- a. *There is no doubt that this statement concerns the ceremonies, for he speaks of them as a wall that divides the Jews from the Gentiles [Eph 1:14]. (That's a 'Yes', by the way.)*

Does Calvin accept that 'decree' in Colossians 2:13-14 means exactly the same thing as 'decree' in Ephesians 2:14-15? (365, 25f)

- a. *I am not at all happy about comparing the two passages in every detail.*
- b. *When Paul would assure the Ephesians of their adoption into the fellowship of Israel, he teaches that the hindrance which once held them back has now been removed. That was in the ceremonies. For the ritual cleansings and sacrifices, whereby the Jews were consecrated to the Lord, separated them from the Gentiles. **Now who cannot see that a loftier mystery is referred to in the letter to the Colossians?***

What is this, *loftier mystery*? (365, 32ff)

- a. *The question there (ie in Ephesians) concerned the Mosaic observances, to which the false apostles were trying to drive the Christian people. But as in the letter to the Galatians he carries that discussion deeper – reverting, so to speak, to its starting point – so he does in this passage. (ie the Colossians passage)*

(IJ: Trying to put this into some sort of plainer English, I think what Calvin is saying here is that in Ephesians Paul is concerned with the contemporary situation [*ie* contemporary to him] in which *engaging in the ceremonies* divided Jews from gentiles. One reason the ceremonies had to be abolished was to enable the creation of, *one new man*. In Galatians and Colossians Paul is not concentrating on contemporary practice but the reason for the establishment of the ceremonies *in the first place* (the, *starting point*). The ceremonies were established originally to point to the need for a mediator. In the following paragraph Calvin tells us exactly how they did that.)

What was it about the ceremonies that supports Calvin's view that, *the decree that was against us*, refers to them? (366, 10f, 22f)

- a. *...in the Jewish ceremonies there was confession of sins rather than atonement for them.*
- b. *...through such rites they openly certify their own condemnation and uncleanness [cf Heb 10:3]*

The Jewish sacrifices accomplished nothing but – what? (366, 12f)

- a. *...to confess **themselves** guilty of death*

Their rituals of cleansing accomplished nothing but – what? (366, 15)

- a. They confessed **themselves** unclean

What did this repeated confession amount to? (366, 15f)

- a. *They thus repeatedly renewed the “written bond” of their sin and impurity.*

What was missing? (366, 12)

- a. *...release*

In the final paragraph in this section, Calvin sums up what he has been saying. What is his first point? (366, 34ff)

- a. The fact that genuine gospel believers who lived in the Old Testament era took part in these ceremonies, thus testifying that they were deserving of death, does not contradict their, does not contradict their experience of grace (*...the same grace with us*). Such grace was attained by them in Christ, not through their participation in the ceremonies.

Why are the ceremonies called in Colossians 2, “*written bonds against*” the salvation of men? (366, 30f)

- a. *...they were, so to speak, binding legal documents, which attested men's obligation*

Why is it dangerous for Christians to, *slip back*, to feeling that they should observe some or all of the Old Testament ceremonies? (366, 36ff)

- a. It leads to our being *...deprived of the benefit of Christ, since, when once he had carried out the eternal atonement, he abolished those daily observances, which were able only to attest sins but could do nothing to blot them out.*

FOR REFLECTION

1. Given the law's role in convicting us of our unrighteousness (pp354ff), how should we present its requirements to unbelievers? Think back to the part played by conviction in your own conversion. How specific was the conviction that you experienced? Did it relate to particular sins (Paul tells us in Romans 7 that he was, by coming to a right understanding of the law, convicted

particularly of the sin of covetousness)? Or was it more general? How can we apply this understanding of how God dealt with us to our dealings with others?

2. What are, *the evils of covetousness*? (355, 21f)
3. 361,36ff Do we regard transgression as a *slippery path*, to be avoided at all costs?