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PREPARATION

1. I recommend Dr Calhoun's Worldwide Classroom lecture on the Sacraments. As he says/writes towards the conclusion of the lecture, he cannot cover everything Calvin says about the sacraments but he hopes that his lecture is a, 'Road Map', through Calvin's main ideas.
2. Calvin wrote about the sacraments in the midst of two controversies - First, there was the controversy with Rome over what constitutes a sacrament, what happens when one participates in a sacrament and transubstantiation. Secondly, a controversy had broken out between Zwingli, who is usually regarded to have taken an exclusively memorialist position and Luther who taught something that came to be called, after his death, consubstantiation. Luther's idea was based on the ubiquity of the body and blood of Christ - something that Calvin does not accept.

EXPLORATORY

1. How did Augustine define, 'sacrament'? (1277, 11ff)
 - a. *...a visible sign of a sacred thing, or:*
 - b. *...a visible form of an invisible grace*What does Calvin think of this definition? (1277, 13f)
 - a. *...there is something obscure in his brevity.*How has Calvin sought to remedy this deficiency? (1277, 15f)
 - a. *I have decided to give a fuller statement, using more words to dispel all doubt.*How many definitions of, 'sacrament' does Calvin give? (1277, 2ff & 7ff)
 - a. TwoWhat is Calvin's fullest definition of, 'sacrament'? (1277, 2ff)
 - a. *...it is an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith;*
 - b. *...we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men.*What is his, 'briefer definition'? (1277, 7ff)
 - a. *...a testimony of divine grace toward us, confirmed by an outward sign, with mutual attestation of our piety toward him.*For whose benefit does Calvin use more words, and why? (1277, 14f)
 - a. *...the less educated, who have been, deceived.*For whose benefit have sacraments been instituted? (1277, 4f)
 - a. For the benefit of the individual believer - *to sustain the weakness of our faith.*
2. From what language does the word, 'sacrament', come? (1277, 19)
 - a. LatinWhat Greek word is always rendered, 'sacrament' in Latin translations? (1277, 19; 1278, 8)
 - a. Mystery

So much for the word itself, it is the Latin equivalent to the Greek word that is usually translated into English as, 'mystery'. What can we deduce about the meaning of the word, 'sacrament' from what we know about, 'mystery'.

3. What always precedes the sacramental rite? (1278, 15)

- a. *...a...promise*

What relationship does the sacrament bear to the promise? (1278, 15f)

- a. *It, is joined to it as a sort of appendix.*

With what purpose? (1278, 16ff)

- a. *...with the purpose of confirming and sealing the promise itself, and of making it more evident to us an in a sense ratifying it.*

In what way does God provide, for our ignorance and dullness? (1278, 15ff)

- a. With the promise

In what way does he provide for our weakness? (1278, 16ff)

- a. With the sacramental sign.

Does the sacrament add to the promise? (1278, 19ff)

- a. *...properly speaking, it is not so much needed to confirm his Sacred Word as to establish us in faith in it. For God's truth is of itself firm and sure enough, and it cannot receive better confirmation from any source than from itself.*

What is it about our faith that requires sacramental sustenance? (1278, 23ff)

- a. *...as our faith is slight and feeble unless it be propped on all sides and sustained by every means, it trembles, wavers, totters, and at last gives way.*

Why is the promise itself not sufficient to sustain lively faith on our part? (1278, 27ff)

- a. *...we are creatures who always creep on the ground, cleave to the flesh, and, do not think about or even conceive of anything spiritual*

What is God doing in providing for our needs through sacramental signs? (1278, 25ff)

- a. *...our merciful Lord, according to his infinite kindness, so tempers himself to our capacity...he condescends to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and to set before us in the flesh a mirror of spiritual blessings.*
- b. *...if we were incorporeal (as Chrysostom says), he would give us these very things naked and incorporeal. Now, because we have souls engrafted in bodies, he imparts spiritual things under visible ones.*

Calvin adds a caveat, lest he should be misunderstood. What is it? (1278, 34ff)

- a. *Not that the gifts set before us in the sacraments are bestowed with the natures of the things, but that they have been marked with this signification by God.*

How would you express this caution in your own words?

- a. The elements - water, bread and wine in the one cup - do not undergo any change nor acquire any power to make the things they signify happen. The things signified happen through the direct actions of God on our souls. Nonetheless, God has given these elements the job of communicating to us the promised realities.

4. When Calvin's opponents say, *a sacrament consists of the word and the outward sign*, what do they mean by, *the word*? (1279, 3ff)

- a. The formula used by them (*whispered without meaning*) in consecrating the elements, described by Calvin as: *one whispered without meaning and without faith, a mere noise, like a magic incantation, which has the force to consecrate the element.*

How should the word, in this context, be understood? (1279, 5f, 37ff)

- a. *...it should, when preached, make us understand what the visible sign means.*
- b. *...when we hear the sacramental word mentioned, **let us understand the promise**, proclaimed in a clear voice by the minister, to lead the people by the hand wherever the sign tends and directs us.*

Not content with mumbling the consecration formula, those who officiated took to doing so in Latin, a language not readily understood by most hearers. What other development served to mystify the consecration process? (1279, 13ff)

- a. *Afterward, superstition came to the point that they believed consecration duly performed **only in a hoarse whisper** which few could hear.*

What, according to Augustine, is the effect of, 'adding' the word to the element? (1279, 17f)

- a. *...it will become a sacrament*

Wherein lies the ability of the word to produce this transformation? (1279, 20)

- a. *Not because it is said, but because it is believed.*
- b. *In the word itself the fleeting sound is one thing; the power remaining another.*

What do sacraments require in order to beget faith? (1279, 30)

- a. *...the sacrament requires preaching to beget faith*

5. In the opening words of this section Calvin spells out the objection to his position that he is engaging with. What is it? (1280, 4ff)

- a. *We (ie individual participants in the sacraments) **either know that the word of God which precedes the sacrament is the true will of God.***

If we know, prior to hearing it preached, that a word declared at a particular sacramental occasion is true, what, according to Calvin's adversaries is the outcome? (1280, 6f)

- a. *...we learn nothing new from the sacrament, which comes after.*

What if the word preached is not something we already know? (1280, 7f)

- a. *...the sacrament (whose whole force rests in the word) also will not teach it.*

What does Calvin use as a picture of the role of sacraments, in relation to the word preached? (1280, 9f)

- a. *...the seals which are attached to government documents and other public acts*

Wherein do these seals resemble sacraments in their function? (1280, 10ff)

- a. *They, are nothing taken by themselves, for they would be attached in vain if the parchment had nothing written on it. Yet, when added to the writing, they do not on that account fail to confirm and seal what is written.*

What Biblical evidence is there to support the position Calvin advocated by Calvin? (1280, 15f)

- a. *Paul called circumcision a seal in Romans 4:11.*

What account does Paul give of the relationship between God's covenant with Abraham and circumcision? (1280, 16ff)

- a. *Abraham's circumcision was not for his justification but for the seal of that covenant by faith in which he had already been justified.*

How does Calvin sum up the relationship between sacrament and promise? (1280, 21)

- a. *...each confirms the other.*

What supporting characteristic does a sacrament bring to a promise? (1280, 22ff)

- a. Clarity

What is the source of this clarity? (1280, 23ff)

- a. *...they have this characteristic over and above the word because they represent them (ie, promises) as painted in a picture from life.*

Why do some people object to the analogy that Calvin is using (sacraments = seals)? (1280, 25ff)

- a. *...sacraments...consist of physical elements of this world...cannot suffice or be adequate to seal God's promises, which are spiritual and eternal*

How does the believer ensure he is not distracted by the physical nature of a sacramental rite? (1280, 32ff)

- a. *...the believer, when he sees the sacraments with his own eyes, does not halt at the physical sight of them, but by those steps (which I have indicated by analogy) rises up in devout contemplation to those lofty mysteries which lie hidden in the sacraments.*

6. In this section Calvin gives two examples of actions that, to have any meaning, must follow words. What two examples does he give? (1281, 2&5)

- a. *...the slaughter of a sow*
- b. *...giving the right hand*

In what way are these actions transformed from meaningless gestures into tokens of great significance? (1281, 6ff)

- a. *...when words precede, the laws of covenants are by such signs ratified, although they were first conceived, established and decreed in words.*

How does this analogy enable Calvin to describe the sacraments? (1281, 9f)

- a. *...exercises which make us more certain of the trustworthiness of God's Word.*

Why does God use physical things as well as his word to communicate with us, and in what way do they achieve what the word alone will not achieve? (1281, 10ff)

- a. *...because we are of flesh, they are shown us under things of flesh, to instruct us according to our dull capacity, and to lead us by the hand as tutors lead children.*

Why does Augustine call a sacrament "a visible word"? (1281, 13ff)

- a. *...it represents God's promises as painted in a picture and sets them before our sight, portrayed graphically and in the manner of images.*

What two further phrases (comparisons) does Calvin suggest that we might use for sacraments - derived from the service that sacraments perform for us? (1281, 18 & 23)

- a. *...the pillars of our faith*
- b. *...mirrors*

7. In Calvin's view, does the fact that some receive sacraments without faith invalidate the role they play to the faithful or the analogy of a seal that he has used for that role? (1282, 1)

- a. He firstly shows that this is no argument against the validity of the view that he has been advancing for, if the same logic is applied to people's rejection of Christ and the gospel it would mean that they would not be what they claim to be because some do not accept them as such.

- b. It strengthens the seal analogy because people also reject the authority of the seal - *the comparison used by me above ought to be received with increasing favour.*

What is necessary for us to recognise God's offer of mercy and the pledge of his grace both in, *his Sacred Word and sacraments*? (1282, 13f)

- a. *...it is understood only by those who take Word and sacraments with sure faith.*

What does Augustine helpfully point out in this connection? (1282, 17f)

- a. *...the efficacy of the Word is brought to light in the sacrament, not because it is spoken, but because it is believed.*

What do sacraments, rightly understood, attest to the believer and what is the effect of that attestation to the believing mind? (1282, 32ff)

- a. *We have determined, therefore, that sacraments are truly named the testimonies of God's grace and are like seals of the good will that he feels toward us, which by attesting that good will to us, sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith.*

What trifling objection is made to this view? (1282, 37ff)

- a. *...our faith cannot be made better if it is already good, for it is not faith unless it leans unshaken, firm and steadfast upon God's mercy.*

Calvin feels that this is a claim to what sort of faith? (1283, 3f)

- a. *...such perfection of faith as no one of the children of men ever attained or ever will attain in this life.*

Calvin points to two biblical examples of true faith that led those who possessed it to seek its strengthening from Christ himself. What are they? (1283, 1f & 5f)

- a. *...the apostles, Luke 17:5*
- b. *The man who said, I believe, O Lord; help my unbelief [Mark 9:24]*

8. What further objection does Calvin address in this section's first paragraph? (1283, 13ff)

- a. Philip required the eunuch, before baptism, to affirm that he believed, *with **all his heart***. Wholehearted faith is strong faith. How could the sacrament of baptism have strengthened the eunuch's wholehearted faith?

With what arguments and observations does Calvin respond to this view? (1283, 15ff)

- a. An argument from the objectors' own experience: I ask them whether they do not feel a good portion of their heart devoid of faith, and whether they do not daily acknowledge. New increases.
- b. An argument from the requirement to progress: We therefore thrice miserable Christians if we grow old without advancement, for our faith ought to progress through all stages of our life until it grows to full manhood [Eph 4:13]
- c. An argument from the true meaning of, to believe with all our heart:
 - i. *...it is not to believe Christ perfectly, but only to embrace him from the heart and with a sincere mind; not to be sated with him, but to hunger, thirst, and aspire to him with fervent affection.*
 - ii. *It is customary in scripture to speak of something as done, with the whole heart, when it means sincerely and deeply, [Ps 119:10, 111:1; 138:1]*
 - iii. *...when he (ie, God) rebukes false and deceitful men, he commonly reproaches them, with...a double heart [Ps 12:2]*

Calvin's detractors move to a second objection, which is - what? (1283, 32ff)

- a. *If faith be increased through sacraments...the Holy Spirit was given in vain, whose power and work is to begin, sustain, and consummate faith.*

What concession is made (by Calvin) to this position? (1284, 1ff)

- a. *I certainly admit to them that faith is the proper and entire work of the Holy Spirit*
1284, 6: *...for one blessing of God which they proclaim, we recognise three.* What one blessing do they proclaim? (1283, 33ff)

- a. *The gift of the Holy Spirit, whose power and work is to begin, sustain, and consummate faith.*

What three blessings does Calvin recognise as the means by which faith is brought to birth and sustained? (1284, 7ff)

- a. *...first, the Lord teaches and instructs us by his Word.*
- b. *Secondly, he confirms it by the sacraments.*
- c. *Finally, he illumines our minds by the light of his Holy Spirit and opens our hearts for the Word and sacraments to enter in, which would otherwise only strike our ears and appear before our eyes, but not at all affect us within.*

9. What particular ministry does Calvin assign to the sacraments? (1284, 13)

- a. *...the confirmation and increase of faith*

Who or what needs to act in, through and with the sacraments for this ministry to be effectual? (1284, 21ff)

- a. *But the sacraments properly fulfil their office only when the Spirit, that inward teacher, comes to them*

As far as the sacraments themselves are concerned (*ie* the material elements only) what two factors is Calvin careful to point out so that we do not misunderstand the source of their effectiveness? (1284, 16ff)

- a. *Not that I suppose there is some secret force or other perpetually seated in them by which they are able to promote or confirm faith by themselves.*
- b. *Rather, I consider that they have been instituted by the Lord to the end that they may serve to establish and increase faith.*

In the absence of the Spirit, what can sacraments accomplish? (1284, 25ff)

- a. *...nothing more than the sun shining on blind eyes or a voice sounding in deaf ears.*

Wherein does the power of the sacraments to confirm and increase faith reside? (1284, 27f)

- a. *I make such a division between Spirit and sacraments that the power to act rests with the former*

What role does this leave for the sacramental elements themselves? (1284, 29)

- a. *...the ministry alone*

What does the activity of the Holy Spirit enable the sacraments to achieve? (1284, 30f)

- a. *...great effect*

And in the absence of the Spirit's working, what will the effect of the sacraments be? (1284, 29f)

- a. *...empty and trifling*

In the third paragraph in this section, Calvin returns to the illustration he has used already to help us to understand the complementary roles of the Holy Spirit and the elements in the

sacraments, ie, the necessity of not just the organs but also the senses of sight and sound to be present before either objects or noises achieve anything.

To what work of the Holy Spirit are our abilities to see and hear analogous? (1285, 6f)

- a. *...the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, which is to conceive, sustain, nourish and establish faith.*

What two conclusions are legitimate if we accept this analogy? (1285, 8ff)

- a. *...the sacraments profit not a whit without the power of the Holy Spirit*
- b. *...nothing prevents them from strengthening and enlarging faith in hearts already taught by that Schoolmaster.*

What difference is there between the ability granted by the Holy Spirit to see and hear God's message through the sacraments and the abilities to see physical objects and hear sounds? (1285, 11ff)

- a. *There is only this difference: that our ears and eyes have naturally received the faculty of hearing and seeing; but Christ does the same thing in our hearts by special grace beyond measure of nature.*

10. What, *objections which trouble some men*, is Calvin referring to? (1285, 16ff)

- a. *Ascribing to creatures (ie, to the sacramental elements of water, bread and wine) either the increase or confirmation of faith*

Why are people troubled by this? (1285, 17ff)

- a. *If we hold the view that faith is increased and confirmed simply by sacramental elements...injustice is done to the Spirit of God, who should be recognised as (the increase and confirmation of faith's) sole author.*

How is this error avoided in the stance Calvin maintains? (1285, 29ff)

- a. *...we do not snatch from him the credit for confirming and increasing it*
- b. *...rather, we assert that what increases and confirms faith is precisely the preparation of our minds by his inward illumination to receive the confirmation extended by the sacraments.*

What does the Holy Spirit do to ensure that the Word does not beat our ears in vain, and that the sacraments may not strike our eyes in vain? (1285, 38ff)

- a. *...the Spirit shows us that in them it is God speaking to us, softening the stubbornness of our heart, and composing it to that obedience which it owes the Word of the Lord.*
- b. *Finally, the Spirit transmits those outward words and sacraments from our ears to our soul.*

Calvin uses another illustration to bring even greater clarity (it will become crystal clear, 1285, 23f) to his meaning. From what sphere of activity is this further illustration drawn? (1285, 24ff)

- a. Human reasoning and persuasion.

What is required for an attempt at persuasion to be successful? (1285, 24ff)

- a. The person attempting to persuade must think of, all the arguments by which the object of the persuasion. May be drawn to the persuader's opinion.
- b. The person being persuaded must have a keen and sharp judgment by which to weigh the validity of the persuader's arguments.
- c. He also needs a teachable disposition and be ready to listen.

- d. The object of persuasion has to have an estimate of the persuader's faith and prudence as may predispose him to adopt the persuader's opinion.

If all these things are present, what will the outcome be? (1285, 35ff)

- a. *...they will immediately cause the hearer, whom you are advising, to obey your advice, which he would otherwise have laughed at.*

How is this analogous to the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to the sacraments? (1285, 38ff)

- a. *The Spirit does this same sort of work in us. For, that the Word may not beat your ears in vain, and that the sacraments may not strike your eyes in vain, the Spirit shows us that in them it is God speaking to us, softening the stubbornness of our heart, and composing it to that obedience which it owes the Word of the Lord.*

What is the final aspect of this particular work of the Spirit? (1286, 1ff)

- a. *Finally, the Spirit transmits these outward words and sacraments from our ears to our soul.*

How is the impression we receive from the sacraments described and to what is it compared? (1286, 10ff)

- a. *...a sort of intermediate brilliance...the rays of the sun.*

11. In this section and the next Calvin develops the thought stated at outset in the final paragraph of the preceding section: ***Word and sacraments confirm our faith*** when they set before our eyes the good will of our Heavenly Father toward us, by the knowledge of whom the whole firmness of our faith stands fast and increases in strength.

Section 11 concentrates on the role played by the Word in this confirmation and section 12 on the sacraments. In both, stress is laid not on the outward means themselves but on the work of the Spirit of God in preparing us to be ministered to by them and in the way in which he uses both Word and sacraments to confirm and establish our faith.

Our Lord Jesus used a particular term for his word that teaches us that from it, faith takes its beginning, increase and perfection. What is that term? (1286, 14)

- a. Seed

What two possibilities does the use of this term suggest? (1286, 15ff)

- a. *...a seed, if it falls in a deserted and neglected part of a field, will only die*
 b. *...if it is cast in soil fitly cultivated and tended, it will bear its fruit with abundant increase.*

How are these two pictures worked out in what happens to God's word? (1286, 17ff)

- a. *So also the Word of God, if it falls upon any stiff-necked person, will become as barren as if it were cast upon sand;*
 b. *...if it lights upon a soul cultivated by the hand of the Heavenly Spirit, it will be most fruitful.*

1286, 25: Applying this picture of seed to the Word, Paul excellently explains both of these effects in various passages.

What enables the Word of God to, *bear its fruit with abundant increase*?

- a. ... *the ministry of the Spirit [2 Cor 3:6]...the power of the Holy Spirit... for the inward illumination and moving of the mind.*

What part does human activity play in this process? (1286, 30ff)

- a. *But when he wishes elsewhere to teach of what avail God's Word itself is as preached by man, he compares the ministers themselves to farmers who, when they have put their toil and effort into tilling the earth, have nothing more to do [1 Cor 3:6-9].*

This leads Calvin to state, explicitly and clearly because we need to be aware of it and to keep it in mind, an important distinction, which is - what? (1287, 1f)

- a. ...*what man can do of himself, and what is reserved to God.*

How does Paul regard, *what man can do of himself*? (1286, 36f)

- a. *Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything [1 Cor 3:7]*

Who brings this human activity to a glorious outcome and effect? (1286, 37ff)

- a. *God...gives the growth [1 Cor 3:7]. Thus, the apostles express the power of the Spirit in their preaching, as far as God uses the instruments ordained by himself for the unfolding of his spiritual grace.*

12. What two Biblical examples does Calvin give of instances in which God barred people who were not entitled to claim his promises from accessing and using symbols associated with those promises?

- a. The banning of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, lest, even though they had ruined themselves in an irreversible way, they clung to the symbol of God's promise of immortality as a source of hope.
- b. Ephesians 2:12ff: the gentiles, who were excluded from God's covenants with the Jews, were also excluded from circumcision - one of the principal symbols of covenant participation.

What conclusion does Calvin draw from this preparedness of God to remove symbols of his grace where there is no underlying reality to justify their presence? (1287, 3ff)

- a. *Sacraments, moreover, are so much confirmations of our faith that the Lord sometimes, when he would remove confidence, in the very things that had been promised by him in the sacraments, takes away the sacraments themselves.*

In the second paragraph, Calvin turns to a second objection, which is - what? (1287, 21ff)

- a. On Calvin's view - that the sacraments confirm and establish our faith - *the glory of God passes down to the creatures, and so much power is attributed to them, and is thus to this extent diminished*

What is Calvin's ready answer to this assertion? (1287, 23ff)

- a. ...*we place no power in creatures. I say only this: God uses means and instruments which he himself sees to be expedient, that all things may serve his glory, since he is Lord and Judge of all.*

Calvin gives three additional examples of created things that we commonly associate with blessings and comforts, asserting that neither of them, *is anything save insofar as he distributes his blessings to us by these instruments*. What are they? (1287, 26ff)

- a. ...*bread and other foods*
- b. ...*the sun*

c. ...*heat*

How does the use he makes of the sacraments parallel his use of bread, the sun and heat? (1287, 30ff)

a. *In like manner, he nourishes faith spiritually through the sacraments*

What is it about the sacraments that qualifies them to be used by God in this way? (1287, 31ff)

a. *...the sacraments, whose one function is to set his promises before our eyes to be looked upon, indeed, to be guarantees of them to us.*

What duty do we have, expressed negatively by Calvin in this section, towards created things in general, including the sacramental elements? (1287, 33ff)

a. *It is our duty to put no confidence in other creatures which have been destined for our use by God's generosity and beneficence, and through whose ministry he lavishes the gifts of his bounty upon us; nor to admire and proclaim them as the causes of our good.*

b. *In the same way, neither ought our confidence to inhere in the sacraments, nor the glory of God be transferred to them.*

How is the same thought expressed positively? (1287, 39ff)

a. *Rather, laying aside all things, both our faith and our confession ought to rise up to him who is the author of the sacraments and of all things.*

13. Sum up the position of those with whom Calvin takes issue in this section. (1288, 2ff)

a. *Sacrament, they say, although it has many senses among reputable authors, has only one that accords with, 'signs'. That is, it signifies the solemn oath that the soldier took to the commander when he entered military service.*

If we accept this as the primary meaning of sacrament, what would our definition of sacraments be? (1288, 7ff)

a. *...by our signs do we profess Christ our commander, and testify that we serve under his ensign....symbols to distinguish us from profane men.*

To what extent should we derive our understanding of, 'sacrament', from its common use among the Romans as a soldier's oath of allegiance? (1288, 16ff)

a. *Not at all. ...it is abundantly clear from the preceding (ie, section 2) that the ancients (ie, early Christian leaders and theologians) who applied the name, "sacraments" to signs had given no attention to the use of this word by Latin writers.*

What did, 'the ancients', do with, 'sacrament'? (1288, 18ff)

a. *...they **invented this new meaning** for their own convenience, simply to designate sacred signs by it...they can be seen to have **transferred the term** to the meaning now in use*

What other term have they treated in the same way? (1288, 23)

a. *...faith*

What was the original meaning of, 'faith'? (1288, 34)

a. *...truthfulness in carrying out promises*

What meaning has come to be associated with, 'faith', as a result of the way early Christian authors came to understand it? (1288, 25f)

a. *...certainty or sure persuasion which one has of truth itself.*

Calvin sees the way the meaning of, 'faith', was changed by the early Christians as an analogy for the way they changed the meaning of, 'sacrament'. How does he describe the specifics of this change? (1288, 26ff)

- a. Before, 'sacrament' was commandeered by the early Christian leaders it, *was the soldier's act of vowing himself to his commander*
- b. *...they (ie, the early Christians) made it the commander's act of receiving soldiers into the ranks. For by the sacraments the Lord promises that, "he will be our God and we shall be his people" [2 Cor 6:16; Ezek 37:27].*

How does Calvin sum up his view of the position he distances himself from in this section? (1288, 34ff)

- a. *...we indeed accept the comparisons which our adversaries bring forward from outward signs*
- b. *...but we do not tolerate that what is secondary in the sacraments be regarded by them as the first and even the only point*
- c. *...the first point is that the sacraments should serve our faith before God*
- d. *...after this, that they should attest our confession before men.*

What danger does Calvin see in treating this secondary use of sacraments as if it were the first, or even the only, use? (1289, 8f)

- a. *...the mysteries...would become lifeless.*

14. Up to this point Calvin has been at pains to establish the true understanding of the term, 'sacrament' and the fact that sacraments serve, like expository sermons, to establish and confirm our faith. The points he has made so far seem mainly to have application to the Zwinglians, whose view of sacraments is purely memorialist.

In this section, through to second 17, he confronts those who place too much store by participation in sacraments. (*...as these men [ie, those with whom he has been disputing thus far] weaken the force of the sacraments and completely overthrow their use, so, on the opposite side, there are those who attach to the sacraments some sort of secret powers with which one nowhere reads that God has endowed them.*) This is formally the Roman Catholic position of course. But we need to examine ourselves also in this area. All error arises from factors to which we are all subject. Whatever the error, we are not insulated from its effects and need, therefore, to maintain a watchful posture.

The teaching that Calvin is now disputing causes, *the simple and unskilled*, to be, *dangerously deceived*. This outcome is encouraged by two factors, which are - what? (1289, 15ff)

- a. *...they are taught to seek God's gifts where they cannot be found*
- b. *...and are gradually drawn away from God to embrace mere vanity rather than his truth*

What has given this error the power to achieve these results? (1289, 19ff)

- a. *...the sacraments...justify and confer grace, provided we do not set up a barrier of mortal sin.*

Why is this view, *deadly and pestilential*, and, *diabolical*? (1289, 26f)

- a. *...in promising a righteousness apart from faith, it hurls souls headlong to destruction.*
- b. *Secondly, because it draws the cause of righteousness from the sacraments, it binds men's pitiable minds (of themselves more than enough inclined to earth) in this superstition, so that they repose in the appearance of a physical thing rather than in God himself.*

In what way does a sacrament, truly understood, preach to those who participate in it in unbelief? (1289, 34ff)

- a. *...nothing ought to be expected in it (ie, in the sacrament) apart from the promise*
- b. *...but the promise no less threatens wrath to unbelievers than offers grace to believers.*

What sets a limit to what a sacrament can achieve? (1290, 2ff)

- a. *...any man is deceived who thinks anything more is conferred upon him through the sacraments than **what is offered by God's Word and received by him in true faith.***
(emphasis, IJ)

Why is there not an unbreakable connection between sacramental participation and assurance of salvation? (1290, 7ff)

- a. *...justification is lodged in Christ alone*
- b. *...justification...is communicated to us no less by the preaching of the gospel than by the seal of the sacrament*
- c. *...without the latter (ie, without sacraments) justification, can stand unimpaired*

How does Calvin sum up Augustine on this point? (1290, 11)

- a. *...there can be invisible sanctification without a visible sign*

What is the corollary of this? (1290, 12)

- a. *...and on the other hand a visible sign without true sanctification.*

What statement of Augustine's is Calvin summarising in lines 10 -12 ? (1290, 13f)

- a. *...men sometimes put on Christ to the point of receiving the sacrament, sometimes to the sanctification of life.*

What distinguishes these two conditions from one another? (1290, 15ff)

- a. *...the first condition can be common to both good and evil men*
- b. *...the latter is confined to the good and pious alone.*

15. What distinction, drawn by Augustine, applies to sacraments? (1290, 19f)

- a. *...that distinction...between a sacrament and the matter of the sacrament.*

What two conclusions do we draw from this distinction? (1290, 20ff)

- a. *...the figure and the truth are contained in the sacrament*
- b. *...the figure and the truth...are not so linked that they cannot be separated*

Why is it the case that, even in the union itself the matter must always be distinguished from the sign? (1290, 24f)

- a. *...that we may not transfer to the one what belongs to the other.*

What remains if a sacrament is, separated from its truth by the unworthiness of the recipient? (1291, 14)

- a. *...nothing remains but a vain and useless figure*

How do we ensure that sacraments do not become to us just, a sign empty of truth? (1291, 16f)

- a. *...you must apprehend in faith the word which is included there.*

How much do we profit do we receive from sacraments? (1291, 17f)

- a. *As much as we, profit through the sacraments in the partaking of Christ*

16. Why is Christ the matter or (if you prefer) the substance of the sacraments? (1291, 22f)

- a. *...in him they have All their firmness, and they do not promise anything apart from him.*

What is, the error of Peter Lombard? (1291, 24ff)

a. *Peter Lombard...makes them the causes of righteousness and salvation*
 1291, 28ff: *...the sacraments have effectiveness among US in proportion as we are helped by their ministry sometimes to foster, confirm, and increase the true knowledge of Christ in ourselves; at other times, to possess him more fully and enjoy his riches.* When does that happen? (1291, 32f)

a. *...when we receive in true faith what is offered there.*

What illustration does Calvin use in response to the question: *Do the wicked, then, by their ungratefulness cause the ordinance of God to be voided and nullified?* (1291, 39f)

a. The distinction between the act of offering and the act of receiving.

What conclusion does this illustration enable Calvin to draw? (1292, 1ff)

a. *...nothing prevents the symbol consecrated by the Lord's Word from being actually what it is called, and from keeping its own force.*

With what few words has Augustine, 'well solved' this question? (1292, 5f)

a. *If you receive carnally, it does not cease to be spiritual, but it is not so for you.*

Continuing with Augustine, what two, vices, are to be avoided? (1292, 15ff)

- a. *The first vice is for us to receive the signs as though they had been given in vain*
- b. *The second vice is...not lifting our minds beyond the visible sign, to transfer to it the credit for those benefits which are conferred upon us by Christ alone.*

What is the outcome of the first vice? (1292, 16ff)

a. *The first vice...by destroying or weakening (the signs') secret meaning through our antagonism, to cause them to be wholly fruitless to us.*

What is the outcome of the second vice? (1292, 23f)

a. The signs', whole worth is shamefully destroyed.

17. In what sense do the sacraments have the same office as the word of God? (1292, 26ff; 1293, 8ff))

- a. They, *offer and set forth Christ to us, and in him the treasures of heavenly grace.*
- b. They do not bestow any grace of themselves, but announce and tell us, and (as they are guarantees and tokens) ratify among us, those things given us by divine bounty.

What must be present in the recipients for these functions to be carried out and these objectives to be successfully achieved? (1292, 28)

a. *...they avail and profit nothing unless received in faith.*

In lines 28-32, Calvin illustrates what he is saying. What features of the illustration correspond to the situation he is describing?

- a. The vessel represents us
- b. The wine or oil represents the gospel promise that is present in the sacrament
- c. The openness or closedness of the vessel represents either the faith with which we participate in the sacramental rite (represented by the vessel being open to receive what is being poured into it) or our unbelief (being in a closed state).
- d. The fact that the vessel, even if closed, will be surrounded by the liquid that, instead of entering it runs over it, pictures our being surrounded by the gospel promises in the sacraments, even if we do not benefit from them.

In Calvin's view the ancients wrote a little too extravagantly about the sacraments in order to enhance their dignity. What error might we be led into by the ancients' extravagance? (1292, 35ff)

- a. *...to think that a hidden power is joined and fastened to the sacraments by which they of themselves confer the graces of the Holy Spirit upon us*

What do we need to bear in mind in order to preserve us from this error? (1292, 38ff)

- a. *...the only function divinely imparted to them is to attest and ratify for us God's good will toward us.*
- b. *...they are of no further benefit unless the Holy Spirit accompanies them.*

To what two things does Calvin compare the sacraments in 1293, 6ff?

- a. *...messengers of glad tidings*
- b. *...guarantees of the ratification of covenants*

In what sense are they messengers? (1293, 8ff)

- a. *They do not bestow any grace of themselves, but announce and tell us...those things given us by divine bounty.*

If the sacraments do not bestow any grace of themselves, who or what is the source of grace? (1293, 11ff)

- a. *The Holy Spirit...is he who brings the graces of God with him, gives a place for the sacraments among us, and makes them bear fruit.*

What is it necessary for us to do in order that the Administration of the sacraments is not unfruitful and void of effect? (1293, 19ff)

- a. *...the inner grace of the Spirit, as distinct from the outward ministry, ought to be considered and pondered separately.*

Calvin feels that giving due weight to the various aspects of the doctrine of the sacraments achieves six good outcomes. What are they? (1293, 28ff)

- a. *...their worth is duly commended*
- b. *...their use clearly indicated*
- c. *...their value abundantly proclaimed*
- d. *...the best mean in all these things (is) retained.*
- e. *...false doctrine is removed*
- f. *...that chief force, which has been overlooked by some is clearly set forth.*

In what way is the best mean retained? (1293, 31ff)

- a. *...nothing is given to them which should not be given, and conversely nothing taken away which belongs to them.*

What false doctrine in particular does Calvin have in mind? (1293, 33ff)

- a. *...the cause of justification and the power of the Holy Spirit are enclosed in elements, just as in vessels or vehicles.*

Where do the accomplishments of the sacraments take place? (1293, 37)

- a. *...within*

What are the sacraments' accomplishments? (1293, 37f)

- a. *...what the minister represents and attests by outward action.*

Who accomplishes these things within us? (1293, 37)

- a. *God*

Why is important that we ever bear this in mind? (1293, 38f)

- a. *...lest what God claims for himself alone should be turned over to a mortal man.*

How does Augustine distinguish between the sanctification attributed to Moses (and, by implication, to all who officiate at ceremonies) and the sanctification achieved by God? (1294, 1ff)

- a. *Moses by the visible sacraments through his ministry*
- b. *God by invisible grace through the Holy Spirit*

In the absence of God's invisible working, through the Holy Spirit, what is gained through participation in visible sacraments? (1294, 4f)

- a. Nothing.

18. What definition of, 'sacrament', is Calvin working with in this section? (1294, 7ff)

- a. *...all those signs which God has ever enjoined upon men to render them more certain and confident of the truth of his promises.*

In what two forms have these signs been presented? (1294, 10)

- a. *...natural things*
- b. *...miracles*

What examples of natural things used as sacraments does Calvin give? (1294, 11ff)

- a. The tree of life
- b. The rainbow

What illustration does Calvin use to show how something can be a naturally explicable phenomenon and, at the same time, a sacrament? (1295, 2)

- a. *...crude and coined silver*

What examples are given of miracles that were also sacraments? (1295, 8ff)

- a. *...when he showed Abraham a light in a smoking fire pot*
- b. *...when, to promise Gideon the victory, he watered a fleece with dew while the earth was dry, and conversely bedewed the earth, leaving the fleece untouched*
- c. *...when the shadow of the sundial went back ten degrees to promise safety to Hezekiah.*

What made these miracles sacraments also? (1295, 14f)

- a. *...these things were done to support and confirm their feeble faith*

19. In this treatment of sacraments, what is Calvin principally concerned with? (1295, 16ff)

- a. *...our present intention is specifically to discuss those sacraments which the Lord willed to be ordinary in the church in order to nourish his worshipers and servants in the faith and in confession of one faith*

What two professions or pledges are made in a true sacrament, and by whom? (1296, 2ff)

- a. *...they are testimonies of grace and salvation from the Lord, so from us in turn they are marks of profession, by which we openly swear allegiance to God, binding ourselves in fealty to him.*
- b. *Chrysostom therefore has appropriately called them, 'covenants', by which God leagues himself with us, and we pledge ourselves to purity and holiness of life.*
- c. *...a mutual agreement between God and ourselves*
- d. *...in them the Lord promises to cancel and blot out any guilt and penalty contracted by us through our transgression, and reconciles us to himself in his only-begotten Son, so do we, in turn, bind ourselves to him by this profession, to pursue piety and innocence.*

How does Calvin sum up these statements in 1296, 13ff)

- a. *Hence you can rightfully say that such sacraments are ceremonies by which God wills to exercise his people, first, to foster, arouse, and confirm faith within; then, to attest religion before men.*

20. Given the necessity of signs and sacraments to the existence of religion, in some form or other they obviously predate Christ. How does Calvin trace the development of sacraments in the Old Testament? (1296, 17ff)

- a. *The sacraments themselves were...diverse*
- b. *...circumcision was enjoined on Abraham and his descendants*
- c. *To it were afterward added purifications, sacrifices, and other rites from the law of Moses*

What change occurred at the coming of Christ? (1296, 24ff)

- a. *...at his coming these were abrogated, two sacraments were instituted which the Christian church now uses, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.*

...the rest of what are commonly considered sacraments (1296, 30f) is a reference to the five additional practices that are viewed by Roman Catholicism as sacraments. These are: Confirmation, Penance, taking holy orders, Marriage and Extreme Unction.

Returning to the sacraments of the Old Testament, what is the logic behind Calvin's assertion that, *those ancient sacraments looked to the same purpose to which ours now tend: to direct and almost lead men by the hand to Christ, or rather, as images, to represent him and show him forth to be known?* (1296, 36ff)

- a. *...they are seals by which God's promises are sealed, and, moreover, it is very clear that no promise has ever been offered to men except in Christ [2 Cor 1:20].*
- b. *Consequently, to teach us about any promise of God, they must show forth Christ.*

In pointing to Christ Old Testament and New Testament sacraments are identical. In what do they differ from each other? (1297, 6ff)

- a. *There is only one difference: the former foreshadowed Christ promised while he was yet awaited; the latter attest him as already given and revealed.*

21. In this section Calvin turns to three particular Old Testament examples of sacraments, believing that, *when these things are individually explained, they will become much clearer.*

What examples of Old Testament sacrifices are referred to?

- a. Circumcision
- b. Baptisms and purifications
- c. Sacrifices

Turning to circumcision first, what truths did it set forth? (1297, 13ff)

- a. *...whatever comes forth from man's seed, that is the whole nature of mankind, is corrupt and needs pruning.*

It also expressed the Jews' relationship to - whom? (1297, 16)

- a. Abraham

What was given to Abraham that made their relationship with him of abiding importance? (1297, 16f)

- a. *...the promise given to Abraham of the blessed seed in which all nations of the earth were to be blessed [Gen 22:18], from whom they were also to await their own blessing.*

How does this demonstrate to us that circumcision pointed to Christ? (1297, 18f)

- a. *Now that saving seed (as we are taught by Paul) was Christ [Gal 3:16]*

How, therefore, should the Jews have understood circumcision? (1297, 21ff)

- a. *Accordingly, circumcision was the same thing to them as in Paul's teaching it was to Abraham, namely, a sign of the righteousness of faith [Rom 4:11];*

What should the Jews have derived from circumcision? (1297, 24ff)

- a. *More certain assurance, that their faith, with which they awaited that seed, is accounted to them as righteousness by God.*

What gave circumcision the ability to assure the Jews of this? (1297, 23)

- a. *Its character and role as a seal of God's promise to give to believers the righteousness that saves.*

Turning now to Old Testament baptisms and purifications, how do these rites point to Christ? (1297, 28ff)

- a. *Baptisms and purifications disclose to them their own uncleanness, foulness, and pollution, with which they were defiled in their own nature*
- b. *...these rites promised another cleansing by which all their filth would be removed and washed away [Heb 9:10, 14]*
- c. *And this cleansing was Christ.*
- d. *Washed by his blood [1Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5], we bring his purity before God's sight to cover all our defilements.*

Lastly, we turn to sacrifices. How did these point to Christ? (1297, 35ff)

- a. *Sacrifices made them aware of their unrighteousness and, at the same time, taught them that some satisfaction must be paid to God's justice.*
- b. *They also taught that there should be some high priest, a mediator between God and men, to make satisfaction to God by the shedding of blood and by the offering of a sacrifice that would suffice for the forgiveness of sins.*
- c. *This high priest was Christ [Heb 4:14; 5:5; 9:11]*

In what ways was Christ's sacrifice different to those offered under the requirements and provision of the Old Testament? (1298, 5ff)

- a. *...he poured out his own blood*
- b. *...he himself was the sacrificial victim*
- c. *...he offered himself, obedient unto death, to the Father [Phil 2:8]*
- d. *By his obedience he cancelled the disobedience of man [Rom 5:19] which had aroused God's wrath. (NB. This is an area of difference between Christ's sacrifice and Old Testament sacrifices. Old Testament sacrifices did not have any impact on the worshipper's relationship with God.)*

22. How do our sacraments compare with those of the Old Testament? (1298, 10ff)

- a. As for our sacraments, the more fully Christ has been revealed to men, the more clearly do the sacraments present him to us from the time when he was truly revealed by the Father as he had been promised.

What difference exists between our experience of the gospel, and therefore our sacraments, and the way the Old Testament saints experienced the same things? (1298, 13ff)

- a. Our sacraments look back to the fulfilment of the gospel promises. Theirs looked forward. *...baptism attests to us that we have been cleansed and washed: the eucharistic supper that we have been redeemed.*

How do the elements used in the sacraments fit this picture? (1298, 15)

- a. *In water, washing is represented: in blood, satisfaction.*

What does John intend us to understand by telling us that Christ, *came in water and blood [1Jn 5]*? (1298, 17)

- a. That Christ came, *to wash and to redeem.*

Whose witness is joined to the testimony of the water and the blood in which Christ came? (1298, 18ff)

- a. *The Spirit of God is also witness of this.*
- b. *...there are three witnesses in one: the water, the blood and the Spirit [1Jn 5:8]*

What specific contribution does each of these three make to their joint witness? (1298, 20ff)

- a. *In the water and the blood we have testimony of cleansing and redemption*
- b. *...the Spirit, the primary witness, makes us certain of such testimony.*

In what way do the sacramental elements reflect the way in which our Lord Jesus died on the cross? (1298, 22ff)

- a. *This lofty mystery has been admirably shown us in the cross of Christ, when water and blood flowed from his sacred side.*

What relationship did Augustine see between the outflow of water and blood from Christ's body and the sacraments? (1298, 24f)

- a. For this reason, Augustine has called it the wellspring of our sacraments.

Pursuing the theme of development, to what difference between the Old and New Testament eras does Calvin draw our attention to in 1298, 26ff)

- a. *There is no doubt that the grace of the Spirit also reveals itself more here if you compare one time with another.*

Why should this be so? (1298, 28f)

- a. *...that pertains to the glory of Christ's kingdom*

What scripture passage in particular teaches us to expect a greater outpouring of the Spirit under Christ than previously? (1298, 30f)

- a. *John 7:8-9, 38-39*

How does this greater outpouring of the Spirit under Christ cause Paul to compare the Old Testament era with the New Testament era? (1298, 32)

- a. *...under the law were shadows; in Christ, the body [Col 2:17]*

Does Paul use these terms to denigrate the former sacraments? (1298, 33ff)

- a. No. *It is not his intention to deprive of their effect the testimonies of grace, in which God long ago willed to prove himself truthful to the patriarchs, as he does to us today in Baptism and the Sacred Supper.*

What, then, is his intention? (1298, 36)

- a. *...to magnify what has been given us*

Why does he want to magnify what has been given us? (1298, 37ff)

- a. *...that no one may think it strange that the ceremonies of the law have been abolished by the coming of Christ.*

23. One has to bear in mind that, throughout his treatment of the sacraments, Calvin is doing four things. He is teaching the truth. In addition, he is engaging in three controversies:

- a. With Roman Catholicism. Rome presented itself as essential to salvation because, through the administration of the sacraments, it dispensed and controlled access to the saving grace of God.
- b. With Lutheranism. Martin Luther taught that Christ's body was ubiquitous and that therefore it was really present through this quality of ubiquity, in the communion bread.
- c. With Ulrich Zwingli, the reformer of Zurich, who is generally thought of as advocating a purely memorialist doctrine of the sacraments.

It seems to me that in this section Calvin is contending principally with Catholicism. I say this because:

- b. His opponents are the Schoolmen, identified by McNeill in the footnote as being principally Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas. These were theologians revered in Catholicism.
- c. The position he is opposing is that sacraments give God's grace, *a present reality*. This is essentially the Catholic position known as sacerdotalism.

Calvin's opponents built their position on Hebrews 10:1, which reads: *For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.* (NKJV)

Calvin's view, stated in 1299, 30ff is that although his opponents build a position on Hebrews 10:1, they lack skill in interpreting the letter to the Hebrews. Their interpretation is one-sided, correctly picking up on one point made in Hebrews 10:1 (*ie*, that the ceremonies of the law did not save) but overlooking the the positive assertion made about the law - that it contained a shadow of the good things to come (*ie*, the shadow of the gospel). How does Calvin describe this? (1299, 30ff)

- a. *...overlooking the comparison discussed there (ie in Hebrews 10:1) while grasping this one point, that the law of itself does not profit its keepers, they simply supposed the ceremonies to have been figures devoid of truth.*

When Calvin says the schoolmen overlook the comparison discussed in Hebrews 10:1, what is he referring to? (1299, 7ff)

- a. The positive thing said about the law, *ie*, that it contained, *a shadow of the good things to come*. This they overlook, stressing solely the negative: *...the law...can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.*
- b. According to Calvin's understanding of this verse, which is fuller than the schoolmen's, this verse implies that the ceremonies of the law are comparable to our sacraments

because they also referred to the gospel. This is the comparison that he refers to and that he criticises others for not factoring in to their theology of sacraments.

How does Calvin sum up this interpretation in his own words? (1299, 3ff)

- a. *...that Scholastic dogma which notes such a great difference between the sacraments of the old and new law, as if the former only foreshadowed God's grace, but the latter give it a present reality.*

What passage does Calvin cite to correct this interpretation? (1299, 9)

- a. 1 Cor 10:3ff

What is Paul's fundamental point in 1 Cor 10:3ff? (1299, 12ff)

- a. *In order that no man, relying upon a barren knowledge of Christ, upon the empty title and outward tokens of Christianity, should dare despise God's judgment, Paul exhibits examples of divine severity that are to be seen in the Jews, to make us aware that the same punishments which they suffered threaten us if we give ourselves up to the same vices.*

What makes the comparison between our privileges and theirs (and, by implication, our responsibilities and theirs) appropriate? (1299, 19ff)

- a. *...there is no inequality between us and them in those boons in which he forbade us to boast falsely.*

How does Paul demonstrate equality between Old Testament sacraments and New Testament sacraments as he pursues this argument? (1299, 9f, 22ff)

- a. *...he teaches that the fathers ate the same spiritual food as we, and explains that food as Christ [1 Cor 10:3].*
- b. *...he leaves us no shred of privilege which could make our souls hope to go unpunished.*
- c. *...whatever is shown us today in the sacraments, the Jews of old received in their own - that is, Christ with his spiritual riches.*
- d. *They felt the same power in their sacraments as do we in ours; these were seals of divine good will toward them, looking to eternal salvation.*

Having established that Old Testament ceremonies of a sacramental nature were more than, *figures devoid of truth*, what does Calvin see as the main point being made in Hebrews 10:1?

- a. *...the apostle's intention is to reduce the ceremonial law to nothing until the coming of Christ, upon whom its entire effectiveness depends.*

24. Those whose position Calvin dealt with in the previous section resort to another set of Biblical passages. Which Old Testament ceremony do those passages refer to? (1300, 4 etc)

- a. Circumcision

What, in the view of Calvin's opponents, do the passages that they cite teach us about circumcision? 1300, 5)

- a. *...it has no place with God, confers nothing, and is empty.*

What do these statements seem to imply about the relative importance of circumcision compared to baptism? (1300, 5f)

- a. *...such statements seem to press it down far beneath our baptism*

Why is Calvin able to respond with an emphatic, *Not at all!*, to this assertion (1300, 7ff)

- a. *The very same thing could justly be said of baptism...this is even said, and first by Paul himself...*

Which passage of Paul's in particular is Calvin referring to? (1300, 11)

- a. 1 Cor 10:5

What did Peter also write that relates to this subject? (1300, 13ff)

- a. *Peter...bears witness that the truth of baptism rests not in outward washing. But I. The testimony of a clear conscience [1 Peter 3:21].*

What point is made by Calvin's opponents, based on Colossians 2:11&12? (1300, 16ff)

- a. *Paul also seems completely to despise the circumcision made with hands when he compares it with Christ's circumcision.*

What points does Calvin make in response to this assertion? (1300, 19ff)

- a. The situation Paul is addressing in this passage. *There* (ie, in Colossians 2:11-12) *Paul is disputing against those who require it* (ie, circumcision) *as necessary although it has already been abolished.*
- b. The general point Paul is making with regard to Old Testament ceremonies - *He therefore admonishes believers to forsake the old shadows and stand fast in the truth.*
- c. The specific point made in relation to circumcision - *You have been spiritually circumcised both in soul and body.*

Calvin articulates an objection that could have been made against Paul by the false teachers at Colossae. What is it? (1300, 27ff)

- a. *...men ought not to despise the figure because they had the thing itself.*

Why might this be said? (1300, 28f)

- a. *...among the patriarchs too there was that putting off of the old man...yet outward circumcision was not superfluous for them.*

In Calvin's view how does Paul forestall this objection? (1300, 31f)

- a. *Paul forestalls this objection when he immediately adds that the Colossians had been buried with Christ through baptism.*

What conclusions does Calvin draw from the way Paul speaks of baptism in Colossians 2:12? (1300, 32ff)

- a. *...baptism is today what circumcision was for the ancients*
- b. *...therefore circumcision cannot be enjoined upon Christians without injustice to baptism.*

25. 1300, 36, *Yet, what follows...* What is Calvin referring to by, *what follows*?

- a. Colossians 2:17

(Go back to section 22, where Calvin gives a two-sentence summary of Paul's intention in Col 2:17)

What difficulty (for Calvin) do Calvin's opponents feel that Colossians 2:17 presents? (1300, 37f)

- a. *...all Jewish ceremonies were figures of future things...the body [substance, in some translations of the Bible] is in Christ*

What acknowledgment does Calvin make of Biblical passages that tend to support his opponents' position? (1300,38ff)

- a. *...most difficult of all is what is discussed in many chapters of The Letter to the Hebrews...and the like. (through to 1301, 6)*

What two points does Calvin make in response to his opponents' interpretation of Col 2:17 and the other passages he has cited from Hebrews? (1301, 7ff & 14ff)

- a. *Paul does not make the ceremonies shadowed because they have no reality, but because their fulfillment had been, so to speak, held in suspense until the appearance of Christ.*
- b. *But we ought especially to note that in all these passages Paul is not speaking simply by way of controversy.*

What is not hindered by Calvin's first observation, above? (1301, 10f)

- a. The ceremonies' efficacy.

What third important point does he make in 1301, 21ff?

- a. *...here the discussion is not about ceremonies taken in their true and natural sense, but distorted to a false and perverted interpretation; not about their lawful use, but their superstitious abuse.*

In light of this, what is not surprising? (1301, 24)

- a. *...ceremonies, cut off from Christ, are divested of all force*

Why is this not surprising? (1301, 25ff)

- a. *...when the thing signified is removed, all that belongs to the signs is reduced to nothing.*

How many points does Calvin make by way of summary in the final paragraph? (1301, 32ff)

- a. Three

What are they? (1301, 33ff)

- a. *...all the pomp of ceremonies which was in the law of Moses, unless it be directed to Christ, is a fleeting and worthless thing;*
- b. *...they (ie, the ceremonies) looked to Christ in such a way that, when he was at length revealed in the flesh, they had their fulfilment;*
- c. *...it was fitting that they should be abrogated by his coming, just as shadows vanish in the clear light of the sun.*

26. In this section Calvin continues the same controversy with the sacerdotal position but turns now to the use his opponents make of quotations from the church fathers, especially Augustine. Calvin is particularly anxious that Augustine should not be misinterpreted, regarding him as, *the best and most reliable witness of all antiquity* (1303, 9).

What is it that Calvin's opponents fail to notice about the quotations from Augustine that they appeal to? (1302, 5f)

- a. *Failing to note that these and similar figures of speech were exaggerated*

What did this failure lead the schoolmen to do? (1302, 6f)

- a. *...they also published their own exaggerated dogmas*

What was the relationship between the exaggerated dogmas of the schoolmen and the writing of the ancients, to whom they appealed for support? (1302, 6ff)

- a. *...their own exaggerated dogmas...in a sense wholly at variance from the writings of the ancients*

Following several quotations from Augustine which show that Old Testament sacraments pointed to the same Christ as ours do, Calvin turns, in 1303, 2ff, to differences between them.

What differentiates Old Testament sacraments from New Testament sacraments? (1303, 4ff)

- a. *...both attest that God's fatherly kindness and the graces of the Holy Spirit are offered us in Christ, but ours is clearer and brighter.*

- b. *In both Christ is shown forth, but in ours more richly and fully.*
- c. *...when Christ was revealed, sacraments were instituted, fewer in number, more majestic in signification, more excellent in power.*

FOR REFLECTION

- 2. To what extent do we need to train ourselves to 'hear' the message in baptism and the Lord's supper and to receive it in the same way as we would a sermon on the inner meaning of those ordinances?
- 3. 1286, 27. Should 'His' have an upper-case 'H' or is Calvin referring to Paul's work in this passage?
- 4. 1289, 8f. Calvin asserts that if sacraments are seen primarily or even only as signs by which we attest our faith in God they would become lifeless. Is this true? By what process would this come about?