

9.7 Calvin: *Institutes of the Christian Religion*

Calvin 1960 (page numbers are in parentheses after citations)

Moreover, it has been my purpose in this labor to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the divine Word, in order that they may be able both to have easy access to it and to advance in it without stumbling. For I believe I have so embraced the sum of religion in all its parts, and have arranged it in such an order, that if anyone rightly grasps it, it will not be difficult for him to determine what he ought especially to seek in Scripture, and to what end he ought to relate its contents. If, after this road has, as it were, been paved, I shall publish any interpretations of Scripture, I shall always condense them, because I shall have no need to undertake long doctrinal discussions, and to digress into commonplaces. In this way the godly reader will be spared great annoyance and boredom, provided he approach Scripture armed with knowledge of the present work, as a necessary tool. . . . (4–5)

Nearly all wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves. (35)

Consequently, we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than meticulously search out. . . . (61–2)

But a most pernicious error widely prevails that Scripture has only so much weight as is conceded to it by the consent of the church. As if the eternal and inviolable truth of God depended upon the decision of men! . . . Thus these sacrilegious men, wishing to impose an unbridled tyranny under the cover of the church, do not care with what absurdities they ensnare themselves and others, provided they can force this one idea upon the simple-minded: that the church has authority in all things. (75)

When we call faith “knowledge” we do not mean comprehension of the sort that is commonly concerned with those things which fall under human sense perception. For faith is so far above sense that man’s mind has to go beyond and rise above itself in order to attain it. . . . From this we conclude that the knowledge of faith consists in assurance rather than in comprehension. . . .

For unbelief is so deeply rooted in our hearts, and we are so inclined to it, that not without hard struggle is each one able to persuade himself of what all confess with the mouth: namely, that God is faithful. . . .

Here, indeed, is the chief hinge on which faith turns: that we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside ourselves, but not at all in us; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them. . . . Briefly, he alone is truly a believer who, convinced by a firm conviction that God is a kindly and well-disposed Father toward him, promises him all things on the basis of his generosity; who relying upon the promises of divine benevolence toward him, lays hold on an undoubted expectation of salvation. (559–62)

He is said to be justified in God’s sight who is both reckoned righteous in God’s judgment and has been accepted on account of his righteousness. Indeed, as iniquity is abominable to God, so no sinner can find favor in his eyes in so far as he is a sinner and so long as he is reckoned as such. Accordingly, wherever there is sin, there also the wrath and vengeance of God show themselves. Now he is justified who is reckoned in the condition not of a sinner, but of a righteous man; and for that reason, he stands firm before God’s judgment seat while all sinners fall. If an innocent accused person be summoned before the judgment seat of a fair judge, where he will be judged according to his innocence, he is said to be “justified” before the judge. . . . [J]ustified by faith is he who, excluded from the righteousness of works, grasps the righteousness of Christ through faith, and is clothed in it, appears in God’s sight not as a sinner but as a righteous man.

Therefore, we explain justification simply as the acceptance with which God receives us into his favor as righteous men. And we say that it consists in the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness. (725–7)

Christian freedom, in my opinion, consists of three parts. The first: that the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness. . . .

The second part, dependent upon the first, is that consciences observe the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law’s yoke they willingly obey God’s will. . . .

The third part of Christian freedom lies in this: regarding outward things

that are of themselves "indifferent" [adiaphora]. we are not bound by God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently. . . . (834, 836, 838)

No one who wishes to be thought religious dares simply deny predestination, by which God adopts some to hope of life, and sentences others to eternal death. . . . We call predestination God's eternal decree, by which he determined with himself what he willed to become of each man. For all are not created in equal condition; rather eternal life is fore-ordained for some, eternal damnation for others. (926)

[W]e should contemplate the evident cause of condemnation in the corrupt nature of humanity – which is closer to us – rather than seek a hidden and utterly incomprehensible cause in God's predestination. And let us not be ashamed to submit our understanding to God's boundless wisdom so far as to yield before its many secrets. For, of those things which it is neither given nor lawful to know, ignorance is learned; the craving to know, a kind of madness. (957)

Accordingly, those whom God has adopted as his sons are said to have been chosen not in themselves but in his Christ; . . . But if we have been chosen in him, we shall not find assurance of our election in ourselves; and not even in God the Father, if we conceive him as severed from his Son. Christ, then, is the mirror wherein we must, and without self-deception may, contemplate our own election. For since it is into his body the Father has destined those to be engrafted whom he has willed from eternity to be his own, that he may hold as sons all whom he acknowledges to be among his members, we have been inscribed in the book of life if we are in communion with Christ. (970)

9.8 Ordinances Concerning Church Polity in Geneva (December 17, 1546)

Hughes 1966: 54–9

Concerning Sermons

1. All the members of each household shall attend church on Sundays, unless it is necessary to leave someone behind to look after children or livestock, under penalty of 3 sous.
2. If on a weekday there is a service ordered by good authority, those who are able to attend and have no legitimate excuse are to attend; at least

one member of each household shall be present, under penalty as above. . . .

5. During the sermon everyone shall listen attentively and there shall be no unseemly or scandalous behaviour.
6. No one shall leave the church until the prayer has been offered at the end of the sermon, under penalty as above, unless there is a legitimate excuse. . . .

Faults Which Contravene the Reformation apart from Those Mentioned Above

Superstitions

1. Those who are found in possession of paternosters or images for the purpose of worshipping them shall be sent before the Consistory. . . .
2. Those who have been on pilgrimages or similar journeys.
3. Those who observe the Romish festivals or fasts shall only be reprimanded, unless they remain obstinately rebellious.
4. Those who have attended the mass shall, besides being reprimanded, be summoned before Messieurs.
5. For this offence Messieurs shall decide whether to punish them by imprisonment or by special fines, according to their discretion. . . .

Drunkenness

1. People are not to invite one another to excessive drinking, under penalty of three sous.
2. Taverns are to be closed during public worship. . . .
3. If anyone is found drunk he shall pay three sous on the first occasion and shall be summoned before the Consistory; on the second occasion he shall pay the sum of five sous; and on the third he shall be fined ten sous and be put in prison. . . .

Songs and dances

Anyone who sings indecent, dissolute, or outrageous songs or dances the fling or some similar dance shall be imprisoned for three days and shall then be sent before the Consistory.

Usury

No one shall lend money for usury or profit at a rate in excess of five per cent under penalty of the confiscation of the capital and condemnation to pay a fine as imposed according to the seriousness of the case. . . .

Fornication

1. Any who are found practicing fornication, if they are an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, shall be imprisoned for six days on bread and water and shall pay sixty sous into public funds.

The Idea of a Local Presence Must Be Put Away:

It is especially important that any idea of a local presence of Christ should be put away. For while the signs are here in the world, seen by our eyes and touched by our hands, Christ in so far as He is man must be sought nowhere else than in heaven and in no other way than with the mind and the understanding of faith. . . .

Against Transubstantiation and Other Follies:

In this way not only is the fiction of the papists concerning transubstantiation refuted but also all the gross figments and futile theorizings which either detract from Christ's heavenly glory or are incompatible with the truth of His human nature. For we consider it no less absurd to locate Christ under the form of bread, or to conjoin Him with the bread, than for the bread to be transubstantiated into His body.

The Body of Christ Is Locally in Heaven:

And lest there should be any ambiguity when we say that Christ is to be sought in heaven this manner of speaking signifies and expresses the distance between places. For although philosophically speaking there is no place above the heavens, yet because the body of Christ, in that it bears the nature and mode of a human body is finite and is contained in heaven as in a place, it is necessarily as far distant from us in terms of separation between places as heaven is from earth. . . . [see 10:14].

2. If it is a case of adultery, that is to say, that one or the other is married, they shall be imprisoned for nine days on bread and water and pay into public funds a sum at the discretion of Messieurs, according to the greater seriousness of the offence.
3. Those who are engaged to be married shall not live together as man and wife until the marriage has been solemnized in church, otherwise they shall be punished as fornicators. . . .

9.9 The Consensus Tigurinus (August 1, 1549)

Hughes 1966: 115–23

Now I have thought it worthwhile to summarize and arrange in order the main articles on which we conferred together, so that, if my plan receives your approval it will be possible for anyone to find tabulated as it were what was done and transacted between us [Geneva and Zurich]. . . . At the same time I would like them to know that nothing is included which all our own colleagues who serve Christ under the jurisdiction of the republic of Geneva or in the territory of Neuchâtel, have not approved by their subscription. . . .

The Purposes of the Sacraments:

The purposes of the sacraments are these: that they should be marks and badges of the Christian profession and fellowship or brotherhood, and that they should be incitements to thanksgiving and exercises of faith and godly living, indeed contracts binding us to this; but among the other purposes this is the principal one, that by means of the sacraments God may testify, represent, and seal His grace to us. For . . . they call to our remembrance Christ's death for us and all its benefits, so that faith may be more fully exercised. . . .

The Sacraments Do Not Confer Grace:

By this teaching that fabrication of the sophists is overthrown which teaches that the sacraments of the new law confer grace on all who do not interpose the impediment of mortal sin [Council of Trent, Session VII, Canon 6]. For, apart from the fact that in the sacraments nothing is appropriated except by faith, it must also be maintained that the grace of God is least of all bound to them in such a way that whoever has the sign also possesses the reality. For the signs are administered to the reprobate equally with the elect, but the truth of which they are signs belongs only to the latter.