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John Calvin's Preaching on the Devil

By

© Karine M.S.T. Langley

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Theology, Saint Paul University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Theology

Ottawa, Canada
September 16, 1999



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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns itself with John Calvin's preaching on the devil. The thesis is unique insofar as there is no book-length that studies this topic, and, Calvin is well known as a theologian rather than a preacher. In this work, I attempt to show that not only does Calvin have some valuable insights on the devil in his sermons but that useful information can also be gathered by a careful consideration of the structure of each sermon. In order to preserve some sense of the structure, I have done a detailed analysis of each of the sermons rather than simply summarizing the main points contained within each. I did this in order to give the reader immediate access to Calvin's sermons. John Calvin's sermons on the devil reveal that he was much more of an experiential thinker than had been previously thought. Our daily experiences of God are not useless and our experiences of trials and temptations can lead us into a far deeper appreciation and understanding of God as Redeemer. Calvin's understanding of the devil affords new insights into Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God. In fact, I attempt to show that true knowledge of God is impossible without the devil.

Calvin's understanding of the devil has ramifications for many of his doctrines including his understanding of the Holy Spirit and the law. I have shown that the devil functions to lead the believer into a deeper relationship with God. Against his will, the devil serves many of the same functions as the Holy Spirit and can be understood as an instrument of Divine accommodation. The devil also functions in the same way as the third use of the law. The thesis shows that there is nothing that exists outside of the grace and love of God. Even the devil is used by God.

I intended this work to be of use not only to scholars but also to the Church. To this end, I included a chapter on how I understand Calvin's ideas on the devil to be applicable today. Calvin's insight that the devil is always held in check by God means that no matter how terribly we suffer, we never suffer outside of the love and grace of God. Suffering is never in vain. Lastly, it is my hope that this work will serve as a point of departure for many other research topics on Calvin. It would be interesting to see how the role of the devil will nuance Calvin's understanding of predestination, evil and human experience.

Karine Langley

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the love, compassion and support of my husband Cyril. In addition to Cyril I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Dale Schlitt whose optimism and kind remarks helped me when all looked black. Dale has the unique talent of seeing the best in everything and I appreciated working with him. Many others have helped me. I thank Prof. Brian Armstrong who encouraged me in my research and put me in touch with the international Calvin research group. I must never forget Dr. Max Engammare, who loaned me his treasured copy of Calvin's Genesis sermons and Prof. Charles Partee for suggesting the topic. Last, but not least I wish to thank all of my scuba diving, singing and other friends who showed me that there is life beyond writing a thesis.

Sigla and Abbreviations

- CO *Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*. 59 volumes contained in *Corpus Reformationum*. Edited by Guilielmus Baum, Eduardus Cunitz, Eduardus Reuss. Brunswick: C.A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1862-1897.
- Comm.* *Commentaries on the Old and New Testament*. Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1844-1856.
- Dogmatics* Karl Barth. *Church Dogmatics*. 14 volumes, Edited by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1957-1961.
- fol. A folio
- Instit.* *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated and Indexed by Ford Lewis Battles. *The Library of Christian Classics*. Volumes 20 and 21. Edited by John T. McNeill. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960.
- LC *Letters of John Calvin*. 4 volumes. Edited by Jules Bonnet. Translated by Marcus Gilchrist. New York: Burt Franklin, 1972.
- NTC *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries*. Edited by David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963-1974.
- OS *Opera Selecta*. Edited by Petrus Barth and Guiliemus Niesel. Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1926.
- SC *Supplementa Calviniana: Sermons Inédits*. Neukirchen: Verlag, 1936-.

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INTRODUCTION

AN UNEXPLORED AREA OF CALVIN RESEARCH

The Problem

This work examines the role of the devil as seen in those sermons of John Calvin (1509-1564) which deal at length with the topic in the period after 1549. It examines what Calvin said about the devil in those sermons. I propose, and this is my basic hypothesis, to show that an overall study of Calvin's preaching on the devil will reveal that Calvin attributes a series of positive functions to the devil, including especially the role of the devil in our coming to a full and true knowledge of God. While it seems that virtually everything else that could have been studied has been studied about Calvin, there is no book-length study that deals with the subject of Calvin's understanding of the devil. The attitudes of other figures from the sixteenth century, like Martin Luther,

towards the devil are well studied, but Calvin's own understanding of the devil is virtually unknown.¹ This lacuna is puzzling because the devil was far from an unknown quantity in the sixteenth century.²

This thesis will examine Calvin's sermons on the devil rather than concentrating on Calvin's *Institutes*. I did this to correct a tendency in Calvin scholarship to privilege the *Institutes* above all other of Calvin's works. The *Institutes* were written for those engaged in the study of religion and offer a well-developed set of doctrines. The concentration on the *Institutes* has led to the unfortunate perception that Calvin was primarily a theologian.³ As Brian Armstrong rightly observes, such myopic concentration on the *Institutes* has resulted in scholarly searches for Calvin's systematic principles or key doctrines.⁴ Calvin was not so much a theologian as a preacher. He even

¹ There are only two studies of which I am aware. The first is a book by C.A.M. Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin* (Zurich: P.G.Keller, 1963). Hall's book is more concerned with the doctrine of atonement and does not study Calvin's understanding of the devil. Moreover, Hall makes use mainly of the *Institutes*. The second work is by Adrian Hallet, "The Theology of John Calvin: The Christian's Conflict with the Devil," *Churchman* 105 vol. 4 (1991): 293-325. Hallet presents the gist of Calvin's ideas about the devil and paints a picture of our constant battles with the devil. But since it is only the gist of Calvin's thought and since he did not do a complete study, the work leaves one with the impression that Calvin understood there was a devil and that we must battle the devil, but no more. In my opinion, Hallet's work misses many of the subtleties of Calvin's thought concerning the devil.

² On this subject there are many references and works. Among the works that I found of interest, I would note the following: Edward Langdon, *Satan, a Portrait: A Study of the Character of Satan Through All Ages* (Folcroft, Penn: Folcroft Library Press, 1974); Joseph Klaitz, *Servants of Satan: The Witch Hunts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Penguin Press, 1971).

³ William Klempa, "The Image of John Calvin in Recent Research," *Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium*, ed. Edward Furcha (Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, ARC Supplements # 3, 1987), 345, makes this same observation. Klempa's remark is not original; he is summarizing the current state of scholarship on the question of the central dogma within Calvin's theology.

⁴ Brian Armstrong, "Duplex Cognitio Dei? Or, The Purpose and Relation of Structure. Form and Purpose in Calvin's Theology," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition, Historical Studies in Honor of Edward J. Dowey Jr.*, eds. Brian Armstrong and Elsie McKee (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 135-153.

called himself a preacher on his deathbed and said that he had hoped he had been a faithful expositor of Scripture by means of his preaching. I find it interesting that Calvin puts preaching ahead of his writings.

Je proteste...que i'ai tasché, selon la mesure de grace qu'il m'avoit donnee, d'enseigner purement sa Parole, tant en sermons que par escrit, et d'exposer fidelement l'Escriture sainte.⁵

If one is to believe the estimate of Nicholas Colladon,⁶ Calvin preached some 7,000 sermons in his lifetime.⁷ To ignore Calvin's sermons is to ignore the bulk of Calvin's work. Moreover, to ignore Calvin's sermons would be to ignore what he himself found most dear to his heart. Thus this thesis will privilege Calvin's sermons.

Reading the Sermons

The sermons offer a fascinating window into Geneva during Calvin's ministry and, as we shall see, provide privileged access to Calvin's understanding of the devil. The sermons are surprisingly fresh and insightful. They are full of wonderful polemics and colourful language. Calvin does not miss occasions to correct what he considers to be incorrect readings of the Biblical text or erroneous ideas. He calls the Roman Catholics Papists, which for him was a term of both identification and derision. He refers to the scholastics as sophists. He calls those who ascribe to the idea that there are two

⁵ CO 20, 299.

⁶ Colladon was a contemporary of Calvin.

⁷ CO 21, 66.

principles operating in the universe, one good and one bad, Manichees.⁸ Calvin also uses the words devil and Satan interchangeably.⁹

We should note that the quotations in this thesis are in sixteenth-century French, which is remarkably similar to modern French. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to point out all the differences between modern French and sixteenth-century French, it may help the reader if we note a few. For example, there is no *j* in sixteenth-century French, and so words like *j'ai* are spelled *i'ay*. The 'i' that we use today is often replaced by a *y*. Hence *i'ay* for *j'ai*. There are far fewer accents as well, with an *s* indicating what we now denote by a circonflexe or an accent aigü.

Having outlined the scope of the thesis and the reason for it as well as having made a few introductory remarks on the sermons, I will now present the methodology used in the thesis.

⁸ Much more will be said about this at a later point.

⁹ Calvin switches from the term devil to Satan spontaneously. Sometimes this is a result of a reference to a Biblical text, other times not. CO 33, 64, 68, 112. At times Calvin uses *les diables*, Satan and *le diable* within the same sermon. CO 33, 61. *Les diables* and Satan is used for example in CO 33, 60 and CO 46, 611, 612, 618. Calvin's most frequent switch of terminology is from *le diable* to Satan, but as shown, he also switches between *les diables* and *le diable*, as well as Satan. Calvin notes in *Instit.* 1.14.14 that the number of devils is almost infinite, but that the term Satan or the devil is used to designate the prince or the head of the devils. This explains why Calvin uses the terms devil and Satan without distinction in his sermons. As for his use of devils and the devil or Satan, it is clear that whatever fate befalls the devils will also be the fate of the devil or Satan. Thus one can speak of devils being enemies of God and bent on destroying God, and one can speak of the devil or Satan having the same goal because the devil shares the nature of the devils.

Methodology

It is my conviction that much can be learned from the very structure of Calvin's sermons. It is not enough simply to scan them in order to get the gist of them or gather a few points. Calvin was a master preacher. Noting the very structure and flow of the sermons brings out many ideas that would not be discovered by merely mining for their main ideas. The mining approach was used by Richard Stauffer¹⁰ who studied Calvin's sermons and summarized Calvin's doctrine of God as found in the sermons. Such a method overlooks many of the subtleties and inferences that can only be found by a careful consideration of the structure and flow of Calvin's sermons.

In this thesis, each sermon will be carefully studied. In order to respect the structure of Calvin's sermons without repeating the entire sermon, I have chosen to quote and paraphrase from Calvin's sermons in the same order that he followed in the sermon under consideration. It is my intention that by doing this the reader may actually 'follow' Calvin's sermon. In my paraphrasing and quoting, I have also kept Calvin's own terminology. Thus, words like Papist or other derogatory terms will appear. The reader should note that such terms are Calvin's and not mine.

Through my methodology, I hope that I have done justice not only to Calvin's sense of the Biblical text, but also to the movements according to which Calvin

¹⁰ Richard Stauffer, *Dieu, la création et la providence dans la prédication de Calvin* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978).

structured his sermons in order to instruct his listeners. After this exposition of the sermons, I proceed to suggest reasons and analyze Calvin's remarks. This is done both on the basis of a consideration of his immediate context and with reference to his other writings. It is important to note that my analysis of themes and subjects found in Calvin's sermons is done from within the context of Calvin's theology. For example, I may comment on how Calvin's stress on the devil's being held in check may affect or impact Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God. At no time do I intend to compare at any length Calvin's thought to that of his contemporaries, nor do I step outside of the bounds of Calvin's thought to impose more modern critical tools.¹¹

¹¹ What this means is that, insofar as possible, I simply present Calvin's ideas and thoughts as they stand within Calvin's works. I try to refrain from applying more modern critical methods to arrive at different conclusions from Calvin. He believed that, by virtue of election and the Holy Spirit and with a text that went back to the sources, it was possible to arrive at the mind of the author. Calvin was aware that, since the author was God, what we saw of His mind depended on how much He wished to reveal. Naturally, Calvin's hermeneutics would be questionable today. The fact that I do not impose modern hermeneutical tools does not mean that I endorse Calvin's hermeneutics. Calvin and his contemporaries posed different questions than we would today. He, for example, was keenly interested in the idea of the sovereignty of God, the role of 'natural order', and the Christian role in the glorification of God. These questions were those that interested Calvin in the sixteenth century. In this dissertation I have been concerned with the role of human experience and how our experience can bring us a knowledge of God. Such experiential questions would not have occurred to Calvin. Thus while I try, generally speaking, to keep the bright modern lights of contemporary questions and analysis away from Calvin, there are some occasions when I ask a 'modern' question. My interest in the role of subjectivity in our knowledge of God is a modern one. I am presenting what is essentially a historical thesis. To this end, I try to present Calvin's conclusions and ideas within the light of his context. Where I do analyze his findings, it is always within his context. My reason for presenting a historical work is that this work is the first of its kind. There are no other studies of Calvin on the devil. Thus, my work is a first level analysis, in much the same way as Edward Dowey's work on Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God was a first level analysis. Later works can analyze Calvin's thoughts on the devil in the light of modern critical theories, but I would find such analysis of little point or use within the context of this present thesis. It would, however, be useful on another occasion, for instance, to analyze Calvin's understanding of the devil in the light of the theories of knowledge in the sixteenth century. For an overview of modern Biblical hermeneutics and critical tools the reader is referred, for example, to Werner Georg Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975) and Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, fourth edition (New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1986)

The study is broken up into chapters with an introduction and concluding remarks. In my concluding remarks I suggest other avenues of study and propose ways in which Calvin's thought on the devil is applicable and useful for today. In the first chapter of the thesis I will discuss Calvin the preacher. This chapter will give the reader an overview of the climate of Calvin's preaching, the problems he faced and the understanding that he had of the task of preaching. The subsequent chapters follow closely and present the sermons or series of sermons, in which Calvin discusses the devil at any length. These are the Job sermons, the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert and the miscellaneous sermons, including the sermons on Genesis 3. The final chapter will not only summarize the findings, but will further highlight and support my hypothesis that an overall study of Calvin's preaching on the devil will reveal that, despite the evil nature of the devil, Calvin attributes a series of positive functions to the devil, including especially the role of the devil in our coming to a full and true knowledge of God. Furthermore, I have found in my research that Calvin's understanding of the devil enables a new dialogue to ensue involving the question and role of experience. Some scholars have tried to find a specific locus of experience in Calvin's theology or tried to understand how Calvin understands and uses Christian experience.¹² This is by no means a simple task. Yet it is within his understanding of the devil that Calvin believes that our Christian experience finds its proper use. Our experiences of temptation and trials not only force us to come to terms with ourselves,

¹² Wilhelm Balke, "The Word of God and Experientia According to Calvin," in *Calvinus Ecclesia Doctor*, ed. W. Neuser (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1979), 19-28; Charles Partee, "Prayer as the Practice of

but also enable us to experience the love of God. While Calvin scholars have always been able to demonstrate how Calvin believed we come to know God, philosophers like Charles Partee,¹³ historians like Brian Armstrong¹⁴ and students of Calvin like myself have felt that the question and role of Christian experience was somehow left out of the picture. As I propose to show, as a sort of further elaboration on my basic hypothesis, the devil is the 'missing link' in the equation linking God, humanity and our Christian experience.

Calvin lived at a time where the French Huguenots were being butchered in France. Reports came to him and, based on his letters and pleas to the Genevan Council, we can be assured that the plight of the Huguenot was something about which Calvin was deeply disturbed. How does one speak of a loving God in the face of atrocity and torture? The question, of course, was not only relevant to Calvin but is one that is very relevant today. As we shall see, Calvin's understanding of the devil, specifically of the devil as God's servant, means that there is no suffering that is outside the sphere of God.

Predestination," in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Richard Gamble vol. 8, *An Elaboration of the Theology of John Calvin* (New York: Garland, 1992), 357-369.

¹³ Charles Partee teaches theology at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh PA. In his published doctoral thesis, *Calvin and Classical Philosophy. Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, vol 14 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977), Prof. Partee had tried to show the role that experience played within Calvin's theology, but ended up showing the influence that ancient philosophy played in Calvin's thought instead. In a private communication with me three years ago, Prof. Partee shared his conviction that indeed Christian experience does play a large role in Calvin's thought and that perhaps the way to approach this subject is not to look for a doctrine of experience but, instead, to consider what role our Christian experience plays in our knowledge of God. Partee has also written an article on the subject of Calvin and experience, "Calvin and Experience," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 26 (1973): 169-181.

¹⁴ Brian Armstrong teaches history at Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. Prof. Armstrong has written extensively on Calvin and is at present chairperson of the International Congress for Calvin Research, a post formerly held by Prof. Wilhelm Neuser.

We never suffer or are tormented apart from the love of God. In closing, I would note that one of the goals of this thesis is to show that Calvin's understanding of the devil, as I see it in his sermons, produces a nuanced and meaningful discussion on hope in the light of despair and evil. We turn now to Calvin the Preacher.

CHAPTER ONE

CALVIN THE PREACHER

Introduction

This chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive study of Calvin's preaching. For that the reader is referred to the works of T.H.L Parker or Leroy Nixon.¹⁵ Rather, it presents a brief introduction to selected aspects of Calvin's theology and method of preaching. I will focus on the context of and influences on Calvin's preaching, the use of rhetoric, the history of the sermon manuscripts and, finally, a consideration of what it was that drove Calvin to preach so regularly and as often as he did.

¹⁵ Leroy Nixon, *John Calvin, Expository Preacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1950); T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1992); T.H.L. Parker, *The Oracles of God* (London : Lutterworth Press, 1947).

Calvin preached in Geneva, a city once known for its moral laxitude.¹⁶ He did not shrink from blasting his congregation for its tendency to whitewash problems and sins for fear that such preaching would dishonour the city of Geneva. Nor was he sparing of his enemies whom he called, “*boucs infets et puants, ce sont memes des loups ravisans.*”¹⁷ Calvin’s congregation was not spared from his disgust over its lifestyle and tendency to ‘luxuriate’¹⁸ and consume in a conspicuous fashion. Indeed, his congregation was often the recipient of his barbed comments.¹⁹ Such remarks were never appreciated. Calvin commented that his congregation had ‘tender ears’ and could bear no reproof.

Et d’austre costé d’autant que nous voyons aujourd’huy les aureilles de beaucoup de gens si delicates, que si tost qu’on gratte leurs rongnes, c’est à se tempester, et voudroyent avoir changé tous les coups quand on ne presche point à leur appetit, qu’à grand’ peine de cent l’un voudra-il de tout se ranger paisiblement à la bonne doctrine, et ceux qui protesteront à pleine bouche d’estre grans fideles, quand on voudra les instruire, et qu’on ne leur souffrira point de continuer en leurs vices, ils se declareront ennemis.²⁰

¹⁶ Prior to the Reformation, Geneva was ruled by a bishop and his attendant court. Yet it was generally believed that the clergy made no serious attempt to control morals. Prostitution was legal, provided it was in certain sections and the prostitutes identified themselves with a certain manner of dress. If someone had created a serious offence, then this person could be dealt with by the ruling council, which was made up of elected lay people. The Genevan regulation on morals was not an invention of Calvin, but more of an appeal from the people themselves who were sick of religious leaders who did little or nothing to control morality. See Henri Naef, *Les origines de la réforme à Genève*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1936), vol.1, chapters 2, 3 and 5.

¹⁷ Here Calvin was speaking of those who added to or twisted the Scriptures due to their arrogance or wish to entertain futile questions. Such people are dangerous as they rob the people of one of the chief weapons against the devil. Indeed, they are not just “*mauvais herbs, mais des poisons de Satan qui sont comme des pestes pour tout gaster!*” Sermon on 2 Tim 2:16-16, CO 54, 158.

¹⁸ Ford Lewis Battles, “Against Luxury and Licence in Geneva, a Forgotten Fragment in Calvin,” *Interpretation* 19 (1965): 182-202.

¹⁹ Rudolph Peter, “Genève dans la prédication de Calvin,” in *Calvinus Ecclesiae Genevensis Custos*, ed. W.H. Neuser (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1984), 23-48.

²⁰ Sermon on Titus 1:1-4, CO 54, 378-379.

One amusing incident in Calvin's preaching was his dismay over the fact that the Genevans were not only hesitant to have sins exposed, but were unwilling to admit that the problems preached about even existed. In this incident, Calvin spoke about the fact that people who were jailed for 'paillardisms' should be on bread and water and yet, instead, people bring wine and bread, making a mockery of justice.²¹ Calvin undoubtedly felt that the Genevans practised the old proverb to be close to the church (they would live close to the church) and yet be far from God.²²

Un Calvin Méconnu

Despite the number and frequency of his sermons, Calvin is less known as a preacher than as a theologian.²³ His *Institutes* are far better known among scholars. Even studies that deal with his preaching are often quick to point out that the 'real' theology is contained within the *Institutes* and not in the sermons.²⁴ Yet this is not to say that the sermons are totally ignored by the scholarly community. In his published thesis titled *Dieu, la création et la providence dans le prédication de Calvin*,²⁵ Richard Stauffer alerts us to the fact that within the sermons one may find theological points which are

²¹ Sermon on Deut. 22:13-24, CO 28, 52.

²² Sermon three of "*four sermons for profit in our times*," CO 8,420-421.

²³ This despite the many fine works by T.H.L Parker that discuss Calvin the preacher, especially in his *Calvin's Preaching*. Calvin as a preacher remains, in the words of Richard Stauffer 'Un Calvin Méconnu'. Richard Stauffer, "Un Calvin Méconnu: le predicateur de Genève," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire du Protestantisme Français* (1977): 185-203.

²⁴ See John Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word," in *John Calvin and the Church: a Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 206-230. Leith is quick to point out that his article is based on the assumption that the sermons illuminate and supplement the *Institutes*, not the other way round.

²⁵ Bern: Peter Lang, 1978.

not to be found within the *Institutes*. While his thesis has been hotly debated, notably by Pierre Marcel,²⁶ the fact remains that one does find ‘theology’ within the sermons and that the sermons should not be thought of as mere supplements to the *Institutes* but as accommodation of the Scriptures to the people of Geneva.²⁷ As such forms of accommodation, the sermons stand on their own and are worthy of study in their own right. They, of course, can be complemented by reading Calvin’s other writings.²⁸ Moreover, Calvin considered himself, first and foremost, a preacher and expositor of the Scriptures.

Ignoring the sermons would also miss an important element in Calvin’s vision and something of what was closest to his heart. Calvin dedicated his life to the service of the Word of God. He was firmly convinced that life was a life *coram Deo* and he spent his own life preaching and edifying so that people might be prepared for this life’s

²⁶ Une lecture non-calviniste de Calvin,” *Supplément à la revue réformée* 4 (1979): 35-45. Marcel’s basic points are that Stauffer misunderstood Calvin’s understanding of providence and selectively quoted Calvin’s sermons without taking into consideration Calvin’s *Institutes*.

²⁷ A fine example can be found in Max Engammare’s paper, “Le paradis à Genève, comment Calvin prêchait-il la chute aux Genevois,” *Études théologiques et religieuses* 69 (1994/3): 329-349.

²⁸ It is fascinating to consider the difference between Calvin’s written and oral work. What was the difference in style or was there a difference in style? It is fair, I think, to say that there was a great difference in style between Calvin’s sermons and written work. This is so partly because his sermons were intended for a very different audience and also because, in his sermons, Calvin used more of the rhetorical tools of *persuasio* than I think he did in his other writings, particularly his *Institutes*. I think it is fair to say that Calvin chose as his point of departure the Bible and then set about to explain the Scriptures in different ways to different audiences. To the Bible studies of the pastors, which was called the congregation, Calvin’s notes were often like lectures. To the students at the Genevan Academy, for whom he wrote the *Commentaries*, Calvin’s exposition is a little more detailed. In the sermons, we have no less theology, just a different way of explaining it. Calvin was clearly aware of the power of printing. Jean Gilmont, in *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 256-274, devotes a chapter showing how Calvin was a master of the dedication. Calvin, was in my opinion very aware of not only the different audiences but the power of the different types of media, be it printed or oral. For Calvin, the point was not, however, what the media was but how to use it as efficiently as possible to spread the message of Christ.

journey. Calvin educated people in order that they might gain a knowledge of Christ. The doctrine of the knowledge of Christ is,

not of the tongue but of life. It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as are other disciplines but it is received only when it possesses the whole soul and finds a seat and a resting place in the inmost affections of the heart.³⁰

Calvin was convinced that his life was one in the service of God. The first task in this service of God was to educate the people in the identity of the true God.³¹ The way to educate people about God was by means of the Scriptures, which Calvin believed to be God's self-revelation. Without proper knowledge the people would be idolatrous. Calvin felt that idolatry was an ever present threat that eroded the roots of the Christian life.³² Yet instruction alone does not suffice. The people need a faith that is more than just head knowledge or knowledge of doctrines. They must be shown the nature, mercy and love of God. This task of edification was done mainly through the pulpit. If we ignore the sermons, therefore, we overlook to a large extent Calvin's vision of an

³⁰ *Instit.* 3:6. 4 (1539); OS 4, 149-150.

³¹ Calvin believed that, as a result of the 'fall', the human was incapable of discerning the true God. All of our attempts lead to idols. Our attempts not only lead us to false Gods but render us inexcusable. *Instit.* 1.5.12.

³² Carlos M. N. Eire, "Calvin's Attack on Idolatry," in *John Calvin and the Church*, 247-276. Eire develops the thesis that at the very heart of Calvin's theology is a burning concern over the worship of the true God as opposed to an idol. Calvin knew that our minds are incapable of understanding the nature of God and thus God had to accommodate to us by revealing Himself. This was done via the Scriptures. To turn away from the task of the knowledge of the true God is to turn away from Christianity itself. Eire makes a very good point. Indeed, one of the key elements that echoes throughout Calvin's works is a concern for the knowledge of God. For Calvin it must be noted that such a knowledge was not a matter of the head alone, or of assent to a body of doctrine, but a deep awareness of the presence of the Living God. Faith, notes Calvin, is "a firm and certain knowledge of

edified, educated people who glorify God in worship and in life. The edifying, educative mission of the sermon implies that the message of the sermon has to be pointed or focused in order to enter the hearts of the people. Calvin had no use for those preachers who would merely expose a general message, as he remarks after speaking of the high office of the preacher and the need for humility and divine help:

Et puis il n'est pas question de faire seulement un sermon quand un homme sera prescheur, mais il faut qu'en general et en particulier il sçache que c'est d'anoncer la parole de Dieu pour edifier, afin qu'elle profite.³³

God gives preachers to the people so that they can be taught about God. When we hear a preacher give a sermon, it is not enough that we say something was well said or well put. The goal of the sermon and of preaching is to reform our lives.³⁴

Another reason that the sermons should be given serious consideration is that they were to a large measure responsible for the social and moral changes that took place in Geneva while Calvin was there.³⁵ Calvin effected a social revolution in Geneva during

God's benevolence towards us, founded upon the truth of the freely given promise in Christ, both revealed to our minds and sealed upon our hearts through the Holy Spirit." *Instit.* 3.2.7.

³³ Sermon on 1Tim 3:1, CO 53, 236.

³⁴ Sermon on Deut. 4:44-49, CO 26, 241.

³⁵ In the records of the *Consistoire* of Geneva, there are accounts of people being interviewed by the counsel as to the contents of the sermons. The sermon was the way in which the Reformation took hold among the ordinary people who perhaps could not read and did not have access to Calvin's tracts and *Institutes*. The *Consistoire* has sometimes been misunderstood as a Calvin "goon squad," but in fact it was made up of elected lay people who had as their task the governance of Geneva. The Consistory was carefully structured to represent the people of Geneva. As such, two of them were members of the small council, four from the council of sixty and six from the council of two hundred. In addition, the Consistory included ordained pastors. The small council was the most important and met daily much like our present day city hall. The difference was that the small council handled legal and criminal cases, having taken over that office from the defunct bishop's court. The Consistory was in part responsible for ensuring that the Reformation was working. It's early records contain many excerpts of interviews with ordinary citizens carried out to ensure that Roman Catholicism was wiped out. (It

his residence there from 1536 to 1564.³⁶ The changes ranged from the institution of orphanages and schools³⁷ to the tightening up of church discipline.³⁸ The 'revolution' was not without resistance³⁹ but it can be said that the changes would not have been possible without the pulpit. If the changes had been brought about by coercion or force, Calvinism would have died with John Calvin in 1564. But it did not. By means of the

stopped the saying of Latin prayers and disciplined some Genevans for collecting holy water.) The Consistory would admonish people for not going to church or for not paying enough attention to the sermon. The punishment was often just a reprimand although, in some cases of severe misconduct, it could be banishment or death. After 1555, following Calvin's victory over the right to excommunicate, there was a reign of moral terror. No one was able to oppose the Consistory and, oddly enough, the number of 'moral' cases brought to the Consistory was at an all time high between 1557 and 1558. In 1560 Calvin was occupied with the situation of the French and there is a corresponding relaxation in the number of 'moral' cases brought to the attention of the Consistory.

³⁶ Robert M. Kingdon, "Social Welfare in Calvin's Geneva," *American Historical Review* 76 (1971): 3-15. Also by the same author, "The Control of Morals in Calvin's Geneva." in *Social History of the Reformation*, eds. Lawrence P. Buck and Johnathan W. Zophy (Columbus OH: Columbus University Press, 1972), 3-16.

³⁷ In 1559, the famous Genevan Academy (one of the Academy's most famous graduates was John Knox) was founded by Calvin. It's original charter was to train young men for the pastorate, and Calvin set rigorous standards. The training period was so long that the Academy could not provide the number of trained pastors that France required. The school was made up of a junior school, which concentrated on basic Latin, and a senior school where Scriptures, Hebrew, Latin and exegetical skills were taught. Karin Maag, in her published thesis, describes the school and focuses on its dual mission of school and seminary. *Seminary or University? The Genevan Academy and Reformed Higher Education, 1560-1620* (Aldershot UK: Scholar Press, 1995). While it may be strange to think of a present day theologian involved in activities such as founding hospitals, schools and orphanages, Calvin lived in the Renaissance and was influenced by the humanist ideal of reforming society for the better. The humanist ideal was to improve living and social conditions so that individuals could fulfil their destinies.

³⁸ See Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and His Socio-Economic Impact* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1971). Graham outlines, in a very readable fashion, Calvin's commitment to social revolution and social justice. Georgia Harkness, in *John Calvin, the Man and his Ethics* (New York: Holt and Co, 1931), offers a readable look at Calvin and his times. Harkness's presentation tends to present Calvin as more of a dictator than revolutionary, but it is still worthwhile.

³⁹ Ross William Collins, *Calvin and the Libertines of Geneva*, ed. F. D. Blackley (Vancouver: Clark Irwin, 1986).

pulpit or, as Calvin called it, the throne of God,⁴⁰ the people of Geneva were ‘reformed’ one by one, causing a permanent difference in attitude, outlook and theology.

Since I have briefly outlined the value and importance of the sermons, it must be said that the sermons should not simply be mined as a source of doctrines, or considered as footnotes to the *Institutes*. They should be understood as fitting into what Leith calls “unifying perspectives that influence all his doctrines.”⁴¹ In Calvin’s sermons we find clearly present and readily accessible the themes that cement together much of Calvin’s thought. In the sermons that deal with the devil, as we shall see, the theme that comes out most clearly is the theme of the knowledge of God as it relates to self-knowledge and human experience. The sermons allow these themes of Calvin’s thought to be clearly expressed to those who attended the church services in Geneva.

Context and Influences

Calvin’s preaching must be understood in terms of its context and influences before we can proceed further. The first and obvious factor to consider in terms of Calvin’s context is that Geneva was officially committed to Christianity.⁴² This was an element in Calvin’s ‘success’ in reforming Geneva. The Geneva of Calvin’s time was

⁴⁰ Sermon on 1 Tim 5:20, CO 53,520. “la chair, qui est le siege de Dieu donc il veut gouverner nos ames.”

⁴¹ John Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine,” 219.

⁴² This can be seen by, among other things, the activity of the Consistory. Calvin’s Geneva was not unique in this. Kingdon makes the point that similar enforcement took place in the time of Savonarola in Florence before Calvin and in the Zwinglian influenced Swiss cities after Calvin. “The Control of Morals in Calvin’s Geneva,” 12.

not an iron theological dictatorship lead by Calvin, as some have thought.⁴³ Calvin did not lead the meek Genevans by the nose. He experienced plenty of fierce debate and opposition.⁴⁴ Yet, opposition aside, both Calvin⁴⁵ and the City council believed that it was possible to make Geneva a Christian reformed city.⁴⁶

The second factor to consider when looking at Calvin's preaching is the influence of humanism, in particular the humanist understanding of the nature and function of rhetoric. Calvin was a humanist scholar as is evident from his first work, a commentary⁴⁷ on Seneca's *De Clementia*.⁴⁸ Humanism in Europe was by no means a uniform influence but various forms had common elements. The first was the notion of going back to the original sources and the subsequent respect for the text. In this regard, it is interesting to remark that when Calvin preached he brought no notes to the pulpit, only the Greek New Testament or the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁹ Calvin was, of course, proficient not only in Latin but

⁴³ Stephan Zweig, *Calvin contre Castellio, ou conscience contre violence* (Paris: B. Grosset, 1946). Zweig paints a very dark picture of Calvin as a persecutor and dictator par excellence, driven and obsessed by power. Zweig uses selective texts in order to make his case but presents a biased image that was not honest to the realities of Calvin's Geneva, namely, that Calvin was answerable to the Council and did not 'run' Geneva.

⁴⁴ He and William Farel, the original reformer of Geneva, were asked by the Genevan Council to leave in April 1538. Calvin spent three years in Strasbourg and returned to Geneva in 1541. Farel did not return to Geneva but took charge in a neighbouring city.

⁴⁵ It is evident that Geneva was looked upon by Calvin as a model. The memory of the disaster at Münster was still fresh in people's minds and Calvin sought to show that Geneva was a model of reformed Protestantism done properly and to the glory of God.

⁴⁶ Emile G. Leonard, *A History of Protestantism*, trans. Joyce M. H. Reid (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), 348ff.

⁴⁷ Calvin's book was less than a roaring success.

⁴⁸ Ford Lewis Battles and Andre Hugo, *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* (Leiden: E. J Brill, for Renaissance Society of America, 1969). The authors show to what extent Calvin was a humanist and conclude that he was very well versed with the best humanist tools of his time.

⁴⁹ It is highly probable that Calvin was familiar with Erasmus's Greek New Testament and used it when he preached. Calvin was very familiar with the French Bible translation by his cousin Pierre Olivétan

also in Greek and Hebrew. This stress on proficiency in the ancient tongues belonged to the humanist notion of *eruditio*. When he preached on a text, he translated on the spot. This can be surmised since the phrases he used when he quoted the Bible from the pulpit at times did not correspond to any known translation and Calvin's pulpit translations would change slightly within the sermon when he repeated the text. Calvin often cited errors in the Vulgate but Parker informs us that Calvin preferred the Vulgate to the translation of Erasmus.⁵⁰ Calvin was distraught at those who called themselves theologians and who disdained the study of the ancient languages, namely, Greek, Hebrew and Latin.⁵¹ He noted that some theologians eschew linguistic study and denounce "language study with as many insults as they can muster."⁵² The results of such disdain are mistakes that are "easy and obvious to anyone."⁵³ Calvin believed that

(The same as Robert) as well as the French translation of the Psalms by Marot. In fact the preachers who were prepared by the Genevan Academy to be sent to the mission fields of France were armed with the Olivétan Bible and the Marot psalms. Calvin wrote the preface to Olivétan's Bible in 1534. The Olivétan bible appeared in Neuchâtel in 1535. As for his source for the Old Testament, there was the famous German Hebraist Reuchlin who published in 1506 a Hebrew grammar. Reuchlin, while a fine Hebraist, was interested in the occult and cabalism and his work was perhaps viewed askance as a result. Reuchlin was condemned by the University of Paris and as a result, in 1514, gained sympathy among the humanists and to some extent the reformers as they had a common enemy, namely, the theologians of the Sorbonne. Sebastien Münster was one of the reformers in Basel and in 1534, using Reuchlin's grammar, published a Hebrew Old Testament with parallels in Latin. Münster also referred to rabbinical sources and put them in his margins. As T.H.L Parker notes, it is fairly certain that Calvin made use of this work. By the time Calvin was preaching, there were many scholars who could read Greek and Hebrew and were publishing newer Latin Bibles to replace the Vulgate. T.H.L Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T and T.Clark, 1986), 5-7.

⁵⁰ *Instit.* 3.2.8 and 3.4.9 give examples of where Calvin points out errors in the Vulgate. T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's New Testament Commentaries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 143-145.

⁵¹ The concern for Greek, Hebrew and Latin was very much a concern of the humanist scholars. It is interesting to note that the enigmatic Francis I established royal lectures in Paris in Latin, Hebrew and Greek. He intended that the faculty of theology teach Latin, but they declined. The college became known as the *Collège des Trois Langues*. Frederic J. Baumgartner *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York :St. Martin's Press,1995),103.

⁵² *Comm.* 1 Cor. 14:15.

⁵³ *Instit.* 4.29.36.

the mind of the author was to be found in the literal sense of the text. Thus, if one is faithful to the original sources, one is closer to the mind or intent of the author. This humanist tool of *eruditio* was in part responsible for Calvin's various attacks on biblical criticism and false preaching.

Another consequence of the humanist respect for the text is that the thinkers would try to remain as much as possible true to the intention of the author. When the author, as in the case of Scripture, was God Himself, it was all the more imperative that one should remain as true as possible to God's intentions as indicated within the text.

The humanists were, by and large, interested in the Reformation of education.⁵⁴ For the Christian humanists, the Roman Catholic bishops and clergy had sadly neglected the task and role of the sermon.⁵⁵ If there was a sermon preached at all, it was only

⁵⁴ There were many reasons for this. The first was the interest in antiquity and Roman and Greek culture, but the second reason was that the Renaissance was a time of exploding horizons. Many of the wealthier citizens wished that their sons be educated in the lucrative trade of law. Law had taken on new dimensions and depth with the advent of insurance of risky overseas ventures, trade missions, and loans. The discovery of the Justinian code meant, of course, proficiency in Latin and, to some extent, the culture of Rome. Gradually, in this period the old structures of education, with its emphasis on the liberal arts, was reintroduced. Calvin was inspired by the humanist college that he saw in Strasbourg, the Sturm Academy where theology and humanism were taught. The Sturm Academy itself took its inspiration from the teaching that the Brothers of the Common Life implemented. The Brothers of the Common life was a movement that was centered in the Netherlands. They were famous for their devotion, prayer and zeal for reformation along the lines of what they understood to be a return to the basic roots of Christianity. The Brothers of the Common life treasured Thomas A Kempis' *Imitatio Christi* above all other devotional works. In the Sturm academy, perhaps following the cue from the Brothers, the emphasis was on the study of ancient languages and rhetorical preaching tools. Fr. Laplanche, "L'enseignement universitaire," in *Histoire de Christianisme des origines à nos jours* (Paris, 1992), vol. 8, 1066-1077 as referred to by Jean-François Gilmont, *Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé* (Geneva: Droz, 1997), 47.

⁵⁵ Calvin's oft quoted remarks on the state of mediaeval preaching are to be found in his letter to Sadoleto. In this letter, among other things, Calvin bemoans those who preach to confuse the ignorant or to excite them. The sermon had become, according to Calvin, a thing of sport and amusement, a prelude to entertainment in the service, if not the entertainment itself. Jean Calvin, *La Vraie piété*, eds. I. Backus, C. Chimelli (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1986), 94.

during special feasts and events such as the start of the Lenten fast. Indeed both Catholic and Protestant reformers called for a greater frequency in preaching. Calvin was no exception.

Calvin on Preaching

Calvin cited his admiration for John Chrysostom, for example, because of what he felt was Chrysostom's simple yet honest approach to the Biblical text⁵⁶ and his insistence on simplicity of thought in order to persuade.⁵⁷ The concern for the text and the intention of the author led to a certain style of preaching that was in vogue at Calvin's time. A good example of this was the style of the famous preacher John Geiler of Keiserberg⁵⁸ who preached in Strasbourg's cathedral from 1478 to 1510. The widely acclaimed Geiler preached by using the *lectio continua* (which probably shows the influence of Augustine of Hippo). Geiler's sermons, which often lasted about an hour, were a mix of pastoral concern as well as teaching. Like Geiler, Calvin used the *lectio continua* and preached through a book of the Bible from verse to verse. He did not approve of those who would select one verse or passage and ignore others.

What order must pastors keep in their teaching? First let them not esteem at their pleasure what is profitable to be uttered and what to be omitted; but let them leave that to God alone to be ordered at his pleasure. So shall it come to pass that

⁵⁶ Ford Lewis Battles, "The Future of Calviniana," in *Renaissance, Reformation Resurgence*, ed. Peter De Klerk (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 143.

⁵⁷ Calvin cites his admiration for John Chrysostom because of his simple yet honest approach to the biblical text. See Battles "The Future of Calviniana," 143.

⁵⁸ Jane Demspey Douglass, *Justification in Late Mediaeval Preaching* (Leiden: E.J Brill, 1966), 207.

the inventions of man shall have no entrance⁵⁹ into the church of God. Again mortal man shall not be so bold as to mangle the Scripture and to pull it pieces.⁶⁰

This verse-by-verse explication of the Scripture was partly due to Calvin's understanding of Scripture as God's revelation to us and to his attitude that Scripture must be received by us with reverence. Calvin's interest in *lectio continua* can be understood not only from his experience in Strasbourg but also from the humanist attitude towards the text. Yet, in the case of the Bible, there was more at stake in Calvin's mind than mere respect for the text. Here the author was divine and had chosen Scripture as a means of self-revelation to people. The Scriptures themselves are part of God's accommodation. Calvin compares the Scriptures with glasses:

Just as old or bleary-eyed men and those with weak vision, if you thrust before them a most beautiful volume, even if they recognize it to be some sort of writing, yet can scarcely construe two words, but with the aid of spectacles will begin to read distinctly; so Scripture, having gathered up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God.⁶¹

⁵⁹ This attitude that nothing foreign to Scripture should enter the church was also true of Calvin's liturgical reforms. Calvin was keen, as he wrote in his letter to Sadoletto, that the church liturgy should be purged of man-made accretions. As Calvin writes,

"I have also no difficulty in conceding to you that there is nothing more perilous to our salvation than a preposterous and perverse worship of God. The primary rudiments by which we are wont to train to piety those whom we wish to gain as disciples to Christ are these; viz., not to frame any new worship of God for themselves at random, and after their own pleasure, but to know that the only legitimate worship is that which He himself approved from the beginning...In short, we train them by every means to be contented with the one rule of worship which they have received from His mouth and bid adieu to all fictitious worship." *John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, A Reformation Debate, Sadoletto's Letter to the Genevans and Calvin's reply*, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966), 59.

⁶⁰ *Comm. Acts* 20:26.

⁶¹ *Instit.* 1.6.1.

Since Scripture is part of God's accommodation, and is God 'lispering'⁶² to us, it would be unthinkable for a preacher to tamper with this self-revelation by being selective with passages.

As God Himself accommodated and spoke to us by means of Scripture so that we could understand, Calvin felt it imperative that the preacher do the same. Calvin's ideas on preaching were very similar to that of Geiler of Keiserberg.⁶³ What is interesting about Geiler of Keiserberg is that eleven years after his death in 1510 the Reformation began in Strasbourg. Many of the changes that Geiler introduced, namely congregational singing, *lectio continua* and one hour sermons were preserved by Martin Bucer. While he was in Strasbourg, Calvin also kept these changes. In reading Calvin's sermons one is struck with the simplicity of language and the fact that although Calvin was proficient in Hebrew and Greek as well as philosophy he does not use Hebrew or Greek in his sermons and does not introduce deep philosophical points in them. They are readable and accessible, which Calvin felt was in keeping with God's intention of making the Bible available and accessible to us. The idea of accommodating to the audience, or the rhetorical device of *decorum*,⁶⁴ was a common humanist technique. Calvin showed nothing but contempt for those preachers who would confuse their audiences in order to show off their erudition. One's erudition should not be an end in itself but should be put

⁶² *Instit.* 1.13.1.

⁶³ It is interesting to note that although Geiler was famous in his day, he is relatively unknown in 1999.

⁶⁴ William Bouwsma in his book, *John Calvin, a Sixteenth-century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 113-127, does a fine job of explaining the links between Calvin and rhetoric as it was understood by the humanists.

in service to the text. There were those who used eloquence⁶⁵ in their preaching to “charm the ears but nothing else.”⁶⁶ Calvin understood the preacher to be one who is obedient not only to the true sense of Scripture but also obedient to God Himself.

Quand nous parlerons, voila Dieu qui veut estre escouté en nos personnes. Puis qu’ainsi est donc qu’il nous a fait un si grand honneur, c’est pour le moins que nous ayons sa doctrine imprimée en nous, et qu’elle ait prins sa racine là dedans, et puis que la bouche rende tesmoignage de ce que nous saurons: bref, il faut que nous ayons esté enseignez de Dieu, devant que nous puissions estre maistres ne docteurs: et mesmes quand nous preschons,⁶⁷

Or in speaking of himself as an example, Calvin notes:

Je ne suis point icy pour moy seul: il est vray que nous devons tous profiter en commun: car quand ie monte en chaire, ce n’est point pour enseigner seulement les autres, ie ne me retire point à part (car ie doy estre escolier, et la parole qui procede de ma bouche me doit servir aussi bien qu’à vous, ou mal-heur sur moy).⁶⁸

In his commentary on 1Tim., for example, Calvin shows his true colours in this regard. He speaks of the theologians at the Sorbonne⁶⁹ who try

⁶⁵ Here Bouwsma in *John Calvin*, reminds us that the word eloquence meant a different thing than it does today. Calvin understood eloquence to mean that which contained both decorum and figurative language or metaphor. The Bible was the supreme example of eloquence for Calvin. Eloquence was a “special grace of God” *Comm. Ex 4:11*. What Calvin disapproved of was the preachers who forsook all attempts to accommodate to their listeners and were charmed by their own abilities and turns of phrase.

⁶⁶ *Comm. 1 Cor. 1:17*.

⁶⁷ Sermon on Job 33:1-7, CO 35, 43-44.

⁶⁸ Sermon on Job 26:1-7, CO 34, 424.

⁶⁹ The University of Paris was a favourite target for the reformers and humanists alike. It was behind many of the sweeping changes of the other universities, partly because of a Papal ban prohibiting them from teaching civil law and partly because of an overly conservative stance against anything reformed. The Faculty of Theology was known as the Sorbonne. The Sorbonne occupied itself, if one is to believe the attacks by Calvin and the humanists, with arcane questions of nominalism and terminist logic. In 1514, Reuchlin (the Hebraist) was brought before the Sorbonne on charges of heresy. The Sorbonne ruled against him, and the humanists rallied to his cause. The antagonism between the University and

to make a display of intellectual ability. There one question leads to another, for there is no end to them when everybody indulges his vanity in seeking to know more than he ought, and these give rise to infinite quarrels. As in hot weather thick clouds cannot be dispersed with thunder, so these thorny questions are bound to break out in disputes.⁷⁰

In other places Calvin called such preachers sophists.⁷¹ Often such preachers, perhaps tired of the simplicity of the Bible, would seek trivial points in the Bible and use “*belle rhetorique et mots exquis*” while having “*esprits fretillants.*”⁷²

Calvin was of course not alone among the humanists⁷³ in his disdain for such use of the intellect. Furthermore, he admired the Church Fathers for their simple approach to the text. God was the chief example of one who accommodated his speech to us. If God did not do so we would not be able to understand at all. How then has he spoken to us in Scripture? God is compared to a nursemaid:

the humanists was further exacerbated by the study of ancient languages like Greek. Prior to the Reuchlin affair the university had been sympathetic to humanism but by 1514, if one is to believe the letter to Erasmus written by the Greek scholar Girolamo Aleandro, who was the former rector of the university of Paris, the theologians of the Sorbonne were threatened by humanism, especially, Greek, as they felt that any undergraduate with a smattering of Greek could question a senior theologian's understanding of Scripture. For a fine overview of the situation in France in the sixteenth century see Frederic J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), especially ch. 7, pp. 97-117.

⁷⁰ *Comm.* 1 Tim 6:4.

⁷¹ Sermon on 2 Tim 3:14-15, CO 54, 281. Calvin also rails against the doctors of theology who have never read the Bible.

⁷² 64th Sermon on the harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 800. In this case Calvin was speaking of those who would spend pulpit time in contemplating the nature of heaven.

⁷³ See, for example, among others Lorenzo Valla's *Ecominion on Saint Aquinas*, where he speaks of the theologians who endlessly debate about the spheres of the planets and the epicycles. They would be better to be more cultured like the Church Fathers, Jerome and Augustine, who did not spend their time in fruitless discussion. Lorenzo Valla is referred to by William Bouwsma, “Calvinism as a Renaissance Artefact,” in *John Calvin and the Church*, 35. See further in Lorenzo Valla, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, ed. Giorgio Radetti (Florence: University of Florence Press, 1953).

For who even of slight intelligence does not understand, that as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us?⁷⁴

Preaching must convey the Biblical message in a simple fashion:

Dieu ne veut point que rien soit anoncé en son nom qu'il ne profite, qu'il n'edifie les auditeurs, et qu'il ne contienne en soy bonne substance.⁷⁵

Calvin was always interested in the utility of doctrines, that is, the question as to whether doctrines or points preached were useful for our salvation. To this end, he was not only interested in simply presenting the Scriptures but was always trying to galvanize people into action. His mission in life was to teach people what it was like to live *coram Deo*. This interest in action, which can be understood as part of the Renaissance humanist fascination with social change, finds expression in the sermons. Calvin's sermons are never just dry expositions of Scripture but often contain very pertinent and presently important messages. His sermons are carefully structured to lead people into action. To achieve this, Calvin used current illustrations and direct statements. One example of this can be seen in his one hundred and forty-third sermon on Deuteronomy, where he speaks of the conduct of women.

Le premier est, que Dieu requiert aux femmes une modestie telle, que elles cognoissent ce que leur sexe porte, et qu'il n'y ait point des femmes qui soyent semblables à des lancequenets: comme on en voit qui tireront à la haquebute aussi hardiment qu'un homme, qui porteront l'enseigne desployée au molard: quand on voit cela, voila des monstres si villains, que non seulement on doit

⁷⁴ *Instit.* 1.13.1.

⁷⁵ Sermon on 2 Tim:16-18, CO 54, 154.

cracher à l'encontre, mais on doit lever la boue pour ietter sur telles villaines, quand elles sont si audacieuses de pervertir ainsi l'ordre de nature.⁷⁶

By artfully structuring his arguments and by using illustrations to lead the listeners to a point of action or decision, Calvin was making use of a well-known rhetorical device. This was the rhetorical device of *persuasio*, a device used to lead the listener to a point of action and that was well-known and studied by all, including Calvin, who had studied law. The use of *persuasio* in humanist circles was often found in legal circles and was the type of argument structure set up and organized to win a case. This form of rhetoric was part of the legal training of the day. The stress was not on what was presented but on how it was presented. While Calvin fully appreciated *persuasio* as a form of accommodation, he felt that the misuse of this form of rhetoric in the pulpit was not only prideful but deceitful. Calvin likens the tactics of such deceivers to that of a serpent.

Ils viendront là comme serpens entortillans leur queue, ils auront beaucoup de façons de faire qui seront plaisantes pour attirer et pour paistre les aureilles: mais quoy qu'il en soit, ils parlent comme un langage bastard.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Sermon on Deut. 25:5-12, CO 28, 234. Geneva had a system, like most cities of the day, of armed citizens or militia for defence. Since the townspeople were employed they did not have the time to master the use of swords. Most militia of the cities were given arquebuses (a pistol that would fire once and be reloaded), pikes and crossbows. In sixteenth-century France women were often guildmasters, having gained that rank by virtue of marriage and widowhood. Some guilds, like the clothmakers guild and the embroidery guild, were almost exclusively made up of women. At the time this sermon was preached in 1556, Calvin's battles with the wife of the former syndic Amy Perrin were over. Perrin's wife had battled with Calvin over the right to dance and the right to wear certain fashions.

⁷⁷ Sermon on 1 Tim 3:4, CO 53, 20.

Like *decorum* and *eruditio*, Calvin understood that *persuasio* must be in service to God's Word and in service to the text and intention of God. Calvin had little time for those who did not use *eruditio* in the service of *persuasio* or who forgot all about *decorum*. His understanding of the relationship of *persuasio*, *eruditio* and *decorum* probably comes from Augustine⁷⁸ who noted that speech and rhetoric must not only be in service to the state, as Cicero had thought, but in service to God. Here the emphasis changes from the preacher and the methods of preaching to the message and, more specifically, the exposition of the Scripture. This was the philosophy of rhetoric that Calvin used. The preacher must not only educate but touch the heart of the listeners. The

⁷⁸ Calvin held Augustine in very high esteem. As Calvin notes, "were we so disposed to frame an entire volume out of Augustine, it were easy to show the reader that I have no occasion to use words other than his." *Instit.* 3.22.8. So high was his esteem of Augustine that even when he disagreed with him in his writings, he did so in a courteous fashion and did not resort to simply dismissing his arguments. While it is generally understood that Calvin referred to Augustine and quoted him and was well versed in his writings, it is less known that Calvin differed from Augustine as well. Calvin for example, thought Augustine was far too subtle in his Biblical exegesis, using allegory and symbolism which in Calvin's mind confused the issue. Recall that for Calvin the mind of the author was displayed in the literal sense of the Biblical text. The literal sense of the text and the intent of the author were the same thing. Calvin was the patristic scholar of the reformers. In the Lausanne disputation (in which it was discussed whether the canton of Vaud was Catholic or Reformed) where Calvin was supposed to be an observer, Calvin quoted from memory many of the Church Fathers, especially Augustine. CO 9, 877-884.

Calvin has more quotes from Augustine than from all other Church Fathers combined. He uses Augustine and the other Church Fathers in a polemical way to show to the opposition that not only do the Church Fathers support the ideas of the Reformation but that the reformers are more true to the spirit of the Church Fathers than are their detractors. In fact, out of the 866 citations of the Church Fathers in his 1559 *Institutes*, only one is not polemical. Yet finding or proving a source in Calvin is notoriously difficult. While some scholars like Charles Partee have found parallel ideas in the thought of Calvin and Aquinas, a parallel or even almost identical idea does not prove dependence. Calvin had a prodigious memory and, for his day, his scholarship was considered painstaking, but Calvin did not footnote. How can one distinguish a parallel from actual dependence? In order to determine Calvin's sources of Augustine, one must first demonstrate some dependence. At his death, Calvin donated his entire library to the Genevan college. This consisted of 300 books, including the *Opera Omnia* of Augustine. As Jean-Francois Gilmont (*Jean Calvin et le livre imprimé*) notes, p. 212, it is almost certain that Calvin used the 1528-1529 edition. We can be reasonably certain that this was probably the only source apart from Calvin's prodigious memory on Augustine. For a fine article on Calvin and Augustine, the reader is referred to A. N. S. Lane, "Calvin's use of the Fathers and Mediaevals," *Calvin Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 149-205.

message is so important that the preacher must be schooled⁷⁹ in it before attempting to preach. The preacher is not just relaying a civil message or report but revealing God Himself. The nature of the message meant that the preacher must be humble and receive the Gospel in faith. In speaking of those who do not receive the Gospel in faith or allow themselves to be schooled in Christ, Calvin notes:

Comme i'ay desia dit, Dieu ne veut point que nous ayons les oreilles chatouilleuses pour chercher là [in Scripture] quelque esbat frivole: mais que nous venions en son escole pour estre enseignez.⁸⁰

Calvin goes on to say that such preachers are the worst plague there is since they refuse to be schooled in Christ yet presume to preach. In other words, such 'preachers' do not do justice to the task of preaching. Rather, they place themselves above the Scriptures. Calvin calls such preachers *des seducteurs, des cafards, qui nous detournent de bon chemin.*⁸¹

In Calvin's mind the place of the preacher was to be under God's revelation. God reveals himself to us by means of Scripture. The preacher in turn uses the Scriptures and faithfully expositions them in reverence and humility to the people in the congregation. In fact the preacher himself is a form of God's accommodation.⁸²

⁷⁹ By this Calvin meant that the preacher must be part of the school of Christ, insofar as the preacher must humbly revere God and worship God. The preacher must be a person of faith.

⁸⁰ Sermon on 1 Cor. 10:8-9, CO 49, 642.

⁸¹ Sermon on Jer. 18:13-16, SC. 6, 155.

⁸² Sermon on Deut. 8:4-7, CO 26, 250.

Notons donc quand Dieu a ordonné que sa parole nous fust preschee, et que nous l'eussions par escrit: qu'en ceia il s'est accommodé à nostre foiblesse, et qu'il nous traite comme s'il estoit homme mortel.⁸³

Yet all of the best intentions and attention to detail would amount to nothing were it not for the work of the Holy Spirit, which is a crucial factor in Calvin's understanding of preaching.

In itself, preaching accomplishes nothing; but since it is an instrument divinely empowered for our salvation, an instrument made effective by the spirit, let us not separate what God has joined together. Faith comes from hearing, but illumination in faith comes only to those to whom the Lord has revealed his power inwardly.⁸⁴

Even doctrine is of no use without the Holy Spirit for, "doctrine is cold unless it is given Divine efficacy."⁸⁵

Calvin understood preaching to be sacramental insofar as it revealed and demonstrated the saving presence of God himself. When the Gospel is preached it is as if God Himself speaks.⁸⁶ Calvin had a special understanding of the role of the Gospel and had a Christological methodology in his sermons. He understood the task of preaching the Gospel to be one of revealing Christ.⁸⁷ For Calvin, the Gospel was not just a text or

⁸³ Sermon on Deut. 8:4-7, CO 26, 251.

⁸⁴ *Comm.* Luke 1:10.

⁸⁵ *Comm.* John 17:1.

⁸⁶ *Instit.* 4.14.26.

⁸⁷ Dawn Devries, *Jesus in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster Press, 1996), makes a strong case for the Christological emphasis found throughout Calvin's Gospel sermons. For Calvin what mattered was that Christ should be presented to the believers. Hence, one would expect that Calvin's treatment of the devil in his Gospel sermons presents less of the terror of the devil and more of the benefits of Christ to the believer. As we shall see, this is indeed the case.

even a series of inspired passages; it was a means by which God united the believers with Christ. In this way, the Gospel brings salvation.⁸⁸ The Word was in fact a means of grace. For Calvin the preaching of the Gospel, the preaching of the Word,⁸⁹ was not to be a matter of edification or moralisation; it was always to be profitable for our salvation as through the word itself believers have access to grace. The preached word is a means of grace and a type of sacrament. Preaching the Gospel presents Christ and his benefits.⁹⁰

The preaching of the Gospel is a way in which believers see the face of Christ.⁹¹ But it is very important to remember that the presentation of Christ in the preaching of the Gospel is never just an intellectual presentation. The preached word is efficacious in that it brings what it portrays. Christ is not only portrayed,⁹² he is actually brought to the listeners by faith. Preaching, says Calvin, ratifies the salvation received in Christ's death.⁹³ We grasp Christ by means of faith.⁹⁴ Christ is presented to us and comes to us

⁸⁸ *Comm.* Gal 1:7, CO 50, 173; *Comm.* 1 Peter 1:13, CO 55, 221.

⁸⁹ In Calvin's understanding the Word meant Jesus Christ, but also, since believers encounter the Word through the preaching of Scripture, it can be said that Calvin understood that the preaching of the Gospel (that part of Scripture that deals with Christ) brings believers to Christ and unites them to Christ by means of faith (*Comm.* John 7:33). So the Word also refers to the preached Gospel made efficacious by the Holy Spirit.

⁹⁰ While the sacraments and the preached word are not the only way in which God's grace is conferred on the faithful, they are the ordinary ways. To this end, Calvin was quick to point out that the mark of a true church was where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments rightly administered, as these were the ordinary means by which grace was conferred. *Instit.* 4.1.9.

⁹¹ *Comm.* Matt. 4:1, CO 45, 128, Lk. 2:30, CO 45, 90, Jn. 3:14, CO 47, 62-68.

⁹² Calvin had a very lively understanding of the Christian faith. Christianity was never a matter of intellectualisation but of doing and living the will of God. In Calvin's sermons that deal with the temptation of Jesus in the desert, one sees this in Calvin's understanding of how one battles the devil. The Christian's battle with the devil is never a once-in-a-lifetime affair, but an ongoing struggle. So it is with our justification and sanctification. We are justified by God's election, but the process of sanctification never ends and is borne out in our struggles with temptation and the devil.

⁹³ *Comm.* Jn. 1:12, CO 47,12.

⁹⁴ There is, of course, a strong Christological element in Calvin's understanding of justification.

by means of the sacraments and by preaching.⁹⁵ Calvin's sermons that deal with the Gospels should be read with the sacramental character and Christological emphasis in mind. The sermons have a sacramental character insofar as Calvin places great emphasis on the benefits of Christ to the believer. His sermons on the Gospel are tightly focused with this concern in mind. Secondly, as mentioned, there is an overall Christological emphasis. The Gospel sermons should be read bearing in mind that they are intended to bring Christ to the believer. They point to Christ. As Devries⁹⁶ notes, the sermons need also to be understood in the light of the need to restore human confidence in the goodness of God. The preached word brings Christ to the believer not as a memorial but as a living presence.

Calvin's sermons reveal not only the glory of God but the saving hand of God. In his sermons on Job that deal with the devil, for example, and by way of anticipation of what we shall say in the following chapter, Calvin shows how powerful and how terrible the devil is. He then shifts to show that, although the devil is so powerful, God saves us and does not allow us to be utterly destroyed. This is an example of Calvin's philosophy of preaching. In preaching, the face and the nature of God are revealed and, by means of the Holy Spirit, the words take root in the hearts of the people. The pastor needs to be prepared in the school of Christ, but also prepared in presenting the Scriptures to the people. The pastor or preacher must divide the Word like a "father dividing the bread

⁹⁵ T.H.L. Parker, "Calvin's Doctrine of Justification," in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Richard Gamble (New York: Garland Press, 1992) vol 8, 117.

⁹⁶ *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher*, 19.

into small pieces to feed his children.”⁹⁷ It was not enough to be learned, however, in order to be a preacher. One also needed boldness and a talent in preaching.

There are many who, either because of defective utterance or insufficient mental ability, or because they are not sufficiently in touch with ordinary people, keep their knowledge shut up within themselves. Such people ought, as the saying goes, to sing to themselves and the muses-and go and do something else...What is required is not merely a voluble tongue, for we see many whose easy fluency contains nothing that can edify. Paul is rather commending wisdom in knowing how to apply God’s Word to the profit of His people.⁹⁸

Yet sermons are not successful due to the amount of human preparation nor the erudition or talent of the preacher. As Calvin notes:

If the same sermon is preached, say to a hundred people, twenty receive it with ready obedience of faith, while the rest hold it valueless, or laugh, or hiss, or loathe it.⁹⁹

The difference is that some are enlightened by the Holy Spirit and predestined to receive God’s word and others are not.¹⁰⁰ The work of the Holy Spirit in preaching enabled Calvin to balance between the human act of sermon-making and divine revelation. The sermon reveals God through the mixture of the Holy Spirit and the faithful exegesis of Scripture. In summary, when one preaches

...ce n’est pas assez de prescher tellement quellement, mais qu’il faut que le tout soit réglé à la parole de Dieu, pour toucher les coeurs, et les gagner, en son

⁹⁷ *Comm.* 2 Tim 2:15, CO 52, 367.

⁹⁸ *Comm.* 1Tim 3:2, CO 52, 282.

⁹⁹ *Instit.* 4.14.26, *Instit.* 4.24.12.

¹⁰⁰ Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, while by no means ‘the central doctrine’ in his thought, nonetheless enabled Calvin to explain why some are able to receive the Gospel and others scoff at it.

obeissance: ...car le royaume de Dieu ne gist point en belle rhetorique, mais en la vertu de Dieu.¹⁰¹

A Brief Textual History of the Sermons

Having spoken of the context of Calvin's sermons, of some of the influences on them, and of their nature and purpose as seen by Calvin, we turn now to a discussion of the rather sad history of Calvin's sermons and of what sermons are available to us today.

The first point to note is that Calvin did not write down or record his sermons. For this reason, there are no surviving samples of Calvin's preaching until an adequate secretary was found.

Little is known of Calvin's preaching before his arrival at Geneva in 1536. It is known that Calvin preached in Lingnières, near Bourges, at the end of the 1520's. He preached, it was said by the squire of Bery, "better than any of the monks and did a pretty lively job."¹⁰² As John Leith reminds us, liveliness is indeed a characteristic of Calvin's sermons.¹⁰³ Calvin also preached at his curacy at Pont L'Évêque near Noyon. Except for these few references, we know nothing of the frequency or the location of Calvin's earlier preaching. Even for Strasbourg, where Calvin stayed from 1536 to 1539, we do not know many details of his preaching.

¹⁰¹ Sermon on Eph. 6:19-24, CO 51, 852.

¹⁰² Testament de Calvin, CO 20, 299.

¹⁰³ John Leith, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word and Its Significance for Today," in *John Calvin and the Church*, 221.

After 1541, when he was back in Geneva, we have a little more information. There were three churches in Geneva, St. Pierre (the main church), St. Gervais and La Madeleine. These churches were served by five pastors and three assistants. There was to be a sermon and service at daybreak in St. Pierre and St. Gervais and a service in the afternoon at all three churches.¹⁰⁴ It is clear that Calvin had a heavy preaching load yet from this time the only sermons that remain are what Calvin called “four sermons for profit in our time.” These were preached before 1549 but then reworked and published in 1552. What remains is the reworked text version¹⁰⁵ and we have no way of knowing to what extent it resembled the text that was preached. There were attempts by the French refugees who were sympathetic to Calvin and who were members of the *Compagnie d'estrangers* to record his sermons. We should note that recording his sermons was not that difficult since Calvin spoke very slowly due to a probable asthmatic condition and the general poor state of his health.¹⁰⁶ Charles Joinviller, André Spifame, André de la Chesnaye and Jacques Dallichant were would-be secretaries. Yet, as Colladon remarks, they were unable to record Calvin’s sermons word-by-word and would often miss entire sections. They did little more than grasp some of the main points.¹⁰⁷

In 1549 the situation changed. First, the frequency of the preaching increased. The pastors had to preach daily. Since there were two services, and all the services had a

¹⁰⁴ *Registres de Compañie des Pasteurs* 1.5.

¹⁰⁵ “Four sermons for profit in our time,” CO 8, 379-452.

¹⁰⁶ Charles L. Cooke, “Calvin’s Illnesses and Their Relation to Vocation,” in *John Calvin and the Church*, 59-72. Calvin’s slow speech should have made the job of recording the sermons a little easier, but the task was daunting as Calvin himself would check the recording and it was known that he had a very demanding standard.

sermon, the strain was too much for Calvin. He restricted himself to preaching two Sunday sermons. He preached weekday sermons on alternate weeks. From 1549 on, Calvin's regular rhythm in preaching was more or less established. On Sundays, Calvin would preach through a book from the New Testament or the Psalms and, on weekdays, a book of the Old Testament. He would work on one book of the Bible Sunday mornings, another Sunday afternoons and a third book of the Bible on the weekday services. After 1554, however, Calvin only preached from one book of the Bible on Sundays. The lasting change of 1549 came in the guise of an unemployed French refugee named Denis Raguénier. Raguénier had devised a system of shorthand that enabled him to take down word-for-word Calvin's sermons. He was hired and, although the pay was not much, he accepted the job. He had to record sermons at daybreak and in the evening, in unheated churches, using quill and ink, since the graphite pencil was not invented until 1564. Raguénier was able to transcribe some 6,000 words an hour. His style was remarkably uniform and painstakingly accurate. Conrad Badius, a Genevan publisher of Calvin's sermons, remarked that "*il n'avoit point son pareil en diligence d'écrire par nombre et chiffres, sans oublier un mot de ce qui se prononçoit.*"¹⁰⁸

T.H.L. Parker¹⁰⁹ reminds us that the Raguénier was human and that one can see a development of style and ease from the first sermon he recorded on Sept 29, 1549 to

¹⁰⁷ *La vie de Calvin*, CO 21, 70.

¹⁰⁸ Conrad Badius as cited by Bernard Gagnebin "Histoire des manuscrits des sermons de Calvin," SC 2, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 67.

Calvin's sermon on Micah, November 1, 1550 where he was able to record the entire sermon.¹¹⁰

Raguenier would take his notes to his secretaries who began the transcription of the sermon into longhand manuscript form. During his stay as Calvin's secretary,¹¹¹ Raguenier recorded some 2042 sermons over a period of ten and one-half years. Upon his death in 1560 or 1561, his work was continued with others, probably using his method. These others recorded the six sermons on the passion of Christ, 87 sermons on 2nd Samuel and the sermons on the books of Kings and Hebrews. Calvin's last sermon was preached on Feb. 2, 1564, only a few weeks before his death.¹¹² All the manuscripts were placed in the care of the deacons of the *Bourse Française*¹¹³ until Nov. 22, 1613.¹¹⁴ On that day the rector of the Genevan college thought that the manuscripts should be housed in the library and the *Bourse Française* gave the manuscripts for that purpose. In 1779 the librarian Jean Senebier noted that there were 44 volumes of sermon manuscripts. In 1805, upon orders to save shelf space and of the opinion that since Calvin did not write the sermons and the manuscripts were difficult to read, Senebier sold them by bulk weight. Later on in that same year, 8 volumes were recovered and put

¹¹⁰ Parker notes that Raguenier used "etc." rather than writing down things that Calvin would repeat. This was especially true for Calvin's closing prayer, where Raguenier would record: "*alors nous prosterons devant la face de Dieu (etc.)*."

¹¹¹ He was employed by the *Compagnie d'étrangers*.

¹¹² Parker provides a very useful chronological guide of what Calvin preached. *Calvin's Preaching*, 150-152.

¹¹³ The *bourse française* was made up originally of members of the *Compagnie d'étrangers*. The *bourse* was set up by Calvin to help French refugees. Calvin relinquished all rights to his sermons in order to assist the *bourse*.

back in the library. By 1879 only fourteen manuscripts¹¹⁵ had been recovered. In all today there exist some 680 sermons either in manuscript form or printed in the *Supplementa Calviniana* or *Corpus Reformatorum*. In addition there are the Genesis sermons recently discovered by Max Engammare in a French Protestant church in Soho, London. These sermons are being edited for the *Supplementa Calviniana*.

Once more T.H. L. Parker¹¹⁶ provides an extensive list of what sermons are left and where they are to be found. I will break it up by referring to the sermons that are available in manuscript form, the *Corpus Reformatorum*¹¹⁷ and the *Supplementa Calvinia* series.

The Sermons in Manuscript

Sermon	References	Location
87 Sermons on 2 Sam.	ms fr.16	Geneva
66 Sermons on Isaiah 13-29	ms.fr.17	Geneva
67 Sermons on Isaiah 30-41	ms.fr.18	Geneva
57 Sermons on Isa. 42-52	ms.fr.19	Geneva
25 Sermons on Jer. 15-18	ms.fr.20	Geneva
2 Sermons on Lam. 1.1-5	ms.fr.20	Geneva
55 Sermons on Eze. 1-15	ms.fr.21	Geneva
69 Sermons on Ez. 23-48	ms.fr.22	Geneva
53 Sermons on Ez. 23-35	ms.fr.23	Geneva
28 Sermons on Micah	ms.fr.24	Geneva

¹¹⁴ *Archives d'état*, 46-60. as referred to in the *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français*, XL (1891): 583.

¹¹⁵ By manuscript here is meant the actual hand-written sermons preserved and bound. The remaining manuscripts are slowly being typed and printed in the *Supplementa Calviniana*, abbreviated SC, series. At this time, the final touches on the Genesis sermons that were recovered are being edited for SC 8.

¹¹⁶ *Calvin's Preaching*, 197-198.

¹¹⁷ The *Corpus Reformatorum* refers to the corpus that includes the works of other reformers like Zwingli. The *Calvini Opera* is a subset of the *Corpus Reformatorum* and refers specifically to Calvin's works. The *Calvini Opera* is cited as CO or OC. Here the abbreviation CO will be used. Sometimes, Calvin's works are referred to by using their *Corpus Reformatorum* designation, or CR but this is not the usual custom and will not be done in this study.

44 Sermons on Acts 1-7	ms.fr.25	Geneva
58 Sermons on 1 Cor.	ms.fr.26	Geneva

The Sermons in Manuscript (Continued)

Sermon	References	Location
24 Sermons on 1 Cor	ms.fr.26	Geneva
24 Sermons misc.	ms.fr.40a	Geneva
7 Sermons on Christ's passion	ms.fr.40b	Geneva
8 Sermons pres. by Raguénier	ms.fr.40c	Geneva
84 Sermons on Genesis	bl40	Bodleian Lib., Oxford
25 Sermons on Genesis	ms 1784	Lambeth Palace Lib.
2 Sermons on Genesis	268 col de Puy	Bibl. Nat. Paris
48 Sermons on Eph.	codex 193	Burgerbibliothek Bern.

Sermons in the *Corpus Reformatorum* (n) means the number of sermons

Sermon	References
Genesis	
Melchizedek (3)	CO 23,625-740.
Abraham's sacrifice (3)	CO 23,741-784.
Jacob and Esau (13)	CO 58,1-198.
Deuteronomy (200)	CO 25,605-29.232.
1 Samuel (Latin) (107)	CO 29,241-30.734.
Psalms (24)	
Psalm 115 (1)	CO 32,455-466.
Psalm 124 (1)	CO 32,467-480.
Psalm 119 (22)	CO 32,481-752.
Job (159)	CO 33,21-35.514.
Isaiah (11)	
Hezekiah (Isa 38) (4)	CO 35,517-580.
Isa 52.12-53 (7)	CO 35,561-688.
Daniel (47)	CO 41,323-42.174.
Harmony of Gospels (65)	CO 46,1-826.
Matthew 26-28 (9)	CO 46,829-954.
Luke 2. 1-14 (1)	CO 46,955-968.
John 1.1-5 (1)	CO 47,461-484.
1.1-11(4)	CO 48,577-622.
2.1-4,13-24 (5)	CO 48,623-664.
1 Cor. 10-11 (19)	CO 49,577-830.
Galatians (43)	CO 50,273-51.136.

**Sermons in the *Corpus Reformatorum*
(n) means the number of sermons (Continued)**

Sermon	References
Ephesians (48)	CO 51,241-862.
2 Thess. 1.6-10(1)	CO 52,219-238.
1 Tim.(54)	CO 54,1-370.
2 Tim (30)	CO 54,1-370.
Titus (17)	CO 54,373-596.
Matieres fort utiles (4)	CO 8,369-452.

Sermons in the *Supplementa Calviniana* series

2 Samuel (87)	SC I
Isaiah 13-29 (66)	SC II
Isaiah 30-41 (67)	SC III
Isaiah 42-52 (57)	SC IV
Micah(28)	SC V
Jeremiah 14.19-18.23	
Lamentations 1.1-5	SC VI
Psalms	SC VII
Genesis	SC VIII (forthcoming)
Ezekiel	SC IX (forthcoming)
Ezekiel	SC X ¹¹⁸ (forthcoming)

Conclusion

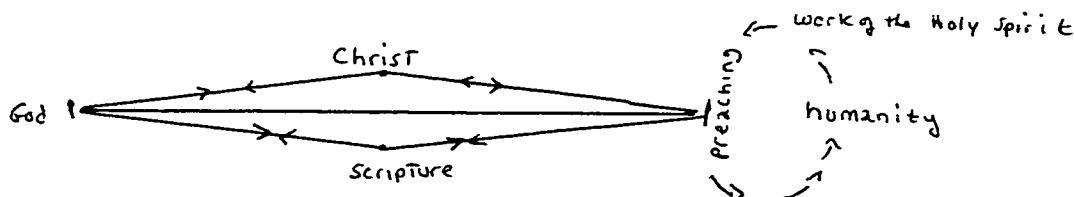
Calvin did not write a manual of how to preach, or what methods to use. It is clear that he used the Bible as a model, but left nothing that I am aware of in the form of a manual to preachers. His successor at Geneva, Heinrich Bullinger, did write down

¹¹⁸ *Calvin's Preaching*, 179,197-198.

some points to preachers in a sermon called “The Sense and Right Exposition of the Word of God.”¹¹⁹ Bullinger gives a few points on how one should interpret Scriptures:

- a) always use the rule of faith;
- b) interpret the passage in the light of the love of God and neighbour;
- c) consider the historical situation of the text;
- d) Scripture must be interpreted via Scripture;
- e) Scripture can only be interpreted via a heart that loves God.

As John Leith notes, these points of Bullinger could summarize the unstated principles that Calvin used in preaching.¹²⁰ It must be noted that Calvin understood that the task of the preacher was a very daunting one. The preacher has the task of presenting the *Vox Dei* and must be constantly aware of his need for God.¹²¹ Calvin’s preaching, and for Calvin, preaching in general, should be seen as a privileged form of divine accommodation to the human reality. This can be understood by reference to the following diagram .



In the diagram we start with God and the problem of how to know God. It is clear that we cannot know God as He is in Himself, but rather God must use some means of

¹¹⁹ Bullinger, as referred to by John Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word,” 215.

¹²⁰ Leith, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Proclamation of the Word,” 215.

¹²¹ Sermon on 1 Tim. 3:1-4, CO 53, 238.

informing us about Himself. The diagram shows that the two main types of accommodation that God uses to reveal Himself to us are through Christ and the Scriptures. The Scriptures and Christ are often further shown to us by means of preaching. The right hand part of the diagram shows the role of the Holy Spirit. Although we have Scriptures and preaching, we would still be ignorant of God were it not for the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit transforms the preacher's words into the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit also enables us to reflect on what we have heard and compare it to the Scriptures and to Christ. As with all diagrams, the reader must be reminded that a diagram is a rough representation. For a more complete consideration of the Holy Spirit please refer to the section, the devil and the Holy Spirit.

Thus we see again, as stressed throughout the chapter, the great importance Calvin placed on preaching and we see why his sermons should not be interpreted simply in the light of the *Institutes* or other works, but on their own as a privileged form of divine accommodation through the ordained minister.

Calvin's sermons and his preaching can never be understood only as exercises in rhetoric or biblical exegesis. Calvin's preaching must be seen in the light of his deep conviction that the preacher is not only the servant of God. The preacher himself must be a disciple in the school of Christ, constantly learning and submitting himself to the discipline of a life in obedience to Christ. This comes to light when one reads Calvin's sermons. In reading them, one has the sense of a man for whom Christianity was not just a philosophy or an overall way of life. Rather one encounters John Calvin as a man who

was firmly convinced that he lived under the hand of a living God. It is this sense of humility, awe, respect, passion and obedience that can still be heard in Calvin's sermons over 400 years later.

With Calvin's philosophy of preaching in mind we will proceed to the sermons that deal with the devil. In the following chapters we will treat in chronological fashion the various groups of sermons in which Calvin speaks at greater length of the devil. These sermons are the sermons on Job, the temptations of Christ in the desert, and the miscellaneous sermons, including the sermons on the third chapter of Genesis. We will now turn our attention to the sermons on the Book of Job.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JOB SERMONS

Introduction

The Book of Job is an obvious place to look in a study of Calvin's preaching on the devil. There are two reasons for this. The first follows from Calvin's method of preaching. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Calvin is an exegetical preacher who followed the literal sense of the text and the intention of the author.¹²² Thus, since

¹²² Calvin believed that his task on earth was to expose the Scriptures and make them readily available for others. To this end, he preached and wrote a Biblical commentary. What does the literal sense of the text and the intention of the author mean? Calvin believed that the Scriptures were a form of Divine accommodation. This means that God Himself used the Scriptures to reveal Himself to us. What this implies for the would-be exegete, is that it is imperative to have a text as free as possible from error and accretions. This humanist notion of *ad fontes* was given a theological twist by Calvin, for whom *ad fontes* meant getting as close as possible to the text that God intended for us to read. Once we have the text in hand, then it is a matter of reading the text. Calvin claimed this is impossible apart from the illumination of the Holy Spirit which acts like a pair of glasses to someone with poor vision. The task of the exegete, in Calvin's understanding, was to get as close as possible to the original text and then read the text with the help of the Holy Spirit. He was clear that there were to be no additions to the text or fanciful allegorical interpretations. He departed from the exegesis of his time because of his understanding of divine accommodation. He really believed that it was possible in this way to find the mind of the author, not because of what the exegete did but because God chose to reveal Himself in this way. The ontological priority is always with God. In modern terms this is called top-down

the devil appears extensively within the Book of Job, it would make sense to look at Calvin's sermons on Job to see where and how he deals with the devil. The second reason is that the Book of Job was for Protestant thinkers¹²³ the example par excellence of the way in which the devil works with the faithful.¹²⁴ Thus the Book of Job is important

revelation and was found in the theology of Karl Barth, for example, who always claimed that theologians had to hear the voice of God before presuming to speak. In my opinion, hermeneutical theory can only follow two paths. The first is to follow, in some variation or another, the top-down model. This is the view of the literalists, some Islamic scholars and those who claim inerrancy. Calvin was not of this genre. Calvin understood that the Scriptures were written by human agents and can have contradictions, even errors, but that God uses the Scriptures to teach us about Himself with the help of the Holy Spirit. Karl Barth's theology was also of the top-down variety. The second type is bottom-up, which claims that our faculty of reason, or human experience, can help us to know God. Here the ontological priority is not with God but with us. It is we who must take the first steps to find God. I think it fair to say that Schleiermacher and, to some extent, Paul Tillich followed this model as did Emil Brunner. Calvin, to my mind, had no concept of natural law (or some say natural theology) and clearly falls into the top-down category of hermeneutics.

¹²³ John Teall, "Witchcraft and Calvinism in Elizabethan England: Divine Power and Human Society," *Journal of History of Ideas*, 23 (1962): 21-36. While Teall does not mention it by name, the themes that were drawn out by his examples are clearly found in the Book of Job, which can be understood as part of the Protestant canon of demonology.

¹²⁴ The issue of the devil was almost invariably linked with witches in the sixteenth century. The Catholic thinkers could rely on tradition and Scripture and thus developed a rich demonology. The Catholic tradition involving the devil and witches was to some extent influenced by the *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by Sprenger and Institoris (1498). There was a great deal of stress placed upon the power of the witch, the nature of the contract and the powers of the devil. The devil was seen as a powerful rival to God. The Protestants who followed Calvin in turn placed a great difference between *mira* and *miracula* and argued that the devil could produce wonders but not miracles, he was not an equal with God. The tradition of the *Malleus* was carried on later by people like Del Rio who in 1599 wrote *Disquisitionum magnicarum libri sex*. The craze and the emphasis on the power of the devil was mainly represented in 1608 with the *Compendium Maleficarum* by Francesco Guazzo. There were voices of protest as well. In Calvin's time Johan Weyer while believing in the devil and his works, nevertheless felt that many of the works ascribed to the devil were too hastily ascribed to him. *De Paestigiis Daemonum* (1563) Finally, in 1584 the Kentish squire Reginald Scot protested utterly against persecuting witches in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*. The basis of the Protestant protests was that the devil could not perform miracles and neither could a witch. Since the 'miracles' are illusions, Scot reasoned that it was wrong to persecute a witch for illusions put forth by the devil. The shift from *miracula* to *mira* and the emphasis on Scripture meant that, to a large extent, the stress was now moved away from the witch as a person capable of doing miraculous and deadly things, to a person or persons in collusion with the devil and his illusions. The change in thinking meant that when Protestants who claimed to follow Calvin, like Scot and William Perkins and George Gifford spoke of the way in which the devil interacts with humanity, the model was no longer Deuteronomy "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" but rather the Book of Job, where the devil is seen in relation to the believer and as one who tempts the believer. Perhaps one reason for the primacy of the Book of Job in understanding the role of the devil for Protestant thinkers, was that, unlike their Catholic counterparts, Protestant thinkers could only call upon Scripture and did not have recourse to tradition. The Book of Job is of course not the only place

to the study of the devil in two ways. Not only does the Scripture speak of the devil, but the Book of Job is a model that describes the way in which the devil deals with the faithful.

It is interesting to note that while the Book of Job speaks of the power of the devil as well as the horrors of the tribulations of Job, in his sermons, as we shall see, Calvin does not stress the power of the devil. Rather, in the Job sermons there is an emphasis on the relationship between the devil, the believer and God insofar as this triadic relationship leads to a knowledge of God. While many famous exegetes like Moses Maimonides used parts of the Book of Job as a way to speculate about the devil, Calvin is not interested in demonic speculations.¹²⁵ Calvin clearly believes in the devil and is not immune to the local folklore about the devil. For example, Calvin believes the local stories that speak of a devil¹²⁶ taking away a blasphemous man. However, as we shall see, Calvin's comments

where Scripture deals with the devil, but it was especially dear to Protestant preachers since it served as a model for the way in which the devil deals with humanity. Job was a favourite of Calvinist preachers because it teaches (according to Calvinist exegesis) about the sovereignty and rule of God. Even the devil is subject to God. Thus not only was Job a fine model for discussing the devil, but the Book of Job also served as a means to preach on the sovereignty of God.

¹²⁵ One can speculate concerning, and in a sense by anticipation, why it was that Calvin focused so much on the relationship between the believer, the devil and God and not on the power of the devil. The first reason was surely a pastoral one. There were those in Calvin's congregation who believed that the devil was in control of the earth and therefore a competitor with God. Calvin refuted these errors from the pulpit by stressing the sovereignty and control of God over all of creation, including the devil. The second possible reason that Calvin stressed the relationship between the devil, God and humanity was his concern for the knowledge of God. In many ways Calvin's reform was towards what he considered a true knowledge of God. In his letter to Sadoletto, Calvin noted that there was nothing more important than the reform of the church and the worship of the true God. Calvin's entire theology can be understood as an attempt to worship the true God and not an idol. The Christian life in Calvin's mind was one of continual struggle and growth towards knowing God. In the case of the Book of Job, Calvin understands the devil to be a servant of God who tests Job in order that Job come to a deeper and fuller appreciation of the nature of God. Calvin has a two-fold knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer. The entire creation, once our minds are illumined, points to God the creator and to the salvific intent of God in showing us the face of Christ. Even the devil, as Calvin will argue in his Job sermons, is not a ranting creature apart from God but also points to God and enables us to know God.

¹²⁶ Calvin believed in supernatural occurrences. In a letter to Viret, he argues about a man who was a blasphemer and scoffer who eventually was taken by the devil, after refusing to repent, into a field and

on the devil in his Job sermons are always framed within the context of the knowledge of God and the sovereignty of God. Before going into a more detailed analysis of the presentation of the devil in the Book of Job, it is worth situating the Book of Job within the exegetical and hermeneutic framework of Calvin's time.

*Situating Calvin's Sermons on the Book of Job Within the
Hermeneutical and Exegetical Context of the Time*

In Calvin's time, the Book of Job was well known and widely commented upon. The most widely read commentaries (among the Latin Western Europeans) were those of Gregory the Great, Moses Maimonides, Thomas Aquinas and Nicolas of Lystra. In order to appreciate Calvin's interpretation of the devil in the Job sermons, it is useful to appreciate the streams of commentaries with which Calvin was most likely familiar. It is also useful to note that the Book of Job was popular in Calvin's time. Most preachers devoted a great deal of time to it and Calvin's sermons on Job proved to be very popular indeed.¹²⁷

The most influential commentaries on Job in the Middle Ages were those of Aquinas and Gregory¹²⁸ the Great.¹²⁹ The concerns of the great mediaeval exegetes of the

lost forever despite the attempts of the town's people to search for him or his body. CO 12,431. In 1539 there was a case in Geneva of which Calvin was aware describing witches and their meetings. E.W. Monter, "Witchcraft in Geneva 1537-1662," *Journal Of Modern History* 43 (1971) :179-204.

¹²⁷ Ariste Vigue, "Les sermons de Calvin sur le livre de Job," *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du protestantisme français* (1882): 466-474, 504-511, 548-555.

¹²⁸ Gregory the Great, "Moralia in Job," *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* 143 (Turnhout, 1979); H. Wasselynck, "Les moralia in Job dans les ouvrages de morale du haut moyen âge latin," *Revue de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 31 (1964): 5-13.

¹²⁹ H. Wasselynck "L'influence de Saint Grégoire le Grand sur les commentaires bibliques médiévaux (vii-xiii siècle)," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 32 (1965): 157-205.

Book of Job were the issues of the suffering of the righteous man Job and the meaning of the whirlwind speech. Calvin also asks himself why Job suffered or was tested by God and by what grounds this suffering was accomplished? Gregory the Great understood the Book of Job to be one of multiple layers, both allegorical and spiritual, but with very little literal meaning. He placed great emphasis on the moral and allegorical meanings of the Book of Job as he saw them. Job was tested by God so that Job's merit would be increased. Gregory was not bothered by the fact that Job was a righteous man. Allegorically, Job's sufferings represent the struggles of Christ on the cross. Morally, the Book of Job tells us that Job succeeded in overcoming temptation in that he looked to the spiritual and despised the temporal.

Another well-known commentator, Thomas Aquinas, saw in the Book of Job more of a literal sense, which he understood to be that intended by the author.¹³⁰ For Thomas the book was very much about providence and the justice of God, indeed, about immortality. Job's friends equated temporal adversity with punishment for sin but, as Thomas pointed out, there is an afterlife in which God's justice is still maintained. Job was not punished for sin.¹³¹ Neither is God's providence something that is beyond human reason. Job, for Thomas, showed that human affairs are ruled by God.

Like Thomas, Calvin was quick to show that God does govern human affairs and that his justice is not restricted to the type of providence we can observe. The book is less

¹³⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio super Job ad litteram*, vol. 26 of *Opera omnia iussu impensaue leonis xlll pm edita* (Rome, 1882-) 1.5.224.

¹³¹ Aquinas, *Expositio*, 5.18.313, 7.1.13, 17.13.185, 18.18.223.

about the way that one man's merit increased as a result of the temptations and more about the justice and providence of God. While one cannot draw exact links between the exegesis of Thomas or Gregory and that of Calvin in his sermons, it is useful to note ideas that might have influenced Calvin. The themes that Calvin worked with were the notions of providence, justice and the sovereignty of God which, as we saw, were themes that occupied the mediaeval exegetes.

The Text of the Sermons

The Job sermons were preached from February 26, 1554 to March 1555 and in all there were 159 sermons. They achieved some measure of fame. They were published by Robert Wienne in 1555, by Fr. Perrin in 1563 in folio form and reprinted in 1569. In 1611 a new edition was produced by Mathew Berjon.¹³² In a preface to the sermons Berjon tells the readers that in his sermons on Job Calvin treated the doctrines in a simple manner and stressed the application of the doctrines to the Christian life.¹³³

Since Calvin's method was to follow the Biblical text, we can be reasonably certain that his major treatment of the devil in the Book of Job would be contained within his sermons on Chapter One, verses 6-12, and Chapter Two, verses 1-8 and relatively little anywhere else. There might have been one exception, that of Leviathan, as it was traditional for the well-known mediaeval exegetes like Moses Maimondes to

¹³² Vigue, "*Les sermons de Calvin*," 466-474, 504-511, 548-555, 471.

¹³³ As cited in Vigue, "*Les sermons de Calvin*," 472.

explain Leviathan as a devil. However, Calvin argues that Leviathan is a fish and that we are not to read more into the text than is there.

Thus, we will focus on are the first nine sermons on the Book of Job. The dates are not recorded on them but are easy to ascertain. Calvin's sermons on the Old Testament were preached daily on alternate weeks. The first nine sermons would then be preached on February 26, 27, and 28, March 1, 2 and 12, 13, 14, 15, 1554. Since the dates are so close together, the most important events that shaped the context of the sermons will be similar if not identical.

Events Shaping the Sermons on Job

Calvin did not follow a lectionary and one may very well ask why he chose Job. After all, he had just finished preaching on Ezekiel. The choice of Job may have been a partially personal choice. Calvin suffered attacks from within Geneva at the hands of the Genevan Libertines, who resented his attempt to impose discipline and sought to curtail his authority and influence. The attacks also came from outside Geneva. The city of Berne had preachers who from the pulpit would denounce Calvin as a heretic. This caused no small measure of concern for Calvin and the other pastors in Geneva. Since Berne had an agreement with Geneva whereby a citizen of one was a citizen of the other, an attack by preachers in Berne was akin to a preacher in Geneva attacking and undermining the efforts of Calvin. If the attacks from within and without were not enough, Calvin's health problems were a worry. In the seventy-second sermon on Job, Calvin even mentions the state of his health:

Et bien, il est vray que ie voy que mon corps s'en va en decadence: s'il y a quelque vigueur, elle diminue de iour en iour, et ie contemple la mort sans l'aller chercher dix lieuës loin: car ie ne peux voir si peu d'infirmité en ma chair, que ce ne soit desia un message de mort : mais si est-ce que ie verray mon Dieu.¹³⁴

There were then essentially three main events or series of events that shaped the context of the Job sermons: the repercussions of the execution of Michael Servetus who was burned at the stake on the twenty-seventh of October 1553 in Geneva; the Libertines and the power struggles between them and Calvin; and the trouble in Berne.

The Ghost of Servetus

The Servetus affair did not end with the death of Servetus. There were two sources of trouble. The first came from those like Sebastian Castellio who saw the death of Servetus as a monstrous act of intolerance and pleaded for tolerance.¹³⁵ The second source was the Libertines. On March 28, 1554 Calvin wrote to Bullinger:

A short time ago, a Book was published clandestinely at Bale [Basle] in which under feigned names Castelio and Curione or Borrhee argue that heresy ought not

¹³⁴ CO 34,130. Calvin was by no means an autobiographical preacher and references to himself are very scant indeed. As Richard Stauffer has noted, the references to the self in Calvin are to use himself as part of the whole congregation. In other words, to make it clear that the message applies to him as well as everyone else. An example of this would be to say that the message he preaches is not only for him but for everyone. The second use of the 'I' is an accusatory use, where Calvin uses the I to accuse the Genevans of one or another sin. In one sermon, for example, Calvin accuses the Genevans of moral laxity when he himself saw a notorious prostitute in prison being treated with pies and drinks. In April 1546 Calvin wrote to Perrin saying that discipline was to be imposed no matter who the recipient. This was directed at Perrin's wife, Françoise, (73rd sermon on Job, CO 34,144). Richard Stauffer, "Les discours à la première personne dans les sermons de Calvin," *Revue de l'histoire et de philosophie religieuse* 45 (1965): 46-78.

¹³⁵ The debate that ensued between Castellio and Calvin is fascinating. Castellio, a professor of Greek in Basle, argues that on no account could one force the religious conscience of another since the matter of the 'truth' is unclear. Calvin did not agree and wrote a small article explaining why heretics must be punished and killed as they infect the entire body and are worse than convicted killers insofar as they attack one's soul.

to be repressed by the sword. Would that the pastors of that church at length though late, aroused themselves to prevent the evil from spreading wider.¹³⁶

A month later, also to Bullinger, Calvin complained that there were those who on account of the Servetus affair say that he is a master of cruelty and atrocity and I now mangle with my pen the dead man who perished by my hands."¹³⁷

Those who were called the Libertines were on the side of Servetus. The Council was divided; Perrin walked out rather than participate. Calvin favoured banishment or exile rather than death. One of Servetus' champions was Philip Berthelier, who was one of Calvin's sworn enemies.¹³⁸ Berthelier's support of Servetus and his general conduct caused the Consistory to rule that Berthelier be barred from the Eucharist on September 3, 1553. Berthelier, in the meantime, had appealed to the Council which passed a ruling allowing Berthelier to take the Eucharist. On September 2, Calvin, in a special meeting of the Council, declared that he would rather die than see the Holy Supper profaned.

Much of Calvin's struggles with the Council arose from the way in which Geneva was governed. In 1387 four syndics were elected and the ruling Bishop, Adhemar Fabri, passed a constitution that the liberties of Geneva would be entrenched within this charter. Geneva had, from that time on, four syndics who were annually elected at the Great Council. The syndics held the final word in matters of city

¹³⁶ Letter to Bullinger, Mar. 28, 1554, LC 3,35.

¹³⁷ Letter to Bullinger, Apr. 28, 1554, LC 3,36.

¹³⁸ In fact he presided over the trial on August 16, 1553. It could be argued that Berthelier's support led Servetus to believe that his case was won. Servetus' confidence was unfortunate as this encouraged him to insult Calvin, which sealed his fate.

administration. There was a smaller advisory council called the Little Council, directed by the syndics. The realm of responsibility gradually grew by Calvin's time into matters of politics and education, moral concerns and hospitals.¹³⁹ There were two other levels of authority, that of the bishop and that of the count. The bishop was responsible for matters of justice both ecclesiastical and secular and the count was an official who presided over secular judgments. Usually the count delegated this office to his vidame or governor of his castle. The bishop had under him a cathedral with thirty-two canons who were of noble birth or doctors of law, theology or medicine. For the most part, the canons were part of the Savoyard nobility. This is where the decay of the bishopric occurred. Many of the bishops in sixteenth-century Geneva had no interest in their office and were mere spokesmen for the dukes of Savoy, who wanted to incorporate Geneva with its lucrative trade fairs and industry into the duchy of Savoy. From the middle of the fifteenth-century, the syndics came to regard the bishop and the count as the representatives of the Duke. To protect the city from invasions by the house of Savoy, Geneva entered into an alliance with Fribourg and Berne. The term was *combourgeoisie*. The effect was that a citizen of Geneva was a citizen of Fribourg and Berne and hence any invasion by the duchy of Savoy under Duke Charles III would be seen as an invasion of Fribourg and Berne. Duke Charles was a staunch supporter of the Bishop of Geneva

¹³⁹ Calvin set up the order of deacons. The person who ran the hospital was called the hospitalier and the hospital was mainly to address the concerns of the Genevans. As the city of Geneva swelled with immigrants, the task of the hospital was enlarged to include outsiders as well as Genevans. The hospitalier was appointed by the Council. By the time of Calvin's death, the hospitalier was a deacon. The diaconate was one of the orders of ministry introduced by Calvin. Thus the hospitalier was neither a secular person nor clergy but an ordained lay person of good standing within the church and the community. This is but one of the many examples where one can see Calvin's vision of a Christian city unfolding.

and of Roman Catholicism and resisted permitting 'evangelicals' or Protestants to enter the city. In 1528, the city of Berne declared itself Protestant and dismissed the Catholic clerics in the city. Fribourg remained Catholic and urged the Genevans to forbid William Farel (the fiery reformer of Geneva) to preach. Geneva dissolved the alliance with Fribourg on May 15, 1534, leaving them allied only with Berne. In the meantime, the Bishop of Geneva had plotted with the Duke of Savoy to open the gates of the city so that a full invasion and annexation could occur. The attack came July 31, 1534 but was fought off. Geneva was in a state of siege. The Bishop left the city. In 1535, led by the preacher Farel who called for reform and with a crowd led by Amy Perrin, Pierre Vandel broke the statues in the cathedral and called for reform. On January 16, 1536 the Duke of Savoy mounted a new attack on Geneva. The Bernese, fearing that Geneva would fall into French hands, counterattacked, routed the Duke on February 2, 1536, and entered the city gates of Geneva. The Bishop's property was divided between Berne and Geneva and on May 21, 1536 the city of Geneva declared itself a reformed city, ending the power of the Bishop and the threat of Savoy. Yet the struggle never really ended. Although the city was reformed there was still a massive reorganisation to undertake and, in particular, great care needed to be taken in the matter of ecclesiastical versus temporal authority.

In the case of Phillip Berthelier the matter was one of barring him from the Eucharist. Who had the power to do so? While the power of excommunication was a matter for the Council, who could bar a person from the Eucharist? Calvin felt his *Consistoire* should hold this power. The Council, no doubt reflecting its history of

struggle with ecclesiastics, thought otherwise. A further bone of contention was the fact that Calvin was French. During the time of the Job sermons there were a great many French refugees who fled the policies of Henry II. Between 1549 and 1559 some 5,017 refugees came from France. This influx was a strain since the population of Geneva was only 13,000. The strain on housing and food resources caused considerable resentment of the French refugees.

The Libertines

Calvin's conflicts at the time of the Job sermons with those whom he termed the Libertines can be understood from two fronts. The first involves Philip Berthelier.¹⁴⁰ Berthelier's boldness came from the fact that in the February 1552 elections the Libertines won the majority. The fact that Berthelier did not attend church on September 3, 1553 did not end the matter. The Berthelier problems revolved around the matter of discipline and moral control of Geneva. It is fair to say that Calvin did not suddenly impose discipline on an otherwise unruly people. The Genevans were used to many rules and regulations before Calvin. A good example is the notices that were put up in taverns on February 28, 1536 which forbade the sale of drinks after 9 p.m. Drink were not allowed to be served during sermon times and the taverns had strictures against the use

¹⁴⁰ Excommunication was what barred Bethelier from Communion. Things were so bad that Calvin had not been outside the city for more than a month in 1553 for fear of attack. By March 1552, the Little Council (controlled by the Libertines) had asked for a list of all those who were excommunicated as well as the reasons why. The ministers said they would rather resign. CO 14, 455-456.

of strong and blasphemous language.¹⁴¹ The Libertines, whose cause was espoused by Amy Perrin,¹⁴² had gained control of the council in 1552. By 1553, they also controlled the Little Council. The opposition was so fierce that on July 2, 1553 Calvin offered to resign.¹⁴³ His request was refused.

The Berthelier Affair

In 1554, Philip Berthelier made another attempt to challenge the authority of the Consistory. The registers of the Consistory of March 20, 1554 record the event.¹⁴⁴

Berthelier was brought before the Consistory and asked if he would persist in his

¹⁴¹ As cited by John McNeill in *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Suny Press, 1962), 135.

¹⁴² Amy Perrin was one of Calvin's closest supporters until 1547. The tide turned because of Perrin's wife, the formidable Françoise Favre, who had numerous clashes and brawls over the right to dance. Finally, in 1546 Calvin was forced to write a letter to his friend Perrin explaining that discipline must be maintained and administered to all, notwithstanding who they are.

¹⁴³ Records of the Consistory, CO 21, 547. I am not sure if this offer was real or if it was a means to get the Consistory to agree with his terms. Calvin was never really threatened. New research is showing that Calvin was the lawyer of Geneva. He was asked to come back from exile simply because it was recognized that Calvin was a man of great skill and not easily replaced. Calvin drafted legal documents for trade, for the city, for diplomatic relationships. It is evident that whenever an important document was required, other lawyers like Viret might be called, but Calvin had the final word.

¹⁴⁴ Calvin believed that only people of sound moral character should partake of the Lord's Supper and thought it important to find some means to protect it. *Instit.* 4:6:12. He understood that "as no city or village can exist without a magistrate or government, so the church of God needs a kind of spiritual government" 4:11:1. Calvin's sojourn in Strasbourg had shown him the importance of church discipline. To this end, in 1541, upon his return to Geneva, Calvin drafted the Ecclesiastical Ordinances. The Ordinances prescribed four orders of ministry within the church. There were the pastors, the teachers, the elders and the deacons. It was the role of the elders, lay people of good moral standing, to carry out the task of spiritual supervision and guidance. The role of the Consistory, Calvin noted, was of "spiritual supervision...of the kind which our Lord demonstrated by His Word." *Instit.* 4:20:2. It is important to note that Calvin understood that these four offices were ordained by God and as such the elders were charged by God to act as the spiritual supervisors or gatekeepers of the Lord's Supper. For the text of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances the reader is referred to *Registry of the Company of Pastors in Geneva at the Time of Calvin*, trans. Philip E. Hughes (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966) 35. The Consistory was made up of twelve elders, each elder chosen from his church, (I use his because Calvin did not have any elders who were women. I do not even think the concept of having a woman elder entered his mind) and the nine pastors of Geneva. Calvin felt that the health of Geneva was to be

behavior and obstinacy.¹⁴⁵ The excommunicated Berthelier replied that he was free to take Communion since this was an edict of the Council and the Council, not the Consistory, had the power to bar one from Communion. In June, Berthelier continued his attack.¹⁴⁶ He was arrested. He continued to attack the Consistory and its authority until the matter was brought before the Little Council on September 6, 1554. Both Berthelier and Calvin presented their cases. The matter dragged on until finally on January 22, 1555, upon the insistence of the pastors who made up the Consistory, a judgment was passed. The judgment was that the Consistory retained the power of excommunication and that the actions of the Council in allowing Berthelier to receive Communion were illegal.¹⁴⁷

The matter of excommunication and of barring people from the Communion table was no small matter in the eyes of John Calvin. Calvin was first asked to leave Geneva along with William Farel in 1538 as a result of their attempts to impose discipline on the city of Geneva.¹⁴⁸ Calvin felt that Geneva was privileged to be able to

governed on two fronts. For civil matters there was the Council and for ecclesiastical matters one had the court of the Consistory.

¹⁴⁵ An excommunicated person had to show remorse and repentance before being re-admitted. Excommunication was a serious matter in the sixteenth century. The Roman Catholic Church forbade any Catholic to do business with an excommunicate. The Protestants echoed this concept, and so the excommunicate was a social and financial pariah.

¹⁴⁶ Actually Berthelier lost his case not only because he made himself obnoxious but also because in the annual election of the syndics held on February the fourth of that year, three of the four new syndics were supporters of Calvin.

¹⁴⁷ The form of the judgement was that the 1541 church Ordinances (drawn up by Calvin) were legally binding. That is, the power of excommunication lies with the Consistory, not the Council. The Bernese Consistory, upon which the Genevan Consistory was to some extent modelled, had the right to excommunicate.

¹⁴⁸ This was done by means of a form of a confession. Calvin had drafted a catechism with forms of confession to be signed by the Genevans. There were different requirements, depending on the citizen's

worship in the true faith as he understood it and thus the citizens had a responsibility to live up to their high calling. This leads us to the next factor within the Libertine opposition, that of discipline.

The Opposition to Discipline

The Libertines began their support of the Reformation by being led by William Farel to smash idols and statues in the church. The early days were filled with excitement, anticipation and a sense of freedom at being rid of the dictates of the bishop and his courts. It must have galled the Libertines to have Calvin in the city. John Calvin always preached moderation and caution. His words must have dampened the spirits of the statue smashers and others who saw in the Reformation a program of rapid change. Calvin called for a disciplined approach to the faith and to the Reformation. Williston Walker gives an example of the type of discipline and power that was exercised by the Consistory after the Libertines had lost power. As Walker writes:

Other examples from the later activity of the Consistory in Calvin's time show disciplinary action against a widow who said a *'requiescat in pacem'* on her husband's grave; for having fortunes told by gypsies; against a goldsmith for making a chalice; for saying that the incoming French refugees had raised the cost of living; for saying that a minister had declared that all who had died earlier [meaning before the Reformation] were damned; for dancing; for declaring the Pope to be a good man; for making noise during a sermon; laughing during

station in life, but the key note in all of the confessions was the idea that as a Christian one's life had to be utterly reformed outwardly and inwardly. Geneva was known as a fairly lax city. It is interesting that Calvin and Farel were asked to leave since the original impetus to reform Geneva, which had a reputation as an immoral city, had come from the Genevans themselves. It is perhaps fair to say that the real issue resulting in the expulsion of the Genevan reformers was one of control. Who had the right to excommunicate? When the bishop's court was still active, there was no doubt that this was a matter for the court. Now one had a Consistory that was responsible to the Council. Who controlled the lives of the Genevans? What mattered most?

preaching; criticizing Geneva for putting men to death on account of their difference in religion; or singing a song defamatory of Calvin.¹⁴⁹

Living to the glory of God¹⁵⁰ was a very serious business indeed. Calvin knew from his experience in Strasbourg with Martin Bucer that the key to a successful Reformation was the way in which discipline was administered.¹⁵¹ In Calvin's understanding the only way in which orthodoxy and discipline could be maintained was by means of the Consistory. The Libertines, since they had gained power in 1552, took delight in trying to limit Calvin's power and in irritating him. Calvin answered insult with insult:

¹⁴⁹ Williston Walker, *John Calvin, the Organiser of Reformed Protestantism* (London: Seebury Press, 1906), 306.

¹⁵⁰ According to many Calvin scholars, Calvin's aim in his theological Reformation, indeed of his very life, was to live to the glory of God. He understood Geneva to be a city blessed by God and in a sense an example for the rest of Protestantism. I agree with this assessment of Calvin's theological ambitions but would caution that it is too simplistic to leave it at that.

¹⁵¹ Strasbourg was known as a refuge for radicals. The dramatic and tragic events at Münster made it clear to Martin Bucer and everyone else in Strasbourg that some sort of church discipline was needed to prevent a similar catastrophe. Martin Bucer introduced the notion of a church court. The church court was to have control over matters of internal discipline within the church. The control of church discipline was to be a matter of the state. In this way, disciplinary problems were handled by both the church and if needed, the state. Scholars are only beginning to research the extent of Bucer's influence on Calvin. Many of Calvin's ideas on church discipline and structure can be linked to Martin Bucer. The Münster affair was one of the saddest episodes in the history of the Reformation and was mainly responsible for the later fear and persecution of the Anabaptists. An Anabaptist group gained control of the Münster city council in 1533 and, by 1534, a self-proclaimed prophet called John of Leyden had taken over. John claimed that Münster was to be a New Jerusalem. His radical party seized control and banished all who refused rebaptism. John of Leyden had a court akin to that of Solomon. He had a throne, wore robes and heard appeals from his people. He declared polygamy legal and proclaimed that all goods were to be held in common. Bernard Rothmann, a one-time friend of Melancton, had nine wives. The group took on a dangerous apocalyptic undertone and believed that God had declared war on all unbelievers and had called upon the citizens of Münster to exact His wrath. The city of Münster declared war on the world and attacked the city hall of Amsterdam. Several prominent citizens of Amsterdam were killed. Finally, the city gates of Münster were opened from within by some who saw that John of Leyden's war had gone too far. The Bishop's troops (Münster was once a bishopric), who had hitherto been unable to storm the city, entered. The cages where the corpses of the Anabaptist leaders of Münster were hung are still to be found hanging on the tower of Saint Lambert's church.

It is very difficult for me not to boil over when someone gets impassioned. Yet so far no one has ever heard me shouting. But I lack the chief thing of all. And this is being trained by these scourges of the Lord in true humility. And therefore it is all the more necessary that I should be tamed by the free rebukes of my brethren.¹⁵²

This was written by a man who in 1546 had thrown himself into a crowd asking that they kill him rather than shed blood.¹⁵³

The Libertines lost control in 1555 and were utterly defeated on May 16, 1555 when some attempted an armed insurrection to regain control after protesting that the admittance of so many new French as voters was unfair.¹⁵⁴ It was the new French voters who had turned against the Libertines and voted in support of Calvin. Thus the years 1552-1555 were some of the most vexatious for Calvin. From his letters it is clear that he thought he would be dismissed or banished at any time.¹⁵⁵ His frustration is evident in a letter he wrote to Ambrose Blaurer on February 6, 1554:

Over the last few years, evil disposed persons have not ceased on every occasion to create for us new subjects of vexation. At lengths in their endeavour to render null our excommunication,¹⁵⁶ there is no excess of folly they have left unattempted, everywhere the contest was long maintained with much violence,

¹⁵² CO 14, 478.

¹⁵³ The account is found in a letter Calvin wrote to Viret, CO 12, 632-633.

¹⁵⁴ This is how the new syndics were all supporters of Calvin. The Council needed funds and admitted prominent French refugees to pay to become bourgeoisie. The Libertines realised their mistake too late and lost the February election.

¹⁵⁵ I think that deep down, Calvin knew he would not be banished or dismissed. The letter indicates the measure of Calvin's frustration and offers a rare glimpse into his inner feelings.

¹⁵⁶ This refers to the excommunication of Phillip Berthelier.

because in the senate and among the people the passions of the contending parties have been so inflamed that there was risk of a tumult.¹⁵⁷

Yet the saddest remark is found in a letter Calvin wrote to John Wolf, the pastor of Zurich, on December 26, 1554. In the letter Calvin wishes for death to relieve him of his burdens.

But believe me, neither from Servetus nor from Westphal and his associates have I so much torment as I receive from my domestic enemies, whose forces are innumerable and fury implacable. If I had the option it would be better to be burnt at once by the Papists, than to be torn to pieces by neighbours devoid of good faith and moderation. No doubt they envy me the luxuries of my position and are unwilling that any man should live in tranquillity, whom they see almost buried under an immense mass of business, distracted by the saddest cares, and harassed by the most importunate demands. One consolation I have is, that from this cruel warfare death will soon procure me my discharge.¹⁵⁸

The case of the former monk Jerome Bolsec was another example of the opposition to Calvin. Bolsec, a doctor of theology and medicine, was evangelical and had to flee Paris. He settled in Geneva and practised medicine.¹⁵⁹ On October 16, 1551, at the Congregation, which was the name given for the assembly of pastors, Bolsec railed for over an hour against Calvin's doctrine of predestination, saying that it made God a tyrant and a monster. Calvin arrived late and slipped into the meeting unnoticed. At the end of the meeting Bolsec¹⁶⁰ was arrested. He was tried by a civic court but, since the charge

¹⁵⁷ To Blaurer, 6 Feb. 1554, LC 3, 17.

¹⁵⁸ To Wolf (the pastor of Zurich), 26 Dec. 1554, LC 3, 109.

¹⁵⁹ There is some evidence that he treated Calvin's ailments.

¹⁶⁰ It is interesting to note that Bolsec was treated with less severity than was Servetus. Bolsec's theology was erroneous yet Bolsec was spared. Bolsec was also treated far less severely than was Castellio, whom Calvin hounded and harassed. It would be tempting to say that Servetus' execution taught Calvin

was a theological one, the court soon became an arena for a theological debate. Bolsec was found guilty of declaring God to be a tyrant and was banished from Geneva.¹⁶¹ He went to Berne and continued his antagonism against Calvin. Finally, in 1577 he wrote *A Life of Calvin* in which Calvin is unfavourably compared to a vile monster. Bolsec returned to the Catholic Church after the Bernese lost patience with him and had him banished from Berne. This leads us to our next section.

Trouble in Berne

The last section in this very brief historical contextualization of the Job sermons deals with the battles¹⁶² that Calvin had with the city of Berne. The chief issue that the records speak about was the trouble Calvin had with those who preached that he was a heretic in Berne and denounced him from their pulpits. Notably, among those were

that such extreme treatments of 'heretics' is not effective, but I am not convinced he ever softened his approach to the heretic.

¹⁶¹ It is fascinating to note that Bolsec was far more vehement in his attacks against Calvin than Servetus ever was. Bolsec also misinterpreted Scripture and rejected Calvin's understanding of predestination. Yet Bolsec, unlike Servetus, was not condemned to death. The difference may lie in the error itself. In rejecting the Trinity Servetus went against the creed and thus committed what in Calvin's words were detestable errors. Bolsec on the other hand did not contravene any doctrine of the creed but predestination. In fact there are two reasons why heretics should be killed: first, if they are stubborn to the point of being blocked and refuse to listen, and secondly if they are reprobate and persist in detestable errors. CO 8, 481.

¹⁶² Geneva had no army and thus relied on the protection of the German-speaking city of Berne, which was a reformed city. Berne had come to the aid of Geneva in its struggles against the armies of Charles V and the House of Savoy. Geneva had a long history of diplomatic relations with Berne, after this initial support many of them revolving around Geneva's attempts to enter the Swiss Confederacy. Calvin and Viret were often sent as diplomatic envoys to Berne, which had an agreement for a while that would enable citizens of Berne to also be citizens of Geneva. This shows the multi-tasking of the pastors of that period. A good example of this is the relationship of Theodore De Beze and Henri de Navarre. Beze received a small stipend from Henri. After the Genevan civil war of 1555, the attempts to join the Swiss Confederacy ended and Calvin was free to concentrate on his missions in France.

Jerome Bolsec and his followers. Their denunciations prompted Calvin to pen the following words to his friend Bullinger on September 18, 1554:

The preachers of the Bernese territory denounce me from the pulpit as a heretic, worse than all the Papists put together, and the more snappishly each one falls foul of me, the surer he is with encouragement and protection.¹⁶³

Letter upon letter of complaint followed, with Calvin even visiting Berne, but nothing was done. By February 1555 Calvin despaired of the Bernese and wrote:

The senate of Berne has not only absolved and dismissed in liberty those who had called me a heretic, but has let them loose armed with greater ferocity against me and this church. We in the mean time, having suffered such grave injuries, are summoned to answer criminal¹⁶⁴ charges. The sum of the whole affair is, that there will be no end to the discords, until discipline be wrested out of our hands, and our catechism abolished. Our council has been asked to curb us severely. I feel so ashamed at their brutality that I can scarcely even touch upon the things which are too scandalous to be mentioned.¹⁶⁵

On October 4, 1554 Jean Fabri, one of the Genevan pastors, was sent to Berne to complain to the authorities or Council in the name of the Genevan pastors about the false accusations of heresy. The Genevan pastors minced no words in describing Bolsec to the Bernese.

As you know Bolsec has been banished on account of his errors from Geneva and makes no scruple to call our brother Calvin a heretic and Antichrist. Consider,

¹⁶³ To Bullinger, 18 Sept. 1554, LC 3,74-75.

¹⁶⁴ Heresy was a criminal offense, punishable by death, exile or torture. (or a combination).

¹⁶⁵ To Bullinger, 24 Feb. 1555, LC 3,151-152.

right worshipful Lords, if we can smother over such an affair without being traitors to God.¹⁶⁶

The Bernese dragged their feet, evidently thinking this was a theological squabble. However, the Bolsec affair got more heated and threatened the stability of Berne with riots. At this point, the Bernese silenced Bolsec and banished him from Berne. As was already mentioned, Bolsec returned to the Catholic Church and the priesthood. With this background in mind, we can now proceed to an analysis of Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil as portrayed within the Book of Job.

Study of the Job Sermons

Brief Remarks on Sermons One to Three, on Job 1:1-5

In the introductory sermons on Job there is no full-length treatment of the subject of the devil. Yet the first sermon speaks of what Calvin considers to be the worst temptation. Job suffered the loss of his property, wealth and health but the worst temptation is, in Calvin's understanding, a spiritual temptation. A spiritual temptation is when the devil comes into our minds to ignite the idea that God is our mortal enemy and that we cannot have recourse to Him. The worst and most dangerous temptation of all is when we start to believe that we cannot have mercy or help from God.¹⁶⁷ Hence we begin the study of the Job sermons armed with the insight that the devil is the mortal enemy of God and humanity and seeks to destroy us.

¹⁶⁶ *Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs*, CO 20, 425-426.

¹⁶⁷ CO 33, 23.

Sermon Four, March 1, 1554, on Job 1:6-8

The first of the sermons in which Calvin deals with the subject of the devil is the fourth sermon. The stage for Sermon Four is set in Sermon Three. In Sermon Three, Calvin spoke of the meaning of what it is to be a 'good' person. If a person is declared or understood to be good, it is not to that person's credit but is the work of God.¹⁶⁸ Calvin picks up on this theme and notes that here it is said that God wishes to test Job. Calvin points out the fact that God wishes to test Job in order to demonstrate two points. The first point is that we are governed by God and our lives are not ruled by fortune or chance and the second point is that God is sovereign¹⁶⁹ and that nothing happens apart from His consent. These are the two reasons for the testing of Job. As we shall see, this sets the major emphasis of Calvin's fourth sermon, namely, that of sovereignty.

Calvin now takes a detour. He asks his congregation why it is that Scripture records this image of the Sons of God before the throne of God. He explains that this image is a device used by God to show us the sovereignty of God. The image is a form of God's accommodation¹⁷⁰ to us.¹⁷¹ The passage, according to Calvin, uses the image of a royal court so that we may come to understand God's sovereignty. After dealing with

¹⁶⁸ Calvin understood that God gradually restores the defaced image of God within us. A good person is one in whom the image of Christ appears more clearly.

¹⁶⁹ As will be shown, Calvin reiterates the point of sovereignty over and over again. This is by no means the only way to interpret the passage. It is tempting to speculate that Calvin's stress on the sovereignty of God was a direct attack on the Libertines who chaffed at Calvin's attempts at discipline.

¹⁷⁰ "Il faut donc que Dieu descende pour estre compris de nous, c'est a dire, qu'il ne se monstre point selon sa gloire, qui est infinie, mais selon qu'il voit quel est nostre sens, qu'il s'y accomode" (CO 33, 57).

¹⁷¹ CO 33, 57.

the question of “why”, Calvin attempts further to elucidate the theme of sovereignty by discussing the Sons of God in contrast to the devil.

The Sons of God

Calvin equates the Sons of God with the angels. It is the Sons of God who are summoned and it is the angels who are always before the throne of God. The angels are ready to do God’s will. The angels, notes Calvin, are instruments of God both to guard and protect us. The angels are also used by God to execute punishments on the wicked. The angels, we are told, appeared before the throne of God. They were not, however, summoned like courtiers. Calvin points out that his analogy of the royal court was deficient, but adds that the analogy of the throne of God is used only so that we might understand the sovereignty of God. The angels have no movement on their own but wait for the command of God.¹⁷² The angels are instruments of God and reflections of the will and virtue of God. Calvin summarizes his passage on angels by saying:

Voila donc que nous avons à recueillir de ce passage, c’est assavoir que Dieu besongne tellement par le moyen de ses Anges pour gouverner les choses humaines, que tout vient à conte devant lui, tellement qu’il n’y a rien qui lui eschappe.¹⁷³

So far Calvin paints a picture of a sovereign God surrounded by angels. Yet he does not leave the image of God as one of raw control and power. By introducing the fact that the angels govern human affairs and are sent to protect us, Calvin introduces the idea of sovereignty and compassion. As we shall see, Calvin never speaks of the

¹⁷² CO 33, 58.

sovereignty of God alone but always in conjunction with the will of God which, in Calvin's understanding, is always one of compassion, mercy and love for us. So here we have a sovereign God but one whose angels are sent to protect and guide us. The theme of sovereignty is shown by Calvin not to be one of mere power and control. Sovereignty is always linked with compassion. The angels are called to give an account to God not only because God is sovereign but also because God is involved with the affairs of humanity. Yet the angels are not alone before the throne of God. The devil is also there.

The Devils

In contrast to the angels, Calvin now speaks of the devils. Satan also appears with the Sons of God to give account to God. Why is this? The first and obvious reason for the devil's appearance is that even the devils, whom Calvin notes are enemies and rebels and who seek to overturn everything and ruin God's majesty, are also subject to God. Since God is sovereign, it follows that everything is subject to Him. Even the devils are subject to God as they too are part of the creation. Moreover, the devils can do nothing without the permission of God.¹⁷⁴ In contrast, the angels obey God freely, because they are inclined to good and want to follow and obey God. The devils obey God grudgingly. The fact that the devils obey God and do God's will, albeit grudgingly, brings Calvin to one of his most important points on the devil, namely that the devil is '*tenu en bride*'.

¹⁷³ CO 33, 58.

¹⁷⁴ It is interesting that Calvin remarks on both the angels and on the devil and in each case argues that they can do nothing without the will and permission of God. This was perhaps a caveat to those who

From Sovereignty to Compassion, the Devil as tenu en bride

Calvin claims that the contrast with the devils and the angels is made in Scripture in order to show that God is sovereign and that even the devils are forced to obey him. Now Calvin moves from the theme of sovereignty to the idea of the providence and compassion of God. This movement is important, and as we shall see, is used a lot by Calvin. Calvin invariably moves from the terrible nature of the devil to the mercy and compassion of God.

Although the devil is called the prince of the world, his power is limited and he does not have free reign over us. This Calvin says is a good thing, especially when the devil is described as a roaring lion seeking prey to devour. In speaking of the devil Calvin preaches:

Nous savons qu'il ne demande que nostre perdition, comme aussi il est nostre ennemi mortel, ainsi qu'il en est parlé en d'autres passages, qu'il circuit comme un lion bruyant (1 Pet. 5.8), [Calvin often quotes this passage but to my knowledge never preached on it] il est tousiours apres la proye pour la devorer. Si donc les diables n'estoient point subjects à Dieu, et qu'ils peussent attenter ce que bon leur semble, et qu'ils eussent une licence desbordee, et que Dieu ne les retinst point, hélas! nostre condition seroit bien miserable: car nous serions exposez en proye sans aucun remede.¹⁷⁵

How can we be sure that the devil will not destroy us? Calvin says one of the most important doctrines for us to know is that the devil is *tenu en bride*. The devil is

ascribed an independent power to the devil and saw him as a rival to God or to those who vested great powers in the angels.

¹⁷⁵ CO 33, 61.

constrained by God. Calvin's concept of God therefore moves from an omnipotent being, to a God of compassion who holds back the devil lest he destroy us.

Although the devil is held in check he is still called the prince of the world. Calvin explains this in the following way. The devil is subject to God but we are willing slaves to the devil and therefore he is very much our prince, for we have made him so. We do not realize our thralldom to the devil and imagine that we are wise creatures capable of rational actions and autonomy. Our pride blinds us. To imagine that we are slaves of the devil would be an utter humiliation. Yet the humiliation is necessary since, until we are aware of the great power of the devil and his power over us, we can never come to a true appreciation of the love and compassion of God towards us.¹⁷⁶

Car nous voyons quel est l'orgueil des hommes, ils se glorifient tellement qu'ils se veulent eslever par dessus les nues, et en sagesse, et en vertu, et en tout... Allez-vous attribuer une grande noblesse? Allez-vous eslever? mais le diable domine par dessus vous, quoy qu'il en soit.¹⁷⁷

Calvin has moved in sermon four from a description of the sovereignty of God, and his control of the devil to a concept of God's providence and care. Then Calvin moves back to declare that we are slaves of the devil who seeks nothing less than our deaths and perdition. Calvin moves back and forth from dogma, namely, the sovereignty of God, to experience, that is, our slavery to the devil, and back to dogma.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ "*cheminent en plus grand crainte*" CO 33, 62.

¹⁷⁷ CO 33, 61.

¹⁷⁸ This point is being 'discovered' by theologians. In a recent talk Randall Zachmann (Notre Dame University) went on at length about how in Calvin's theology as exemplified in part, but not exclusively,

We must never imagine that we are not slaves to the devil, or that the devil is not a very powerful enemy. There are two things that we can learn from this awareness: one, that the devil is a very real enemy and, two, that we are powerless to deal with the devil apart from God's help.¹⁷⁹

Car si nous ne pensions point avoir d'ennemi qui nous fist la guerre, et qui ne fust pas si puissant, nous serions nonchalans, et vivrions ici comme en paix. Voici Dieu qui nous declare que Satan est un lion bruyant, qui a tousiours la gueule ouverte pour nous engloutir: que nous n'avons point armures pour luy resister, sinon qu'il nous en donne: qu'il faut que nostre force viene de luy.¹⁸⁰

by his sermons, he is forever moving from dogma to practice and experience and back again. This was a talk that was given at meeting of the 16th Century Studies Society, October 14, 1997, in Atlanta GA.

¹⁷⁹ Calvin sees the struggle with the devil as a three-way battle. There is God who controls the devil, there is the believer who must call on God for help and, finally, there is the devil who wills to destroy us. The stress on the individual's battle with the devil was very much a split from the mediaeval understanding of the devil. Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) also stressed the individual's battle with the devil. This individual introspective look at the devil produced two changes. The first was a fascination with the power of the devil. In reading about the witch trials and the search for the mark of the devil, one sees that this obsession with the power of the devil very much occupied people. Even Calvin in his Job sermons is aware of this when he notes that the devil does not have power over fire and the air. The second result of the individual emphasis on the devil was skepticism. Calvin addresses this skepticism in his *Institutes* where he points out that there are those who believe the devil to be no more than a bad intention. This idea would not have been possible in the earlier mediaeval understandings where the devil and God were engaged in a cosmic battle for souls. In Calvin's time, the skepticism involved those who doubted the devil as well as those who opposed the witch hunts. For example, Reginald Scot in his *Discoverie of Withcraft*, tried to show that most of the so called witches were not witches at all but harmless old women. Likewise, Johan Weir with his work *On Magic* (1563) tried to show the shaky foundation of the witch hunts. The voices of skepticism, however, like the voices of those who called for religious tolerance (Sebastien Castellio) were mute compared to the voices that called for stricter witch hunts and followed the book *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by Institoris and Sprenger (1486). Martin Luther's (1483-1546) struggles with the devil are well known. Unlike Calvin, Luther understood that the individual had no freedom. We either obey God or the devil and this is not of our choosing. In Luther's mind, the devil has such power in the world because he has so many followers. Luther represented the break between the mediaeval notion of the devil and God, which involved very much the idea of a cosmic battle, to the Renaissance understanding of the devil in battle with an individual. Here the devil battles with the individual, but the individual is not yet fully autonomous and is more of a pawn.

¹⁸⁰ CO 33, 62. It is interesting to observe that God's providence and protection extend to the individual and are not restricted to an abstract idea of God holding the devil back. Here Calvin shows his people that God will intervene with us as individuals and give us the means to resist and to fight the devil.

God asks the Devil "Where Have You Been?"

Calvin returns to the image of the throne of God and argues again that the description is made to accommodate the presentation of the Divine message to our senses. Calvin was convinced that Scripture was part of God's accommodation. Scripture is not obscure or too difficult to grasp.¹⁸¹ Calvin has already looked at the image of the throne of God and we see the preacher at work in the fact that he repeats this image to make another point. He first commented that the idea of the throne of God was an image to get us used to the idea of the sovereignty of God. Now Calvin goes back to the image, this time not to stress the sovereignty of God, but rather to say that this form of accommodation within Scripture is carried out in order that the Scriptures might be easy to grasp by even the most humble. Calvin is stressing at this point the compassion of God and is doing so by pointing out to his parishioners that God's Scriptures are written in such a way that everyone can benefit.

When God asks the devil where he has been, the devil's reply is that he has been circling the world.¹⁸² The devil's reply is useful for us to know. The information that the

¹⁸¹ CO 33, 63.

¹⁸² The idea that devils live in the air goes back to antiquity. I thank Prof. Coyle for this insight. Calvin did not mention this ancient tradition. When in regard to a biblical verse, Calvin mentions the devils circling the world, he seems to consider circling the world to include being in the air. Later Calvin says that this passage is included so that if we try to raise our head in pride, we see that the devils are on top of us. If Calvin were aware of a strong tradition that claimed that the devils lived in the air, he would have attacked it at this point. He did not. Calvin exegeted the verse circling the world to mean all around us, above, below and beside us. There was an ancient tradition of devils living in the air going back to the ancient Greeks. The aer was that which filled the space between the earth and the moon. The aer contained vapour which was an impure air as it existed in the lower levels closest to earth, and ether which was purer air as it existed higher up. The demons therefore inhabited the impure aer or vapour. The Greeks also felt that the demons lived in the air space that was very close to earth and thus the demons were responsible for meteorological mishaps and driving humans mad. *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 1 (1975), 449-450.

devil circles the world should make us all the more aware of the fierce nature of the attacks of the devil. Yet the devil has always been around us and attacking us. Why do we only now realize this fact? We would not even be aware of the devil and his attacks except that God has given us the 'eyes of faith'.¹⁸³ Once we have our eyes open to the spiritual realities around us,¹⁸⁴ we see the devil as one who seeks to destroy us utterly. In fact the very passage indicating that the devil circles the world ought to make us aware that the devil is never very far from us but is overhead.¹⁸⁵ We must also be aware of the subtle attacks of the devil. At times we are not aware of the devil or his attacks until it is too late.¹⁸⁶ Even once we have our eyes opened and know that the devil will attack us, we must never let this awareness lead us to complacency or overconfidence. The devil circles us and we are warned to be vigilant at all times.¹⁸⁷ How are we aware of spiritual realities since we cannot see them? Calvin points out that our awareness of spiritual realities, to a large extent, is a matter of experience.

Parquoy quand nous sentirons quelque mauvais desir en nous, que l'un sera mené d'une concupiscence mauvaise, l'autre de ceci, l'autre de cela: notons que c'est l'ennemi qui besongne ainsi finement. Voila donc comme par effect nous cognoissons que les diables machinent à l'encontre de nous: voire ceux à qui Dieu a donné la prudence le cognoissent, car les meschans et les reprouvez,

¹⁸³ To those who are not elect and whose eyes have not been opened, the devil is invisible. They are blind to him as they are blind to all spiritual realities. Calvin here is showing that the devil is a spiritual reality only visible, as it were, to those whom God has enlightened with his Spirit.

¹⁸⁴ CO 33, 64.

¹⁸⁵ CO 33, 63.

¹⁸⁶ CO 33, 64.

¹⁸⁷ Calvin's view of the Christian life is that we are to be always learning more about God. We must pray to God and experience his love. In this, we grow in faith and the image of God, defaced by the fall, is gradually restored within us.

combien que le diable les possede, et qu'il besongne en eux avec toute efficace.
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Scripture tells us these things about the devil, according to Calvin, in order that we might know who the enemy is, be prepared for his attacks and also be aware that when we are attacked, the source of the attack is the devil.¹⁸⁹ Calvin was keen to ensure that his parishioners never blamed God for misfortune. Following the biblical text, Calvin proceeds to the next passage where God asks the devil if he has considered his servant Job.(Job 1:8) Job is exemplary in his righteousness. There are those who by their very lives and actions despise or battle the devil. These people, like Job, are:

miroirs de sa vertu: quand il nous a fait ce bien de nous gouverner par son saint Esprit, il nous met comme sur une eschaffaut, afin que sa bonté et misericorde se cognoisse en nous, et sur cela il se glorifie contre Satan en nos personnes.¹⁹⁰

In Calvin's view, Job was given an inestimable honour insofar as his battle with the devil would glorify God. How is it that by such battles we glorify God?¹⁹¹ Calvin notes that we glorify God when God gives us his grace.

¹⁸⁸ CO 33, 64.

¹⁸⁹ CO 33, 65.

¹⁹⁰ CO 33, 65.

¹⁹¹ Calvin's point is that our struggle against evil glorifies God and enables us to grow closer to God. We grow closer to God because our struggles against the devil force us to rely upon God's help and grace. This action glorifies God. God's glory has sometimes been painted as a cold and abstract notion yet here, in commenting that in our very actions of fighting against evil we glorify God, Calvin has given a hitherto cold notion a more human face. God is glorified not so much by the devotions of saints but in the everyday struggles that the average person wages against evil. God is more accessible. Calvin was always interested in making God accessible to the average churchgoer. He was never content to describe the attributes of God in abstraction, but always related them to the everyday lived experiences of those to whom he preached. At the time these sermons were written, reports of the tortures and executions of the French Huguenots had reached Geneva and Calvin was well aware of the sufferings

Dieu apres nous avoir choisis, espond de son saint Esprit sur nous, et nous eslargist de se graces, et là dessus il veut estre glorifié en nos personnes, et en fait ses triumphes à l'encontre de ses ennemis.¹⁹²

In ourselves there is nothing that we have or can do that can glorify God but God imputes his glory to us by virtue of his Holy Spirit. The testing and our struggles against the devil glorify God.¹⁹³

...quand il plaira à Dieu de nous exercer en beaucoup de combats, et de tentations, de ne point trouver la chose estrange: mais quand nous aurons entendu que Dieu nous exerce, le fruit qui procede de nos combats, nous doit bien contenter, c'est assavoir que Dieu soit glorifié, que sa vertu soit cogneuë, afin que Satan demeure confus en tous ses efforts.¹⁹⁴

On the Righteousness of Job

Calvin argues that virtue or the product of an active Holy Spirit glorifies God in our persons.¹⁹⁵ When we triumph over our enemies, it is not because of any special gifts or power that we have. Our triumph is only because God has chosen us and given us his

of his compatriots at the hands of the less than sympathetic French king. Calvin's message to those who wrote to him from the prisons and who faced certain death was not that their blood would serve as an example but, rather, that their lives glorified God. The very fact that they were in prison, showed that their lives gave glory to God because they did not capitulate to the authorities. Moreover, Calvin was equally gracious with those who had been church leaders as well as with those who held no special office. Their struggle, their daily journey, glorified God.

¹⁹² CO 33, 65.

¹⁹³ It is interesting that it is by means of our daily struggles and experiences in resisting evil that God is glorified. Calvin was very much a theologian for whom the daily experiences of people trying to follow and worship God was important. He understood that the Scriptures were a form of God's accommodation and, I think, had a high regard for our experience insofar as our experiences of resisting evil and temptation not only glorify God in an abstract way but bring us closer to God and enable us to live with a far deeper knowledge of God. Calvin had room in his theology for *les petits gens*.

¹⁹⁴ CO 33, 65.

¹⁹⁵ CO 33, 65.

Holy Spirit. The Christian life is an active one. In fact, we are to pray that we be tested and challenged.¹⁹⁶ Calvin now considers why God has given us his Holy Spirit:

afin de leur monstrier que iusques à la fin il leur sera Pere, là dessus ils peuvent lever leur voix et leurs sens, et se peuvent glorifier contre Satan, contre la mort, et contre toutes choses. Et pourquoy? D'autant que rien ne les peut separer de ceste amour que Dieu leur porte, et qu'il leur a une fois monstree en nostre Seigneur Jesus-Christ.¹⁹⁷

The battle is not one that is fought on a cosmic plane but rather it is we who are to struggle against the devil. We are given the means to resist and defeat the devil so that we learn by experience that God is our Father and that no trial, no matter how arduous, can separate us from the love of God.¹⁹⁸

The Christian Life

From this point, Calvin moves naturally to the next section of the sermon, where he speaks of the Christian life. Job, we are told, was a model of integrity and courage. He resisted evil and the Christian is admonished to do the same.¹⁹⁹ The virtue that God gives to us is useless unless it is put into action. We are to be active in our resistance of evil. If we give up and argue that there is too much evil and that it is futile to resist it, we

¹⁹⁶ CO 33, 65.

¹⁹⁷ CO 33, 66.

¹⁹⁸ Calvin's cosmology has often been thought of as God and Christ in heaven with us on earth. Yet when one looks at what he preaches about when he speaks of the devil, this stark view is modified. There is tremendous interaction between heaven and earth. The devil is sent to tempt, the angels are sent to help us all under the control of God. The devil acts as a bridge between us and God. The devils temptations and trials force us to reflect and in so doing, we can grow closer to God.

¹⁹⁹ CO 33, 67 and 68.

deny God's words.²⁰⁰ God says that we cannot live holy lives unless we resist evil and he gives us his Holy Spirit so that we can resist.²⁰¹ The resistance will not be an easy matter as the devil is always ready to destroy us. When one method fails, the devil is ready to use another:

le diable est tousiours apres nous pour nous ruiner, s'il peut: que quand nous luy serons eschappez d'un costé, il suscitera incontinent une autre tentation nouvelle.²⁰²

In terms of the cleverness of the devil's temptations, Calvin writes: "*Il y a des cautelles infinies, qui se forgent en sa boutique.*"²⁰³

Calvin closes the sermon by reminding the listener of the cleverness of the devil and saying that we must pray for God's help.

Voila donc de quoi nous sommes admonestez en ce passage, afin de nous recommander à Dieu, luy demandans qu'il nous fortifie contre les tentations de Satan, tellement que nous n'en soyons jamais vaincus, quand le Seigneur nous aura confermez en la vertu invincible de son saint Esprit.²⁰⁴

²⁰⁰ Calvin had a struggle with the Genevans whom he felt did not only not resist evil, they supported and applauded it. In one case, Calvin chided the Genevans for visiting a known prostitute in prison and giving her cakes, and for visiting a man jailed for drunkenness and bringing him some wine. CO 34,144.

²⁰¹ Calvin gives two homey examples. He says for instance that when there is bad air we flee it and if there is rotten meat we do not touch it. The same is true for evil; we must flee and resist it. The note about bad air is interesting, The medicine of Calvin's time believed that the plague, indeed many diseases, was due to 'bad air'. To this end, the locals would try to expel the bad air by different smells. In Sir Isaac Newton's London, during plagues, scented blinds were hung on the windows of the houses of Parliament to dispel the bad air.

²⁰² CO 33, 68.

²⁰³ CO 33, 68.

²⁰⁴ CO 33, 70.

Summary of the Themes Found in Sermon Four on Job

In some ways Sermon Four demonstrates how the devil is used to bring the believer into a deeper understanding and knowledge of God. The structure of the sermon uses Calvin's two-fold aspect of the knowledge of God both as Creator and Redeemer. Calvin shows that the devil is obedient to God and as such must come before the throne of God. This reveals God as Creator. The devil is obedient to God, since the devil is a creature of God.

Calvin does not dwell on the point of God as sovereign and Creator but, as we have seen, quickly moves to the all important fact that the devil is *tenu en bride*. This shifts the emphasis from God as Creator to God as Redeemer. God holds the devil back lest we be destroyed. God is not a passive observer but a God of providence and compassion.

Once Calvin has shown how the devil leads the believer into a knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer, he moves to what he considers the second part of the knowledge of God, namely, the knowledge of self. Once we are spiritually awakened and thus aware of the power of the devil, we come to know that we are the slaves of the devil and can do nothing to resist. The knowledge of self that we arrive at by experiencing the attacks of the devil is simply that we are powerless in the hands of the devil. The devil is powerful and crafty. He tries one ruse after another to destroy us and is relentless in his attacks. We come to know that we must call upon God. Yet, the fact that we call for help does not mean that we are to be passive and wait for divine rescue. We must not simply

wait for God to rescue us. Calvin stresses the fact that God's gift of the Holy Spirit to us means that we must resist evil and combat the devil throughout our lives. With God's help we are required to become guerrilla fighters in the war with the devil.

Calvin presents an interesting view of the Christian life in which one hopes in God and is active in resistance to evil. Our lives are to be ones of battle and resistance so that God Himself is glorified. Calvin ends the sermon with an admonition that we are to pray to God for strength as we battle.²⁰⁵ In this sermon we can see the links between Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God and the role of the devil. Much more will be said about this later in the thesis.

Sermon Five, March 2, 1554, on Job 1:9-12

Sermon Five is best understood if one begins with a consideration of the end of Sermon Four, where Calvin discusses the fact that the devil comes to God and suggests that Job be tested. Calvin notes that the devil points out that if God takes away Job's goods he will no longer serve God. The devil accuses Job, and Calvin uses this fact to show that the devil is persistent in attacking us. In fact, if one attack does not work he will try another.²⁰⁶

No sooner has Calvin warned his congregation of the ruses of the devil than he adds that the testing, the trickery, is done at the instigation of God (not the devil who must ask permission). God seeks to test our faith. The accuser would succeed in ruining us were

²⁰⁵ It is interesting to note that we are not to pray for deliverance from evil, but rather strength to resist evil.

it not for the fact that God fortifies us. Calvin passes over the temptations of the devil and does not dwell or elaborate on them except to say that they are real and that the devil does not tire. In fact, the devil is so deadly that we would be destroyed were it not for God protecting us. Thus the main point in the passage concerning the accusation is that the devil is real and we are protected by God.²⁰⁷

Does Job Serve You for Naught?

Sermon Five deals with Job 1:9-12 where the devil asks God whether Job worships him for no reason and points out that Job has been protected from all adversity and thus finds it easy to praise God. While it would be easy to launch into a sermon that described the devil in his role of accuser, Calvin does not do so. Once more this is because Calvin is not interested in commenting on the nature of the devil as a being on but instead always concentrates his efforts to describe the functional relations of the devil. Calvin does not describe the devil in abstraction from God or humanity. Calvin wished always to stress the practical nature of doctrine and the use of doctrine and, with this in mind, it is obvious that he would have emphasised the role of the devil as tempter and adversary since these doctrines have much more practical and tangible relevance to those who attended the little stone church where Calvin preached.

Calvin's fifth sermon can be seen to be structured in definite sections. Each section starts with a verse that concerns itself with the devil or a temptation and then moves through Job to the believer and, finally, ends in a reflection on the knowledge and nature of

²⁰⁶ CO 33,68.

God. This movement is seen throughout this sermon. The first identifiable section is where Calvin reflects on the accusation of the devil.

The Accusation of the Devil

Instead of recapitulating the power and person of the devil, Calvin passes over the person of the latter very quickly and notes that the devil is only showing his 'office' or role of perverting all that is good insofar as he falsely accuses Job of being a hypocrite. This office or function of accusation has already been described by Calvin at the conclusion of this fourth sermon on the Book of Job. Although the accusations against Job are false, the devil correctly discerns that the tendency towards hypocrisy is real in all of us. Thus within one paragraph Calvin has shifted the focus from the devil to the believer. This shows, once more, Calvin's lack of interest in the nature of the devil in abstraction. The devil is able to discern the evil that is so prevalent within us. Calvin next shifts from Job to the congregation. The fact that Job was falsely accused does not imply that we are falsely accused of hypocrisy.²⁰⁸ One wonders here if Calvin had in mind those Genevans who imagined that they were quite free of sin and hypocrisy and who objected when Calvin declared them sinners from the pulpit and exposed them.²⁰⁹ Hypocrisy is often undiscovered unless God afflicts the believer. Hypocrites do not realize the seed of rebellion against God that lies within them. Calvin has shifted away from the devil and expounds on the nature of hypocrisy and how it sets into the heart. In

²⁰⁷ CO 33, 69.

²⁰⁸ CO 33, 69.

²⁰⁹ Fifth sermon on 1Tim. CO 8, 57-58.

light of our sin of hypocrisy, Calvin notes that God sends us afflictions for two main reasons. The first one is that our vices are mortified, but the second reason is that, through affliction, we are refined like ore.²¹⁰ Within ten lines, Calvin has moved away from consideration of the devil and is dealing with the relationship between the sinner and God. Notably, what are the obstacles between the sinner and a knowledge of the true God?²¹¹ Calvin points out that we do not become full-fledged hypocrites overnight. It is easy to praise God when all goes well but, once afflictions arise, we begin to murmur and actually blame God for not treating us in the way we like. Eventually, hypocrites are no longer aware of the fact that they are hypocrites. They are unable to see their own vices. As Calvin notes, the sin of hypocrisy is far more serious an offense than the sin of those who flatter themselves into thinking they will never curse God. The latter are aware that they have vices. If they are not hypocrites, they are aware that their flattery is self-delusion. They become aware of their self-delusion the first time they curse or murmur against God. Testing and afflictions are useful therefore to the believer insofar as they will enable the believer to root out possible hypocrisy.

Having defined hypocrisy as a huge obstacle in the relationship between the believer and God, Calvin moves towards a solution. The 'cure' for hypocrisy comes by means of testing. The testing is good for us insofar as it refines us, but God also sends

²¹⁰ CO 33, 70.

²¹¹ The knowledge of the true God was one of Calvin's biggest concerns. How do we come to 'know' God? Calvin did not use Thomas's knowledge by analogy and always stressed the vast differences in type and kind between God and humanity. Calvin's sermons on Job can be studied from the point of view of the knowledge of God. In this case, how was it that Job came to 'know' God?

afflictions so that they will act like a mirror.²¹² The afflictions do this when the faithful are able to contemplate the sin of hypocrisy. Afflictions force us to reflect and see whether or not we are double-hearted (hypocrites) or if we serve the Lord in truth. After Calvin has demonstrated that the sin of hypocrisy lurks in our hearts and that afflictions will root it out, he shifts back to a consideration of the devil in order to demonstrate how severe the afflictions are.²¹³

The devil is a powerful enemy who looks at ways in which he can attack and drown us. Despite such temptations we are to praise God and ask that we be '*tenu en bride*'²¹⁴ so that we do not fall into the habit of murmuring against God, complaining and then falling into open rebellion. We are to use the 'test of affliction' to our benefit. We are to suffer the afflictions to see if we are hypocrites and ask all the while that God protect us from falling into the sin of cursing²¹⁵ God or of total hypocrisy.²¹⁶

Thus, we have seen how Calvin has moved away from the terror of the devil towards an analysis of our personal sins, in this case blasphemy and hypocrisy. Even the devil is used as a means of our salvation. The afflictions force us to examine our hearts

²¹² Calvin was fond of the metaphor of the mirror which was a common one among Renaissance thinkers. His second use of the law was as a mirror where we behold our true faces.

²¹³ Since hypocrisy is a serious disease, one needs strong medicine. Calvin speaks of the work of the devil only in relation to the trials as part of God's cure.

²¹⁴ This is an interesting device. Up to now Calvin had stressed that the devil is *tenu en bride* but now he preaches that we should also be *tenu en bride*. There is no doubt that by using the same terminology towards us as was used for the devil that Calvin is drawing parallels between us and the devil and showing how similar we are.

²¹⁵ This, notes Calvin, is the result of prolonged complaint against God to the point that the complainer loses all sense of the majesty of God and all fear of judgement.

²¹⁶ That is, only praising God when things are going well.

and in the very process of examination we are to pray to God. This section is what I call a movement or a mini sermon within Calvin's sermon. He starts with the verse that in this case dealt with accusation. Rather than spending all his time describing the power of the devil or how much we are hypocrites, Calvin moves from the devil and the accusation towards an analysis of human nature (the sin of hypocrisy) and ends in an acclamation of how God deals with us and what we learn about God as a result. The movement from the devil to God and the stress on what we can learn about ourselves and God from the attacks of the devil is one that, as we will continue to see, Calvin invariably used when he preached about the devil.

In summary, Calvin notes that there are perhaps two things that we must know. The first is the subtle detail in the process of cursing God, which does not happen all of a sudden. Once we are aware of the details in the process that leads us to curse God, we can be on our guard and stop the process before it leads to the point of cursing God and, eventually, turning from God. The second point that Calvin feels we must know is that we are not on our own in our battles. When we are afflicted we are able to pray to God to help us. When we are afflicted or tempted, we can even pray to God to turn our chastizements into occasions of profit and salvation for us.

" Il est muraille et fosse, et rempar, et bastillion, et tour, et forteresses" ²¹⁷

Calvin turns his attention to the fact that Job is protected and begins by paraphrasing the passage. He would often paraphrase the text on which he preached.

²¹⁷ CO 33, 72.

While it is true that Calvin would enter the pulpit without notes, and only with a Hebrew Bible in the case of his Old Testament sermons, there were many Hebrew Bible translations that he was aware of. Most common was the version printed in Münster and in Basle in 1546. Judging by the books that were in the Genevan Academy,²¹⁸ one can be certain that Calvin had a copy of this Bible.²¹⁹

It is evident that Calvin's use of the Bible was much freer in his sermons than in either his *Institutes* or *Commentaries*. Engammare's analysis of Calvin's sermons on the book of Genesis²²⁰ makes the case that at times Calvin would add citations or little parts of verses when he preached that were not in the text. This prompted Engammare to write an article asking whether or not Calvin even knew the Bible.²²¹ But it is clear that Calvin did know the Bible and did use available translations. The verses that he would 'add' and the fact that sometimes when he would repeat a passage it was not exactly the same did not indicate Biblical ignorance but does tell us that Calvin was a fine preacher. Engammare's study of the Genesis sermon 'additions' show that Calvin never introduced any new doctrines nor did he ever stray from the sense of the text. His

²¹⁸ Calvin's will stipulated that his books would be donated to the Genevan Academy. He had some 300 books, but Calvin also borrowed books from friends and sold a lot of his library while he was in Strasbourg. The Genevan Academy collection therefore does not represent the full picture of Calvin's resources.

²¹⁹ Other common translations included the Estienne Bible of 1545, with its parallel structure of Hebrew and Latin. There was also the Leo Jud translation of the Hebrew Bible. After the year 1545 it seemed that there was an explosion of good translations of the Hebrew Bible. This does not mean that Calvin did not use the Vulgate. Parker in his work, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries*, has shown that, although Calvin cited errors in the Vulgate, he no doubt used it.

²²⁰ Max Engammare, "Le paradis à Genève, comment Calvin prêchait-il la chute aux Genevois?," *Études théologiques et religieuses* (1993/94): 332-333.

²²¹ Max Engammare, "Calvin connaissait-il la Bible? Les citations de l'Écriture dans les sermons sur la Genèse," *Bulletin de la société de l'histoire du Protestantisme français* 141 (1995): 163-184.

additions were only to stress the Biblical text. I believe that this is well within Calvin's understanding of the preacher as God's accommodation to the parishioners. The preacher takes the Biblical text and makes it even more accessible to his audience, adapting it slightly, and perhaps adding local colour.

It is true that Job was protected. When the devil noted that Job was protected by God on all sides, the devil was telling the truth. Calvin does not develop the idea that at times the devil is an angel of light²²² and tells the truth. Rather, he goes on to say that whether or not the devil speaks the truth is not important as the end that the devil has is the same. The devil's end or goal is to destroy Job.

Once more, as in the case of the accusation of the devil, Calvin almost immediately shifts from Job to the believer. He argues that the devil is correct, Job was protected, but then so are we. If this were not the case, we would be destroyed by the devil:

Satan, lequel luy mesme nous viendroit abysmer, et en nous, et en nos personnes, si nous n'estions pas bien emmuraillez, que Dieu nous servist de rempar, comme aussi nous le verrons en la procedure du texte. Car si tost que Satan a son congé, nous voyons comme il racle tout le bien de Iob, et en quelle impetuosité il y va.²²³

In fact, without God's protection we are utterly vulnerable to the attacks of the devil.²²⁴ In Calvin's understanding, God was not idle, instead He interacted with those

²²² At this point, Calvin shows his lack of interest in speculating about the demonology that concerned itself with the fall of the angels and Lucifer.

²²³ CO 33, 72.

²²⁴ The theme of human vulnerability is not one that is restricted to talk of affliction. Calvin was very aware of the vulnerability and the fragility of life. He knew that death lay in every hidden garden, or from a falling roof tile. *Instit.* 1.17.10.

whom He chose. As such, God worked with the faithful. The image of God was gradually restored in them as God protected them as though they were in a forest full of bandits.

Or ceste doctrine nous est bien utile: car nous sommes admonnestez par cela de prier Dieu, veu qu'estans en ce monde, nous sommes comme en une forest pleine de brigands, qu'il luy plaise de nous garder. Et voila pourquoy aussi en l'Escriture ces titres ici luy attribuez, qu'il est nostre bouclier et escusson, il est muraille et fossé, et rempar, et bastillion, et tour, et forteresses.²²⁵

Calvin's movement so far is to stress the reality of the devil and of the trials and temptations. Yet, rather than make us concentrate on the devil, the assaults bring us to a deeper realisation of ourselves in relation to God. This brings us to an awareness of God as protector of our hearts and tongues. The fierce and deadly nature of trials leads us to an awareness of our poverty and infirmity in the world. Through this, we are brought to an awareness or knowledge of God as our protector and fortress. This knowledge, or awareness, is experiential in nature. Despite the infirmity of our lives we are not utterly destroyed. Despite the fact that there is a devil who wants to destroy us, we are not destroyed. The reality of our lives leads us to an experiential awareness of a God who protects us against such attacks.

This knowledge of God as protector is so basic, however, that we should never boast of it. Indeed, says Calvin, even the devil knows that God is a protector since the devil correctly notes that Job is protected by God. We should at least know more about God than

²²⁵ CO 33, 72.

the devil. Indeed if we do not confess²²⁶ that God protects us, we should be ashamed, for we would confess less than the devil. This represents the second section where Calvin begins with the devil and ends with the knowledge of God. In this second section, Calvin elaborates what we are to learn about God from our trials.

God Grants the Devil Leave

The third mini-section in Calvin's sermon deals with God who grants the devil leave to afflict Job. Calvin goes into detail about the mechanism of this. Does God capitulate to the devil's request? Calvin's answer is a resounding "no."

Calvin, according to Susan Schreiner,²²⁷ and I think she is correct, seems to struggle at this point with the issue of testing. Job as a righteous man was not tested for any obvious breach of the law. Calvin notes that we cannot question why we are tested. We are simply to submit to the testing. When the reasons for our testing are not obvious, then: *quand elle nous seroit incognue, si faudroit-il baisser la teste, et dire, que Dieu est iuste et equitable en tout ce qu'il fait.*²²⁸

It is clear that even when the cause of affliction is unknown or hidden to us we must rest in the knowledge that God is not capricious or malicious, but just and equitable. This knowledge is achieved, in my understanding of Calvin, by means of

²²⁶ Calvin uses the word to confess. He understood knowledge of God to be something that takes root in our hearts and upon which we act. It is useless to say that God is a protector or a fortress unless we believe it and act upon it. In this sense Calvin's use of the word 'confess' may signify more of Calvin's intention than the overused to 'know.'

²²⁷ Susan Schreiner, "Exegesis and Double Justice in Calvin's Sermons on Job," *Church History* 58 (1988): 322-338.

experience. How do we 'know' God is not capricious? We know this via the Scriptures, but also by our lived daily experience of a life *coram Deo*. We cannot rely on the notion that if we are righteous God will provide. We cannot trust in providence but in God's justice.²²⁹ Thus the testing was part of the will of God. God grants the devil permission since it was part of God's plan and the devil is His servant. This small section reflects the overall movement in Calvin's sermon. He has moved, once more, away from the devil towards a deeper knowledge of God. In this case, the believer is to have faith, not in God's providence, but in God's justice, knowing that God is providential and loving. God's justice is never without compassion and love. Thus, Calvin again returns to the theme of the knowledge of God

There is another reason for giving the devil leave to afflict Job: so God will triumph over the devil.²³⁰ The devil is aware that our virtue is weak and fallible and is confident that his temptation of Job will succeed. The devil is not aware that Job is fortified with the grace of God which is strong and invincible. Thus, by means of the power of the Holy Spirit within Job, the devil is defeated.²³¹ His plan to cause Job to curse God turns instead to an occasion for Job to bless God and further his relationship

²²⁸ CO 33, 73.

²²⁹ Calvin was a realist. He saw many righteous people suffer and die. We are maintained, therefore, not by a reliance on the providence of God, but ultimately in God's justice. God is not a God of caprice. God is sovereign and has the devil *tenu en bride*.

²³⁰ CO 33, 73.

²³¹ CO 33, 74.

with God. Calvin notes that indeed we are likewise to bless God when afflicted.²³² When we struggle and defeat the devil in our trials, we, like Job, give glory to God.

Once again we see Calvin's pattern. He deals with the devil but moves to God. He mentions that the devil is frustrated in his efforts to torment and then develops the theme of the Holy Spirit who enables us to resist and overcome adversities to the point that we actually bless God while being afflicted. In summary,

- 1) We must be aware that when we are afflicted it is not God who does the affliction but this was done at the instigation of the devil.
- 2) The fact that the devil battles us makes us aware that our battles are spiritual in nature and cannot be overcome by physical means. We must resort to the help of God.
- 3) The fact that we are tempted and assaulted by so powerful an enemy as the devil and not destroyed shows us the good parenting of God who preserves us and supports us.

Vray est qu'il nous faut avoir cela pour resolu, quand nous ne cognoissons point pourquoy Dieu nous afflige, que nous le confessons tousiours estre juste: mais cependant si faut-il encore que nous ayons ceste doctrine imprimee en nos coeurs, c'est à savoir que Dieu nous aime si tendrement, qu'il ne demande sinon à nous reduire, il nous espargne, il nous tient comme en son giron:...

²³² This was not a matter of bland piety. Calvin regularly corresponded and interceded for French Protestants who under the rule of Francis I and later, Henry II of France, were tortured, imprisoned and executed. Some of Calvin's most moving letters are those he wrote to people awaiting execution.

²³³ CO 33, 74.

The spiritual battle is fascinating. The devil does not know of the presence of the Holy Spirit and thus loses the battle. Is the devil merely a puppet with no autonomy whatsoever? Since the testing is ordained by God and since we are fortified against the devil, one has to wonder whether the devil has a role at all. Calvin notes that indeed the devil has a role. How is God glorified since the battle was 'fixed' and God has no possibility of losing? Calvin notes that the glorification of God occurs in the struggle itself. The saints may be predestined for salvation and preserved but they grow by means of struggles and temptations.²³⁴ Thus, the believer is exercised at the hand of the devil.²³⁵ God allows us to be exercised since, as Calvin notes, God is aware of what is good and profitable within us. This is an interesting point. What is good within us? Does this refer to God's Holy Spirit in us? Does this refer to the regenerated image of God within us?²³⁶

Having dealt with affliction and temptation, Calvin does a very interesting thing. He argues that God deals with affliction in different ways for the elect and the non-elect.

²³⁴ There may have been a bit of an autobiographical intent here. The time during which Calvin preached his Job sermons was one of his worst periods in Geneva. The Libertines were firmly in power and doing their best to oppose and thwart Calvin.

²³⁵ CO 33, 74.

²³⁶ Calvin believed that as a result of the 'Fall' the image of God was destroyed within us. But when we are illumined by the Holy Spirit the hitherto defaced image becomes clearer. We grow as Christians by means of the Holy Spirit, prayer and struggle. All of which serve to deepen our trust and restore the image of God. In some ways one is reminded of Plato's concept of the soul which 'remembers' through education and philosophy. Here Calvin's concept of the image of God is that which is restored through the Holy Spirit and struggle (philosophy) and prayer (education). At this point I think we can see a contradiction within Calvin. If the image of God is utterly defaced and destroyed within us as a result of the Fall, how can this be restored? Is it therefore totally defaced and destroyed or is there a partial vestige to be restored? This of course is the debate about natural theology in Calvin. I think it is fair to say that Calvin would have understood the defaced image of God in the following way. While there remains an image, it is impossible for us apart from God's Holy Spirit and election to make use of this image. On our own, we cannot reason our way to God, and if we try what we find are idols. The vestige of the image of God in fact serves only to condemn us and render us without an excuse if we claim that we have never heard of God.

He notes that, for the faithful, the affliction is always at the instigation of the devil but in the case of the non-elect (Calvin calls them the wicked as well), God does not wait but will initiate the affliction. In the case of King Ahab, who by any account was wicked, God did not wait but initiated the affliction by sending a lying spirit to seduce the King. Even though God initiates, it is still the devil that does the actual afflicting.

...les diables²³⁷ sont comme bourreaux pour executer les iudgemens de Dieu, et les punitions, qu'il veut faire sur les meschans: ils son aussi comme verges, par lesquelles Dieu chastie ses enfans.²³⁸

In the case of the faithful, the afflictions are not sent as a judgment but in order to chastize and bring the believer back to God. "*En ce passage quand il est question d'affliger Job, c'est à dire que Dieu traite rudement l'un de ses enfans, il faut que cela vienne à la poursuite de l'ennemie.*"²³⁹

Calvin develops the differences between the way the devil is used to deal with the wicked or with the faithful. In the case of Ahab, God initiated the punishment and acted as a judge. As Calvin argues, God did not allow Job's soul²⁴⁰ to be seduced by a

²³⁷ Calvin uses the words devil and devils without distinction. There is a reason for this. When the Biblical passage that he is using speaks of the devil, in the singular, he will speak of the devil but in the process of his preaching Calvin often uses other Biblical references. In other Biblical references, devils or demons (Calvin does not distinguish between a devil and a demon. Where the Greek text will speak of a demon, Calvin will translate this as devil) in the plural may be spoken of. In the course of Calvin's sermons he will spontaneously switch from the devil in the singular to devils in the plural. It is to be recalled that Calvin was preaching and not writing a systematic theology at this point.

²³⁸ CO 33, 75. Calvin uses Satan/devils in the same sentence and then goes on to say that the devil is an instrument of God. Once more, this shows how Calvin operates with the terms devils, devil and Satan.

²³⁹ CO 33, 75.

²⁴⁰ The soul for Calvin was immortal (*Instit* 1.15.6) and the seat of the image of God (1.15.3). In terms of the philosophical understanding of the soul, Calvin cites Plato with approval. In Calvin's understanding the soul was not just a mere receptacle for God's spirit but was endowed with intellect, enabling it to make choices between good and evil. The gradual restoration of the image of God was a function

lying spirit as he did with Ahab. Seduction was akin to the removal of the Holy Spirit from the soul. Non-believers, the wicked or the non-elect do not even realize they are being tempted since they are unaware of any inner struggle. This is because they cannot discern the good.²⁴¹ The believer, once seduced, becomes incapable of discerning good from evil and is blinded in matters of the divine.²⁴² The seduced believer goes back to his/her condition before God intervened, namely, one of total spiritual blindness. God does not allow believers to have their souls seduced.²⁴³ The faithful are never tempted in this way. For the faithful, the devil is kept on a short leash. "*si est ce qu'il est tenu court.*"²⁴⁴

Yet, although the faithful are never seduced, this does not mean that their souls will not be tempted. In the case of Job, the devil was allowed to tempt his soul through Job's wife. Thus the faithful must never make the mistake of assuming that because God fortifies and protects them their souls will always be free of temptation and seduction. God has reasons for this. The first is that, when believers are tempted in such a way and resist, they know that it is not by means of their own power and strength that this is

therefore of the Holy Spirit (God's part) but also involved decisions and struggles on the part of the Christian.

²⁴¹ CO 33, 76.

²⁴² Without the Spirit of God we cannot know God. Calvin preached and wrote on this theme in hundreds of places. For example: CO 33, 277, 442, 451; CO 34, 52, 241, 254-66, 370ff, to note only the places in Calvin's sermons on Job that speak of this.

²⁴³ One of Calvin's corollaries to his understanding of predestination is that the elect are preserved. Since they have been forechosen by God and God is infallible, the elect cannot fall. The notion of the seduction of the soul is an illustration of how they are preserved. Calvin argues that the souls of the elect, or believers, are never allowed by God to be seduced by the devil as King Ahab was. Thus the believer is always able to discern right from wrong and to participate in the Christian life.

²⁴⁴ CO 33, 77.

accomplished. They know²⁴⁵ that God supports them, “*Ainsi donc ordinairement quand Dieu permet à Satan de tenter ses fideles, c’est pour leur faire servir le tout comme de medecine.*”²⁴⁶

As in the case of the trials by the devil and the works of the devil in the world, the parallel is the same. God uses the devil to afflict. In the case of the wicked, the use of the devil is to execute God’s judgment. In the case of the faithful, the devil is used as a type of medicine. Rather than destroying the believer, the afflictions serve to enable the believer to turn towards God with renewed confidence and knowledge that is now partially grounded in the experience of the believer in the face of temptations and trials.

If the devil’s temptations and trials are changed by God, by virtue of his assistance to us, into a medicine,²⁴⁷ one could ask against what disease. Calvin is quick to point out that the poison that pollutes all of us is that of pride and self-sufficiency in spiritual matters. Spiritual pride, in Calvin’s mind, is considered by God to be the most odious of all sins. The devil kept St. Paul in check and will do the same with all believers. The medicine of temptations and trials serves to purge hidden vices.²⁴⁸ Calvin closes his sermon with a reminder to the congregation of the power and fury of the devil, but then quickly stresses the love and protection of God. This completes what I termed the third mini-sermon. The movement is the same and one ends up with a deeper knowledge of God.

²⁴⁵ In this case such knowledge of the providence of God is very much an experiential matter.

²⁴⁶ CO 33,78.

²⁴⁷ “*Il nous fait servir tous les aiguillons de Satan à medecine.*” CO 33,78.

Summary of the Themes Found in Sermon Five on Job

In summary, Calvin asks what are we to do in the face of the devil. It is clear that we know we are too weak to resist the devil on our own, and this serves to keep our pride in check and causes us to pray to God. However, we must also know that God will help us and we will be victorious.

Voila donc comme nous sommes instruits d'un costé à nous humilier, cheminer en crainte et sollicitude, d'autre costé à invoquer Dieu, sachans que quand nous serons secourus de luy, rien ne nous defaudra: voire encore qu'avec grandes difficultez il nous faille batailler, que neantmoins nous soyons asseurez de la victoire qu'il a promise à tous les siens.²⁴⁹

Calvin's sermon began with the reality of the devil who accused Job and it ended, not in a vision of the terror of the devil, but in an image of the love and protection of God towards his own.

The Sixth Sermon, March 12, 1554, on Job 1:13-19

Calvin wrote a letter to the brethren of Orbe²⁵⁰ on March 4, 1554. In this letter he urges the Protestants to work for the conversion of the Catholics²⁵¹ in their town and to persevere. Indeed there were 'firebrands of strife' kindled by the devil. The Evangelicals had not yet succeeded in making the city Reformed and, as Calvin notes, this should not be a total surprise since the devil works to hinder the reign of God. The devil could do

²⁴⁸ We are back to hypocrisy again.

²⁴⁹ CO 33, 80.

²⁵⁰ Orbe was Viret's birthplace and was divided between Catholic and Reformed worship since 1532.

much worse but is held in check by God. Each Evangelical had a post, or duty, amidst the trials of the devil to defend the true worship of God and the Reformed faith. Calvin thought it a disgrace if the Protestants were found wanting and were unprepared to defend themselves against the devil.²⁵² He reminded the Genevans whenever he could of the great privilege that they had in being able to worship in a Reformed manner.

L'astuce de Satan

In Sermon Six Calvin considers the verses that describe the torments of Job. (Job 1:13-19). He reads the passage which describes the terrible torments of Job. No doubt when the torments of Job were read there were those in the congregation who were thrown into a state of panic. Probably aware of this, Calvin begins his sermon with a discussion of the protection of God. He tells his congregation that, in the light of the ferocity of the devil, we are surrounded by angels who are encamped around us to protect us. Why the angels? No doubt to underscore the danger and the power of the devil and the fact that we need protection. Lest we imagine that we do not need such protection, Calvin points out the fragility of our lives and the fact that we are subject to 100,000 types of death.²⁵³ We are all aware of the numerous physical dangers that

²⁵¹ On July 30, 1554, Roman Catholicism was abolished from the city as by that time the number of evangelicals who had gathered in a square to vote on the matter outnumbered the Roman Catholics by eighteen. The magistrate who counted them decided that the city was to be Reformed.

²⁵² By this remark Calvin meant that Protestants should be well versed in the Scriptures, which he understood to be the chief weapon in the fight against the devil.

²⁵³ William J. Bouwsma, in *John Calvin, A Sixteenth Century Portrait* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), has argued that Calvin was obsessed with anxiety and angst. Yet this was a characteristic of the time when the black death had reduced the population of Europe by half. In Calvin's time the plague revisited Geneva in 1545, causing panic. 100,000 deaths is not meaningless hyperbole, but an expression of the many faces of death that were in the minds of Calvin's congregation. The sixteenth century, perhaps due to its encounters with the plague, was one that was well acquainted with the many faces of death.

surround us, but not aware enough of the attacks of the devil who is more powerful than we can imagine. In fact, the devil's ultimate victory is to bring us all to a point of despair, so to overwhelm us with temptations and troubles that we give up all hope in ourselves and in God.²⁵⁴ Calvin used the parallel here between the physical and the spiritual. No doubt he often felt that the Genevans were very attuned to physical realities but almost blind to spiritual realities.²⁵⁵ Job was terribly afflicted, but the devil was *tenu en bride*. Hence Job's person could not be touched.

Calvin describes in detail the nature of the trials of Job in order to show how cunning the devil is. The devil uses various forms of the elements to torment. There is fire from the air, bandits, wind power, all of which destroy Job's livelihood and his children. Calvin notes that the reason the devil used various means like fire, bandits and wind power was in order to trick Job into thinking that it was God himself who was afflicting him and thus cause him to despair.²⁵⁶ Indeed, "*voila quelle est l'astuce de Satan.*"²⁵⁷

This can be seen from a study of the art at that time, particularly scenes of the crucifixion, as well as by looking at the ritualism surrounding funerals. Death was no stranger to the people.

²⁵⁴ This is a fascinating insight. The devil's ultimate and most dangerous temptation is that of despair since it is only despair which will lead us away from turning to God. The danger of despair was well recognised by Ignatius of Loyola.

²⁵⁵ One must bear in mind that while Calvin preached he understood himself to be preaching to the elect, those chosen by God and as such those who are not utterly blind to spiritual reality as a result of the fall.

²⁵⁶ CO 33, 82.

²⁵⁷ CO 33, 82.

Calvin ends this section by speaking about the devil and his temptations, having warned and convinced his congregation of the reality of temptations. He now moves on to discuss the inevitability and nature as well as the reasons for temptations.

The Inevitability of Temptation

All of us will be tempted, but not all of us equally. Temptation is an inevitable part of the Christian life. This being the case, God fortifies us with his grace and enables us to withstand trials.

selon que Dieu nous distribue de la force qui est en luy, il nous exerce, il veut aussi que nostre foy soit esprouvee, cognoissant que cela ne nous est pas inutile, mais il sait pourquoy il le fait.²⁵⁸

Yet, there are some for whom even a small trial would be too much.

Il n'est pas tenu de nous donner une seule goutte de vertu, il nous pourroit laisser en nos infirmités pour faire qu'à chacune minute de temps nous serions accablez et opprimez de tout: car nous n'avons nul moyen de resistance en nous; mais tant y a que Dieu nous fortifie par sa grace: toutesfois... ce n'est pas d'une pareille façon: car les uns demeurent infirmes et les autres ont une plus grande vertu beaucoup.²⁵⁹

This is why the saints, like Abraham, Isaac and Job, who had excellent virtue, were also greatly tormented in their lives.

Temptations and trials are part of the Christian life from which the Christian cannot escape. We will be tempted and we must ask God for fortification to endure our

²⁵⁸ CO 33, 82.

²⁵⁹ CO 33, 82.

temptations. Job's temptations are to be understood as types of mirrors for us. Job's reactions and response to his trials and temptations are meant as a model for us.²⁶⁰

After speaking of the fact that we will be tempted and that the severity of the temptation is in direct proportion with our virtue, Calvin adds that we are tempted not because God hates us and wants to watch us suffer but in order to obtain our salvation.²⁶¹

The Nature of Temptation

Now having shown the listener that there will be temptations and that these temptations involve the devil, hence the need for us to ask God for help, Calvin further shows that the temptations of Job have the devil's very signature on them. He notes that if our goods are valuable to us, our children are more so. The last trial of Job was so painful it was as if Job was put to the torture.²⁶²

Et bien, voila un homme à la torture: mais quand on luy vient dire, Voila le feu qui est tombé du ciel,... c'est comme si on mettoit aux pieds un contrepoids à un povre homme, afin que le mal luy croisse, et qu'il luy soit beaucoup plus grief.²⁶³

When it seemed that Job had already suffered enough, it was announced that his children were killed. We must always be ready, even when we think we have suffered

²⁶⁰ CO 33, 84.

²⁶¹ CO 33, 87.

²⁶² Calvin spoke from experience. He lost his only son Jacques in infancy. He wrote of the death to his friend Pierre Viret as follows:

"Certainly the Lord has afflicted us with a deep and painful wound in the death of our beloved son. But he is our Father: he knows what is best for his children." Calvin's letter to Viret as found in A.L. Herminjard, ed., *Correspondence des Réformateurs dans les pays de langue française*, vol. VIII (Geneva and Paris: 1886-1897), 109.

²⁶³ CO 33, 88.

enough, to receive another trial. This is because the devil is behind the trials. The devil's method is likened to that of an expert in torture. There is no reprieve at the hands of the devil.

The Purpose of the Trials

It is evident that trials are inevitable and necessary since they serve to toughen us and make us more aware of spiritual realities and of the devil. Yet, the devil's assaults also serve to glorify God. This is another purpose or reason for the trials. How is this possible? In Calvin's sermons it is suggested that God is glorified by our very struggle and by the fact that God fortifies us to defeat the devil. Calvin has already mentioned this point, but it is a point that bears repetition since the trials are so unpleasant. People needed to be reminded that they were not needlessly sent trials. In fact, when they pass such a trial, God is glorified since he has delivered them from the assaults of the devil.²⁶⁴

Here it may be helpful to consider what Calvin understood by giving glory to God in relation to temptation and trials.

Giving Glory to God

The assaults by the devil not only help our salvation but we are told that they glorify God as well. Calvin describes the nature of temptation in the 1536 *Institutes*:

Satan tempts that he may destroy, condemn, confound, cast down. But God tempts that he may prove and exercise his children; that he may mortify, purify, and cauterize their flesh, which unless it were forced under this restraint would play the wanton and vaunt itself beyond measure. Besides, Satan attacks those who are unarmed and unprepared that he may crush them unaware. God, along

²⁶⁴ CO 33, 88.

with the temptation, provides a way of escape, that his own may be able patiently to bear all that he imposes on them.²⁶⁵

Calvin makes a clear distinction between the reason the devil attacks and why God tempts. The devil has one purpose, and that is our destruction or, as Calvin puts it, *de nous navrer*. But God binds the devil and reigns the ferocity of the devil's attacks. With God's help, we can overcome the trials and attacks.

Calvin's understanding of the glorification of God through temptation may be linked closely with his understanding of the image of God and the fall. The consequence of the fall was to efface the image of God within us such that we are not only blinded to spiritual realities but also disoriented with respect to God. We turn to the devil and are the enemy of God. In turning to the devil, we are reverting to our natural state, which is to be an enemy of God.

The Christian life with grace is not so much a life where God imprints his renewed image onto us, a sort of ontological elevation. Rather, grace imparts to us a psychological re-orientation such that we can live lives to the glory of God.²⁶⁶ As Oberman notes, Calvin thought of such a properly oriented life as a life wherein one could truly pursue happiness.²⁶⁷ Yet this search for happiness, which is a life directed

²⁶⁵ Instit. 1536, 111:27

²⁶⁶ For a fine article that discusses the psychological overtones of the image of God, see Heiko Oberman, "The Pursuit of Happiness: Calvin between Reformation and Humanism," in *Humanity and Divinity in Renaissance and Reformation: Essays in Honour of Charles Trinkhaus*, ed. John W. O'Malley (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 251-282. Oberman demonstrates that the Christian life and the restoration of the image of God have remarkable parallels with the Renaissance notion of the pursuit of happiness.

²⁶⁷ This is not a new idea. One immediately thinks of Augustine of Hippo who noted that our lives are in need of love, but that very often we substitute love of things, people and even self in place of love of

towards God, must not be spiritualized and lived only in heaven. It is a life to be lived on earth. Once more we see Calvin's emphasis on lived experience. The Christian life was very much a life in the here and now. It enables one to see things in a proper perspective and to truly enjoy God's creation and to revel in fine wine.²⁶⁸ We only see the creation and the gifts that God has given to us in a proper light when we do not abuse them and when we are directed towards God, or living a life to the glory of God. If this is not the case then we can be overly fastidious and concerned about matters of conscience such that

When consciences have once ensnared themselves, they enter into an inextricable maze, not easy to get out of. If a man begins to doubt whether he may use linen for sheets, shirts and handkerchiefs and napkins, he will afterward be uncertain about hemp;²⁶⁹ finally doubt will even arise over tow!²⁷⁰

On the other hand, gifts not properly seen may also be abused by those who luxuriate. In this respect, Calvin was particularly critical of the Genevans who seemed to him to be especially guilty of this failing.

Surely ivory and gold and riches are good creations of God, permitted, indeed appointed, for men's use by God's providence. And we have never been forbidden to laugh, or be filled, or to join new possessions to old and even ancestral ones, or to delight in musical harmony, or to drink wine. True indeed. But where there is plenty, to wallow in delight, to gorge oneself, to intoxicate

God. The love of the lesser things eventually leads to despair. When our lives are oriented towards God, then we can truly love all of God's creation, things and others without the danger of elevating them to a place of ultimate importance. For Calvin, only a life re-oriented, a life infused by grace where the image of God is gradually restored, is one in which we can be truly happy.

²⁶⁸ *Comm.* on Psalm 53:53, CO 23, 545.

²⁶⁹ Hemp was a coarse but strong fiber often used for ropes but sometimes used for sackings. Tow was even coarser and used almost exclusively for ropes.

²⁷⁰ *Instit.* 1536 3.19.7. 6:4

mind and heart with present pleasures and be always panting after new ones -- such are very far removed from a lawful use of God's gifts.²⁷¹

How do our struggles against the devil glorify God? As a result of the fall we are in bondage to the devil and our thoughts are destructive. A life that with God's help and grace tries to free itself from such bondage is a life where the image of God is restored within us. Such a life is a life lived to the glory of God. God is glorified therefore in the very struggle. It is only within the struggle or the battle that we are will become aware of the devil's trials and of God's goodness towards us. The struggle is an important element in our lives. God's grace does not fill us like an empty cup is filled. We must use God's grace, and the way in which it is used is by resisting the devil.

Calvin renews his notes on the devil by speaking about the variety of means whereby Job's livelihood and children were destroyed. The devil used wind, air, fire, and enemies. Calvin notes that this is to make Job think that God himself is against him.²⁷² He warns that, although the devil used these methods, he is not in charge of the air, or firepower or storms. He is not the king of the air.²⁷³ Once more Calvin reiterates that the devil can do nothing apart from God. He has already spoken of this topic, but here we see Calvin the preacher using the same passage to bring out yet another facet of the text. In this case, Calvin stresses that the devil is not the king of the air or in charge of the

²⁷¹ *Instit.* 1536 3.19.9. 6:5

²⁷² CO 33, 88.

²⁷³ CO 33, 89. This may have been a reference to the fact that often witches were accused of changing the weather by causing hailstorms, or storms or rain. If the devil were the king of the air, then indeed he would be in charge of such meteorological meddling.

elements. Previously, his point was that, in this technique of using multiple methods of attack, we are warned of the very clever and deadly nature of the devil. The devil used air and fire and the enemies under God's strict supervision and with his permission.²⁷⁴

Calvin ends this sermon by stressing the fact that God is in control of the devil and that the devil can do nothing unless God gives him permission. He summarizes his sermon by first saying that temptation is inevitable no matter how safe we imagine ourselves to be:

*Advisons donc de cheminer en crainte et tremblement, sur tout quand nous verrons que Dieu nous envoyera quelque prosperité mondaine, car c'est alors que le diable est au guet pour nous surprendre, et qu'il nous pourra mettre quelque tentation au devant, à laquelle nous n'aurons iamais pensé. Voila ce que nous avons encore à noter sur ce passage: quand il est dit, que du temps que Job estoit si bien fondé, qu'il sembloit qu'il eust tant de rempars, que nul mal le peust attoucher: toutesfois qu'en un moment et la foudre du ciel, et un tourbillon de l'air, et les ennemis le despouillent de tout ce qu'il a, qu'il est là iusques à l'extremité, excepté sa personne, que Dieu reservoit encores à des tentations plus griefves.*²⁷⁵

This is then the point of the sermon. No matter who we are, temptation and trials are a reality of the Christian life. At times, it will seem that God Himself is against us but we are warned that this is but a trick of the devil. Calvin closes Sermon Six by noting that the devil has many sharpened arrows and darts aimed at us, as well as deadly

²⁷⁴ In Calvin's time there was, in Calvin's mind, a resurrection of the dualism that he called Manichee, where the storms and tempests were considered to be controlled by the devil and God was in charge of the nicer elements.

²⁷⁵ CO 33, 91.

plagues.²⁷⁶ Rather than despair, we are to be aware that God will protect us and we are to pray in the following manner:

Helas Seigneur, si nous n'estions en ta protection, que seroit-ce de nous? Il est vray que tu nous chasties pour quelque temps: mais en cela tu nous declares ta bonté paternelle, quand tu ne permets point que nous soyons exterminés du tout, attendu la rage de l'ennemi à qui nous avons affaire: que si tu luy laschois la bride contre nous, il faudroit que nous fussions devorés plus soudain, que ne seroit pas une povre brebis entre cent mille loups.²⁷⁷

Summary of the Themes found in Sermon Six on Job

Sermon Six began with Calvin noting that the angels are encamped around us to protect us from the devil. It is a sermon wherein Calvin speaks of the cunning of the devil and the means by which he tempts the faithful. Calvin describes the power and the rage of the devil, but in this sermon we find some particular insights as to the function of the devil in the glorification of God. God is glorified in our trials. At times, it will seem that God Himself is against us, but this is just a trick on the part of the devil. In some ways, the trials cause us to be more aware of the spiritual realities that surround us. First, we are aware of the devil as we fall into temptation and struggle, but then we come to be

²⁷⁶ This was no small matter. In 1545 there was a recurrence of the plague in Geneva, causing panic. 32 women were burned, having been accused of plague spreading. Although some older works suggest that they were simply accused of witchcraft, more recent work has shown that they were accused of plague spreading. Plague spreading had become a concern following the plague of 1545. After 1545, many of the hospital employees found themselves out of work for lack of victims. The employees were usually from less than savoury backgrounds. The employees devised a plot to plague spread. A foot was taken from a plague victim and boiled to a grease. This grease was then applied to doorposts. The victims of this crime would awake to see grease smeared on their doors and complain. The result was that a hunt for plague spreaders would follow. I owe this fascinating insight to my friend Bill Naphy of Aberdeen University who is in the process of publishing a book on plague spreading in Geneva. In fact the grease would have never spread the black death as it was very sterile owing to the way in which it was prepared.

²⁷⁷ CO 33, 92.

aware of God when we see that we are not destroyed and that God is helping us. In this sense, the image of God is made brighter within us as we come to know God and withstand the devil. We become gradually reoriented to God and thus live to the glory of God.

Sermon Seven, March 13, 1554, on Job 1: 20-22

In this sermon Calvin does not speak in great detail about the devil but, instead, dwells on the trials and our attitude toward them. Since the sermon does not deal with the devil at any length, I will not analyze it except where the devil is mentioned. It is within this sermon that Calvin further develops the notion of why we are tested. This sermon deals especially with the nature of patience. Calvin points out that we do not know the reasons why we are afflicted or tested. Yet the believer must know that nothing happens unless God wills it. Thus the believer is assured that trials are not random or without purpose.²⁷⁸ Calvin preaches that the Christian must have the 'right' attitude in the face of temptations. The right attitude is one that will not lead the believer into a state of despair.²⁷⁹ The right attitude is to have a peaceful and tranquil heart assured of the goodness of God. Such an attitude means that we will win against the devil.

²⁷⁸ CO 33, 108. Actually this insight afforded great comfort to the parishioners, some of whom believed that evil and disaster fell for no reason. Calvin believed that the plague was sent to Geneva in 1545 in part because the Genevans did not take their task as followers of God seriously enough. Here Calvin is saying that all is in the control and care of God and that nothing happens outside of his will. Scholars of the reformed thinker Karl Barth will note a great difference. Barth understood evil to occur in a place where God was absent. For Barth, it was almost as if God turned away from evil and disasters. Calvin has no room for the absence of God in his theology.

²⁷⁹ Calvin had noted that the devil's plan is to reduce us all to a state of despair such that we turn away from God or no longer believe that God will listen to us. This is a little like the sin of Faust. Faust was a very popular play in Calvin's day.

...Dieu veut que parmi les miseres de ce monde, nous ayons tousiours un coeur paisible, et que nous soyons tellement asseurez de sa bonté, que cela nous resiouisse et nous contente, et que nous puissions nous glorifier contre Satan, et contre tous nos ennemis.²⁸⁰

In order to come to this attitude, it is not enough that we merely look to our daily experiences, but rather we must be aware jointly of the goodness of God and the terrors of the devil.²⁸¹ The Christian is one who lives with a profound awareness of the grace of God.²⁸²

Sermon Eight, March 14, 1554, on Job 2:1-6

A rather important event at the time of this sermon and recorded in the records of the Company of Pastors is the Berthelier affair. François²⁸³ Berthelier was summoned to appear before the *Consistoire* and show himself repentant in order that he could be readmitted to the Eucharist.²⁸⁴ François claimed that he lost his head and was rash when

²⁸⁰ CO 33, 93.

²⁸¹ In short, Calvin is expanding upon Sermon Six.

²⁸² Calvin's idea of the Christian life can be expressed as a life under the grace of God. This understanding affords a softening of the usual understanding of Calvin, which is that he subjugated everything to the glory and sovereignty of God. God is sovereign, but Calvin understood God's sovereignty, as we see in his passages that deal with the devil, as that of a God who protects and preserves us with his grace. The Christian life, is a life that faces all things, even trials with absolute confidence in the grace and love of God.

²⁸³ During the Phillip Berthelier affair, François, his younger brother, was protesting vehemently to the Council and the Consistoire that his brother was unfairly treated.

²⁸⁴ This of course was what the Berthelier brothers were upset about. In their eyes the Consistory rivalled and challenged the power of the Council. It must have been galling to have to appear before the Consistory. To be barred from the Eucharist was not merely a matter of one's soul, it touched upon the question of trade. No one would trade or do business with one who was excommunicated. The excommunicates were often exiled and forbidden to hold office. The Berthelier brothers were supported by the Libertines but there is little doubt that their stance against Calvin cost them even at this stage. One could note that in New England Puritanism the excommunicate was shunned, declared officially dead to the congregation and forced to leave the community.

he appealed for his brother Phillip. After a good deal of debate, François was reinstated. However, Calvin would have preached before this meeting took place. Hence this context will be more relevant to his ninth sermon.

While the Berthelier affair came to a head on the evening of March 7, 1554, there can be no doubt that Calvin was aware of the troubles and grieved at the behaviour of Phillip Berthelier and other Libertines. In this sermon, one can catch the occasional glimpse of Calvin's vitriol towards those whom he claimed appeared good before others but who were far from God in their hearts.

In this pericope, Job 2:1-6 the devil once more appears before the throne of God and God gives him leave to tempt Job even more. Calvin breaks the sermon into several smaller sections. He starts by saying that he has already discussed the notion of the devil being before the throne of God and will not do so again. Suffice it to say that the devil and all the wicked are held in check by God.²⁸⁵ The 'wicked' are not mentioned in the Scriptural verse. Here we see an example of Calvin's extra citations previously discussed. No doubt Calvin had certain troublemakers in mind when he spoke these words.

Since God controls the devil and the wicked, one can ask to what extent God is culpable for the devil's actions. The first of Calvin's subsections then deals with the possible culpability of God.

²⁸⁵ CO 33, 103.

The Possible Culpability of God

Job did not blame either the bandits or the elements for his misfortunes but ascribed them to God. In this, Job was not condemned. Job confessed that in His dealings God was fair and just.²⁸⁶

The first point to bear in mind in any discussion of culpability is to note that God is sovereign and that only God knows his works. When it comes to knowing God's works we are in the dark. In fact we are in *un abysme profond*²⁸⁷ and must confess²⁸⁸ that God is sovereign.

Mais nous avons à noter plus outre, à quel propos le saint Esprit nous declare que Dieu fait tout, et que rien peut advenir sans sa volonté. C'est afin que nous puissions despiter Satan, et tous les iniques, quand nous voyons qu'ils pratiquent et machinent beaucoup de choses, que nous sachions qu'ils ne pourront venir à bout de leurs entreprises.²⁸⁹

Calvin notes that God is in control and sovereign.²⁹⁰ This is never a sovereign God devoid of compassion.²⁹¹ Calvin makes this point before analyzing the issue of the

²⁸⁶ CO 33, 104.

²⁸⁷ CO 33, 105.

²⁸⁸ When Calvin uses the words to 'confess', it is evident that he does not mean merely to say that God is sovereign or to recite a creed that says that. To confess implied a deep experiential knowledge of God. To confess that God is sovereign is to truly know and have experienced the sovereignty of God.

²⁸⁹ CO 33, 105.

²⁹⁰ CO 33, 105.

²⁹¹ In her work, Susan Schreiner argues that in the Job sermons Calvin struggled with the concept of a sovereign God who could test by secret decree and of a God of compassion. When we look at the Job sermons that speak of the devil, we get the impression that this tension is lessened considerably. God is sovereign and uses that sovereignty to test. But as he tests, he is in control of the devil whom he will not allow to destroy his faithful. The devil, it would seem, acts as a bridge that enables us to say that God is both sovereign and compassionate. "Exegesis and Double Justice in Calvin's Sermons on Job," 322-338. See also CO 33,105.

culpability of God. This is an interesting point. Were Calvin to speak of a sovereign God devoid of compassion, it would be no use to speak of the culpability of God. God would be sovereign and inscrutable and one could not discuss issues such as culpability. First he notes that God is sovereign and that this passage where the devil comes before God shows this.

With the idea implanted that God is sovereign but also that God is one who will protect us against evil, Calvin moves more directly to discuss the culpability of God. He notes that God makes use of the wicked and of the devil but that the best way to understand this is to consider the relationship between a judge and an executioner. The judge passes the sentence upon the prisoner and gives the prisoner to the executioner. The executioner carries out in turn the will of the judge.²⁹² It is clear that God makes use of the devil to carry out his will, yet the devil himself remains culpable.²⁹³

Or donc voici Dieu qui execute ainsi ses commandemens et ses decrets, voire: mais cependant notons que le mal ne luy peut pas estre imputé en façon que ce soit: Satan demeurera coupable en sa malice, les hommes sont redarguez et convaincus par leur conscience propre qui est leur iuge, et Dieu sera glorifié en tout ce qu'il fait.²⁹⁴

²⁹² CO 33, 107.

²⁹³ Satan, unlike some accused war criminals who claim that they are innocent since they were only following orders, is culpable. The devil can not hide behind the excuse that he was only doing the will of God and was forced to do so since God is sovereign.

²⁹⁴ The concept of proper conscience is interesting. Calvin believed that, due to the fall, the image of God was defaced within us. What remained was a seed of God. This seed led us to be aware of God but could not lead us to a saving knowledge of God. It served only to condemn us. Calvin felt that he was speaking to the elect and so there are two ways to understand conscience. The first is the conscience of the faithful, where the image of God is renewed and restored by God who would allow them to know who is their judge. If Calvin referred to the unelect or the wicked, then even they, by virtue of the seed of God that remained after the fall, have a glimmer of who is their proper judge and thus would stand condemned. Thus God is glorified by both the wicked and the elect.

Calvin uses some interesting rhetoric to prove his point on culpability. The trials and temptations are powerful, yet in contrast to the devil who seeks to destroy, when God uses trials He intends the good. Hence, by intent, God is not culpable.²⁹⁵

Car toutes ses oeuvres sont appelees iugements, et l'Escriture parlant ainsi, par ce seul mot nous veut oster toutes les mauvaises fantasies qui nous peuvent venir au devant, tellement que c'est une marque qui est pour iustifier toutes les oeuvres de Dieu, c'est assavoir, que ce sont iugemens et droitures.²⁹⁶

By means of the devil and trials, God punishes the wicked. No one questions whether that is good or evil.²⁹⁷ God also exercises the faithful in patience, mortifying their fleshly or carnal desires, and instructing them in humility. Again, says Calvin one cannot condemn this. Even if one were to ask the most wicked people whether or not God has the right or the power to do these things they would have to answer yes.

Conclusion: "*Si donc Dieu regarde à ce but-la, il s'ensuit que toutes ses oeuvres sont iustes et droites.*"²⁹⁸ Yet people will still complain. The faithful need only walk in simplicity of heart and spirit in the knowledge that God is just and good.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ We might recall again that Calvin was a fully trained lawyer.

²⁹⁶ CO 33, 108.

²⁹⁷ When Calvin wrote his reasons why heretics must be put to death in CO 8, in his treatise against heretics, one of the arguments that he used was simply this. He noted that no one complained that it was unjust to put a murderer or a traitor to death since this was for the good of everyone. The death penalty was an unquestioned penalty imposed for these crimes. The criminal was put to death for the protection and good of society. Since this was the case and since this was unquestioned, noted Calvin, it follows that one should put notorious heretics to death if their intentions are to destroy and pervert the truth of God. Heretics can do more damage than the average serial killer.

²⁹⁸ CO 33, 108.

²⁹⁹ CO 33, 108.

The Devil at the Throne of God

Calvin now returns to the passage where the devil is at the throne of God. He remarks that this passage describing a courtly scene is a form of God's accommodation to our intellect. By using such a scene, the passage shows us that God uses both angels and devils to deal with us. The angels are the hands of God³⁰⁰ used to support us, and the devils are used to chastize us. When we are chastised, our faith is examined. And so Calvin proceeds into another subsection where he considers the role of testing, the role of the devil if one likes, in the growth of faith.³⁰¹ Calvin, as we see, comes back to that all-important question, namely, the reason for temptations and trials.

The Role of Testing in Faith, or the Why's of Temptation

Why did God place Job in the hands of the devil? The most obvious reason for Calvin is that God wished that Job's patience be known. If there are other reasons, they are hidden from us. God has many reasons to chastise us when we fall one hundred times a day. God does not always have the end of chastisement in mind when we are tempted. No doubt Calvin preached this to soothe the minds of his parishioners, some of whom could torture themselves by trying to imagine why they were punished. Sometimes, God wishes that we be victorious in our struggle with the devil because in our struggle we become more noble (*plus anoblie*).³⁰² The temptations and trials serve as a way in which

³⁰⁰ CO 33, 109.

³⁰¹ CO 33, 110.

³⁰² CO 33, 110.

our faith in God is put to the test, deepened by our experiences.³⁰³ They are a wake-up call.

Il nous veut aussi exercer par pratique, à ce que nous soyons craintifs, que nous ne prenions point occasion de nous eslever, que nous ne soyons point endormis en une vaine confiance et presumption comme nous avons accoustumè.³⁰⁴

The why of testing is so that we struggle with the devil.

quand nous aurons vaillamment combatu, et que Satan n'aura peu rien gagner contre nous, d'autant que nous aurons esté munis de la vertu d'enhaut pour resister à toutes ces tentations.³⁰⁵

Calvin reiterates this point on the struggles with the devil. Here again we see Calvin the preacher in action. He comes back to the key issue of the reasons why we are tempted, but now in another way.

The Process of the Christian Struggle

The devil circles the world in search of victims. Calvin does not dwell on this point³⁰⁶ but says we should not be terrified since we are assured of victory against the devil. Once again the movement in Calvin's sermon is from terror to assurance and hope.

³⁰³ Calvin notes that experience teaches, and yet made it very clear that we are unable to know God apart from God's initiative towards us. This does not mean that Calvin allowed no place for Christian experience. In the Job sermons, it is clear that when Calvin speaks of the fact that through our struggles against the devil we come to know God more and understand him, he is speaking of the fact that our knowledge and faith are deepened by our experience of struggling.

³⁰⁴ CO 33, 110.

³⁰⁵ CO 33, 110.

³⁰⁶ Not here. Calvin had already commented on this passage.

Car nous aurons assez de force, et nous serons asseurez de la victoire, quand nous serons appuyez en Dieu, et en la grace de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ.³⁰⁷

On the other hand, we must never take the danger of the devil too lightly and misunderstand how it is God will help us. The protection of God assumes a life of struggle. God's protection will not make us immune or keep us away from the devil. On the contrary, God's protection forces us into battle.

Nostre Seigneur dit, Je vous soustiendray, ne craignez point, combien que Satan en ses assauts foudroye, et qu'il semble que tout doive abysmer: tant y a que vous serez à saueté sous moy et sous ma main. Mais quand il dit cela, il ne veut pas qu'on presume de soy, et qu'on s'en contente, mais au contraire il dit, Venez à moy, retirez vous sous ma protection, que ie soye vostre forteresse contre ceux qui machineront vostre mal.³⁰⁸

In Calvin's understanding, such battles were not one-time affairs, but were ongoing. We must be ready always to resist evil.³⁰⁹ Job was used to battle and had resisted evil all his life. It is within the process of struggle that the Christian character is formed.³¹⁰ While we are struggling against evil we must also keep a guard on ourselves lest we become evil ourselves.

Par cela donc nous sommes admonestez de nous point corrompre quand nous serons avec les meschans, et quand nous verrons tout le monde estre desbauché et perverti, il ne faut point que nous prenions exemple de là pour nous laisser transporter: mais retenons nous en droite obeissance sous la conduite de Dieu, prions le qu'il nous fortifie par son saint Esprit, afin que nous ne soyons point

³⁰⁷ CO 33, 111.

³⁰⁸ CO 33, 112.

³⁰⁹ This comes from Calvin's remarks on the goodness of Job. Job resisted evil.

³¹⁰ This idea was of course not original to Calvin. The role of battle in Christian formation was, for example, a key element of the spiritual exercises of Calvin's contemporary, Ignatius of Loyola.

pervertis par les scandales que nous verrons, et que le diable nous mettra en avant pour nous seduire.³¹¹

Here Calvin not only repeats his points, but he uses the occasion to make a not-so-subtle dig at his enemies, who no doubt were seated before him in the church pews. He notes that we must not only flee evil in order to appear good before others. We must always be aware of the fact that we are before God. What good is it if we appear like angels to those around us but have hearts full of wickedness?³¹² In times of testing, we should use the occasion to see if our hearts are double or if we are hypocrites.³¹³ In a particularly vitriolic moment Calvin describes those who wish to be well thought of by others.

Nous en verrons qui voudroyent bien estre reputez les plus iustes³¹⁴ du monde: mais quoy? il ne faut que leur vie pour les demeriter: ils sont tant gens de bien que merveilles: ouy, à pleine bouche, mais à pleins yeux, à pleines oreilles, à pleins pieds, à pleins mains, ce sont des diables encharnez, ce sont des pestes mortelles pour infecter tout le monde.³¹⁵

Calvin warns people against the sin of hypocrisy and the need to flee evil. The evil is within us like a smouldering fire.³¹⁶ Thus to flee evil involves recognizing not

³¹¹ CO 33, 112.

³¹² CO 33, 113.

³¹³ Again it is evident that Calvin considered hypocrisy among the most odious of sins.

³¹⁴ During the trial of Michael Servetus, the Libertine council, which at that time was headed by Phillip Berthelier, thought Calvin to be unjust and wished justice in the matter. It galled Calvin to no end that the proceedings were halted by what he thought was grandstanding and hypocrisy on the part of Berthelier. To call someone a mortal pest was akin to calling them a plague spreader. In 1545 Geneva had undergone a period of hysteria due to the plague. As was previously mentioned, 32 women were accused as plague spreaders and executed.

³¹⁵ CO 33, 113.

³¹⁶ CO 33, 114.

only external evils, but to searching into our hearts for hidden sins of hypocrisy. When we are aware of evil and retire from evil, then

...la vertu du saint Esprit se monstre et se declare tant mieux en nous, quand nous aurons obtenu la victoire des tentations, et des combats lesquels nous seront livrez par Satan.³¹⁷

Summary of the Themes Found in Sermon Eight on Job

The sermon has two main sections. In section one, the most important points are the ideas of the accommodation of God, the culpability of God and the will of the devil and of God. In the second section, Calvin considers the Christian life.

As Calvin argues, the pericope that speaks of the devils and the angels at the throne of God is a form of accommodation so that we can come to understand or have an idea of the sovereignty of God. Yet sovereignty is never developed or presented in this sermon apart from a consideration of the compassion and mercy of God. God is in control of the devil and the devil is *tenu en bride*.

The devil himself protects God from the charge of power without conscience. Calvin next moves on to the question of the culpability of God and argues that one must consider the intent as well as the action. Since God's intent is always good and for our salvation, God is not as such culpable. The devil remains culpable for the malice since the intention of the devil is only to destroy. Not only does God have good intentions, but God has the power and the authority to test the faithful. God after all could have good intentions but not this power, in which case we would be in a quandary. Hence, since all

of God's works are just and good, by virtue of the intention of God, and since God has the power and the ability and the authority to test us, it follows that for Calvin God is not culpable.

Having established that God will test us and is right and justified in testing us, Calvin answers why we are tested and delves into the process of the struggle itself. We are tested to make us aware of the spiritual world. The trials act as a wake up call. We are also tested so that we will struggle with the devil. In our being tested, we glorify God.

Sermon Nine, March 15, 1554, on Job 2:7-10

The ninth sermon on Job is the last of the series. The subsequent sermons on Job touch the subject of the devil, but no new ideas are presented. The ninth sermon contains specific sections in which are a certain number of themes and identifiable movements of thought. These are the protection of God as a necessity, the nature of temptation, the nature of the devil and, finally, in the face of the above, the need for God. In this sermon Calvin attempts to move the listener from a position of complacency to fear, to despair and, finally, to a trust in God.

The Devil Leaves the Presence of God

Calvin begins by saying that when God tests us he sees how much we are able to endure. The battle-hardened can endure much more. Job was battle-hardened for he had always resisted evil in his life. Thus Job was heavily afflicted. Calvin goes into almost

³¹⁷ CO 33, 116.

morbid detail in describing the nature of Job's affliction. Job was "*comme une charogne pourrir qu'il creve, par maniere de dire, en sa puantise.*"³¹⁸ Such morbidity was not uncommon in the sixteenth century. By drawing on artists and writers of the time, Lynne White³¹⁹ paints a picture of the Renaissance as a period almost obsessed with death and decay. This same tendency is seen in Calvin when he speaks of the many types of death that await us.³²⁰

By suggesting the physical torments of Job, the devil showed himself to be a very astute observer of human nature. Most people would do anything to save themselves from death and physical torment. According to Calvin, Job is all the more remarkable insofar as he did not curse when faced with such torments. Even when we are tested we must always remember that God is our Father and that he cares for us.³²¹ Yet, although we are tested, our suffering is less than that of Job. This does not mean that the devil has become kinder nor does it mean that God has no authority over us and therefore no

³¹⁸ CO 33, 117. The fascination with morbid details of illness was partially because the sixteenth century was well acquainted with death, plagues and so forth. In addition, Calvin himself was a sick man. Charles L. Cooke comments that Calvin saw physical ills as part of the Christian vocation. Christians must use their illnesses as a means to rely upon God's providential care and love. Charles L. Cooke, "Calvin's Illnesses and Their Relation to Christian Vocation," in *John Calvin and the Church, a Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990), 59-72.

³¹⁹ "Death and the Devil," in *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: General Studies*, ed. Brian Levack (New York: Garland Press, 1992), 319-341. While White has an interesting idea, it could also be said that war played a large factor in the morbidity of the age. The religious wars were particularly brutal and the people were used to the faces of death. Battles were not isolated from villages, but took place within villages and indeed peoples' homes. The combination of disease and warfare were probable factors in the morbid nature of the sixteenth century.

³²⁰ While it can be said that the Renaissance was obsessed with death, and in gravestones there were often carved elaborate images of decaying bodies, it can also be said that our age is obsessed with avoiding and disguising the unpleasantness of death. While they were familiar with and almost embraced death, we flee from it.

³²¹ CO 33, 118.

longer tests us.³²² The reason our testing is much milder is that God is merciful towards us.

Concluons donc que Dieu se montre benin et pitoyable envers nous, quand nous sommes chastiez ainsi doucement de sa main, qu'il tient un tel moyen, que nous ne sommes pas pressez iusques au bout, qu'il n'y a point ceste rigueur si grande et si excessive, comme nous la voyons en la personne de Iob.³²³

Calvin concludes that the temptations are real and dangerous since the devil uses the fact that we cling to our lives at all costs. He notes that we are all in danger of being too attached to our comforts in life. When we are afflicted we come to a new awareness of our dependence on God. Calvin shows how this is possible by describing the subtle nature of temptation.

The Nature of Temptation

After this interlude, Calvin proceeds to the next section, where he treats the nature of temptation in the course of his discussion of Job's wife. Job's wife tried to tempt Job to give up and curse God. Calvin says the devil is so clever that he uses our very inner desires, in this case the desire to give up, against us. In fact, "*sans que nous ayons des soufflets qui allument le feu, desia le diable trouve assez de moyens en nous*

³²² The idea of God not having authority would be foreign to most of the parishioners, except of course the Berthelier brothers and their followers who felt that religion was admissible only if it did not infringe on their freedoms.

³²³ CO 33, 118.

pour nous solliciter."³²⁴ The devil does not rely on exterior terrors to find ways to tempt us but uses the malice that is within us, and ignites the fires.³²⁵

...Satan ne prendra point des instrumens hors de nous, afin de nous decevoir, il en trouvera assez en nos personnes: les ennemis sont desia au dedans: car (comme i'ay dit) toutes nos phantasies volages sont autant d'adversaires à Dieu: toutes nos affections sont armées à l'encontre de luy, pour nous faire rebecquer contre les afflictions, quand il nous les envoie.³²⁶

Job had to fight two wars, the battle with himself and the battle with his wife who encouraged him to curse God and die. In Calvin's mind, the temptation to despair was the most serious of all temptations. In this case, the temptation came through his wife, who was an instrument of the devil.³²⁷ But the temptation is always around us when we are mocked for our faith and for our trust in God. Temptation is deadly because it has the capacity utterly to destroy our faith. This temptation shows us the need to be

³²⁴ CO 33, 120.

³²⁵ In many ways, this is a remarkable insight. The devil does not tempt by creating fantastic torments and trials, but by using our very hearts against us. Satan uses our free will to battle God and to tempt us. Calvin was similar to Augustine, who understood that God was in control of the devil and used the devil to teach us humility and wisdom. Evil, for Augustine, eventually arose from our free choice not to follow God. God tolerates evil for the greater good. Calvin understood the Christian to have free will in terms of evil and good. Only the Christian knows the difference between good and evil. The unselect are blind and do not see the dangers that are all around them, nor do they worship the true God. See also J.Burton Russell, *Satan, the Early Christian Tradition* (London: Cornell University Press, 1981), 206-207. For Luther the battle between the devil and the individual was fought on a cosmic plane. The soul is like a horse, which has two riders, the devil and God. The horse must obey its rider. Luther also believed that the devil held great power in the world as so many followed the devil. In my opinion, Calvin understood that the battle that took place with the devil affected the individuals. The struggle is important. The struggle not only glorifies God but also helps the individual reflect more of the image of Christ. The struggle is between God, the devil and the individual, which may be why in the *Institutes* Calvin notes that every event has three wills, the will of God, the will of the devil and the will of the individual. *Institutes* 2.4.2.

³²⁶ CO 33, 120.

³²⁷ It would be interesting to research whether or not this particular reference to women was used in any misogynist literature of the time.

vigilant.³²⁸ Although Calvin notes that Job's wife says bless God and die, Calvin makes it clear that in this case the word bless means to curse. Job's wife is inciting Job to avenge himself on God. In this temptation the devil does not use fantastic means and demons, but rather the wife to incite Job to curse God.³²⁹

...despite³³⁰ Dieu, et puis tu mourras: Venge-toy de luy une fois devant que mourir: car tu vois bien qu'il t'a trompé. Or il n'y a nulle doute, que cest femme ici ne soit une organe de Satan: il ne se faut point donc esbahir si elle est comme une Proserpine, que ce soit une furie d'enfer pour mettre Job en une telle rage qu'il s'esleve à l'encontre de Dieu.³³¹

The deadly temptation to despair is often used by the devil. When we are mocked, as Job was by his wife, we are often tempted to despair. The temptation is exacerbated in this case as the one mocking Job was his own wife. In this terrible temptation, Calvin notes, the devil has us by the throat.

Et de fait Satan voit qu'il nous tient comme à la gorge, quand il aura gagné ce point sur nous: car il n'est point question là de nous picquer, et navrer aux bras ou aux iambes, mais il vient droit au coeur, et à la gorge, quand il a tant fait que les meschans se moquent de nous.³³²

³²⁸ CO 33, 121.

³²⁹ Although there is evidence based on a letter to Viret that Calvin did not dismiss the folk tales in Geneva that spoke of demons carrying off people, for the most part Calvin understood the devil to work via ordinary means and use the evil that is within us rather than resort to the fantastic.

³³⁰ Curse, more literally, despise.

³³¹ CO 33, 122.

³³² CO 33, 120.

This temptation is such a dangerous one, that we must pray to God to protect us. The temptation³³³ is “la plus mortelle que the devil nous puisse mettre au devant, c’est quand il nous semble que nous perdons temps, quand nous prions Dieu, et que nous avons nostre recours à luy.”³³⁴

Not only was the temptation deadly, but Calvin reminds the listeners to be aware from whence the attack came. The attack did not come from a stranger, but from Job’s wife. The devil not only uses the evil in our hearts, but also uses the people who are closest to us to tempt us.³³⁵ Job’s sharp rebuke to his wife serves as a reminder that when we are dealing with the devil we engage in a deadly battle.³³⁶

In this sermon Calvin shows the reader the full force of the devil. The devil is aware of how dear our lives are and uses physical ailments to torment us. When this is not enough, he resorts to the ultimate temptation, that of despair, when we are told our faith in God is useless. Calvin’s sermon shows the devil as one who employs things and persons close to our hearts in order to tempt. The devil does not use fantastic things and tragedies to torment us but knows our hearts.

³³³ The temptation to imagine that God cannot help you and to give up was what eventually felled Dr. Faust. (d. 1541). Since 1570 the subject has enjoyed literary fame.

³³⁴ CO 33, 124.

³³⁵ Calvin notes that people are to pray for their partners and their friends lest the same fate happen to them. CO 33, 124.

³³⁶ CO 33, 125.

Summary of the Themes Found in Sermon Nine on Job

After describing the formidable nature of our enemy, Calvin notes that we should be vigilant and aware and also pray to God for protection and have confidence in the fact that God is our Father. At this point, Calvin shows his mastery of rhetoric. He convinces the listener both of the goodness and of the providence of God by showing the terror of the devil, on one hand, and on the other, the saving hand of God. The point that he wishes to show is our need for God and the providence of God. Calvin does this by describing the terrors and boldness (*astuce*) of the devil and our helplessness apart from God who restrains the devil and saves us.

Other Sermons

In the rest of Calvin's sermons on Job, the devil is mentioned in passing, but there is nothing that adds to our discussion apart from the few points upon which I shall now remark.

The Devil as an Instrument of God's Judgment

Although he speaks of the torments of the devil as a way to lead us to God, Calvin is realistic. He notes that, although we face many temptations and trials, we do not turn to God. We grumble. The real truth about human nature is that we are slaves to the devil.³³⁷ Calvin did not treat the matter of evil lightly. In his 28th sermon on Job, Calvin speaks of God punishing the children of the wicked. He notes that God punishes the children of the wicked. God grants the devil full leave to punish the wicked. God

³³⁷ CO 33, 168.

*“luy lasche la bride à ce qu’il domine en telle maisons.”*³³⁸ This idea was not presented in detail in the earlier sermons on Job. Here the devil is seen as an instrument of God’s judgment and wrath. The same theme is found in Sermon 26 where the devil punishes the ungrateful of the world.³³⁹

The devil’s attacks are likened to poison that keeps us from turning to God and, instead, angers us.³⁴⁰ The devil seeks to drive us to despair and to imagine that God is sleeping. Calvin is quick to point out that God never sleeps and is always aware of our situation. Were he to sleep, we would be destroyed in an instant.³⁴¹

On Leviathan

Calvin is aware of the exegetes who speak of Leviathan³⁴² as the devil. Yet he notes that Leviathan is clearly a large fish. The reason Calvin makes this remark is that he is convinced of the principle of accommodation in Scripture. God accommodates to our senses and as such would not write about a fish when he meant it to be the devil. This is a good example of Calvin’s method of reading the text. For Calvin, there were no allegorical or hidden meanings. God reveals Himself and what he means to say he says plainly in the text.

³³⁸ CO 33, 230.

³³⁹ CO 33, 327.

³⁴⁰ CO 33, 351.

³⁴¹ CO 33, 363.

³⁴² CO 33, 464. When Calvin is aware of exegesis that he finds in error, he wastes no time to expose it.

*Concluding Remarks and Some Elements Contained Within
Calvin's Sermons on Job*

The Devil as tenu en bride

In Calvin's words the most useful doctrine that we can learn about the devil is that he is *tenu en bride*.³⁴³ This doctrine, or idea, is the most important doctrine according to John Calvin. It shows a devil who is not out of control or allowed to run amok but, rather, one who is under the control of God.³⁴⁴ It would be easy either to dismiss this doctrine by noting that Calvin's time was one of great search for order, and that the devil would have to be under control, or to contain this under Calvin's understanding of the sovereignty of God. To do either would be to overlook the subtleties as they pertain to the devil.

In the following section I will work out some consequences to this doctrine. I shall do so by considering what implications the idea of the devil being *tenu en bride* has on the nature of the devil, and, secondly, what this idea reveals about God himself. I will first turn my attention to the consequences of the notion of the devil being *tenu en bride* as it pertains to the nature of the devil.

As It Reveals the Nature of the Devil

While we have considered many aspects of the nature of the devil, the devil being *tenu en bride* was a doctrine or an idea that Calvin stressed in his sermons to

³⁴³ CO 33, 61.

prevent people from ascribing too much power to the devil and also to alert people to the fact that the devil is clever and malicious and must be restrained. Thus, the same doctrine prevents people from thinking that the devil is all powerful and perhaps more powerful than God, since the devil himself is held in check by God who remains sovereign and more powerful. The second idea or cluster of ideas that the doctrine of *tenu en bride* refutes is that the devil is not a worthy opponent. The devil, Calvin assures us, is a clever and deadly opponent and must be restrained. With this in mind, I shall focus my attention on what the devil being held in check has to tell us about these two aspects of the nature of the devil, namely, the power and *astuce* or daring of the devil.

The Power of the Devil

Calvin makes no small matter of the power of the devil, who seeks to destroy us.³⁴⁵ The devil's true nature is one of malice and destruction. He seeks to destroy us by any means and attacks us from all sides.³⁴⁶ He is a roaring lion who is subtle in the extreme.³⁴⁷

Calvin stresses the power of the devil in order to wake us up from a mistaken belief that we are not under attack. The devil never tires of attacking the faithful and, were it not for the fact that he is held in check, we would be utterly destroyed. Yet not only is the devil powerful, he is clever in the means by which he attacks. In reading the

³⁴⁴ CO 33, 61, 71, 72, 73.

³⁴⁵ CO 33, 62.

³⁴⁶ CO 33, 62.

³⁴⁷ CO 33, 23, CO 33, 67, CO 33, 68, CO 33, 92.

descriptions of the devil's attacks, it is tempting to draw conclusions based on Calvin's context. Indeed at times he wished for death to deliver him. It must have been very comforting to know that the devil, or the wicked, would not triumph and that they are held back by God. It is interesting that, in Calvin's sermons on the book of Job that deal with the devil, Calvin generally begins with the power of the devil in order to highlight, I think, his idea of the devil being *tenu en bride*. The devil is powerful, all the more reason why it is imperative that he be held in check by God. I think that Calvin may have stressed the power of the devil in order to irk the Libertines in his congregation.

Although the Genevan Libertines are not to be confused with those who followed the Dutch sect called the Quintinists against whom Calvin wrote, there are some similarities. Judging from the records of the Consistoire, Calvin's letters and Calvin's other writings, the Genevan Libertines were content with Calvin's reform provided that religion did not infringe upon the powers of the Council. The Libertine's felt that the devil was simply the result of faulty thinking and not 'real'. It may be the case that Calvin's repeated insistence on the power of the devil was not only a pastoral tool to teach people about the dangers posed by the devil, but also a way to annoy the Libertines.

L'astuce of the Devil

The devil does not merely attack at random or in an arbitrary fashion.³⁴⁸ The devil is clever and has infinite ruses in his methods. Not only that, but the devil uses the

³⁴⁸ Many of the accounts of the devil in Calvin's time seemed to focus on the witch and her relationship with the devil. Satan was thought to enter into pacts with witches to enable them to do fantastic deeds. The emphasis was always on the fantastic and the extraordinary. What Calvin is saying is that the devil does not use the extraordinary to attack us, but rather uses our very natures against us. This does not mean that Calvin was unaware of the accounts of the devil. In his commentaries on Deuteronomy

evil that is already within us to make us rebel against God.³⁴⁹ The devil uses our very natures to cause us to despair of God's goodness and love. Hence the enemy is not only powerful but very clever. This makes us all the more thankful that the devil is *tenu en bride*. Were this not the case there would be no hope for us. The clever nature of the devil also makes us aware of the relentless attacks of the devil. Once more, we are not only faced with a deadly enemy, but one who is clever in the extreme and who will use any occasion of our weakness to attack us. The onus is on us who must be prepared for the attacks of the devil, which are an inevitable feature of the Christian life.

As It Reveals the Nature of God

In terms of the nature of God, the devil as *tenu en bride* is very revealing of the power and sovereignty of God as well as the love of God towards his people. It is upon these two areas that I will now concentrate. We first turn our attention to showing how the devil as *tenu en bride* has consequences for, or shows the power and sovereignty of God.

The Power and Sovereignty of God

As mentioned, the fact that the devil is *tenu en bride* reveals aspects of the nature of God. The first point is the power and sovereignty of God. The devil is in no way a competitor of God. Calvin makes it clear that the devil does not solicit God to tempt Job,

18:10, Calvin notes that whether or not the devil appears to raise the dead or to bewitch people it is all an illusion. The key word is to 'appear'. "It is clear that he has no power except upon unbelievers whose minds are darkened, so as not to distinguish black from white." *Comm. Deut. 18:10.*

³⁴⁹ According to Calvin, we are naturally at war with God and our hearts are turned against Him. The devil uses this to tempt us.

and God does not give in to the devil. Rather, the devil can do nothing without the permission of God. The devil obeys God and even comes before the throne of God.³⁵⁰ The devil is part of God's creation and, as such, is subject to God. The devil is held in check because God is sovereign and powerful. Calvin belabours this point, stressing the fact that although the devil is clever, malicious and powerful, he is held in check by a sovereign God.

The sovereignty of God is also explored in terms of God's freedom and right to test us by means of the devil for reasons unknown to us. Yet, although we are tested, God is never culpable of malice or evil. This is because God's intent in testing us is always good and for our salvation. The sovereignty of God is never expressed as a naked power. God holds the devil in check because God is sovereign but also, and more importantly, because God wishes to save us, to control the testing so that we grow in faith and patience. In Calvin's sermons on Job the presentation of God as sovereign is invariably linked with the presentation of God as providential, just, and merciful. This leads us naturally into our next section where we deal with the love of God for his people.

The Love of God Towards His People

Were it not for God's protection we would be like lambs in the midst of 10,000 wolves. Yet God's protection is not there only to save us, but to use the afflictions, to direct them so that we are exercised in patience, self- reflection and faith. Thus God's

³⁵⁰ Although, as we have seen Calvin does not take this literally. For Calvin the Job pericopes that describe the devil at the throne of God are placed there so that we can understand partially the magnitude of the

love expresses itself in His salvific intent towards us. Our salvation, Calvin argued, is connected with the restoration of the image of God within us. When we struggle and resist evil, God is glorified and the image of God or God's virtue shines forth, since it is His spirit that enables us to resist evil. Our struggle in turn enables us to resist greater temptation the next time. The love of God is demonstrated in our victory over the devil, which consists of two elements. On the one hand, there is the cosmic factor: God is sovereign over the devil and the devil can do nothing without God's permission and will. On the other hand, were the struggle only to be a cosmic one, there would be no struggle. What makes the love of God apparent is the personal element of the struggle in which believers can use their free will in the contest between themselves and the devil. Christ's victory over the devil is efficacious but, when we are struggling, this answer will not suffice. Rather, it is by means of our struggles with the devil that we enter into a personal relationship with God insofar as we not only ask God for help but, in preparing ourselves for the inevitable attacks of the devil, we come to know God more deeply as we search the Scriptures. The faithful are to actively resist evil and use their free will to pray to God for help in the struggle. The free choice of the believer plays a crucial role. Unless we pray for help we will not be victorious in our struggle.³⁵¹ The element of free will in the struggle can also be understood if one remembers that Calvin believes God is

sovereignty of God.

³⁵¹ This makes one think of predestination. Calvin understood that the faithful were predestined for salvation and thus cannot fall. How then can they exercise free will in their struggle with the devil? They cannot fall for ever. But like King David who turned away from God, God allows the faithful to fall for a time and to be servants of the devil. In terms of the nonelect, there is no struggle. They are already slaves to the devil.

'above the common laws of nature'.³⁵² This means that God is sovereign and we cannot predict His actions or how for that matter the faithful will act. God even changes the laws of nature to show His freedom.³⁵³ God's plan remains hidden to us. The revelations of the devil and of God also lead to further insights into our own natures and into a deeper knowledge of God, as we will now see.

Tenu en Bride and Its Consequences for the Knowledge of Self and of God

In addition to the faces of the devil and God revealed, the devil also serves another function in the sermons on Job. As Calvin writes, in speaking of spiritual knowledge, all knowledge consists of two parts, the knowledge of self and the knowledge of God. The knowledge of the self is linked with the knowledge of God within a context of faith.³⁵⁴ The devil serves to bring us to a greater knowledge of both self and God.

Knowledge of Self

The knowledge of self in terms of the devil can be explored in two ways. One can know oneself as powerless in the face of the devil, and, as slave to the devil. We turn our attention first to the knowledge of self as powerless.

³⁵² Sermon 81 Job, CO 35, 248.

³⁵³ *Comm.* Genesis 48:17.

³⁵⁴ I say within a context of faith since Calvin understood that we are utterly blind to spiritual matters apart from God's self revelation and illumination.

The Knowledge of Self as Powerless in the Face of the Devil

This was an aspect that Calvin seemed to almost delight in exposing. No doubt he had in mind the Libertine council who imagined themselves to be powerful and able to control even God himself.³⁵⁵ Calvin points out with artful creativity the fact that when we are faced with an indefatigable enemy who seeks to destroy us from every angle and who is clever, we are without hope. If we were able to control the devil, why would it be so necessary for the devil to be held in check? He is held in check because we are utterly defenseless against him. Even if we think that we are prepared, the devil, as we have seen, uses the evil that is within us as a weapon against us. Thus the devil attacks from within and without.

If we ever imagine that the devil is soft with us and that we are not tested, we fool ourselves, for the devil seeks only to destroy us. The knowledge that we are powerless against the devil,³⁵⁶ like all the knowledge that I shall now speak about, is an experiential knowledge. It is not a matter of creed, ideas or doctrine, but of life experience. This knowledge leads us to an even more drastic conclusion, namely, that not only are we powerless against the devil but we are actually enslaved to the devil.

The Knowledge of Self as Slave of the Devil

To the proud Genevans who had fought for independence from Rome and the house of Savoy the idea that they were slaves to anything must have been very

³⁵⁵ Or at least so it seemed with the debate that ensued over which body had the right of excommunication.

³⁵⁶ Once more, this knowledge is only applicable to those whom Calvin believed were elect. Only the elect had their eyes open and were able to discern good and evil and the path of the devil.

disturbing.³⁵⁷ Calvin used the concept of slavery to the devil as his conclusion in the sections of his sermons where he dealt with our powerlessness in the face of the devil. It was as if he would build up the power of the devil and then, in a way, to crush all hope, declare that we are slaves to the devil, the Prince of the World. Calvin was at his best when he remarked that the reason Scripture tells us that Satan was circling the world is for us to know that the devils are above us and then when we raise our heads in pride it is only to be aware of our status as slaves of the devil. The knowledge of self, is, in Calvin's theology, connected to a knowledge of God.³⁵⁸ This brings us to our next section, remarks concerning how the idea of the devil being *tenu en bride* impacts our knowledge of God.

Knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer

In his *Institutes*, Calvin divided the knowledge of God into the knowledge of God as Creator and as Redeemer. I will use the same division here.

In turning our attention to the knowledge of God as Creator, the devil, we are told, is held in check. The devil obeys God. This is because the devil is a creature of God the Creator. The notion of the devil being held in check is only possible if the devil is a creature of God. Thus God is shown to us as Creator by the fact that we experience the devil being held back. If God were not the Creator, he would have neither the power nor the authority to hold the devil back. The devil being held in check is also demonstrative

³⁵⁷ Some of the Genevan council at times protested Calvin's sermons as unflattering to Geneva and thus bad for business.

³⁵⁸ Yet there is a certain direction. We cannot know God. God must first reveal Himself to us as Creator and Redeemer and only then can we really know ourselves.

of the sovereignty of God over his creation. As Creator, God is sovereign over all. God, not the devil, is in charge of all the elements and one cannot imagine that the devil is in charge of evil events. The fact that the devil is held in check by God shows us unmistakably that God is sovereign, not the devil. The devil is held back not only to show the sovereignty and glory of God, but also to assure us that we will not be utterly destroyed at the hands of the devil. This second element brings us to the knowledge of God as Redeemer.

We are assailed by the devil and yet we are not totally destroyed. We experience the saving hand of God daily in our war against the devil. The way in which we experience God as our saviour here is very personal. When we are attacked by the devil, we pray to God who helps us in our battles with the devil. Our prayers are founded on hope in the knowledge that God does hold the devil in check and does not allow him to destroy us. This is a fact that has been demonstrated to us experientially. We are not destroyed 1000 times a day, and since the devil seeks only to destroy us, the fact that we are alive is due to the saving hand of God as Redeemer. Our continued existence is due to the love of God in our lives. When we are attacked by the devil, our recourse is to pray to God for help. Our hope is well founded, since we know by experience that the devil is *tenu en bride*. After we struggle with the devil, we grow closer to God since we know that he has rescued us and helped us. In our struggles against the devil we use the tools that God has given us to combat him, namely, the Scriptures, which are God's self-revelation to us. Thus the devil as *tenu en bride* shows God as Redeemer both

cosmically, insofar as God is in control of the devil and sovereign, and personally so that our struggles with the devil are never devoid of hope.

The Three-fold Office of the Devil

In addition to the knowledge of God and of the devil, there is one more idea which we can draw from Calvin's notion of the devil being *tenu en bride*, and what this tells us about the purpose or role of the devil. Indeed, as we have seen, the role of the devil is to tempt and to test, but the fact that he is actively constrained and controlled by God introduces a new twist. God controls the devil and, since God is sovereign and his will supreme, the devil is an instrument of God. The devil does not tempt randomly or by his will, but rather by and through the will of God. It seems that the fact that the devil is controlled introduces a new function for him, namely, that he is an instrument used by God to bring the faithful closer to Him. Whether the faithful pray when under affliction and duress or whether the trials cause them to repent anew, the end result is the same. The devil, since he is used by God, effects the will of God which is always to bring the faithful to Him and Him to the faithful.

It would then seem that the uses of the devil are really three-fold, the first being to terrorize the people and make them despair. It is interesting that in the Job sermons Calvin begins by stressing this aspect of the devil's role, however briefly. The devil is always introduced as an enemy, or a roaring lion, or one who seeks our destruction. The devil, in this first office, is a judge of the wicked. The devil is used by God to judge the wicked but also to prick the conscience or to test the righteous, as we saw in the case of

Job. The devil is used to judge people for their wickedness. Calvin speaks of King David who was punished by trials as a result of his sin. Calvin also speaks of the devil being used to upbraid the haughty and the proud.³⁵⁹ “*Or quand les hommes se sont ainsi eslever, Dieu prononce a l’opposite, qu’ils sont esclaves de Satan.*” The devil’s first office is to serve out God’s justice, to be the headsman of God. It is God who pronounces sentence, but the devil and the wicked, who carry out the punishment.³⁶⁰ This first office is primarily negative: the devil is sent by God to punish people. In this case the judgment can be judgment both of the elect and the non-elect.

The second function of the devil, as seen in these Job sermons, is to make the faithful repent. The faithful, when faced with such an indefatigable and deadly enemy, despair and realize that there is nothing that they can do on their own in the face of such an enemy. They also realize that they must rely on God for help. The second office or function of the devil is to cause the faithful to reflect upon themselves. The trials and torments effected upon the faithful at the hands of the devil cause the faithful to reflect on whether or not they serve God for no reason. Is there a hidden sin of hypocrisy? Does the believer curse God and expect that there will be no trials? Calvin makes it very clear in this series of sermons that testing is a natural and useful aspect of the Christian life. It is only by testing that Christians are able to grow and develop as they resist temptations. As noted above, God is glorified in the struggle and Christians grow stronger in the spirit

³⁵⁹ CO 33, 61.

³⁶⁰ CO 33, 107.

of God.³⁶¹ It is only through temptation that the faithful become aware of the spiritual realities that encompass them.³⁶² Thus Christians through battle engage in soul searching and, having been made aware of the great danger posed to them by the devil, turn to God. This leads us to the third office of the devil.

The third function, as it were, is that the trials and temptations of the devil lead the faithful back to God. The faithful are led back to God by calling upon God for help and also in a deeper sense by arming themselves against the devil by reading Scripture and thereby discovering *qualis Deus sit* or what kind of a God they deal with. The believers, having fought the devil and searched their souls, begin to turn once more to God, with a renewed openness. Gone is the laxity and the assumption that all will be well. Believers turn to God with a renewed awe and sense of the sovereignty of God. As aforementioned, they come to experience God both as Creator and Redeemer. They come back to God with a renewed sense of their own fragility and spiritual weakness. The devil's torments eventually lead them to a deeper relationship and knowledge of God.

The three-fold office, or three functions of the devil are remarkably similar to Calvin's use of the law. One could argue that the three-fold office of the devil is to act as a judge for the wicked and to prick the conscience of the righteous, to act as a mirror

³⁶¹ Calvin would say that more of God's virtue is shown in the Christian who resists and battles with the devil.

³⁶² This office is only applicable to those who are elect.

whereby the righteous examine their lives and actions in the light of the devil and, lastly, as a means to bring the faithful back to God.

Having analyzed and drawn a few consequences of the doctrine of the devil being *tenu en bride* from the Job sermons, we see that the devil is used to root out hidden sins and reveal to us not only ourselves as sinful creatures but also the nature of God himself. With regard to this we see that Satan is under the control of God but is not a mindless pawn: he is an intelligent, deadly and cunning enemy. It would furthermore appear that Calvin uses his preaching on the devil to give more of a foundation to the concept of Christian experience. If it were not for the devil, our lived suffering would have no meaning. Yet God directs the devil to test us, therefore our suffering and trials can lead us towards a deeper knowledge not only of ourselves but of God. As such, our sufferings have salvific meaning. Ironically, the devil therefore helps impart salvific meaning to our suffering. The question of suffering and temptation is also dealt with in the sermons that deal with the temptations of Jesus in the desert. We turn to these sermons in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS IN THE DESERT

Introduction

Calvin's four sermons on the temptation of Christ in the desert are part of his gospel sermons. While this chapter does not intend to discuss Calvin's understanding of the role and function of the gospel in any great detail, since the texts that we will study are part of the gospel it is worth pursuing a few remarks on Calvin's understanding of the gospel and, more specifically, how one is to preach the gospel. Calvin understood the task of preaching the gospel to be one of revealing Christ.³⁶³ For Calvin the gospel was not just a text or even a series of inspired passages but, rather, a means by which God

³⁶³ Dawn Devries in *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1996) makes a strong case for the Christological emphasis found throughout Calvin's gospel sermons. For Calvin what mattered was that Christ be presented to the believers. Hence one would expect that Calvin's treatment of the devil in his sermons on the temptation pericopes would present the devil in the light of the benefits that Jesus Christ obtained for us by means of his battle with the devil. As we shall see, this is the case.

united the believers with Christ. In this way, the gospel brings salvation.³⁶⁴ The Word is in fact a means of grace. For Calvin the preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the Word,³⁶⁵ was not to be just a matter of edification or moralization. The preaching of the gospel is to be made profitable for our salvation since it is through the Word itself that believers have access to grace. As Calvin notes, “God has manifested the word concerning life by the preaching of the gospel.”³⁶⁶ Thus, the sermons on the temptations of Christ in the desert must be read bearing in mind Calvin’s special treatment of the gospel.

As we have seen, for Calvin preaching and the preacher were essential to bringing the Word of God to the people. Yet, when it comes to gospel texts, not only the Word of God but also Christ himself are presented. The preached Word is a means of grace and a type of sacrament because preaching the gospel presents Christ and his benefits.³⁶⁷ This stress on the presentation of Christ and his benefits is, as we shall see, clearly shown in the temptation sermons where Calvin discusses the victory of Christ

³⁶⁴ *Comm.* Gal 1:7, *Comm.* 1 Peter 1:13.

³⁶⁵ In Calvin’s understanding, the Word meant Jesus Christ but also, since believers encounter the Word through preaching of the Scriptures, it can be said that Calvin understood that the preaching of the gospel brings the believers to Christ and unites them to Christ by faith. *Comm.* John 7:33. So the Word also means the preached gospel made efficacious by the Holy Spirit.

³⁶⁶ *Comm.* Titus 1:3.

³⁶⁷ While the sacraments and the preached word are not the only way in which God’s grace is conferred, they are the ordinary ways. Calvin was quick to note that the mark of the true church was where the gospel is preached and the sacraments are rightly administered. *Instit.* 4.1.9.

over Satan and our consequent assurance of victory over Satan's temptations through Christ. The preaching of the gospel is a way in which believers see the face of Christ.³⁶⁸

But it is very important to remember that the presentation of Christ in the preaching of the gospels is never just an intellectual presentation. The preached word is efficacious in that it brings what it portrays. Christ is not only portrayed, he is actually brought to the listeners by faith.³⁶⁹ Preaching, says Calvin, ratifies the salvation received in Christ's death.³⁷⁰ We grasp Christ by means of faith.³⁷¹ Christ is presented to us and comes to us by means of the sacraments and by preaching.³⁷²

Hence Calvin's sermons that deal with the gospel should be read with two things in mind:

- 1) The sacramental notion of the sermon must be kept in mind. The reader must be aware that for Calvin the sermon will stress the benefits of Christ to the believer.
- 2) The Christological emphasis must never be forgotten. The sermons must be read bearing in mind that they are means to point to and portray Christ to the believer.

³⁶⁸ *Comm. Matt.4:1, Comm. Luke 2:30, Comm. John 3:14*

³⁶⁹ Calvin had a very lively understanding of the Christian faith. Christianity was never a matter of intellectualization but of doing and living the will of God. In Calvin's sermons on the temptations one sees this in his understanding of how we do battle with the devil. The Christian's battle with the devil is never a once in a lifetime affair, but is something which he or she can expect throughout life. What is interesting is the way in which Calvin describes the battle of the Christian and the devil. The battles are never static, and the Christian must be vigilant in keeping his armour or methods and means of repelling the attacks of Satan in top shape.

³⁷⁰ *Comm. John 1:12*

³⁷¹ There is a strong Christological element in Calvin's understanding of justification.

³⁷² T.H.L. Parker, "Calvin's doctrine of Justification," in *Articles on Calvin and Calvinism*, ed. Richard Gamble, vol. 8 (New York: Garland Press, 1992), 117.

As Devries³⁷³ notes, the sermons need also to be understood in the light of restoring human confidence in the goodness of God. The preached word brings Christ to the believer, not as a memorial but as a living presence.

Events Shaping the Sermons on the Temptations of Jesus in the Desert

Calvin began preaching his series on the harmony of the gospels on the first Sunday of July 1559, and continued each Sunday to his death in 1564. As Calvin preached twice on Sundays, the four sermons in which he dealt with the temptations of Jesus in the desert would have been preached on the last Sunday of December and the first Sunday in January 1560. Since the two-week time period is too short to consider much in the way of context, what I will do is look at both global and specific contexts. By global context, I mean the overall period of Calvin's ministry in Geneva and his relationship with the ruling Council. By specific context, I mean the letters of Calvin from November to December 1559 and the records of the Consistory and Company of Pastors. Unlike the Job sermons, the temptation sermons were preached at a time of peace when Calvin was given his highest level of support from the ruling Council. Also, unlike the Job sermons, Calvin wrote a commentary on the harmony of the gospels in 1555 and all of his commentaries were completed by the time these sermons were

³⁷³ *Jesus Christ in the Preaching of Calvin and Schleiermacher*, 19.

preached, so we can refer to them. Also of use in reference will be Calvin's *Institutes* of 1559.³⁷⁴

The Global Context

When Calvin preached his sermons on the Book of Job, he was embattled by the Genevan council and his sermons on Job perhaps reflected something of a battle-weary Calvin. In contrast, the sermons on the temptations were written in a period when Calvin enjoyed very favourable relations with the Council. The "Genevan" revolution, where Calvin supporters were elected to the Council took place in 1555.³⁷⁵ As a mark of the support of the Council, the registers record that on December 25, 1559, Pierre Viret, John Raymond, John Taget and other ministers and lecturers were offered free bourgeois status. Calvin was also offered this rank and accepted the offer with thanks.³⁷⁶

The second aspect of the global context, which will touch as well upon the specific context, is that of Calvin's relations with France or the French connection.

³⁷⁴ Although Calvin wrote a 1560 edition of the *Institutes*, the 1559 edition is generally considered to be the final edition. I will use the Battles translation of the 1559 *Institutes* since I am only using them as supporting references and since the Battles translation is felt to be superior to the Beveridge translation.

³⁷⁵ Amy Perrin, who was the head of the council, had decided that in order to solve Geneva's cash flow problems he would allow rich French immigrants to purchase citizenship. Geneva had two types of citizens, those who were Genevan born and those who became called the bourgeois. The bourgeois, by rank or status were allowed to become citizens and enjoy the privileges of casting votes in the elections and sitting on the council. Perrin allowed this to happen on April 18, 1555. By May 16, the Perrinists, realizing that the new bourgeois would vote them out in the April/ May election of that year, tried to block the voting rights of the new bourgeois. They were defeated, and Calvin supporters became members of the Council. The Perrinists tried to stage a revolution but were defeated and disgraced. By 1556, the Council was fully in favour of Calvin and his work.

³⁷⁶ Records of the Consistory, CO 21, 728.

The French Connection

It is fair to say that Calvin remained an evangelist to the French in France throughout his life.³⁷⁷ In 1536, he dedicated his *Institutes* to Francis I³⁷⁸ of France, urging him to see the truth of the Reformation. Calvin's letters throughout his life reveal a keen pastoral and missionary interest in France. Closer to the dates of the temptation sermons, in November 1559, Calvin wrote one of his many letters to the brethren in

³⁷⁷ While in Strasbourg, during his 'exile' from Geneva, Calvin was in charge of the French refugee congregation (Strasbourg was considered to be a safe haven for free thinkers). It was during this time that his colleague Martin Bucer looked after the Germans. In Geneva, Calvin's preaching and work was directed mainly to the French refugees.

³⁷⁸ The French connection began with Calvin's dedication of his 1536 *Institutes* to Francis I, King of France. By all accounts, Francis I was an unstable and weak monarch. He was also a humanist. His royal librarian, Du Chastel, was a moderate man, who pleaded against Francis' saying that no one should be executed for heresy, since one cannot be certain of the truth. (Philip Benedict, *Un roi, une loi, deux fois: Parameters for the History of Catholic-Reformed co-existence in France, 1555-1685*, in *Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation*, eds. Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 69.) His realm was shaky and he no doubt saw the growing evangelical movement as a threat. He needed allies. He had already been imprisoned by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and had lost territories. France was threatened by invasion and inner revolt. Francis wrote a peace treaty with the German Lutheran princes in January 1534. At the same time, after the infamous placard affair of June 1534, he persecuted French Lutherans (where they were not protected) and other evangelicals. He claimed the placards were seditious. The placards criticised the Mass. Such a criticism was not theological hair-splitting; to criticise the Mass was to undermine a crucial element in maintaining the balance of power between Church and State. The Mass, with its attendant priestly miracle, was something the Church maintained as its own. When Karlstadt (a contemporary of Martin Luther) tried to hurry the reform of the mass and introduce the cup to the laity, it was a fiasco. We also see the delicate balance of Church and State in Calvin's Geneva when one reads the disputes over whether the church or the state had the power to excommunicate. (Excommunication here arguably took the place of the Mass and remained in the power of the church, not the state.) Francis I was a puzzling figure in history. Because he was a humanist and had argued against the Sorbonne's wish to ban the study of Erasmus and because he had formed a treaty with Lutheran princes, he was thought to be sympathetic to the cause of the French evangelicals. In his dedicatory preface, Calvin takes great pains to distance himself from any charge of sedition or schism and appeals to Francis' task as a Christian prince. His task is not to cause a revolt but to fulfil a need, as Calvin notes:

"My purpose was solely to transmit certain rudiments by which those who are touched with any zeal for religion might be shaped by true godliness. And I undertook this labour especially for our French countrymen, very many of whom I saw to be hungering and thirsting for Christ; very few of whom had been imbued with even a slight knowledge of him." Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion, 1536*. Translated and Annotated by Ford Lewis Battles, (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1975), 1.

France, as he called them. The letter is full of admonition that they not break with their faith but be brave in the face of persecutions. Calvin urges them to arm themselves with the Word of God as a means of resisting the enemy.³⁷⁹ The enemy in this case was not only the devil but also Henry II, the King of France. At the time these sermons were preached, Henry was intent on eradicating Protestantism in France. Calvin likens Henry's attacks to those of the devil and warns the brethren to be vigilant and to struggle. He remarks that the blood of the martyrs will inspire them.³⁸⁰ Yet the letter is far more than an idle encouragement to be brave in the face of torture. Calvin reveals a keen understanding of the nature of persecution and the Christian response to it. He closes with a hopeful note and a prayer that God will make them feel safe and that they can cast their cares³⁸¹ on Jesus.³⁸² The tyrants, after all, can only do what God will allow them do and thus the brethren are in the hands of God.

Calvin's influence in France stemmed from two sources. The first source was the influence of his *Institutes* and treatises. The second source of influence was the

³⁷⁹ Letter to the Brethren of France, Nov. 20, 1559, LC 4, 81.

³⁸⁰ Letter to the Brethren of France, Nov. 20, 1559, LC 4, 85.

³⁸¹ In fact the Christian life, as Calvin is never tired of pointing out, is one of constant struggle and battle. The Christian must be ready to enter the arena of battle at a moment's notice. Moreover, Calvin was not naive about the struggle that faced many of the French evangelicals. He speaks of this in his Sermon 31 on 2 Samuel, SC 1, 272.

“Our Lord has wanted to afflict his own in many places. Poor people have had their throats cut, there have been many horrible and bloody butcheries, many outrages, many tyrannies and cruelties. The poor faithful will be exiled from their homes, and it will be much if they escape with their lives. Their goods will be seized, their wives and children like poor vagabonds, fleeing here and there and always in danger like a bird on a branch.”

³⁸² Letter to the Brethren of France, Nov. 20, 1559, LC, 4,87.

missionaries that Calvin sent to France from Geneva. We turn now to the influence of Calvin's written works.

The Written Works

It is not possible to overstress the influence of Calvin's written work for the French Protestants. In 1535, the first French Bible by Robert Olivier was ready, for which Calvin wrote the preface. The Olivier Bible was remarkable in its presentation of the Old Testament.³⁸³ It remained the standard French Bible for French Protestants for some three hundred years.³⁸⁴ 1535 also marks the date when Pierre Robert,³⁸⁵ Calvin's cousin, translated the New Testament into French and Calvin wrote the preface to this work as well.

In addition to Calvin's work on the Bible, there was his *Institutes*. In 1541, Calvin wrote the *Institutes* in French. This work was not a translation of the earlier 1539 Latin work but a reworking employing many of the French idioms of his day. The work was clear and easy to read and lacked the cumbersome long sentences that other French theologians such as Pierre Viret and William Farel used. Its clarity and brevity were perhaps some of the main reasons why this work was so popular and widely read. Calvin's 1541 *Institutes* was the first serious theological / philosophical work in French

³⁸³ It was remarkable insofar as the translation was very close to the original Hebrew.

³⁸⁴ Samuel Mours, *Le protestantisme en France au Xvie siècle* (Paris: Librairie Protestant, 1959), 54.

³⁸⁵ Robert Olivier, Olivétan, Pierre Robert are all the same person.

and set a new style in French literature,³⁸⁶ which up to that time had been cumbersome and difficult to follow.³⁸⁷

Calvin's 1541 *Institutes* caused a near panic in France. On July 1, 1542 the French parlement banned it.³⁸⁸ The French monarchy was not in favour of the Reformation.³⁸⁹ The French opposition began with Francis I who may have been merely ambivalent until the infamous placard affair of 1534.³⁹⁰ Despite the ban on the *Institutes*,

³⁸⁶ This was a hallmark of the Reformation. When Martin Luther translated the Bible into common German, it was felt by some that he became the father of modern German. Luther's Bible represented the first time that German had been used in such a manner.

³⁸⁷ Up until Calvin's time, there were many devotional tracts written in French but it was felt that the French language of the sixteenth century was unable to express the complicated theological ideas needed in a work like the *Institutes*. Latin was the preferred language, and the French writers tended to write texts in French that were heavily Latinized. The Protestant Reformation brought theology into public debate. Many debates on the Trinity were held in public forums. By 1540 there were complex theological arguments in French at the University of Paris. By 1543, the University of Paris published a list of banned books. The list included some 43 titles in French. By 1556, the banned list included some 250 titles in French. This shows to what extent French was being transformed from a popular language used to express devotional materials, to a language of serious theological debate. Alistair McGrath in his book, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1990), 134, goes so far as to say that the linguistic tools of abstract argumentation in French were a result of the French Reformation.

³⁸⁸ The parlement acted on the advice of the Sorbonne, which was notoriously anti-humanist and anti-evangelical.

³⁸⁹ Lutherans were tolerated, as a result of a treaty with the German princes signed by Francis I. Yet Francis did not fully honour this treaty. He persecuted Lutherans in the parts of France where they were not protected. His real zeal was saved for the Calvinists (who at the time were called evangelicals to distinguish them from the Lutherans) whom he deemed dangerous heretics.

³⁹⁰ Francis awoke to see the city of Paris affixed with placards urging reforms. The demands were Lutheran. An enraged Francis formed a parade with the blessed sacrament and ordered his soldiers to hunt down and kill those responsible. On June 24, 1539 Francis I issued an edict declaring that he would exterminate all the errors of Luther from France (so much for his treaty) and chase those who did not follow the Holy Catholic faith. His edict was never fully carried out against the Lutherans since they were powerfully placed and protected. In 1546, Henry II established an office with a special chamber used to examine heretics. This was called the *Chambre Ardente*. From 1547-1550 there were at least 500 arrests in Paris. The edict of Chateau Briand issued in 1551 by Henry II gave detailed explanations of what measures could be taken against heretics and those who harboured them. Note that here a heretic was anyone who did not follow the Catholic faith. As a result of such edicts, the refugees fled to Basel, Neuchatel, Strasbourg and other towns like Geneva. Francis' reaction towards the Reformation was shared by the majority of the nobility. There were some exceptions, notably Marguerite de Navarre and later Anne De Bourg and counselors of Henry II of France, but for the most part the nobility, except towards the end of the 1500's, remained untouched by the efforts of the

the growth of the French churches and Calvin's influence up until 1555 can, for the most part, be attributed to his writings. The Genevan presses published not only the *Institutes* and treatises of Calvin but also works of other reformed thinkers. The Genevan press was obviously a productive if 'subversive' press since, in 1545, of the 121 banned titles in France, over half were printed in Geneva. The French booksellers protested that if the ban were allowed they would be ruined. The 'success' of the banned books can be measured by the number of accused heretics. The number of accused heretics rose as the contraband book market in France expanded. In 1541-1550 at Toulouse there were 257 heretics, but in 1551-1560 there were 684.

In response to the printed output and the work of the *colporteurs* who carried the illegal books,³⁹¹ the French Protestant church increased dramatically after 1555. Up until that time Protestants met in houses sporadically and clandestinely without an established order of worship or system of government. In 1555, the church in Paris, encouraged by

Reformation. The peasant class was completely unaffected. This is because the French peasants did not speak the French that was spoken in Paris, but instead spoke dialects and had little in common with the French speaking missionaries sent from Geneva. By far the vast majority of refugees who came to Geneva were literate middle class artisans and tradespeople. The French Reformation was of interest to the middle class. One could argue that the ideas of Calvin were especially appealing to this class, as Calvin established dignity in work and did not prohibit interest rates. Calvin's form of Christianity was a lively faith that was actively engaged in the day-to-day world. To the middle class, this was of great appeal. The peasant class, whose lives centered around the agricultural cycles, were for the most part well served by the Catholic church and enjoyed the services and ceremonies. The nobility had no desire to change their position of privilege, but the middle class was open. Steven Oziment in his work, *Protestantism: The Birth of a Revolution* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), notes similar patterns in Germany. Oziment draws our attention to the importance of printing. The French evangelization could not have happened were it not for the book sellers. The French churches sprang up along the trade routes of these itinerant merchants. In some ways the growth pattern was similar to that of early Islam, which spread along the trade routes.

³⁹¹ To be caught in possession of a banned book was effectively a death sentence.

Calvin and following his 1542 *Forme des Prieres*,³⁹² was the first church to move towards a system of discipline and church structure that Calvin had put forth in this church order. Thus, the Paris church became the first Protestant reformed³⁹³ church in France. On May 26, 1559 the Protestant reformed churches held their first synodical meeting in order to regulate worship. The confession of faith and the ecclesiastical discipline that they agreed upon were largely adopted from Calvin's 1542 work. The growth of the French churches was largely a function of Calvin's second source of influence in France, namely the missionaries.

The Missionaries

1555 also marks a turning point for Calvin's involvement with the French churches. Up until 1555, he was too occupied with his struggles against the Genevan Council to give much active consideration (other than letters) to France. In 1555, the Company of Pastors started to send missionaries from Geneva to France.³⁹⁴ In April

³⁹² Calvin's *Forme des Prieres* is Calvin's manual for church order. Among other things, it writes orders of service for baptism, funerals, marriages and communions. At the end, Calvin has included a psalter as these were the Psalms that were set to music in Strasburg. CO 6, 173-223. Calvin's psalter has been ignored but this oversight has been corrected. John D. Witvliet has written a fine paper that was presented at the last meeting of the Calvin Studies Society. John D. Witvliet, "The Spirituality of the Psalter: Metrical Psalms in Liturgy and Life in Calvin's Geneva," in *Papers Presented at the 11th Colloquium of the Calvin Studies Society, April 24-26, Louisville Theological Seminary*, ed. David Foxgrover (Grand Rapids, Michigan: CRC Product Services, 1999) 93-117.

³⁹³ I use the phrase Protestant reformed church to indicate that these churches were reformed in so far as they followed the reformed tradition set out by John Calvin, and Protestant insofar as they followed the Protestant ideas of *sola Scriptura*.

³⁹⁴ It is worth bearing in mind that the Genevan missionaries were only successful in cities or in large urban areas. The reasons for this are due to the greater discontent in the cities with the existing church but also because, apart from these large urban areas, French was not spoken in France. It is well known that the dialects spoken in France bore little resemblance to "French", such that a peasant from Breton would simply not understand a peasant from Provence. During the sixteenth century, French was evolving so much that at the time of Francis I the French language deferred to Latin which was seen as

1555 the records of the Company of Pastors indicate that they sent Jean Vernou to Piedmont,³⁹⁵ and Jacques L'Anglois to Poitiers. The agents were sent in secret with planned routes and pre-arranged safe houses. These routes periodically changed and the times varied so that they would not be caught.

In 1557, the Company of Pastors revealed their hitherto secret activities to the Genevan Council who established a policy that they would deny all knowledge if a missionary was caught. This policy proved its wisdom in January 1561 when a French courier delivered a message from an angry King Charles IX of France demanding an explanation for the subversive activities of the Genevans who were sending missionaries to France. The Council explained that such missionaries were sent not by them but by a small zealous group of pastors. In this way, a possible war was averted.

The French demand for pastors grew. In 1559, Calvin established the College of Geneva to meet the demand, but Calvin had established the College too late.³⁹⁶ By 1562,

a more stable language. The state of the French language and the prevalence of dialects can be garnered from considering the legal Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts (1539) which mandated the use of French in place of Latin or any other language in the royal courts. The result was that gradually Parisian French, the French of the courts, supplanted the local dialects. Of all the dialects, Breton, the dialect of Brittany, lasted the longest. See Frederic Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 177.

³⁹⁵ This area was considered a good prospect since it had been a site for the Waldesians. The Waldesians were considered heretics by Francis I who, despite a fierce resistance from the Waldesians (including entire town councils made up of Waldesians), massacred many of them. France was almost entirely 'heresy' free after 1330 when Catharism was erased but some small pockets of Waldesians remained in Provence. The Waldesians were a sect that arose from the group calling themselves the Poor Men of Lyons, who claimed to follow Peter Waldo (d. 1217). The Waldesians laid great stress on the spiritual benefit of poverty and common property. The Waldesians would have remained an isolated pocket were it not for Francis' I promise to the Pope that he would rid France of all heresy. After the fierce persecutions in 1545 by Francis I, the Waldesians were scattered and many of them simply joined the Reformed church in France.

³⁹⁶ He had tried to build the College earlier but had to raise a substantial amount of money. Calvin eventually persuaded many of the wealthy merchants and bankers in Geneva to invest in the project.

there were 1785 consistories³⁹⁷ in France and France was making heavy demands on Geneva.

Closer to the time of the temptation sermons we see that on July 13, 1559 the records of the Company of Pastors³⁹⁸ shows that there were seven new brothers elected to preach the gospel in France. At the end of 1559, the same records show that Lancelot D'Albeau, a French missionary sent from Geneva, was taken by his enemies and martyred in France. The French churches were very much a part of the Genevan ministry. We turn now to a closer look at the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert.

The College placed heavy demands on the would be pastors with an emphasis on Greek, Hebrew and exegetical methods. The course of study was on average two years which was too long to be of any use at that time to the French churches. Calvin's understanding of church structure was that it had a four-fold order of ministry. There were pastors, doctors, deacons and elders. The pastor was an elder but the only one allowed to preach and, hence, was called the 'teaching' elder. This presbytery system for churches meant that each church was to have a slate of elders, both lay and teaching. Geneva was only to supply the teaching elder. The emphasis on preaching remains a hallmark of today's Presbyterian churches. Oddly enough, today, despite the proud preaching heritage of the Presbyterian church, almost anyone is allowed into a pulpit to preach, but only an ordained minister is allowed to celebrate the Eucharist. It seems to me that this emphasis is backwards since a lot more harm can be done by poor preaching than in inept performance of the Eucharistic liturgy.

³⁹⁷ A consistory was made up of a group of pastors, or even one pastor and the elders. It was the body responsible for the ecclesiastical discipline and regulation of the church. Calvin's rules, which the French had adopted, was that each church should have a teaching elder or an ordained person to preach the Word and administer the sacraments. The French would have to provide the lay eldership and Calvin would try to supply the ordained pastors.

³⁹⁸ This was a type of Bible study/support group founded by Calvin and attended by all the pastors of Geneva. The records are somewhat sporadic.

Study of the Temptation Sermons

Sermon One, December 31, 1559 on Matthew 4:1, Mark 1:12-13,

Luke 4:1-2

Given this context, we are now in a position to understand what lay behind the preaching of Calvin's sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. The pericopes speak of Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit and led into the desert to be tempted by Satan. Calvin breaks the passage, by which he meant a harmonized version, into smaller sections which he analyses in his sermon.

Calvin begins the sermon by speaking of the Holy Spirit descending as a dove. He does not question this account and notes that the dove is a good symbol since it shows the fact that Jesus is loving and approachable.³⁹⁹ He spends some time in analyzing the expression "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Calvin notes that Jesus is called the beloved in contrast to us, who are the enemies of God.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁹ CO 46 , 590. Yet at the same time we are warned not to abuse the approachable nature of Jesus. When Jesus accepts us it is God Himself who accepts us as pure and clean.

⁴⁰⁰ There can be many theories advanced as to why Calvin so often focussed on our sinful nature and the fact that in our natural state we are hated of God. Calvin's emphasis on the difference between the redeemed and unredeemed state may be related to his understanding of grace. Christ takes our sin freely and imputes to us his righteousness. It is only through this free action that we are acceptable to God. The justified person receives God's spirit and love, but the basis of this justification and our knowledge of assurance of it is found only in Jesus Christ. This is why Calvin stressed that we behold God through Christ. In part this means that God's grace is no longer directed at our intellect or knowledge as Augustine had noted (Augustine understood that the knowledge of our renewal or acceptance by God was our assurance) but rather the grace of God is directed at our consciences (our inner judge that condemns us when we do not know God). Apart from Christ, our consciences serve only to condemn us and render us without excuse. Calvin was very keen on expressing to his parishioners the basis of their assurance on a day-to-day basis. The focus on the conscience meant that there was a good deal of experiential knowledge in Calvin's understanding of the Christian life. Calvin's world was divided into two classes, the elect and the unelect, or those with God's grace and those

The expression 'beloved' is deliberate and in contrast with what we are. We are at war⁴⁰¹ with our Creator. In fact we can only be loved by God through Christ and our incorporation into Christ. "C'est donc en ceste sorte que la guerre et inimitie cesse entre Dieu et nous: asçavoir quand nous sommes incorporez en Jesus Christ."⁴⁰²

Calvin had already spoken of our being hated by God and Jesus being beloved. He is quick to point out that Jesus' being called beloved and the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus to emphasize the point are not put there to throw us into despair and to argue that we have no hope. The passage, instead, is to show us the love and gentleness that God shows towards us. While it is true that we are hated and Christ beloved, through Christ we are loved by God. Thus by highlighting the beloved nature of Christ and the fact that God filled Christ with the Holy Spirit, God supports our fragility and shows us mercy in the person of Christ who healed the sick and made the lame walk.⁴⁰³ Calvin tells his congregation that the reason Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and was called

without God's grace. The axis of the two worlds was Jesus Christ. Calvin's focus on the fact that we are hated of God apart from Christ was a caveat to the many theologies that expressed the basic goodness of the human state as well as the prevalent attitude in Geneva that Calvin called Libertine, which stressed the nobility of the human spirit and took a dim view of Calvin's negative views. His emphasis on the conscience as condemning rather than assuring defined even more sharply the difference between Calvin and much of his context.

⁴⁰¹ Calvin understood that the Christian life was one of warfare. There is really never a time of peace and even when Christians are not in battle they are to be making their armour ready.

"But if, at any time, the Lord spares our weakness and does not permit the ungodly to torment us as they would desire, yet during the season of repose and leisure, it is proper for us to meditate on the doctrine, that we may be ready, whenever it shall be necessary to enter the field and may not engage in the contest until we have well prepared." *Comm. Matthew 5:10*

Even the nonelect are at war. In this case they are at war with God. The elect must always battle Satan. The biggest enemies Christians face are themselves and their vices. Sermon 54 on Job, CO 33, 679.

⁴⁰² CO 46, 590.

⁴⁰³ CO 46, 587.

beloved was so that we could know that we can have access to God through Christ and that God is merciful and accommodating towards us.⁴⁰⁴

How was Jesus Tempted?

At this point, Calvin speaks of Jesus' temptation and asks how Jesus could be tempted. Calvin solves the problem of temptation in the following manner. Jesus has both a human and a divine nature. But the human nature is made up of two aspects. The first aspect of human nature is our tendency to sin as a result of the Fall.⁴⁰⁵ Jesus did not share this with us. The second aspect of human nature, which Jesus did share with us, was our frailties and infirmities. Calvin expressed it in the following way: a) like Adam, human nature is weak and liable to temptations; b) as a result of the fall, since Adam human nature is an abyss of corruption and putrefaction. Jesus shared human nature in its Adamic but not post-Adamic nature.⁴⁰⁶ Thus, the human Jesus really did battle Satan.⁴⁰⁷ Jesus was called to battle and was armed with celestial virtue. In short, he was not left alone to battle Satan.

There are two things that are important. The first is that Jesus did battle Satan and the second that he did not do so without help from God. Likewise with us, when we

⁴⁰⁴ Here we see Calvin's Christological emphasis. God's love is revealed to us in the face of Christ. The fact that Christ is beloved of God and merciful towards us in His ministry and life indicates that Calvin understood the nature of God to be revealed to us through Christ. We do not have access to God through a harsh unforgiving path but, rather, we have access to God through Christ. It was God in Christ who accommodated to all our weakness and foibles. It was by means of Christ that Calvin was able to reconcile God's justice and love. God is a just God who cannot tolerate sin and rebellion. As rebellious enemies of God, we had no access to God. The only one who could have access to God is one who is beloved and unstained by sin. This was Jesus Christ.

⁴⁰⁵ CO 46, 597.

⁴⁰⁶ *Comm.* Matt. 4:1.

battle Satan Calvin assures us that we will never fight alone without God's help and grace.⁴⁰⁸ Our battles with Satan are an indispensable⁴⁰⁹ part of the Christian life.⁴¹⁰

Having stressed yet again the inevitability of our battles with Satan, Calvin moves towards assuring the congregation of God's support in a new way. He reiterates the fruits of baptism to reinforce the idea that we will win against Satan in our battles. The fruit of baptism⁴¹¹ is more than just the remission of sin. To stress that alone is to make a terrible mistake. The real fruit of baptism is that we will live invincible to Satan.⁴¹² Here we see Calvin, the pastor, using as many tools as he can to assure the faithful in light of their inevitable battles with Satan that they will not be destroyed. We will have constant battle but our faith will be victorious, since God will not allow us to be defeated. Thus, the fruit or benefit of baptism⁴¹³ is that we will be able to withstand

⁴⁰⁷ CO 46, 594.

⁴⁰⁸ CO 46, 594.

⁴⁰⁹ Calvin understood the Christian life to be one in which the image of God is gradually restored within us so we become more and more like Christ. Here we have the heart of the natural theology debate. Is the vestige of the image of God useful as Emile Brunner had claimed and hence was Calvin a proponent of natural theology, or is the remnant image of God so corrupt as to be non-existent as Karl Barth had argued. The restoration of the image of God proceeds from God's prior initiative but is also very much a matter of experience. Here believers are faced with temptations and overwhelming odds but fight and, as they do so, they become battle-hardened because it is Christ who fights with them against Satan. Experience shows the believer not only that they are not alone in their battle but also that they gradually become more Christ-like in the process.

⁴¹⁰ CO 46, 596.

⁴¹¹ Baptism is our entrance into the church and is the means by which the faith was confirmed in the elect. The reformed theologian Karl Barth called Calvin's understanding of Baptism cognitive sacramentalism. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics*, IV.4.130. Calvin's view of baptism was very like that of Augustine, in that it was a *signum visibile gratiae invisibilis*. For Calvin the hidden aspect was the power of God. The power of God was the hidden grace in that God accomplished his will in the elect.

⁴¹² CO 46, 595.

⁴¹³ This happens as we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, CO 46, 595. Calvin has already explained the mechanism in reference to Christ doing battle with us, but he reiterates the message from the point of view of baptism as if to further reassure his congregation. It is Christ who comes to us. Calvin was very

the attacks of Satan. Christ was filled with the Spirit and resisted the attacks of Satan. Like Christ, we too will be able to resist the devil. Baptism enables us to become reconciled with God and allows the Holy Spirit to fill us. Baptism is efficacious by virtue of the action of the Holy Spirit. Christ did not need the Holy Spirit but rather was filled with the Holy Spirit for all the body of the Church.⁴¹⁴

Jesus Led into the Desert

Calvin now is able to move to the passage where Jesus is led into the desert by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil. The fact that it was the Holy Spirit that led Jesus was important inasmuch as this shows that the temptations do not occur apart from God's will and consent.⁴¹⁵ The Spirit's leading shows us another aspect of God, that is, His hidden plans. Did Jesus know where he was to be taken? Probably not. It is the same with us. At times God tells us where he is taking us and at other times he does not. We are not always shown the whys. The assaults and attacks are used by God to exercise our faith and to have a certain measure of proof⁴¹⁶ that we do not serve God out of hypocrisy but would rather suffer combat and battle in God's hands than ignore temptations and live without worry. God wishes to exercise us. Our lives are in a continual testing state to

keen to express, as often as he was able, the fact that the faithful live under a gracious and living God. We live under grace. Grace was not a magical substance given by God to us in increments but rather Calvin understood it to be a renewed personal relationship with God made possible by God through baptism and incorporation into God's family.

⁴¹⁴ CO 46, 596.

⁴¹⁵ This point was stressed in Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil in Job. Job's trials were not random and acts of caprice but, rather, permitted by God for God's purposes. The fact that Jesus was led into the desert by the Holy Spirit should offer the believer some consolation in the knowledge that there is no trial that God is not aware of. Thus the faithful can call upon God in times of trial and temptation with full confidence.

⁴¹⁶ Conscience again.

demonstrate whether or not we are obedient to God. We are often not told the whys. Yet the very fact that it is God's Spirit that leads us shows that God is in control and in full knowledge of our temptation. This shows that we can call upon God in times of trial. Here Calvin comes back to his often repeated point that a sovereign God means we can call upon God in times of temptation. Calvin arrives at this same conclusion by a different route. In his sermons on the Book of Job, as we have seen, he notes that we can call upon God in times of trial by virtue of the fact that God is sovereign and in control of Satan, such that Satan must appear before the throne of God. Here, the same conclusion, notably, that of our ability to call upon God in times of distress, is arrived at. However the 'proof' is no longer found in the fact that Satan appears at the throne of a sovereign God but, rather, that the Holy Spirit, part of God's essence, directs us to the place of temptation. The fact that God is in control of the testing also shows us that we can call upon God.

Voilà comme nous pouvons invoquer Dieu en pleine fiance, c'est asçavoir quand ceci nous est bien persuadé par l'Escriture sainte, qu'il gouverne et adresse tellement nos pas, que si Satan nous tormente, qu'il nous fasche, qu'il nous picque, et qu'il tasche à nous abysmer, Dieu est par dessus, et que rien n'advient de cas fortuit: mais que Dieu veut que nous soyons ainsi assaillis.⁴¹⁷

It is important to note that Calvin's insistence on the control of God over Satan and God controlling our testing is not to paint an image of a despotic God, but rather a God who chooses to love us and allows us to call upon Him in times of trouble so that

⁴¹⁷ CO 46 ,596-597.

we can grow closer to God and come to know Him.⁴¹⁸ The primary purpose and function of such testing and trials is not for punishment but to bring us closer to God.⁴¹⁹ We will now consider a little more closely the nature of the trials and the manner in which we fight.

The Origin of Temptation

Temptations and trials are the work of the devil, but we are tempted because the devil has taken advantage of an inner flaw and weakness in our characters. We are not tempted by random acts or by any trick. The temptation invariably arises from our own natures. Calvin, in my opinion, had a very psychological understanding of the nature of temptation. We are not tempted or driven mad by desires unless they are already within us as fatal character flaws in the same way that the Greek heroes often had a tragic flaw. Since the temptation arises from within us, we cannot rely on our own resources to fight the devil. The resource that we have at our disposal is God and the Holy Spirit, hence the way in which we are to fight temptations is with the help of God. Most of our fights will be against ourselves. Since the temptation comes from ourselves and since we are in need of help, the greatest sin will be when we no longer have the confidence or the trust to call upon God.

⁴¹⁸ The image here is that of the human Christ, the first human to be reconciled and beloved of God, is tempted. So shall we be tempted.

⁴¹⁹ In this series of sermons, we can see how this works a little more clearly than in Job. We grow closer to God by calling upon God, but also in the very act of struggling against Satan. When we battle Satan, Christ battles with us and in our place. In this way, the image of God is gradually restored within us. As the image of God is restored in us, we come to recognize and know God since we are no longer blinded. Each time we struggle against the devil and temptations this process is repeated and we grow more like Christ. In the Job sermons, we grew closer to God by calling upon God, but now we grow

The constant battles with temptation make us battle ready. We are made much stronger because of the struggle. Calvin likens this process to a man in good shape and one in poor shape. The man who is fit will not easily succumb to being ill, but the man who has abused his body becomes ill⁴²⁰ at a very slight provocation. We must therefore keep in shape by continually calling upon God in times of temptation. This insistence on struggle and activity is one of Calvin's key points about the Christian life. Calvin understood the Christian life to be one not of contemplation but of full engagement both with the forces of darkness and with oneself.⁴²¹ Jesus enters the same conflicts as we do and his victory assures us of our victory.

Voyla donc comme nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ a este tenté, afin qu'aujourd'huy en toutes nos tentations nous ne doutions point qu'il ne bataille pour nous, et que nous ne soyons victorieux en luy.⁴²²

The forty-day period of temptation does not mean that we are tempted for a time in our lives and never again. The temptations are continual and to test and prove our faith.⁴²³ The devil is released to tempt us but in a controlled fashion. He is never let

closer to God as God himself in the person of Christ enters us and battles with and for us against the snares of the devil.

⁴²⁰ Calvin calls this having all his humours rise up. CO 46, 599.

⁴²¹ Calvin attacks Catholics by saying they believed that baptism somehow protected them from sin. A Turk or other non baptized person tempted to greed or laziness is to be censured but a baptized Christian tempted to the same thing is somehow less culpable as the Christian somehow exercised virtue in not giving in to temptation. Calvin considers such an understanding to be a mockery of baptism and considers that the devil has blinded the Catholics to the truth. In Calvin's understanding there is no such thing as a partial consent to temptation. It is all or nothing. Either you are tempted or you are not. CO 46, 600.

⁴²² CO 46, 601.

⁴²³ CO 46, 602.

completely loose to destroy us. Moreover, we are assured of our victory over Satan in Christ.

Summary of the Themes Found in Sermon One

The sermon has a very strong Christological emphasis. We are able to battle Satan only because of Christ. Christ is pivotal since it is only through Christ that we are acceptable to God. Christ was tempted by the devil and won. This not only shows us that through Christ we will be victorious over the devil, but it also shows the inevitability of temptations in our lives. The constant temptations and trials mean that the Christian life is one of struggle. Yet our struggles are not meaningless. Calvin was always very clear to point out that our justification is only by means of Christ. Our sanctification, which was the process of our struggle to become more like Christ, arises after the justification and comes from the struggle itself. Justification and sanctification were linked. For Calvin, the Christian life and good works did not inevitably follow from the preaching of the gospel as Martin Luther maintained, nor was it the case that good works were somehow necessary for us to be acceptable to God, as Calvin understood the Roman position to be, but rather the Christian life was one of continual soul searching, prayer and temptation.

In his overview of temptations, Calvin notes that temptations are inevitable and that they do not come from a capricious devil who seeks to trick us but arise from within us. Once again, this leads us to understand that the devil is very clever and has access to our hearts and hidden desires.

Sermon Two, December 31, 1559, on Matthew 4:2-4, Lk. 4:1-4

In this sermon Calvin is at his polemical best. Calvin attacks what he believes to be common misinterpretations of the passages that speak of the temptation of Jesus to turn stones into bread.⁴²⁴ He attacks what he believes to be a common misrepresentation of this passage, which involves the temptation to turn stones into bread. Calvin understands that the most common misinterpretation of this passage is to think that when Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread he was tempted to gluttony. To avoid such a temptation to gluttony, Calvin thought that many avoided certain foods, or went to ascetic extremes, or moderated it by attempting to imitate Christ in a Lenten fast. Calvin's⁴²⁵ attacks on the fast shed some light as to how he saw the Genevans who filled

⁴²⁴ Calvin does not consider the variances within the gospels, but considers a harmonized reading.

⁴²⁵ Calvin criticised Roman Catholics for what he called humanly devised festivals and doctrines. In part this was because he did not hold tradition as a source of revelation. His abhorrence of humanly devised doctrines can be traced back to his commentary on Seneca. In one passage he laughs openly at the Roman practice of deifying dead emperors. Calvin, *Commentary Sen. de Clementia de Seneca*, translated by Ford Lewis Battles and Andre Hugo (Leiden:Leiden Press 1969), 187. He notes that this is not religion but superstition. Superstition bears the same relation to pity as pity does to clemency; just as cruelty stands in the same relationship to clemency as impiety does to religion." *Comm. Sen. de Seneca*, 363.

Calvin was keenly interested in the idea of what differentiates true worship from superstition and idolatry. In fact, Calvin's attack on idolatry has been to some extent overlooked by modern scholars. In his reply to Cardinal Sadoletto Calvin noted that there was nothing more important than true worship:

"I also have no difficulty in conceding to you that there is nothing more perilous to our salvation than a preposterous and perverse worship of God. The primary rudiments by which we are wont to train to piety those whom we wish to gain as disciples of Christ are these; viz., not to frame any new worship of God for themselves at random, and after their own pleasure, but to know that the only legitimate worship is that which He approved from the beginning. For we maintain what the sacred oracle declared (1Sam.5:22). In short, we train them by every means to be contented with the one rule of worship which they have received from His mouth, and bid adieu to all fictitious worship." John Calvin, *Letter to Sadoletto in John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoletto, Reformation Debate*, ed. John C. Olin, (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 59.

Carlos Eire in his article, "Calvin's Attack on Idolatry: True Piety Begets True Confession," in *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform*, ed. Timothy George (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1990), 274-276, makes the point that as a response to man-made doctrines Calvin advocated spiritual

his church. But this is a rare insight, as Calvin was not given to point out the characters of those in his congregation for fear that this would obscure the Biblical message and lead to a theatrical display. Calvin's attacks are based on the question of what it means to 'follow' Jesus.

What is the Role of the Devil in Temptations?

Calvin's sermon begins with a reiteration of the inevitability of trials and temptations in the Christian life. The Christian life is full of such trials and these cannot be avoided.⁴²⁶ After his summary on the inevitability of trials and temptations, Calvin draws attention to the fast. He notes that the period of the fast was not random. The forty days is significant. Moses went into the mountains for forty days before receiving the law and likewise Jesus withdrew for forty days in a fast before he was tempted and

worship, which was a form of worship where we acknowledge God and keep away from material things. In his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, for example, Calvin placed an emphasis on the *sursum corda*, where our hearts are lifted beyond the elements of the bread and wine and we rise to meet the risen Lord. Idolatry in essence results from our propensity to put ourselves in God's place.

"What matters for Calvin is the fact that idolatry does not result from any insufficiency in matter itself, due to its contingency and ontological inferiority, but rather from a defect in human beings. It is the human mind, or 'flesh' that tries to reverse the natural order." *Calvin's Attack on Idolatry*, 256.

Or in the words of Calvin,

"For this is the origin of idolatry, that when genuine simplicity of God's worship is known, people begin to be dissatisfied with it, and curiously to inquire whether there is anything worthy of belief in the figments of men; for men's minds are soon attracted to the snares of novelty, so as to pollute, with various kinds of leaven, that which has been delivered in God's Word." CO 24, 282.

"Men being by nature inclined to hypocrisy, Satan easily persuades them that God is worshiped aright by ceremonies and outward discipline." *Comm.* 1Tim. 4:1.

Calvin's idea of true worship was that it was not a function of what you do but rather how you live. We give glory to God not in our ceremonies, but in our daily struggles. Calvin's attacks on man-made superstitions are not so much an attack on the Lenten fast or any other doctrine but rather a reflection on the unredeemed state which, apart from the grace of God, is utterly blind in divine matters.

⁴²⁶ Calvin notes that there are two people in the congregation who, because they were afraid of persecution, denied their faith. Calvin asked that they ask the entire congregation for forgiveness. CO 46, 412.

before he began his ministry of preaching the gospel. Calvin notes that the forty-day fast was to draw attention not to Jesus but rather to the gospel. When too much attention is drawn to the fast itself, as it is in the case of the Lenten fast, it is the devil who seeks to obscure the glory of the gospel and destroy the good news. This was one of Calvin's oft-repeated ideas.

The Lenten Fast

Calvin understood that the work of the devil was to destroy the gospel and the good news and, as such, understood that the devil would do anything to obscure the gospel. In this case, attention is all too often diverted away from the gospel and onto the actual fast itself. The fast should only be seen as that which points to the gospel.

brief, le iusne de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ a este comme un seau pour monstrier que L'Evangile⁴²⁷ ne doit point estre receu comme venant des hommes, et que Dieu en est l'auteur.⁴²⁸

Calvin's polemics on the fast are not just reflections of his time but, as Calvin says, the stress on the fast is a clever trick of the devil in order to persuade people to

⁴²⁷ It is interesting to see how Calvin tries to show divine authorship at this point. In his *Institutes* he does not do this. Rather, he dismisses speculation about whether or not the text is inspired as idle and vain. He understood the gospel to be more than a collection of narrative texts. The gospel was more than God's message or accommodation to us. It was by means of the gospel that we meet Christ and come to know God. Calvin is not seeking to prove Divine authorship, he is merely stating a fact. By noting divine authorship, more glory is shed upon the gospel which Calvin understood to be, among other things, "a clear manifestation of the mystery of Christ" *Instit.* 2.9.2.

⁴²⁸ CO 46, 604.

ignore the gospel and imagine they follow Christ by trying some variations on a fast.⁴²⁹

As such, they pervert the gospel and introduce lies and errors.⁴³⁰

As Calvin notes, to follow Jesus one would have to totally abstain from food and water for forty days and forty nights.⁴³¹ No one does this; instead there are infinite variations. Some fast one day a week, others three, some on Sundays. There have been 1400 years of superstition. The Lenten fast not only is impossible, since no human can fast from food and water for forty days, it is also wrong as Jesus fasted only once in this way, not every year. The errors⁴³² would remain just comical if it were not for a serious consequence.⁴³³ It is at this point that Calvin in his sermon leaves his comical polemics and turns to a discussion of the all-too-serious nature of the result of the Lenten fast.

When we try to do the Lenten fast, we are taking away from the reverence that is due the Gospel.⁴³⁴ Jesus fasted in order to prepare Himself for his office as preacher of

⁴²⁹ Here we can see Calvin's polemics against man-made doctrines.

⁴³⁰ CO 46, 605.

⁴³¹ Calvin's commentary on the temptations offers this insight into the Genevan practices:

"There are those who fast daily during all the forty days and pretend that they are imitators of Christ. But how? They stuff their bellies so completely at dinner, that, when the hour of supper arrives, they have no difficulty in abstaining from food!" *Comm. Matt. 4:1.*

⁴³² "I wish we could say that they had only amused themselves, like apes, by such fooleries. It was a wicked and abominable mockery of Christ, to attempt, by this contrivance of fasting, to conform themselves to him (or to compete with Christ) as their model." *Comm. Matt. 4:1.*

⁴³³ CO 46, 606.

⁴³⁴ "But above all, it is an intolerable outrage on God, whose extraordinary miracle they throw into the shade; secondly, on Christ, whose distinctive badge they steal from him, that they may clothe themselves with its spoils; thirdly, on the Gospel, which loses not a little of its authority, if this *fasting* of Christ is not acknowledged to be his seal." *Comm. Matt. 4:1.*

the Gospel.⁴³⁵ The fast was extraordinary in order to show further that the gospel is extraordinary and comes from Heaven. When we fast, we damage the very thing that was given to us for our salvation.⁴³⁶ To fast is more than *sottise or badinage* but an enormous injury to God and Jesus Christ. In fact it is a work of Satan used to destroy the certitude of our faith.⁴³⁷

Since we cannot follow Jesus in terms of a fast any more than we can change water into wine,⁴³⁸ we can follow Jesus in terms of his patience and faith in the face of

⁴³⁵ "Christ abstained from eating and drinking, not to give an example of temperance, but to acquire a greater authority, being separated from the ordinary condition of men, and coming forth, as an angel from heaven, not as a man from the earth. For what, pray would have been that virtue of abstinence, if not tasting food, for which he had no more appetite then if he had not been clothed with flesh? It is mere folly, therefore, to appoint a 40 day fast (as it is called) in imitation of Christ." *Comm. Matt. 4:1*.

⁴³⁶ What is fascinating is that the Lenten fast was still a concern even though these sermons were preached in 1559. As the records of the Consistory show, from 1542-1544 the Genevans made vigorous attempts, by examining the faith and practices of citizens, to eradicate Catholicism. The case of Rolet Viret of Geneva who was examined on April 5, 1543 is a case in point. Viret (no relation to Pierre) was brought in because of sermons, which was a common reason of examination. His answer was that he goes to the sermons and knows the Our Father, but not the Creed and ate meat in the Lenten fast and did not make any orations to Saint Felix (a common saint that the Genevans would appeal to for luck). He did not go to confession. The opinion of the consistory was that he should know a little more and be more diligent in his catechism. What was interesting about this case, which was not atypical, is that there remained a good deal of Catholic practices. The idea of the Consistory was that through education and sermons and catechism the people would become reformed. Obviously this was somewhat of a romantic notion, since we see in these sermons preached in 1559 a good deal of polemic about the Lenten fast. This would not be the case if the practice of the Lenten fast had been eliminated altogether. *Registres du consistoire de Genève 1542-1544*, vol. 1, ed. Robert Kingdon (Genève: Droz, 1996), 217.

⁴³⁷ Notice here that the aim of the devil in creating the Lenten fast is not to trick or to tempt but rather to destroy the certitude of our faith and cause us to despair. For Calvin the gospel reveals God and Christ to us. It opens our eyes and without it, we are blind and helpless. Moreover, the gospel reveals the saving work of Christ to us. Without the gospel, the glorious work of Christ as mediator and reconciliator of humanity to God is unknown. It is Christ who is the beacon and the measure of the infallible love of God .CO 46, 593. The temptation to despair, as we saw in the Job sermons, was the most serious of all of the temptations of the devil. This temptation caused us not to call out to God in times of trouble and eventually would lead to our turning away from God.

⁴³⁸ CO 46, 608.

temptations.⁴³⁹ We are to look to Jesus and not to ourselves as a model in the face of temptation. The words we are to remember are not “have confidence in victory” but rather “since I have been victorious, rest assured that your faith, when it is founded on me, will be victorious.”⁴⁴⁰

Calvin now returns to the devil, who is named the tempter.⁴⁴¹ He is so named to put us immediately on our guard. Calvin looks at each of the temptations in terms of two things. One is how the devil works and the second is how we can defend ourselves and repel his attacks.⁴⁴² The meaning of the word Satan is enemy. The name tempter also suggests that we are not dealing with an idle enemy but rather with one who will battle us throughout our lives.⁴⁴³ It is at this point that Calvin begins to consider the nature of the temptation, which was the temptation to turn stones into bread.

The Temptation to Turn Stones into Bread

In keeping with his polemical introduction, Calvin begins this section by considering how this passage has been misunderstood. The misunderstanding was that Jesus was tempted to gluttony.⁴⁴⁴ The entire purpose of the devil, Calvin reminds us, is

⁴³⁹ Once more Calvin stresses the Christian life. The Christian is to worship God not so much in doctrines and rules but in patience, in trusting God, in glorifying God. Calvin understands the devil to be one who actively seeks to thwart the mission of the Christian.

⁴⁴⁰ Calvin, citing Chapter 17 of John . CO 46, 608.

⁴⁴¹ CO 46, 608.

⁴⁴² Calvin always emphasizes the usefulness of a doctrine. He did not engage in theological curiosity for its own sake.

⁴⁴³ CO 46, 609.

⁴⁴⁴ Calvin does not elaborate on the polemics in his commentary. This is left to his sermon.

to cast doubts and throw aside the certitude of faith.⁴⁴⁵ Calvin comments that the error many have made is to consider the temptation of the devil to be a temptation to gluttony and so they imagine that they are called to extreme asceticism to follow Christ. Some drink only an ounce of water a day, some less. Others imagine that the greatest sin that the devil can tempt us to do is to eat a delicacy,⁴⁴⁶ and try to imagine what the delicacy is.⁴⁴⁷ If we imagine that the greatest temptation of the devil is to tempt us to eat a fruit (as yet undefined), we vastly underestimate the devil our enemy. The devil does not play with us but delivers deadly blows to the heart and the throat.⁴⁴⁸ The true temptation of

⁴⁴⁵ This is why Calvin stresses the exercise of faith for the believer so much. It is only through experiencing God's grace and love in times of trouble and trial that we will have an experiential grasp of God's love. This will lead us to a greater certitude of faith. The devil, on the other hand, seeks to destroy our confidence in God's love.

⁴⁴⁶ "Let it always be remembered by us, that he who created food, gave us the free use of it, which it is vain for men to attempt to hinder." *Comm.* 1Tim 4:3.

⁴⁴⁷ CO 46 , 610.

⁴⁴⁸ CO 46 , 610.

the devil in this passage is the temptation to doubt God and try to attain⁴⁴⁹ something which is not ours.⁴⁵⁰ These are the mortal blows.

There are those who sidestep the true nature of the temptation, which is the temptation to doubt, pride and despair, and imagine that the temptation is to gluttony. Such people are the *supposts de Satan*.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, Jesus was hungry. Do we accuse hungry people of gluttony if they look for bread and water?

Calvin notes that the best way to expose all the misinterpretations and errors in this passage is to look at the words that Jesus himself used when tempted.⁴⁵² From Jesus' answer we can deduce that the temptation was to doubt God's providence and to provide

⁴⁴⁹ Calvin stresses empirical methods and experience above speculation. He was influenced by the nominalism and the late mediaeval tradition of *contra curiositatem*, which was not against intellectualism but, rather, against one sided-intellectualism that led nowhere. Calvin understood that, in terms of our knowledge of spiritual matters, it is important that we keep within the limits set out by God and not to seek knowledge which is not ours to seek. This stress can be seen as a result of Calvin's understanding of our intellectual faculties in matters of the divine. We are blind apart from God's self revelation and so it would be useless to seek out knowledge not revealed to us by God. For Calvin, illicit knowledge was any knowledge that was attained *via vanae curiositatis*. We can see his attitude revealed, in, among other places the *Institutes*, where he speaks of the devil. In this case he is speaking against a tradition that speculated that devils were simply bad ideas or affections and not 'real'. 'I believe I have already done enough for my purpose, which was to put the pious on their guard against the delirious dreams with which restless men harass themselves and the simple.' *Instit.* 1.14.19. Or from the following from his commentary on the book of Genesis on the fruits of illicit knowledge: "And we all suffer daily under the same disease, because we desire to know more than is right; and more than God allows; whereas the principal point of wisdom is a well-regulated sobriety in obedience to God." *Comm.* Genesis 3:5.

⁴⁵⁰ Satan's attack on Jesus was to cause him to doubt God and therefore have Jesus get food in an unlawful way, that is, a way that was not authorized by God. Satan tried to get Jesus to admit that God had forsaken him and that he needed to provide for himself.

⁴⁵¹ Once more we have the idea that the devil seeks to twist and distort the truth.

"Truth he assails with lies, light he obscures with darkness. The minds of men he involves in error; he stirs up hatred, inflames strife and war, and all in order that he may overthrow the kingdom of God, and drown men in eternal perdition with heresy." *Instit.* 1.14.15. Also *Comm.* Genesis 3:1, 1Tim 2:15 and 1Tim. 4:2. And this is the craftiness of Satan, to draw away the hearts of men from ministers, that instruction may gradually fall into contest." *Comm.* 1Tim 5.19.

⁴⁵² CO 46, 611.

for himself. Sowing doubt is the first step in the work of the devil. As we shall see, this is the main theme of the sermons on the temptation of Jesus.

In order to combat the errors and to point out that the temptation was to doubt, Calvin stresses the words of Jesus' rebuttal and says that this shows us the need to be armed with the Word of God in our struggles against Satan. It is by the Word⁴⁵³ of God that we are able to repel Satan, and so this is our true armour.⁴⁵⁴ By his answer, Jesus was saying that it is God who nourishes⁴⁵⁵ us, not bread or meats. Once more, we are shown, this time by the answer of Jesus himself, that we cannot fight the devil using our own resources. We must rely upon God. In this case, we are taught to use the Word of God as a weapon against the devil. The devil wished to lure Jesus into feeding himself by a means other than the will of God. If Jesus had changed stones into bread, then it would have been clear that doubt had taken a foothold in him and he would have insulted God by not being content with God's grace and will.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵³ Here we have the idea of the active nature of the Word of God. The Word of God was not merely a faith record, or even pious prayers. It was even more than God's accommodation towards us. The Word of God, in Calvin's understanding, was an active entity that disclosed God's presence in such a way that the faithful are called to respond and to live to the glory of God. As such the Word of God is always directed towards and useful for our salvation. For the Lord, when he gave us the Scriptures, did not intend either to gratify our curiosity, or to encourage ostentation, or to give occasion for chatting and talking, but to do us good; and therefore, the right use of Scripture must always tend to what is profitable." *Comm.* 2 Tim 3:16.

⁴⁵⁴ CO 46, 611.

⁴⁵⁵ *Comm.* Matt 4.4.

⁴⁵⁶ "The devil seeks to make us distrust God. The temptation was to provide for himself since God was not about to do so." (*Comm.* Matthew 4.4). One can perhaps draw some links with the late mediaeval idea of being content with one's station in life as a virtue. Calvin's aversion to not being content in and under the will of God may be a reflection of this late mediaeval idea.

Calvin, the pastor, now repeats this point by using the words of the apostle Paul. He notes that when Paul uses the language of arming ourselves against Satan, he uses the words faith, hope and gospel - but these things are the Word of God. These things all come to or amount to the same thing, that is, to have confidence, in or *a sçavoir*⁴⁵⁷ *à la foy*. The confidence in our faith comes from the Word of God. Hope also comes from the same source. Moreover the gospel is the doctrine upon which faith is born or founded. Our real armour is confidence or certitude of faith,⁴⁵⁸ which is founded not on our own ideas but on the Word of God.⁴⁵⁹

To know the faith, or to have a deep confidence in the faith, is what the Christian life is about. In terms of our armour, the Word of God is our sword. Faith, our shield is founded upon the Word, as we cannot have efficacious faith in an idol. The helmet, our hope of salvation, rests in the gospel which itself is linked with the Word of God. Thus the sword or the Word of God is our chief weapon upon which all other armours rely.

The words of Jesus give us another clue. Since, like Jesus, we, too, are called into daily battle with the devil, we are called to imitate Christ, not in terms of a fast but in his use of the armours and in his use of the Word of God.⁴⁶⁰ Jesus repelled Satan by using

⁴⁵⁷ This does not mean merely a head knowledge or an assent to doctrines or beliefs. The word *savoir* for Calvin meant a deep knowledge, born by experience and trust in the living God. To know God was to live with and glorify God.

⁴⁵⁸ As it is confidence and certitude that will see us through and enable us to overcome obstacles.

⁴⁵⁹ CO 46, 612.

⁴⁶⁰ The stress on Scriptures and the Word of God was by no means unique to the reformers. It was in part, a result of the late mediaeval ideas of Ockham, who sought to get rid of the metacategories in theology and replace them instead with Scripture. Heiko Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B Eerdmans, 1992), 28.

the Word of God. Calvin notes that it is very dangerous for a church to rid itself of the Scriptures since without them it would be totally exposed to attacks from Satan.⁴⁶¹

Calvin thinks that unless we are armed with Scripture not only are we open to attack but we are foolish and deserve our fate.⁴⁶²

Retenons bien donc ceste leçon, c'est que quand nous serons desgarnis de la parole de Dieu, le diable nous trouvera là exposez à sa merci, et nous serons à découvert. Comme donc un homme qui se viendroit fourrer entre les mains de son ennemi, sans aucun moyen de luy resister, merite quand il le fera à son escient, de perir: aussi nous sommes dignes que Dieu nous delaisse, quand nous daignerons point nous munir de sa parole, afin que nous combations vaillamment contre toutes les tentations de Satan.⁴⁶³

The Scriptures

Calvin considers that those churches that have allowed themselves to think that the Scriptures lend themselves to misinterpretation or twisting like a nose of wax⁴⁶⁴ have given into a diabolical plot. Without the Scriptures the churches and the faithful are wide open to attacks by Satan.⁴⁶⁵ In fact those who claim that the Scriptures are obscure and malleable are guilty of a blasphemous error⁴⁶⁶ and rob the church of its inestimable treasure.

⁴⁶¹ CO 46 , 612.

⁴⁶² Calvin's words are that these people deserve to be strangled for being so foolish." *Comm. Matthew 4.14.*

⁴⁶³ CO 46, 613-614.

⁴⁶⁴ This was a favourite expression. It meant that the Scriptures could be shaped into any form and therefore were not to be relied on by themselves.

⁴⁶⁵ CO 46, 612.

⁴⁶⁶ CO 46, 613.

Calvin asks how if it is true that the Scriptures⁴⁶⁷ are malleable and open to abuse by heretics and hence not to be trusted, is it that Christ was able to repel the devil by using the word? If the devil was in control of the Scriptures this would not have happened. This shows that the Scriptures are not a tool of Satan, but useful for our salvation, if we know how to use them.⁴⁶⁸

Also, while it is true that at times heretics have twisted the meaning of the gospel, the law and the prophets, the church doctors rely on Scripture itself⁴⁶⁹ in order to ascertain whether a questionable teaching is heresy. If, therefore, Scripture was a wax nose, how could it repel Satan and be used to determine whether or not a doctrine was heretical? The answer is simply because the Scriptures are the Word of God⁴⁷⁰ and authentic insofar, as no matter how hard the devil through heresies and false teachings has tried to dispose of the Scriptures, they cannot be distorted or destroyed.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁷ The Word of God.

⁴⁶⁸ Once more, it is evident that our salvation is not a passive matter of predestination. Calvin stresses that we must know how to use the Scriptures, to be conversant in them in order that they become useful for our salvation. The efficacy of Scripture in the matter of our salvation, is a function of our knowledge of them. The Scriptures disclose Christ to us and carry with them the power of God.

⁴⁶⁹ This is not so easy. Calvin had a long debate with Sebastien Castellio who claimed that Calvin's use of Scripture in determining heresy (*vis-à-vis* Servetus) was questionable. Whereas Calvin relied on what he called the 'plain sense' of the text, Castellio remarked that this was not as plain as it appeared.

⁴⁷⁰ Calvin's view of the Scriptures is best expressed in his *Comm.* on 2 Timothy 3:15. It is a very high commendation of the Holy Scriptures, that we must not seek anywhere else the wisdom that is sufficient for salvation...But at the same time the apostle states that we ought to seek in Scripture; for the false prophets also make use of it as pretext, and so, in order that it may be useful to us for our salvation, we have to know how to use it rightly."

⁴⁷¹ CO 46, 613. In Calvin's seventh sermon on Psalm 119, preached on February 19, 1553, Calvin discusses how we use the Word of God to battle Satan. The words of Scriptures are not idle nor are they simply demonstrations of who God is. *Quand nous aurons fait valoir la parole de Dieu pour resister à Satan et à tous les assauts qu'il nous dressera, qu'il faut aussi que nous scachions, que Dieu n'a pas seulement parlé, mais qu'il a montré par experience que sa parole n'est vaine: mais quelle avoit son execution preste."* CO 32, 564

The Scriptures are more than armour used in our defense against Satan. The Scriptures have a positive function as well. Not only do the Scriptures protect us against Satan and deepen our understanding, but all that comes from the mouth of God is blessed and is what God ordains.⁴⁷² We are nourished not by bread or meats but rather by the grace and blessing of God. God is sufficient for all of our needs. While we are often blessed and supported with riches and foods, we must never forget that it is more valuable to be supported by God's grace.⁴⁷³ From this, we can ascertain that the meaning of the gospel passage is not that we should fast or abstain from certain foods but that we should know always that we are supported by God's grace at all times.⁴⁷⁴

Summary of Themes Found in Sermon Two

In this sermon, the devil is seen as deliberate and active in trying to disarm the faithful by removing Scriptures,⁴⁷⁵ which Calvin understood was our chief weapon.⁴⁷⁶

⁴⁷² CO 46, 614.

⁴⁷³ Calvin often found the Genevans greedy and materialistic. In his mind, they were quick to forget the blessings and the grace of God.

⁴⁷⁴ CO 46, 616.

⁴⁷⁵ A word of explanation may be useful. At times, I use Scripture, and the Word of God interchangeably. Calvin understood that the Bible is the inspired Word of God revealed in human language and confirmed in the believer by means of the Holy Spirit. As Calvin writes in his *Commentary on 2 Tim 3:16*, "All those who wish to profit from the Scriptures must first accept this as a settled principle, that the Law and the prophets are not teachings handed on at the pleasure of men or produced by men's minds as their source, but are dictated by the Holy Spirit. We owe to Scripture the same reverence as we owe to God, since it has its only source in Him and has nothing of human origin mixed with it." Scripture, therefore is the accommodated Word of God. It is the Word of God that arms us against Satan, but it is the Scriptures that we use, since the Scriptures are God's accommodated Word.

⁴⁷⁶ Removing the Scriptures was very serious. The Scriptures present Christ and are a means of grace insofar as by knowing Scripture we come to a greater knowledge of the providential care and love of God. In this way, to remove the Scriptures, would be to destroy the certitude of our faith. The image of the devil in these sermons is far more than a nuisance or a figure of caprice. (The devil in Luther's Germany was seen as a prankster who would disguise himself and hence one had to trick the devil in order to avoid him.) Here the devil is a cunning enemy who seeks to destroy the heart of our faith. By twisting the Scriptures, the devil seeks to remove Christ Himself. Since it is through the Scriptures that

The sermon was also about Calvin's views of providence. In Calvin's view, we are not pawns determined entirely by God, nor are we utterly free of God, but live under the auspices of a providential God who cares for us.⁴⁷⁷ To accept such providence is

we see the image of God reflected in Christ, twisting and distorting the Scriptures amounts to distorting the image of God. That is outside Christ, there is nothing worth knowing, and all who by faith perceive what he is like have grasped the whole community of heavenly benefits. *Instit.* 2.15.2. Christ shows us a God as the foundation of all good and it is only through Christ that we are children of God. Calvin made it clear in his sermon, that, apart from Christ, we are the enemies and hated of God. Calvin considers Christ to have three offices or functions, that of prophet, priest and king. In his office as prophet Christ acts as a witness referring us always to God the Father. As a priest, "The principle point on which our whole salvation turns, *Instit.* 2.15.6, Christ's life and death took away our sins. (It is interesting to note that Calvin understood that our salvation was contingent not only on Christ's death but more so on Christ's life of obedience and struggles.) Christ as King refers to his spiritual rule. "Such is the nature of his rule, that he shares with us all that which he has received from the Father." *Instit.* 2.15.4. It is Christ who gives to us the power to endure as he shares with us God's spiritual blessings. Thus to twist the Scriptures is to attempt to blind us and to rob us of sharing the benefits of our salvation through Christ. Calvin also notes that the devil acts in a corporate way. The devil does not only blind an individual here and there but works upon entire institutions. Yet it is Christ who in his office as prophet, priest and King delivers us from our suffering under the hands of the devil. The battle with evil, as Anselm of Canterbury noted, was not a cosmic battle between God and the devil, but instead a battle between God and our soul. The true battle is internal. The evil we battle is within us. By twisting the Scriptures, the devil ensures that we will lose hope and evil will always triumph.

⁴⁷⁷ The face of God is reflected in Christ, who in these sermons suffers temptations. In a moving description of suffering C.S. Song expresses much of what Calvin preached about temptation and suffering as he notes:

"The suffering of Jesus the Messiah has removed all human barriers. It makes God available to human beings and enables them to be part of the divine mystery of salvation. The depths of God's suffering ought to be the place where all persons, despite their different backgrounds and traditions, can recognize one another as fellow pilgrims in need of God's saving powers. Religious traditions tend to alienate strangers. Ecclesiastical structures become walls surrounding faithful believers. Doctrinal precision creates heretics and infidels. Even expressions of religious devotion in worship and liturgy makes people alien to one another. Suffering, however, does not need to be transmitted by traditions; it is present here and now, as well as in the past. It needs no ecclesiastical sanction; it comes and goes without anyone's bidding. It does not have to be defended doctrinally; it is our daily experience. It cannot be worshiped and adored by fine liturgy, it is to be endured and not idolized. To be human is to suffer, and God knows that. That is why God suffers too. Suffering is the one place where God and human beings meet. It is the one place where all persons- kings, priests, paupers, and prostitutes-recognize themselves as frail and transient human beings in need of God's saving love. Suffering brings us closer to God and God closer to us. Suffering, despite all its inhumanity and cruelty, paradoxically enables humanity to long for humanity, find it, treasure it, and defend it with all their might." C.S. Song, *The Compassionate God* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 115.

difficult since we are, Calvin often said, overly attached to outward means,⁴⁷⁸ as in this case of bread, or meat or other physical signs of support.⁴⁷⁹ Yet “We cannot even move one finger without His leading.”⁴⁸⁰ Ultimately God’s providence⁴⁸¹ is shown in Jesus who acts as ‘a mirror which represents for us the universal providence of God, which extends through the whole world, and yet shines especially on ourselves who are the members of Christ.’⁴⁸²

Sermon Three, December 31, 1559 on Matthew 4:5-7, Lk. 4:9-12

This sermon concerns itself with the next temptation of the pinnacle where the devil takes Jesus to a high peak and challenges Him to throw Himself down. As we shall see, Calvin discusses this sermon in terms of the devil’s desire to distort the Word of God.

Calvin mentions the fact that the evangelists listed the temptations in different orders but notes that this is not important.⁴⁸³ What is important⁴⁸⁴ is what the devil is

⁴⁷⁸ Calvin thought it was very difficult to rely on God in times of abundance. In times of affluence, our tendency is always to become overly attached to things. This insatiable pleasure in goods or things is what Calvin called luxury.

⁴⁷⁹ NTC 4, 147. (New Testament Commentaries, see sigla)

⁴⁸⁰ NTC 7, 141.

⁴⁸¹ P.H. Reardon compares Calvin’s Christological view of Providence to that of the Epicureans and the Stoics and concludes that Calvin was very far from either position. P.H. Reardon, “Calvin on Providence,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 28 (1975): 517-534.

⁴⁸² NTC 6, 64.

⁴⁸³ Calvin is not interested in such detail. Once more this shows Calvin’s notion that the Scriptures are useful for our salvation and not intended to be something that confuses us with details that cloud the issues. Calvin harmonized the gospels when he preached on the gospels and wrote his commentaries. He was less interested in the detail than in the overall picture.

⁴⁸⁴ E. Harris Harbison in *The Christian Scholar in the Age of Reformation* (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1956) notes that Calvin cannot be understood apart from a consideration of usefulness. Calvin did not

doing.⁴⁸⁵ So Calvin begins the sermon with a reference to the devil and a summary of the last sermon. The devil sought to tempt Jesus in the previous passage by using illicit means to sustain himself. The devil's temptation was for Jesus to bypass the will of God and rely on himself. In so doing, the devil sought to tempt Jesus to defy God. This is a very common method employed by Satan. Even if we think that God is not responding to our needs and our cries we must never seek exterior means to sustain ourselves. That is, we must never go against the will of God and take short-cuts. God sustains us but we must never forget that we are creatures of God and that God deals with us as He pleases. *"il se sert de ses creatures, et en besongne quand il luy plaist et á sa libert e comme bon luy semble."*⁴⁸⁶

The work of the devil is to destroy the certitude⁴⁸⁷ of our faith and to make us believe that God has abandoned us.⁴⁸⁸ The devil knows that we often are tempted to despair and uses this to plant the idea in our mind that God has abandoned us and that we must fend for ourselves. The devil seeks to tempt Jesus into doing something illicit and cause doubt in Jesus' mind. The devil did not spare any efforts in tempting Jesus.

speculate on idle matters, but always focused on what was useful for our salvation. In this case, he does not spend time on the nature of the devil but goes to the heart of the matter, namely, to emphasize what the devil is doing so that we will be aware of the types of temptations the devil will inflict on us.

⁴⁸⁵ CO 46, 618.

⁴⁸⁶ CO 46, 618.

⁴⁸⁷ The certitude of our faith is founded upon a sure knowledge that God loves us. In reading Calvin's sermons on the temptation of Jesus in the desert, one gets the impression that the knowledge of the love of God towards us is very much rooted in experience. Our faith and confidence are boosted when we realize that God does rescue and provide for us in our daily lives.

⁴⁸⁸ The temptation to despair was the most horrific of all the temptations in Calvin's sermons on the Book of Job.

Had the devil succeeded in tempting Jesus, the followers of Jesus would soon scatter and the devil would have been able to destroy them entirely.⁴⁸⁹

The Perils of Despair and Doubt

The devil used his worst tactics against Jesus. Since we too are in battle against the devil we should learn all that we can about his tactics.⁴⁹⁰ Although Jesus was the son of God, the temptations came to Jesus the man,⁴⁹¹ and thus the blows that Satan used against Jesus are applicable to us. In terms of tactics, the devil tried to induce Jesus to doubt and finally to get him to act on his pride or ambition. The devil uses these tactics to lead all of us to doubt. There are times when we will be discouraged and deprived of what we need, as if our hands were tied and our arms broken, and imagine that God has abandoned us.⁴⁹² At times like this, the devil wishes to throw us into a black despair and make us think that it is a waste of time to call upon God. Doubt, on the other hand, can cause us to act on own ambition and pride. The devil will fan the flames of our ambition and pride and so it is important, when we are placed in such extreme conditions, that we grasp God's help by faith before we rest. Although the former temptation, that of changing stones into bread, was one of despair and seeking one's own means, the temptation to pride arises from the same source, that is, doubting God's providence. In

⁴⁸⁹ CO 46, 619.

⁴⁹⁰ CO 46, 619.

⁴⁹¹ Jesus was fully human and it is evident from this that it was by means of his full humanity that we are redeemed and reconciled to God. Calvin's Christology places a heavy stress upon the humanity rather than the divinity of Christ. Jesus is indeed the Man for others.

⁴⁹² No doubt Calvin was making reference to the French as they were likely to feel abandoned by God in the face of persecutions.

both cases, we must be careful to ensure that the devil does not lead us into exceeding our limits.⁴⁹³

It is interesting that he did not begin his sermon by asking the question of whether or not the event was a dream. The reason is that Calvin is not concerned with what he thinks are trivial matters. What is important are matters that concern our salvation and are therefore useful.⁴⁹⁴ In the case of this sermon, what is useful is not whether or not it was a dream, or where the pinnacle was, or if Jesus flew or was carried but, rather, the nature of the temptation and how the devil uses our doubts to lead us away from God. Calvin comments that it was probably a vision, but it was also an illusion of the body and not the mind, since Jesus' soul was not tempted. Had it been an illusion of the mind, Jesus' soul⁴⁹⁵ might have been tempted.

The devil wished to induce Jesus to jump by quoting psalm 91. Since God commands the angels to be in charge of us, how much more would the angels⁴⁹⁶ rush to help the son of God? At first glance it seems that the devil is correct, but there is a double ruse.

⁴⁹³ As is the case of this temptation.

⁴⁹⁴ E. Harris Harbison's point again.

⁴⁹⁵ It is evident that by soul Calvin meant the mind or the thoughts of a person. We can see this in his sermons that deal with the witch at Endor and Saul. Calvin notes that Saul's soul was seduced, meaning his reasoning. Calvin understood that when the soul of a person was seduced, that person could fall as they lost all of their spiritual reasoning. Hence it was important that Jesus' soul was not seduced, and the pinnacle scene remained an illusion of the body.

⁴⁹⁶ The angels would in fact be our enemies if it were not for the fact that we linked with God through Christ who rules the church. CO 46, 620.

The Deadly and Clever Nature of the Devil

The deadly and clever nature of the devil in this temptation is shown by two things.

- 1) The devil twisted a doctrine that was meant to be a consolation to us, namely, the protection of the angels, and extrapolated it into utter audacity or testing of God.
- 2) The devil left out a small verse; namely, that the faithful would be guarded 'on their way'.

Calvin proceeds to discuss what the phrase 'on our way' means. Since it is true that we face many dangers⁴⁹⁷ and that the angels are sent to protect us,⁴⁹⁸ the doctrine of angelic protection ought to give us hope. Once we are part of God's family, we will resist all the machinations of Satan against us and be protected. Not only will we resist them, but we will be able to overcome the problems and trials for God and his angels will assist us.⁴⁹⁹ In fact the day we experience⁵⁰⁰ no problems and trials is the day we

⁴⁹⁷ Calvin's times were ones of hardship and peril. While the historian William Bouwsma in *John Calvin* perhaps overstates the case and presents Calvin as a man poised between the joint terrors of the abyss and the labyrinth, the point of the uncertainty and tenuous nature of life in the sixteenth century must not be overlooked. Calvin felt that life was very precarious and full of dangers. He writes:

"innumerable are the evils that beset human life; innumerable too the deaths that threaten it. We need not go beyond ourselves: since our body is the receptacle of a thousand diseases- in fact holds within itself and fosters the causes of diseases- a man cannot go about unburdened by many forms of his own destruction, and without drawing out a life, enveloped, as it were, with deaths. Embark upon a ship, you are one step away from death. Mount a horse, if one foot slips, your life is imperiled. Go through the city streets you are subject to as many dangers as there are tiles on the roofs. I pass over poisonings, ambushes, robberies, open violence, which in part besiege us at home, in part dog us abroad." *Instit* 1.17.10.

⁴⁹⁸ If this were not the case we would not survive. In his sermon on Daniel 12:12, CO 42,124, Calvin notes that the archangel Michael is sent to protect us against Satan.

⁴⁹⁹ *Au milieu de nos tristesses*, we will be fortified. Again one cannot help but think that Calvin had the plight of the French churches in mind.

count ourselves as lost.⁵⁰¹ Yet, despite our hardships and trials, jumping off a pinnacle is hardly 'on your way'.⁵⁰² Such experimentation with God is not on our way. God is on our side, but is not obliged to protect us from such stunts.⁵⁰³ The devil has taken a doctrine of comfort, namely God's providential care for us, and turned it into a poison. Or, in Calvin's words, taken spiritual bread and made it into poison. Since the devil tempted Jesus into doubting God's care and testing it, he will do the same to us.

Hence we must, Calvin argues, beware of the times when problems seem overwhelming and must never tempt God to see if He will support us. The devil used the Scriptures, but cleverly twisted them, making it all the more important that we know and are armed with the Scriptures.⁵⁰⁴ If we are not conversant with the Scriptures then we will fall prey to the devil's tactics to make us lose hope. To combat the devil's temptations, we must resist as Jesus did with the Scripture itself.⁵⁰⁵ Yet in our use of Scripture it is not enough for us to say this is the exposition and leave it at that. We must

⁵⁰⁰ Calvin understood the Christian life to be one of discipleship and perpetual warfare against evil. It was through adversity that "God tests his own, he examines them by affliction, he puts them like gold in the furnace, not only to be purged but also to be known. This is the foundation of philosophy" CO 33, 69-70. For other comments that speak of the Christian life as one of warfare, one can refer to: *Comm.* Psalm 46: 4, 41:2, *Instit* 3.9.1, 2.2.11.

⁵⁰¹ CO 46, 622.

⁵⁰² CO 46, 622.

⁵⁰³ It is tempting speculate on how much of an influence Ockham had on Calvin. Calvin here asserts the sovereignty and the freedom of God. God is free to do what he wishes and we can place no restrictions on His freedom. This was one of Ockham's ideas as well. Such speculation, although interesting in the case of Calvin, is notoriously dangerous. Calvin did not footnote his work and we are even unsure what books were on Calvin's shelf. We do know that Calvin donated his library to the Genevan Academy upon his death. From this we can be sure that he had the Olivetan Bible, but Calvin had to sell a large percentage of his library while in Strasbourg. What books he sold we have no way of knowing.

⁵⁰⁴ The stress on knowing the Scriptures has remained a hallmark of the Reformed churches to this day.

⁵⁰⁵ CO 46, 624.

use the Scripture in our lives.⁵⁰⁶ By twisting the Scriptures the devil is trying to rob us of our treasure, which is the Scriptures. When we lose hope and begin to despair, the temptation is always to try to test God and make him bend to our will,⁵⁰⁷ and yet God is not obliged to serve us in those conditions.⁵⁰⁸

Another danger in the temptation is that we try to keep God as a prisoner⁵⁰⁹ and force him to act on our schedule.⁵¹⁰

Quand donc nous serons patiens, et que nous ne passerons pas nos limites, mais que nous souffrirons que Dieu soit maistre en tout et par tout, et qu'il ait son autorite par dessus nous, voyla comme il ne nous adviendra pas de le tenter. Ainsi nous voyons maintenant de quoy ce passage nous doit servir. Et non seulement pour en recevoir instruction, cependant que nous sommes paisibles: mais aussi afin que quand quelque combat nous survient, nous sçachions resister à dextre et à gauche, que nous sçachions tourner le bouclier contre les coups, quand nous-nous verrons assaillis d'une part et d'autre, comme nous enseigne nostre Seigneur Jesus. Et quand nous cheminerons en telle humilite, ne doutons pas que le diable ne s'en retourne vaincu.⁵¹¹

Yet the devil will come back, as Calvin notes, with stronger efforts:

⁵⁰⁶ The Scriptures were more than moral tales or a history. For Calvin they were a living tool that enabled the faithful not only to know God but to walk with God. The Scriptures were an active weapon to resist Satan and without them we have no hope. Calvin stressed the active nature of the Christian life and, here, of Scripture throughout his writings. In some ways, Calvin's views on the active nature of the Christian life, were similar to those of Lorenzo Valla (circa 1440) the Italian humanist and theologian. Valla understood that the human bore great responsibility, standing as it were on the intersection of the sacred and secular realms. Humans are the partners of God, chosen to act responsibly (this was an idea from nominalism). Valla's view on the responsibility of humanity and the Christian life was, in the words of Oberman, 'an activist partnership of the anthropology of nominalism'. Oberman, *The Dawn of the Reformation*, p. 32

⁵⁰⁷ CO 46, 625.

⁵⁰⁸ Calvin likens God to a nursemaid who is in charge of the children and protects them but cannot protect them if the children decide to fly or do similar acts. CO 46, 623.

⁵⁰⁹ Ockham's stress on the free will of God was developed in order to combat a tendency to force God to act in certain ways in accordance with doctrines or principles.

⁵¹⁰ CO 46, 627.

Le diable redouble, et persiste encore en cest orgueil, de vouloir despiter Dieu, et corrompant l'Escriture, et convertissant le blanc en noir.⁵¹²

Summary of Themes Found in Sermon Three

The second temptation of throwing oneself from a pinnacle builds on the first temptation to turn stones into bread. In the first temptation Jesus was tempted to use pride and his own resources. This temptation is not only a temptation to pride, but it is also a temptation to test God's love and providence. The devil here is more than a mere nuisance or even a clever enemy. In the temptation to turn stones into bread the devil used our bodily desires to tempt us to pride. The temptation in this sermon is of the same nature, but more subtle. Here not only are we tempted to pride as the first temptation, but also tempted to test God's love for us. Since the temptations are so dangerous, it is imperative that we are armed against Satan, and yet the very Scriptures that we claim as our sword are used against us. This means that it is not enough for the faithful to have the Scriptures, but we must know and live by them so that they will be useful in our battles against Satan.

As in the first, temptation, so too here Calvin outlines the Christian life as one of constant battle and trial, but we are never to forget that God will help us in our lives.⁵¹³ The temptation is to forget that and ask for signs and miracles that prove to us that God is faithful.

⁵¹¹ CO 46, 628.

⁵¹² CO 46, 628.

⁵¹³ With the proviso that we do not tempt God and that we are armed with Scriptures.

Sermon Four, January 7, 1560, on Matthew 4:8-11, Mk 1:13, Lk
4:5-8

Calvin starts his sermon on the final temptation, which is where the devil offers Jesus worldly power by speaking of the Christian life, which is to be a life praising God. The devil, however, wishes that the faithful praise him rather than God. The devil, Calvin reminds his listeners, wishes that we turn away from God⁵¹⁴ to worship him⁵¹⁵. Worshipping the devil is a natural consequence of turning from God. If we do not worship God, we worship the devil. There is no gray area.⁵¹⁶

The devil's aim is to rob⁵¹⁷ us of our status as children of God.⁵¹⁸ In looking at this temptation, the point is not to imagine whether or not it happened, or other details

⁵¹⁴ In commenting on what happens when people turn away from God and seek the devil, Calvin wrote:

“But after they had given place to Satan’s blasphemy, they began, like persons fascinated to lose reason and judgement; yea, since they were become the slaves of Satan; he held their very souls bound.” *Comm. Genesis* 3:6.

⁵¹⁵ Calvin goes on to say, that we know that this is the case from experience. In our temptations we are encouraged to turn away from God and to turn instead towards the devil. CO 46, 629.

⁵¹⁶ This can be seen from Calvin’s understanding and insistence on the single will of God. God wills that we be either elect or reprobate. Reprobation is not a matter of the absence of election or our choice, but was an action on the part of God, part of his single will. Thus, there is no grey area. Either we are willed by God to be part of the elect, and serve him, or we are willed by God to be part of the reprobate and serve Satan. *Instit.* 3.21.1.

⁵¹⁷ Eventually the devil wishes to turn us away from God altogether. As Calvin points out, Satan has no more “grievous or dangerous temptation to dishearten the faithful than when he disquiets them about their election.” *Instit.* 3.24.4.

⁵¹⁸ Once more Calvin notes that we should not find the fact that we are tempted to be strange as Jesus endured temptations and won against the devil. He was assailed for our sakes and was victorious. CO 46, 629.

but, rather, we must be aware of the tactics the devil used against Jesus for he will use the same on us.⁵¹⁹

When Jesus gave the answer that you should worship the Lord your God he repelled the devil. Calvin starts from the answer and works backwards to ascertain the nature of the temptation. There are two issues that Calvin will address. The first is that the devil claims that the world is actually his and the second is that the devil sought to be worshipped, based on the claim that he could offer the world to Jesus. The devil had claimed that all the kingdoms in the world are his and if Jesus would worship him, they would be Jesus'. Here the devil is far more than the Lieutenant of God acting under God's orders. The devil shows himself to be the mortal enemy of God and speaks like a thief who offers booty that was never his to offer in the first place.⁵²⁰ However, when the devil claims that the world is his,⁵²¹ one must bear in mind that the devil is the father of all lies.

⁵¹⁹ Our victory over the devil is not altogether unconditional. As Calvin argued in terms of the Scriptures, if we are unarmed against the devil (we don't know the Scriptures), then we cannot expect God to help us. In fact, to do so would be to tempt God to act according to our whims. Calvin imagined the Christian life to be a partnership between God and humanity. While the initiative is always from God, we still have a responsibility to God.

⁵²⁰ Calvin is careful here. He was aware of those in Geneva who claimed that the devil indeed was in charge of the world or at least the less savoury aspects of the world. Calvin cannot simply argue, as he did in the Job sermons, that the devil is under God's command because in this passage the devil offers the kingdoms of the world to Jesus.

⁵²¹ Calvin did not have much time for those in Geneva who believed that the world, or at least the unsavoury parts of the world, were ruled by Satan who competed against God. Calvin called this a Manichaeian heresy. *Instit* 1.13.1.

In Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil, there is mention of those whom he labels Manichees. This is odd. Calvin was well versed in Augustine and no doubt was well aware of Augustine's comments about the Manichaeans. Calvin knew that there were no disciples of Mani in his congregation but yet he did speak of those whom he calls Manichees. Calvin was very careful with his phrases and expressions. When Calvin name called, by referring to someone as a Papist, or a Sophist, or a Libertine, he had

specific ideas and a specific audience or even individual in mind. So who were the Manichees? Calvin wrote against the Libertines, those who collected relics, the Anabaptists, the Roman Catholics (whom he called Papists) and the sophists. Yet no such treatise or document exists on the Manichees. The only clue we have on who the Manichees were comes from Calvin's *Institutes* where, in 1.13.1, in speaking of the doctrine of the immensity and spirituality of God's essence, he complains that the Manichees perverted this understanding. "by adopting two first principles [they] made the devil almost the equal of God." No more is said of these two principles until later in 1.16.3 where he notes that "Manes (Mani?) too has arisen with his sect, fabricating to himself good things to God, but assigning all bad natures to the devil as their author...And where is the omnipotence of God, if the devil has the power of executing whatever he pleases against the will and notwithstanding the opposition of God?"

It is by means of this latter statement that we can come to a fuller understanding of what Calvin understood was the error of the Manichees. The Manichees dishonoured the omnipotence of God by believing that the devil had free reign. As we have seen in Calvin's sermons, Calvin is almost obsessed with maintaining the idea that the devil is under God's control and that the devil can do nothing apart from the consent and permission of God. Calvin's obsession was partly the result of his context. Calvin believed that there were those in his congregation who steadfastly believed that the devil had a free reign of terror and was a rival if not the equal of God.

The notion that the Manichees held to two first principles is by no means unique to Calvin. Jean Bodin in his famous 1580 work, *On the demon-mania of witches*, trans. Randy Scott (Toronto Centre for Renaissance and Reformation studies, 1995) argues in book 1.5 chapter five that the Manichees "tried to maintain that there were two principles, one good, one bad." So the idea that someone thought that the Manichees held to two principles was common. Anyone who subscribed to the same idea or two principle thought could be called a Manichee.

In the Middle ages, the term Manichee was used almost without qualification to attack any perceived heretic. The Manichean religion was not well understood due to a lack of information and available texts. It was, however, understood that to be called a Manichee was an insult. In the sixteenth-century there was scholarly interest in the Manichees. The term Manichee took on a less diffuse meaning in the sixteenth-century. A Manichee was now a term used to identify a disciple of Mani. During the 1500's, the Roman Catholics accused Martin Luther of being a follower of Mani. It seems that the Roman Catholics felt that Luther's understanding of the bondage of the will was derived from Mani's teachings. In 1578, the Lutheran Cyriacus Spangenberg defended Matthias Flacius who was accused of being a Manichee by virtue of his Lutheranism. Spangenberg attempted to show that in fact Lutheranism has nothing in common with Manichaeism. Spangenberg, *Historia Manichaeorum, de furiosae et pestiferae hujus sectae origine* (Ursel, 1578). Later works seem to suggest that Protestantism, not just Lutheranism, was rife with the errors of Mani. Conrad Schlüsselburg along with Dupreau wrote the *Catalogus Haereticorum*, published at Frankfurt from 1597-1599, where they tried to show that Protestantism was rife with the errors of Mani as they understood them. Yet it was not until 1605 that Calvin was identified with Manichaeism. In Dupreau's later work, *Elenchus Haereticorum Omnium*, (Cologne, 1605) he speaks of the four men whom Mani influenced as Calvin, Melancton, Flacius and Illyricus. There seems to be no evidence to suggest that Calvin was accused of being a Manichee during his life. For Calvin, the term Manichee simply referred to someone who believed that there were two operative principles in the world. Calvin wrote at a time when the term Manichee was taking on a far more defined and sharper intent. The term Manichee was shifting from being understood as a heresy that infected Lutheranism to an error that was rife in all Protestantism. The term Manichee was becoming an anti-Protestant insult. Had Calvin been aware of any such attacks on his doctrines, he would have defended his position. Since no such defense exists, one can be reasonably certain that Calvin did not use the term Manichee to refer to the Roman Catholics. The tactic of turning around an attack was one that was often used by Calvin, as can be seen, among other places, in his reply to Sadoletto who had accused him of theological novelty. Calvin in turn accuses the

The Temptation of the World

The devil wished to be worshipped by Jesus on account of his claim that he could offer the world to Jesus. The temptation of Jesus contained two aspects. The first aspect can be considered as having two parts. The first part was to induce Jesus to wish for more than the Father had ordained for him.⁵²² The second part was to destroy the majesty and sovereignty of God by Satan taking the place of God. The second aspect of the temptation was to get Jesus to believe that God was nothing and the devil was everything. This aspect of the temptation affects all of us. There are times when we may believe that it is the devil⁵²³ who gives us what we need, and not God. We may try to enrich ourselves with fraud and in doing so we adore Satan and act as if God were nothing.⁵²⁴ Once the devil gains control of us and ensnares our heart with avarice, we no longer are free and become the slaves to Satan.⁵²⁵

Roman Catholics of doing the same thing. We can conclude that the Manichees, for Calvin, were those whom he believed understood that there were two operative principles in the world.

For more information on the Catholic/Protestant debates on Manichaeism, the reader is referred to M.J. C. Wolf, *Manichaeism ante Manichaeus et in Christianismo redivivus*, (Hamburg, 1707) or the more accessible work by Julien Ries, *Introduction aux études Manichéennes*, (Analecta Lovaniensia Biblica et Orientalia, 1934-). Ser. 11. esp. pp. 454-482.

⁵²² This is the same temptation as changing stones into bread or, for that matter, leaping off a pinnacle. The temptation is one of not being content with what God provides and desiring more outside of God's will.

⁵²³ This is a subtle variation on the former temptations. The former temptations were temptations to self-sufficiency via doubt or pride, and testing God. This temptation is born of our impatience and is the temptation to believe that Satan can provide for us, thus dispensing with God altogether.

⁵²⁴ Some of Calvin's most vitriolic attacks were leveled against those who were greedy. He railed against the merchants for whom the bottom line was all too often filled with fraud. (*Comm.* Isaiah 23:15), In his remarks, Calvin notes that the phrase 'song of a harlot' refers to mercantile wealth. This type of wealth is not in itself to be condemned, but "in a word he [Isaiah] shows by what means mercantile cities become rich, that is, by deceitful and unlawful methods." In other references to those who were greedy and hoarded he commented about those wealthy who would "steal the very sun from the poor for their own pleasure, leaving the poor in the dark if they could get away with it." Sermon 84 on Job, CO 34,286. Greed had serious social consequences and for Calvin was like a terrible disease. It was

The will of Satan is not only to destroy us but, to enslave us.⁵²⁶ Avarice is one of Satan's best nets.⁵²⁷ It not only makes us get away from God but when we begin to desire worldly goods at all costs, we become like savage beasts, unable to be satisfied.⁵²⁸ In this way we worship Satan. If we have an extreme desire to get things, we will become so possessed by our desires that the devil will throw us into a rage. In our intemperance, we give homage to Satan. We are always tempted in this way. We look at lovely things and begin to desire⁵²⁹ As our desires become more and more and become insatiable, the devil will induce us to do evil things.⁵³⁰

like a plague that rules the world driving people mad for lust of possessions. In fact the wealthy are annoyed that the poor have sunshine and water to drink. Sermon on Deut. 39, CO 26,352.

⁵²⁵ CO 46, 633.

⁵²⁶ Calvin saw plenty of this attitude in Geneva, where he railed against those who hoarded wheat in a time of wheat shortages.

⁵²⁷ Calvin used this expression to refer to a means by which Satan can trap and ensnare us.

⁵²⁸ One is reminded at this point of Augustine of Hippo when he spoke of unfulfilled love. For a brief discussion on Augustine's concept of love, the reader is referred to Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre A History of Philosophy*, fifth edition (New York: McGraw Hill, 1993), 144-147.

⁵²⁹ Calvin understood that at the root of greed was a deep anxiety and unrest. In some ways he was echoing Augustine, who noted that the only love that was capable of fulfilling us was a love of God, not a love of things or persons. Calvin observed that it was our anxiety which causes us to forget God and attempt to rely on our own resources and hoard. Christians who were willing to entrust God with their souls were far less likely to trust God with their material well being!. People worry about what they will wear, what support they will have and "unless they have on hand an abundance of wine, grain and oil, tremble with apprehension." *Instit* 3.20.44. In commenting on the link between our worries and greed, Calvin wrote:

"Our covetousness is an insatiable abyss unless it is restrained, and the best way to keep it in check is for us to desire nothing more than the needs of this life demand. But we transgress this limit because our anxiety exceeds the needs of a thousand lives." *Comm.* 1Tim 6.7.

⁵³⁰ The image here is of a devil who not only knows our weakness but who fuels the fires of our desires and leads us into further evil.

Jesus was not tempted in this way since he was not infected with original sin.⁵³¹ Unlike Jesus, we will always have some weakness, no matter how hard we try. God will discover the secret evil within us and will show us that our hearts⁵³² are like fiery furnaces. Even if we think we are in control, in reality the flames are covered for the most part, but can be relit by means of objects and our desires.⁵³³ Satan is aware of our condition and fans the flames of our desires despite our best efforts. We must be aware that we require God's help to combat the temptations and darts of Satan. Here Calvin comes back to his point on our need for God's help. In this case, we become aware of our need for help by means of inner reflection when we become aware that we are driven by desires and passions that are out of our control and, as such, are vulnerable to attacks by Satan.

When Christ replied that we are to worship God and God alone, his answer meant that the devil wished to annihilate the majesty of God and to take it all to himself. The devil is full of rage and shows it.⁵³⁴ His plan was to destroy the majesty of God himself with this temptation. The temptation was serious and it was important that Jesus used the right Scripture to combat the temptation. Thus we must know how to use the Scriptures when the devil attacks us from all sides.⁵³⁵ Those who teach the Scriptures or

⁵³¹ CO 46, 634.

⁵³² Here the devil by means of temptations is the one who reveals the secret evil. God reveals it to us by means of the devil.

⁵³³ CO 46, 634.

⁵³⁴ Calvin comments on the fury and anger of the devil in this temptation.

⁵³⁵ Calvin argues that he says this not to shame those who may not know the Scriptures but so that we all know that we can use the Scriptures with discretion as required. CO 46, 635.

preach must make their teachings profitable. This is important as we are to be armed in our encounters with Satan.⁵³⁶

To Honour God

Calvin proceeds to discuss what it means to honour God.⁵³⁷ We are all admonished to honour God, but this honour is not like the civic honour that we pay to officials. The Roman church has divided up the honour of God into two parts, what they call reverence and service.⁵³⁸ The distinction, according to Calvin is, 1) reverence for God and 2) service for the saints. When they give homage to statues,⁵³⁹ bones and shoes of saints they call this *dulia* or service. The homage due to Mary or the cross is called *hyper dulia* or super service.

Yet if we consider the natural sense of the passage,⁵⁴⁰ to be told to adore only God means that we give God all spiritual homage with our bodies, goods and souls. The temptation is always to place other things, like people or saints, in the place of God.⁵⁴¹ To adore God means to acknowledge the fact that all authority, glory, praise, wisdom, justice and virtue are found in him. Other ceremonies, like *dulia* or *hyper dulia* that take

⁵³⁶ CO 46, 635.

⁵³⁷ This does not deal with the devil and so my remarks will be brief.

⁵³⁸ Calvin claims that they do not distinguish between civic honour and honour paid to God, but have chosen instead to divide types of service that one can render to God.

⁵³⁹ Calvin wrote an amusing treatise against relics. CO 6,409-451.

⁵⁴⁰ Calvin was fond of this phrase, yet as pointed out earlier what he meant was less than clear. It is my opinion that the natural or clear sense of the text was ostensibly mystical insofar as it relied upon the Holy Spirit but in the end, the natural sense equals Calvin's sense.

⁵⁴¹ CO 46, 637.

away from the honour of God, are illusions of Satan.⁵⁴² We are to repel the temptation to obscure God's glory and, in so doing, we are to see that God alone is to be served and adored. The devil sets his nets and produces many idols.⁵⁴³

After this temptation, we are told the devil left for a while. Jesus was victorious and the devil had to retreat. But since the devil left for a while, we must be aware that we will always be tempted, albeit with respite in between. The devil does not leave us for long. During our rest periods, we are to work hard on our means to resist Satan⁵⁴⁴ and bear in mind that when we fight, God and all the angels are with us.

Summary of Themes Found in Sermon Four

In this sermon, the devil is not only presented as clever and deadly but also as a master of illusion and deception. On the surface, the temptation to worship Satan is blatant. If you worship Satan you will gain material power and goods and yet, as Calvin points out, the temptation is actually far more subtle. The devil deludes us into thinking that we can give only partial honour or service to God and serve other things such as ourselves as well. The devil deludes us into imagining that he can do more for us than God can. The real temptation is to dispense with God from our lives altogether. The final temptation therefore points out the nature of Satan as mortal enemy both of us and of

⁵⁴² CO 46, 638. As Calvin says people are fond of telling lies, and yet the test is anything that does not ascribe all authority, honour, virtue, justice and wisdom to God, but claims that this is found elsewhere, is an illusion of Satan.

⁵⁴³ People fool themselves, Calvin argues, into following an idol and arguing that they must make a living, and so devote all of their time to a business or to self enrichment. Yet, in so doing, they are not honouring God but instead following an idol (in this case the one of self enrichment). Yet they imagine that they will improve their lot if they do so. This robs God. We must always look to God .

⁵⁴⁴ CO 46, 641.

God. It shows how Satan seeks to place himself in the place of God and destroy God's kingdom of the elect.

*Concluding Remarks and Some Elements Contained Within
Calvin's Sermons on the Temptations of Jesus in the Desert*

In this series, the devil is presented as a clever, ruthless and deadly enemy both of us and of God. The devil will use deadly blows and will not trifle with us. The devil goes so far as to use against us the weapons that we have to fight him.

Unlike in the Job sermons, there is here little or no stress on the devil being controlled by God. The emphasis throughout is Christological. Like Jesus, we will be tempted by the devil, but through Jesus' victory and struggle we will be assured of our victory.⁵⁴⁵

Also, unique to these sermons is the fact that we are given specific weapons against Satan. In Job, the faithful were encouraged to pray to God for help and, while this is not diminished, the onus in this series is much more on the Christian knowing how to use his/her armour, especially the Scriptures. The chief weapon is the Word of God, which was far more than a documented record of faith. The Word of God is efficacious in that it presents Christ to the believers. When the Scriptures are used against Satan, it is as if Christ Himself is battling for us against Satan.

⁵⁴⁵ I say struggle. I think that it is important to note that the battle between the devil and Jesus was real and not a *fait accompli*. This implies that the struggle of Jesus was important, as he was strengthened by his struggle and tested. In a like manner, we are empowered by means of testing and struggling. Calvin's

The devil is portrayed as one who attacks us where we are the weakest. He seeks to bring us to the point of doubt and despair so that we will no longer look to God. The point of doubt often arises from our own anxieties about God providing for us. Like the sermons on the Book of Job, the devil is shown as one who will root out our hidden vices. In this case, it is our tendency to be impatient and doubt the providence and love of God.

As Calvin notes in his commentary on Matthew:

A considerable portion of mankind disbelieve the power and authority of God over the world, and imagine that every good thing is bestowed by Satan. For how comes it, that almost all resort to wicked contrivances, to robbery and to fraud, but they ascribe to Satan what belongs to God, the power of enriching whom he pleases by his blessing?⁵⁴⁶

In addition to a depiction of the power and cleverness of the devil, the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert show the reality of the Christian life. Calvin was faced with reports on the dire situation of the French churches and his sermons represent a sober reflection on the less than glamorous life of the Christian.

Many of the same points that were made in the Job sermons can be made here. The devil is useful and serves to deepen our knowledge of God. Also we see clearly how Calvin stresses the 'third' use of the devil.⁵⁴⁷ In these remarks I will pass quickly over

theology was not one of the afterlife or of cosmic completion in the hereafter. His theology was firmly grounded in the daily experience and struggles of Christians.

⁵⁴⁶ *Comm. Matt. 4:9.*

⁵⁴⁷ The third use, discussed in my previous chapter, is to bring the believer closer to God.

points that are common with the Job sermons and focus on what is new and unique to this group of sermons insofar as our understanding of the devil is concerned.

The sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert are to be read not only from a Christological perspective but contain some of Calvin's deepest insights as to the nature of temptation and how temptations arise. It is within these sermons that there emerges the image of the devil as not only deadly but as one who knows the workings of our hearts. We are gradually stripped of our self-defences in these sermons since Calvin brings the point that we are all in need of God's help in battling with the devil.

As in the case of the Job sermons, there are certain themes that emerge. The first theme is that of the sovereignty of God. God is in control of the testing, by virtue of the Holy Spirit. God knows what we will face. But God is also with us, insofar as it is through Christ's victory that we are able to overcome the temptations of the devil. God is sovereign, which Calvin demonstrates by making an appeal to our experience. We are not destroyed. Calvin reiterates the idea that the devil is not a fully autonomous being, free to cause havoc. The devil is a servant and an instrument of God. It is in these sermons that the theme of the devil as God's servant is developed.

The Devil as Servant of God

The devil is shown to be God's servant because it was the Holy Spirit that led Jesus to be tempted. As with all of God's creation, therefore, the devil is an instrument of our salvation. All of creation, Calvin noted, reflected God and pointed us towards God. While it is true that we are blind to such things before God calls us, after we are

called we begin to see the wonderful workings of God. Yet this is not to say that Calvin espoused a natural theology. He was quick to point out that while the creation and the *opera Dei* point to God, we need the Scriptures to clarify our vision further. The devil, as part of God's creation, also functions in a way to bring us closer to God. This is clearly shown in the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert.

Diabolical Modus Operandi

As God's servant, the devil tests us. The testing however, is not based on an external torment. We are not tempted by exterior things, but the devil uses our very natures against us. The devil 'fans the flames of our desire'. The devil works from the inside out. As such, these sermons demonstrate the cleverness of the devil as well as his deadly nature. In using our very nature against us, the devil leaves us defenceless. We can no longer have any excuse. All of our recourse to our self-defence will prove futile, since the attacks come from within. In the Job sermons, we are told to be prepared for the attacks of the devil lest the devil find a weakness and attack us. Here the listener is told that the devil will find a weakness and the weakness is within us. There is nothing that can be done about it. It is at this point that one can with profit recall the context of these sermons.

The temptation sermons were written at a time when Calvin was receiving reports of the persecutions and executions of the faithful in France. Calvin no doubt spent many sleepless nights thinking about how a loving, providential God could allow this to happen. The old answer of a sovereign God does not really surface in these

sermons. Rather, we have the idea of the devil using our nature against us to tempt and test us. The temptations are a part of the Christian life, and on our own we cannot prepare for them or defend ourselves. In a real way, the true devil lies within our hearts.

Calvin was, I think, faced with a crisis of faith. It is one thing to say that temptations and trials are a part of the Christian life, but another thing to read the relentless letters that outlined the deaths of so many of the faithful, many of whom Calvin sent to evangelize France. In the Job sermons, Calvin was faced with his own trials and was able to preach that one had to be prepared to face trials. In these sermons, no amount of preparation seemed to matter. Thus Calvin preached that temptations were inevitable and a part of the Christian life. The devil uses our own natures against us. In these sermons, I believe, Calvin delves much more deeply into the nature of the temptations. The main temptation is the temptation to despair. We can either despair, thinking that God is too slow in listening to our prayers and take matters into our own hands, apart from God's will; or we can despair that God will act at all on our behalf. The temptation to despair is the temptation that will drive a wedge between us and God since it will make it impossible for us to rely on God. I have no doubt that Calvin's stress on despair, as the worst temptation of all, and something that he spoke about as well in his sermons on Job, was driven by the French context and the French persecutions.

The Nature of Temptation and the Use of the Devil

In the sermons on the temptations of Jesus, the nature of the temptations is inward, insofar as the devil uses our own desires. In using our own nature as a weapon against us, the devil forces us to look at ourselves or at aspects of our character which otherwise may never surface. The devil forces us to examine ourselves. Now, one must ask: why? It is the case that the devil is God's servant and so there must be a reason for this.

The reason is simply that in examining our true nature we become more aware of ourselves. We become more aware of ourselves as powerless in the face of the devil, who can use our own nature against us, but also we become more aware of ourselves in relation to ourselves. We come to know ourselves far more deeply. The devil acts as a 'therapist'. We are forced to look at ourselves and to face ourselves. This is a crucial element in Calvin's understanding of the Christian life. One knows God and one knows oneself, and the two are related.

It is only with a deep knowledge of the self that we come to know not only our limitations and, hence, need for God's help but also our strengths and, then, our need to praise God. This deep knowledge of self leads us naturally into an appreciation of God both as Redeemer and Creator. Thus, once more the devil as therapist leads us into a deeper knowledge of self which, in turn, leads us to seek God and come to know God as Redeemer and Creator.

While it is the case that a deep knowledge of ourselves as weak and vulnerable will lead us to pray to God, which will lead us to come to know God as Redeemer and Creator, the question could be asked : how do we know that God is merciful and gracious?

In the Job sermons, Calvin answered this question by stressing the power of the devil and by adding that we would be destroyed 1000 times a day were it not for the protection of God. In these sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert, we come to know God as gracious and good by means of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are presented as having a two-fold benefit. The first benefit is to expose the lies of the devil. Thus, at the first level the Scriptures act as a weapon to rebuff the attacks of the devil. The ruses of the devil are illumined and shown for what they are. Yet there is a deeper level of understanding how the Scriptures function, and this is that the Scriptures act as a source of blessing.

Since all that comes from God is a blessing and the Scriptures come from God, they are a form of blessing. The Scriptures themselves enable us not only to repel the devil but to grow in our understanding of God and act as a blessing to us since the Scriptures not only speak about Christ but actually present Christ to us. Thus the Scriptures enable us to partake of the blessings of Christ and of His virtues. We are to make use of the Scriptures not simply as proof texts with which to repel the devil but as a means to receive the blessings of God and to develop a deeper relationship with God by knowing God.

Unlike the Job sermons, the addition of Scripture as both a weapon and a blessing affords new insights into the relationship of the devil with us and with God. We are told in these sermons that the main temptation that the devil will use is that of despair. The Scriptures are thus seen by Calvin as the antidote to despair. Jesus Himself used the Scriptures to dispel the devil and overcome temptation, and we are to use the Scriptures to overcome those periods of despair when we imagine God has either abandoned us or is simply too slow to help us. Calvin did not focus on the types of temptations nor on other details of the passages but spent a lot of time in the sermons showing how it was that in each case the Scriptures not only illumined the true nature of the temptation faced by Jesus but also are to be used as a source of blessing. The Scriptures are what we turn to when faced with despair. No doubt Calvin faced much despair over the fate of many of the fledgling French churches.

The temptation sermons also highlight the deadly nature of despair. To despair and think that God is too slow or has abandoned us is more than just a phase or a temporary lapse. Calvin illustrates that this temptation, fed from our own nature, is from the devil and, if allowed to go unchecked, will drive a wedge between us and God such that we will no longer call upon God.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MISCELLANEOUS SERMONS

Introduction

In this chapter, the miscellaneous sermons that deal with the devil will be analyzed. They are so named as they are not part of a series like the temptation sermons or those on Job, but rather are a few isolated sermons that deal with the devil in a substantial way. Calvin, as has been noted, was an exegetical preacher and his sermons that concerned themselves with the devil were invariably those that were preached on texts that dealt with the topic. The sermons that will be treated span the years 1549 to 1561. As such, except for the Genesis sermons, there is no overall context that will suffice and each context will be treated in terms of footnotes where relevant. For those sermons in which Calvin speaks of the devil at greater length, we will survey his remarks and provide a summary. For other sermons where Calvin speaks briefly of the devil, we

will simply review his remarks. The sermons will be considered in chronological order.

We now turn our attention to Calvin's sermons of 1549.

Study of the Miscellaneous Sermons

1549

Sermon on Jer. 15:10-11,14-15, June 26, 1549

In this sermon Calvin stresses our real nature (the unredeemed self) as one of fighting against God.⁵⁴⁸ The spirit of Satan is one of *pique*,⁵⁴⁹ or a contentious spirit,⁵⁵⁰ that is always at odds with God and the gospel.⁵⁵¹ This spirit of Satan⁵⁵² infects us with bitterness and strife such that we rebel when we hear the Word of God. We resent God, and yet God chooses to change us. The sermon illustrates our ingratitude towards God insofar as we look elsewhere for the fountain of life.⁵⁵³ We look to false prophets and seek other teachings and thus are led astray.⁵⁵⁴ We are not led astray because of the false prophets. Rather we are led astray as a punishment of God when we do not listen to

⁵⁴⁸ SC. 6. 31.

⁵⁴⁹ *Comm.* Rom. 16:17.

⁵⁵⁰ *Comm.* 2.Cor 2:11. for if Paul had not to some extent favoured the wishes of the Corinthians, Satan would have prevailed by kindling strife among them.

⁵⁵¹ *Comm.* Hebrews 12:14.

⁵⁵² The spirit of Satan is not an alien spirit that enters into us. It is our nature before we were redeemed. Even after redemption the old nature and flaws are still present. Calvin argues that Satan uses these flaws and weaknesses to prey upon us and instill resentment against the gospel.

⁵⁵³ In view of Calvin's sermon on the possession narrative, the elsewhere may not only be our own devices, but the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin may have accused people of looking towards the ideas and doctrines of the Roman Catholic church and the teachings of astrology instead of to God.

⁵⁵⁴ *Comm.* Gal. 1:6, 3:1.

God.⁵⁵⁵ If there is hypocrisy in our service to God, then there will be false prophets.⁵⁵⁶ The false prophets serve as a warning to us of our hypocrisy and so it is imperative that we root out hypocrisy from our hearts. This is why there are heretics,⁵⁵⁷ so that the hypocrites⁵⁵⁸ will be known.

God punishes us by sending⁵⁵⁹ us lies and so we are to pray that we do not fall away lest we too be led astray.⁵⁶⁰ We are more susceptible to lies if we have not examined ourselves and our hearts. If we do not serve God in humility, then we are open to lies. In fact, when we do not have a true affection⁵⁶¹ for God, God will punish⁵⁶² us with false prophets and lies. God allows Satan to bring us to false prophets.

⁵⁵⁵ At this point Calvin is a little inconsistent. In the previous sermon, as we have seen, he notes that we fall when we listen to Satan. Here Calvin argues that such falling away is the punishment of God.

⁵⁵⁶ *Comm.* Thess. 3:3.

⁵⁵⁷ Calvin has a positive view of heresy in this sermon. The heretic serves to function in much the same way as the trials of Job, namely, to expose hypocrisy.

⁵⁵⁸ In CO 8, 481, Calvin speaks of damnable heresies which cannot and should not go unpunished. While the heretic may serve to force us to check our Christian service, there are some heresies that are so heinous that they cannot go unpunished. The heresies of Servetus against the Trinity were of this nature. CO. 8, 481. The Libertines were those who advocated tolerance based on the claim that one cannot clearly articulate the truth and, in matters of religion, the truth is but an opinion. Yet their very claims of tolerance, make them intolerant. Calvin spared no vitriol in his attack *Ces canailles faisant semblant ne point vouloir iuger, se constituent iuger au dessus Dieu,* CO 7,196 (*Contre les Libertines*).

⁵⁵⁹ It is important that this point be understood. The lies and the heresies will always be present insofar as there are many who are unredeemed and non-elect and Satan is powerful and crafty. God does not 'send' lies to tempt and to trick us but, rather, God uses the lies and the heresies for his own will and use. This is yet another illustration of the application of Calvin's understanding of the sovereignty of God.

⁵⁶⁰ Once more, the work of the devil is to lead people astray and to twist the truth. In this case, though, it is not for Satan's pleasure but the delusions are sent or allowed by God as a punishment for our refusal to listen to God.

⁵⁶¹ By this term Calvin means more than fear or reverence. He understands that the Christian relationship with God is one of love and growth. When he uses the term 'affection' he means, in this instance, a true love or friendship with God.

⁵⁶² The punishment is of our own making. When we refuse to listen to God, we will seek other sources. Calvin is noting that God will allow us to be brought to the false prophets. What is interesting is that

Summary

This sermon deals mainly with the idea of lies and false prophets. In terms of the office of Satan, we are told that Satan is the master of deception and that Christians need to be sure that they serve God in true humility and in the right spirit lest they be overcome and fall victim to lies.

Sermon on Jer. 17:9-11, July 24, 1549

This sermon deals with the wickedness of the heart. Our nature is totally wicked.⁵⁶³ This cannot be overstated. We are all too prone to believe that we are not that bad and yet, when we start to believe that there is some good in our nature, it is Satan who tells us this. If we imagine that we have some goodness within us, then we will seek means other than Christ to approach God. Yet our nature is such that we can never approach God on our own. The only way in which we can know God, since we are so full of perversity⁵⁶⁴ and lies, is via Jesus Christ. Jesus⁵⁶⁵ is the only way to approach God

Calvin is not speaking about the unredeemed or the unelect but, rather, the elect. There is a warning here that if we do not take our Christian vocation seriously enough (predestined or not), we will be led into errors. God will allow Satan to blind us and to lead us astray. The devil is the instrument of the lies but is given permission by God.

⁵⁶³ *Comm.* Col. 3:9.

⁵⁶⁴ Here again we see Calvin's concern for the true knowledge of God. We cannot know God as we are full of corruption and find only idols in our search for God. All true knowledge of God must come from God himself. The preoccupation with knowledge was a common one in the sixteenth century. Later in 1561 Francis Bacon would write about idols that interfere with our search for knowledge. In Bacon's case it was the idols of presuppositions of tribe or culture that would interfere with our search for truth. In the case of Calvin, our search for divine truth is simply impossible due to our fallen state. In this sermon Calvin is speaking against those who claim that we can approach God with our sense of justice and innate goodness. In Calvin's view the natural heart (the human heart before God's intervention and redemption) was utterly dark and devoid of any goodness.

⁵⁶⁵ Calvin here is polemicizing against the notion of intercession via saints.

because we are very far from God. Apart from Jesus, we will never reach or approach God.⁵⁶⁶

Satan never ceases to tell people that there is some good⁵⁶⁷ in them so that they will always remain separate from God.⁵⁶⁸ This is because the people attempt to forge their own routes to God. As Calvin puts it, Satan never ceases to whisper in our ears that we are not all bad and that we can assist in our own salvation.⁵⁶⁹ The message of this

⁵⁶⁶ One can imagine the image of a labyrinth. There is no way out apart from the thread of illumination from God.

⁵⁶⁷ Calvin was a keen observer of human nature. The years 1549-1555 were by no means easy ones for him in Geneva. The Perrinists (those who followed Amy Perrin) were in power and had turned against Calvin and his restrictions. The basic problem seemed to have been one of ecclesiastical power and control, such as who had the right to excommunicate, but at the root of the trouble was a difference in understanding of the basic human nature. The Perrinists, whom Calvin called the Libertines at times, espoused a positive view of human nature and saw Calvin's strictures on gambling, gaming and dancing as overly restrictive. (Amy Perrin's wife was an avid dancer). Calvin understood that a positive view of human nature, while tempting, was highly dangerous as it devalued the salvific work of Christ and the grace of God. In his treatise against the Libertines, Calvin observed that one of their key doctrines was that there is one spirit in all, that of God (which would make them at odds with Calvin's dark view of human nature). By claiming that God's spirit is within us, it follows that we will no longer need God since we are no longer totally corrupt and spiritually blind. CO 7,196.

⁵⁶⁸ SC. 6 109.

⁵⁶⁹ Calvin probably had the Libertines in mind. In 1545 Calvin wrote his treatise *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins, qui le nomment spirituelz*. CO 7, 145-248. In this treatise, Calvin calls this sect so dangerous as to be likened to poisoners. Poisoners or plague spreaders were executed in Geneva and were deemed equivalent to or worse than witches. The Libertines were the followers of Quintin Thieffrey, whom Calvin had met in Paris in 1535. The Libertines were dangerous in Calvin's mind for two main reasons. The first reason is that the Libertines use allegory to interpret Scripture and do not take Scripture seriously. Moreover since there is only one spirit that exists in all things, namely the spirit of God, good and evil do not really exist. There is also no need for the saving work of Christ, since our nature is permeated with the spirit of God. Was this why Calvin insisted that we not listen to the whispers of Satan when Satan tells us we are not that bad? The devil, for the Libertines was just an idea or opinion. (Calvin mentions this position in his *Institutes* of 1559.) CO 7, 181-182. The Libertines maintained that the world is not an evil place dominated by the devil nor are we corrupt. Yet as Calvin notes, CO 7, 182, this is utterly false. We are engaged in a deadly struggle. In terms of evil and sin, it is more than just a poor decision. It is insidious and ensnares our very hearts and beings with venom.

sermon is that we need to be vigilant against the lies of Satan. The sermon also shows the seductive nature⁵⁷⁰ of Satan who flatters us into thinking that we do not need Christ.

Summary

Calvin understood that without God's prior initiative all of our efforts to reach or approach God are doomed to utter failure. The devil is shown as one who knows all about our human vanity and who never ceases to tell us that we are not that bad and that on our own we can somehow gain the ear of God. Thus, the devil is painted as having a deep awareness of our hearts and weaknesses and as exploiting these weaknesses to his own end, in this case, making us imagine that we can gain God's favour through our own merit or righteousness.

In this sermon Calvin also speaks of the knowledge of God. Once more he stresses that our unredeemed nature is incapable of approaching God because it is naturally against God. This sermon illustrates once more the fact that Satan once more is an instrument of God and is useful in bringing the believers into a fuller understanding of both God and themselves. In this case, Satan reminds us that our nature is evil and there is no natural good within us. Satan also reminds us that the only way in which we can approach God is through Christ and by means of God's prior initiative in our election and salvation.

⁵⁷⁰ Satan never has any lack of ministers to deceive people since he has never had any lack of the means of deceiving. *Comm. 2 Tim. 4:3.*

1554

Sermon on 1 Tim. 4:1-2, November 1554

Here the devil is dealt with in more detail than in the previous sermons and thus this sermon will be analyzed more closely. This Biblical pericope speaks of the lying spirits. The term lying spirit is used rather than speaking of an evil person or evil people in order to bring to mind the devil and the spiritual battle that the Christian faces. The sermon begins with a commentary on the human foible of not being willing to learn from the Word of God but to wanting to seek other means instead.⁵⁷¹ We seek other means⁵⁷² because we are unstable, flighty and rebellious creatures unwilling to be subjected to God.⁵⁷³ Even though God has given us what we require for salvation, we persist in our rebellious ways. Calvin argues that, because of our rebellious natures it is all the easier for us to listen to the lying spirits⁵⁷⁴ that speak of other ways to God. We must be vigilant so that we do not fall prey to the traps of Satan.⁵⁷⁵ In order not to fall⁵⁷⁶ prey to Satan's lies, we are to be faithful to the teachings contained within Scripture.

⁵⁷¹ CO 53, 329.

⁵⁷² By other means Calvin had in mind extra doctrines or extra practices.

⁵⁷³ What was important for Calvin in all of our Christian journey was a humble spirit and an obedient nature so that we could learn from and about God through our daily experiences and the Scriptures.

⁵⁷⁴ Our rebellious nature makes it all the more likely we will listen to the lying spirits. CO 53, 333.

⁵⁷⁵ CO 53, 332.

⁵⁷⁶ Calvin was a tireless preacher and writer of the idea that the Christian life is one of vigilance and taking care. As he wrote in his 1536 *Institutes*: we must take care not to think that the least particle of our salvation is lodged elsewhere"(outside of Christ). 2.16.19. The Christian life is a two-fold battle against our corrupt natures and the deceptions of Satan.

Our vulnerability to Satan's lies is due to our very nature. It is within our nature to be unstable and to prefer confusion and lies to the truth.⁵⁷⁷ When we listen to lies, we deliberately blind ourselves in matters of God. This is the case when we pretend that the message of Scripture is unclear. Satan's aim is very clear. When he feeds our rebellious natures⁵⁷⁸ and induces us to listen to lies, he robs us of the very weapon that we use to defeat Satan, namely, the Scriptures, or the Word of God. Without the Scriptures, we are open to all sorts of lies.⁵⁷⁹

Once more, the onus is on Christians to defend themselves and to make good use of the gospels and doctrines, lest God send them false prophets and absurdities. The daring or *astuce* of Satan is to feed on our nature. Our nature will not change and the tendency to be rebellious will always remain.

⁵⁷⁷ In Calvin's 1561 sermons on the witch at Endor in the book of Samuel, Calvin makes this point once more. People are inclined to consult mediums and spiritualists rather than seek the truth of God. They find the fantastic more interesting. Calvin abhorred the fantastic. As has already been noted, unlike some of his contemporaries who were intrigued by the exotic tales about Satan and witches, he was very sparing in his remarks and did not entertain fantastic stories.

⁵⁷⁸ Calvin writes about the ways in which our nature and the devil interact to tempt when he writes:

"The forms of temptation are many and varied. For wicked conceptions of the heart, provoking us to transgress the law, which either our inordinate desire suggests to us or the devil prompts are temptations. These are not evil of their own nature yet become temptations through the devil's devices, when they are so thrust before our eyes that by their appearance we are drawn away to turn aside from God. And these temptations are either from the right or from the left. From the right are, for example riches, power, honors, which often dull men's keenness of sight by the glitter or seeming goodness they display, and allure with their blandishments, so that, captivated by such tricks and drunk with such sweetness men forget their God. From the left, are for example, poverty, disgrace, contempt, afflictions and the like. Thwarted by hardship and difficulty of these, they become despondent in mind, cast away assurance and hope, and are at last completely estranged from God." *Instit.* 1536 3.20.46.

⁵⁷⁹ CO. 53, 336.

Car nous sçavons que le genre humaine est muable, leger et inconstant, nous sommes d'une nature rebelle à Dieu, nous sçavons qu'il n'y a en nous que vanité et mensonge.⁵⁸⁰

In terms of holding on to doctrine, Calvin meant more than a simple assent to the doctrine. God is to be obeyed. The lying spirits seek to turn us away from this obedience and encourage us to denigrate Scripture. The term "spirit" is used so that we are to be aware of the nature of these temptations and not be misled by the temporal power or authority of the tempter. The outer appearance may be of light,⁵⁸¹ but the source is Satan. He continues along this path by speaking about the messages of the lying spirits.

Among the stories told by the lying spirits, are those which claim that the law and the gospel are good but only rudimentary and perfection is to be found in the doctrines of the holy councils. The devil is behind all of this and has so many disguises that it is imperative that the faithful be well armed at all times. We must pray that we are not taken in by the lying spirits. We who are so warned of the danger, have no excuse.⁵⁸² We must pray that God places a limit on Satan's lies.

⁵⁸⁰ CO 53, 337.

⁵⁸¹ Calvin warns his readers that the ministers of Satan emulate the church. "But the ministers of Satan, by false emulation, like apes began afterwards to make the same boasts, and likewise falsely assumed the name." *Comm.* 1 Tim 4:2

⁵⁸² The idea of having no excuse is found throughout Calvin's works. Although our nature is corrupt, we are morally culpable for our actions insofar as we are not forced into an action but can freely chose without coercion. We who have been forewarned have no excuse at all because we once knew the truth of God. In Calvin's understanding, the Christian life was one of continual sanctification and struggle. Calvin's compatibilist understanding of freedom seems to be at odds with his assertion that our nature is totally corrupt. Calvin's point is that, although our nature is totally corrupt insofar as the image of God that is left within us after the Fall is destroyed, we still remain free because we are not forced to act in one way or another. Since our nature is corrupt, the chances are that we will do evil, but we have a choice because we are not forced externally to do evil. Compatibilism enables Calvin to claim that

There are two aspects here. The first is the cunning nature of the devil himself, and the second is God placing a limit on the daring of the devil. The devil seeks to sow doubt about Scripture,⁵⁸³ replacing it as a source of authority⁵⁸⁴ with different notions of revelation and with other sources.

Lest we have any sympathy for the lying spirits, Paul describes their nature. The nature of the lying spirits or the devil is one of a mortal enemy, the father of lies, who seeks to destroy our souls. He is the very prince of death itself. Once we are convinced of the nature of the devil, it is more likely that we will not follow him. How are we sure that we do not follow the devil's lies? Calvin says that once we learn 'the pure doctrine of the gospel and simplicity found in the Scriptures' we can be sure that we are following the right course. When we listen to Satan's lies, it is also sure that we are not following a man but the very devil himself who will dominate us.⁵⁸⁵ Paul calls those who knew the truth and have turned away, devils, because they wish to be slaves of the

although our natures are corrupt, we are culpable. Yet when Calvin tries to apply the same reasoning to argue that Satan is culpable for evil but God is not, the reasoning seems contradictory.

⁵⁸³ It is a common artifice of Satan to trouble men's consciences under a false pretext of the gospel, that the truth of the gospel may be brought into confusion. *Comm. Col. 1:23*.

⁵⁸⁴ What was authoritative for Calvin? Calvin, like Luther, steered away from speculation about God, the *Deus absconditus*, and noted that it was the task of faith to base itself on God's own revelation (*potentia ordinata*) on what God did rather than what he can do. When this idea was linked with the humanist stress on the original sources, the insistence *sola potentia ordinata* became an insistence on *sola scriptura*. What was authoritative for Calvin lay in the realm of God's initiative or *potentia ordinata*. The devil, in trying to destroy our confidence in Scripture, would not only blind us to God and hence destroy any *pietas* (worship of God) and our access to God, but also rob us of our main weapon against the lies of the devil, which is Scripture. This is what Calvin meant in his sermon when he spoke of being vigilant. The devil seeks to replace the *potentia ordinata* with speculation and lies. The devil seeks to destroy *sola potentia ordinata* and add tradition, for example, or other sources of revelation.

⁵⁸⁵ CO 53 , 341.

devil.⁵⁸⁶ These people are like witches⁵⁸⁷ insofar as they have willingly given themselves over to Satan.⁵⁸⁸ The fact that some people who knew the truth would willingly give in to the lies ought to act as a warning to us.⁵⁸⁹ There are many false doctrines and lies.

The problem seems to be that in order to approach God we must renounce ourselves and not imagine that we can have any special insights.⁵⁹⁰ This is very difficult because people do not wish to renounce themselves or think that their very nature is evil.⁵⁹¹ People are more inclined to believe that there is some good within them and that they can assist in their own salvation. The seducer uses our disbelief in our nature to seduce and entwine us. People who are so deceived try to approach God but never reach God as they are unwilling to die to themselves. They are more inclined to listen to flatteries and lies making the work of the devil easier.

⁵⁸⁶ CO 53, 341.

⁵⁸⁷ CO 53,341. This is one of the very few references in Calvin's sermons that I am aware of that speak of witches.

⁵⁸⁸ Here Calvin makes reference to the pact that exists between Satan and the witch. The notion of a pact or an agreement between the devil and the witch is an early one, probably coming from Byzantine sources by means of the Crusades. The common element in such stories was the idea that one could sell one's soul to the devil in exchange for worldly goods or power. By the 13th century the 'pact' had become a legal document signed in blood. In the 15th century, Jaquier noted that it was the pact that defined witchcraft as heresy because by means of the willing contract, the witch owed her allegiance to the devil. (Jaquier, *Flagellum Haereticum Fascinatorum* (1458)). By 1585 the pact was not only signed in blood but was a tight contract, akin to any secular legal contract with clauses and sub clauses. (see R. H. Robbins, *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology* (New York: Crown, 1959), pp 375-376 for an example of such a pact.)

⁵⁸⁹ We are warned of the great danger of the lies and also of the fact that the lies are not rare or uncommon. The fact that many people give themselves willingly to the lies should also tell us that the lies are seductive and they can trick people. To avoid this trap a change is required in our attitude. The reason that we listen to the lies is because we do not want to be governed by God. It is our rebellious nature that drives us to seek for other sources and eventually to listen to the lying spirits.

⁵⁹⁰ CO 53, 342.

⁵⁹¹ We imagine that we have some special insights because we are convinced that we have some intrinsic goodness and can use this part of our nature to approach God.

Summary

In terms of his offices, the devil in this sermon is once more presented as a tempter and a liar. The lies and the temptations of the devil are designed to make us turn away from the pure truths of the gospel and follow another course. The devil is shown to be one who uses our very nature and vanity as a weapon against us to lead us away from the gospel.

It goes without saying that the devil is presented in this sermon as a deadly enemy of both man and God. The devil seeks to destroy the Kingdom of God by denigrating Scripture and, in so doing, destroy our salvation by causing us to turn away from God.⁵⁹²

By stressing the notion that we are not all bad and can approach God by easier or at least other means, the devil of course interferes with God's notions of how we are to know God. The devil is shown in this sermon as one who blinds us to the identity of the true God. The devil is also shown as one who wishes to blind his victims before he attacks. Yet the temptation and the ruses serve a function. In this case, such ruses are useful to get us to sort through the lies and gain more of an understanding of the pure message of the gospel and the true nature of God. Hence, the devil serves as an

⁵⁹² Calvin also understood that, since God was sovereign, once God had predestined some for salvation, they could not 'fall'. Yet here we are told that the devil can indeed cause us to turn away from salvation and from God. The fall in this case would be a free choice on the part of the individual. While saved individuals cannot 'fall' by external temptations and trials, they can still fall if they willingly choose Satan over God. This is what this sermon is illustrating, as if to shake people out of a false complacency.

instrument to bring us closer to God. In this case, the devil does so not by terror, but by lies and falsehoods that cause us to reflect or “test the spirits.”

1555

Sermon on Deut.4: 6-10, May 1555

Moses is telling the people to guard their souls.⁵⁹³ Calvin explains⁵⁹⁴ this by saying that it means one cannot take enough precaution and care to be vigilant and follow the Lord lest you be lost to the devil.⁵⁹⁵ The admonition to guard our souls⁵⁹⁶ is far from a frivolous one since our hearts are very evil and turned away from God. This makes it easy for us to be lax and succumb to the devil whom we are naturally inclined to follow. The combination of the devil’s attempts and our natures means that we will fight battles throughout our lives.

We have two battles. We battle against our nature but, in addition, we have an active enemy, the devil, who seeks to seduce us with false doctrines. Tricksters can even

⁵⁹³ CO 26, 129.

⁵⁹⁴ Calvin links the soul with the image of God. In order to know about the image of God, Calvin must consider the soul. Calvin rejects Augustine’s notions that the soul is a mirror of the Trinity or that the soul, as Servetus and Calvin understood the Manichees to say, involved a transmission of the divine essence into man. The soul is incorporeal yet it inhabits us. *Instit.* 1.15.6. The soul consists of two parts, the intellect and the will. The intellect distinguishes between objects and the will decides if they are good or bad. The intellect is the ruler of the soul. It was God who provided our soul with intellect so that we may discern good from evil. *Instit.* 1.15.7.

⁵⁹⁵ *Comm.* 1 Tim. 1:20, 1 Thess. 5:9.

⁵⁹⁶ Since our soul is that which seeks to be united with God by intellect and will, if it loses its will by reverting to its natural state and it has its intellect corrupted by means of lies and false doctrines, we will turn away from God.

seduce us with false doctrines and outright errors by using the name of God.⁵⁹⁷ The devil, Calvin warns his parishioners, is often disguised as an angel of light.⁵⁹⁸ In this way, the two components of our souls are vulnerable to attack.⁵⁹⁹ The intellect is under attack by Satan's lies, and the will is vulnerable to our very nature which is rebellious against God.

Summary

The devil is portrayed as one who attacks us and produces lies and errors. By means of lies, Satan attacks our intellect and tempts us to believe the lies, but Satan also uses our fallen nature, or our will against us. The lies also attack our will. Since we are naturally inclined to follow Satan and his lies, the lies also appeal to our unredeemed or fallen or natural nature.

Sermon on Deut. 5:20, July 1555

Calvin speaks here of charity and overlooking sins. We don't wish to have enemies.⁶⁰⁰ This natural reluctance on our part to create enemies makes it easier for us to overlook sins. We see how the sinners offend God but we spare them and therefore

⁵⁹⁷ We have seen this in Calvin's earlier sermons, where he speaks of the devil actually being responsible for the propagation of false gospels to turn people away from the simplicity and truth of the gospels.

⁵⁹⁸ CO 26, 129.

⁵⁹⁹ The two components of the soul for Calvin were the will and the intellect, the intellect being akin to the seat of reason and the will being our moral resolve.

⁶⁰⁰ CO 26, 363.

support the evil.⁶⁰¹ This covering of sins is evil itself.⁶⁰² It is Satan who blinds us into thinking that such tolerance is charity.

Sermon on Gal. 1:1-5, August 1555

This Biblical pericope deals with church fights. The church is plagued with superstitions and new doctrines. Calvin warns that the superstitions and problems are often in the name of Mary and the apostles. He warns his congregation not to be like branches that bend with every new doctrine⁶⁰³ but, rather, to discern what is the truth and what is a trick of Satan.⁶⁰⁴ The devil has many tricks and, if our faith does not rest on the pure truth of God,⁶⁰⁵ it is surely founded on lies.⁶⁰⁶ The devil uses great subtlety in tricking us. He does not expose himself as an enemy of God but, like a ruffian who wishes to seduce a girl, the devil uses flattery and nice words to infect us gradually with

⁶⁰¹ Calvin stressed the importance of not associating with evil. He commented in his 1536 *Institutes*, for example, that one ought not to have any dealing with excommunicated people or those turned over to Satan. 4.12.5-10. Church discipline was Calvin's third mark of the church, after doctrine and the sacraments (Reply to Sadoleto) CO 5, 394.

⁶⁰² Calvin had a very active view of the Christian life. Not only are we to struggle against our own vices and temptations but we are to expose sin and injustice that is around us. Not to do so, or to cover sins, is evil in itself.

⁶⁰³ Calvin wrote to Melancthon, who was having trouble with people in the congregation espousing new doctrines. Calvin's advice was to speak against these troublemakers for it is better to win the approval of God than of men. To Melancthon, 23 August, 1555, LC 3,219.

⁶⁰⁴ The heretic, who is Satan's emissary, CO 11, 439, CO 12, 281-282, is useful insofar as the heretic can test out our hypocrisy. *Comm.* 1 Cor. 11:19.

⁶⁰⁵ What Calvin means by the truth is by no means simple. He referred to the simple pure truth of the gospel that was obvious to all. In Calvin's mind there clearly was a truth, nothing is less tolerable than when God's truth is turned into a lie." *Comm.* Ezek.13:19. Calvin thought that it was possible to distinguish truth from error. A preconceived conviction of God's truth is the foundation of faith. *Instit.* 4.2.5. The Lord is truth, *Instit.* 2.8.3, 1.1.21, and the truth flows from God. The church is to keep this truth and to defend it. Even the theologian has a role to play. The task of the theologian is "to strengthen consciences by teaching things true, sure and profitable." *Instit.* 1.14.4.

⁶⁰⁶ CO 50, 276.

his poison. The devil seeks to seduce⁶⁰⁷ us under the cover of the law of Moses and the ceremonies contained therein.⁶⁰⁸

The devil even interfered with the institution of marriage, as Calvin remarks in sermons 136 and 138 on Deuteronomy. In sermon 136, preached late September 1556, Calvin speaks of the devil entering between the man and the woman to cause fights and discord. In sermon 138, preached in October 1556, Calvin notes that the devil wishes to destroy the noble institution of marriage by advocating abstention and angelic chastity.

Summary

Most of the ideas presented about the devil in these sermons have been dealt with before. The only exception is some new ideas about how the devil will introduce lies. We are told that the lies and false ideas will often be in the name of Mary and the Apostles. In addition, we are told that the devil causes discord and strife and even enters into a marriage to cause fights.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁷ The devil uses the very laws of God to trick people. This is all the more reason why the Christian needs to be armed with Scripture.

⁶⁰⁸ CO 50, 277.

⁶⁰⁹ Marital fights were by no means new. Calvin and the consistory were sometimes called to regulate a marital dispute, be it a wife accusing her husband of beating her, or a wife accusing her husband of desertion, or in some cases, a husband accusing his wife of being a nag.

1557

Sermon on Isaiah, 23 vs 5-10, February 1557

This sermon does not deal with the devil at length, only in passing. Satan is said to be in control of the reprobate of God.⁶¹⁰ In this sermon Calvin speaks of the wrath of God: Who are the instruments of God's ire? According to Calvin they are the ones whom God rejects and are without God's spirit. These are Satan's prey.

1558

Sermon on Eph. 2:1-5, end of May, 1558.

Since this sermon only deals with the devil when it discusses the phrase, "the devil as the prince of the world," I will restrict my remarks to that passage. This section begins in CO 51, 354. Calvin speaks of the devil as the prince of the air, who rules the gullible and foolish. Before Calvin reaches this point in his sermon, he has already discussed our natural condition, which is one of spiritual blindness and deadness.

Et puis, à fin que nous sçachions que ceste mort ne procede pas d'ailleurs que de nos vices, il est dit que nous sommes tous corrompus, qu'il n'y a que fautes, que pechez et offenses en nous, et que toute nostre vie en rend tesmoignage, que les fruicts monstrent quelle est la racine.⁶¹¹

We are rebellious and deceive ourselves about our evil natures until God enlightens us. Yet the evil that we see is not only a function of our nature but also a

⁶¹⁰ Calvin was at his lowest ebb at this point in his Genevan ministry. His enemies attacked him openly and as he lamented in a letter to Farel, "you can have no idea, my dear Farel, with how many ambushes and clandestine machinations Satan daily assaults us." Letter to Farel, 3 Feb. 1557, LC 3,314.

⁶¹¹ CO 51, 354.

function of our being slaves to the devil. Until Jesus rescued us, we were slaves to the devil who dominated our hearts, desires and possessed us.⁶¹² After preaching about our miserable state and ingratitude towards God, Calvin begins to speak of the power of the devil. It is not without reason that the devil is called the Prince of the world. He is called that not because he rules the moon or the sun, but the title refers to his utter tyranny over us. He holds us so tightly that we are not worthy of God governing us. Here again we see the remarkable consistency in Calvin's thought. The title does not mean, as some think, that there is a battle between God and the devil to see who is the stronger.⁶¹³ When Adam rebelled, it was because he could not support or tolerate the sovereignty of God and chose the devil instead.⁶¹⁴ Thus Adam was subjected to the devil. The empire of the devil is in fact a just vengeance of God upon the sins of humanity.⁶¹⁵ The devil is called the prince of the air, to illustrate how he dominates us. The devil is over our heads and, if we take pride, in ourselves and raise our heads in pride we see that the devil is on top of us and is far more powerful. The devil is a tyrant but is different than any earthly tyrant we may be aware of. We know when we are oppressed by earthly tyrants but we do not know our misery under the devil inasmuch as the devil is invisible and spiritual.

⁶¹² Although this is the case, we are still morally free agents and responsible for the evil that we do. Calvin defined a free act as an act that is done without any external pressure.

⁶¹³ CO 51, 356.

⁶¹⁴ *Comm. Eph. 2:2.*

⁶¹⁵ CO 51, 356, also *Comm. Eph. 2:2*: "What is Satan but God's executioner to punish man's ingratitude."

We do not think of the devil as an awful tyrant because unlike earthly tyrants we cannot see the devil.⁶¹⁶ Since the devil can enter unseen, he is far more dangerous than any mortal tyrant. The devil enters our very thoughts. His method of entry ought to convince us of the terrible malice that he is capable of.⁶¹⁷ It is hard for us to understand our nature as once we are touched by God the grace of God, to some extent, masks our true natures.⁶¹⁸ Yet we cannot sustain our state of grace. We would revert to being enemies of God were it not for the grace of God.⁶¹⁹ No matter how we imagine ourselves to be, the human condition apart from God is utter bondage to Satan.

*Car est-il chose plus detestable que de dire que nous sommes subiects du diable, et qu'il ne domine pas tant seulement sur nos corps comme feroit quelque tyran de ce monde: mais qu'il domine en nos ames et en toutes nos pensees?*⁶²⁰

There is nothing that is not corrupted by the devil and filled with his venom. God found us in this miserable state and we are saved from this condition by the pure mercy of God. Yet at the same time the devil can do nothing without God's permission.⁶²¹ As with all of his sermons that deal with the devil, Calvin ends on a note of encouragement.

⁶¹⁶ Our ignorance of the devil is due to our spiritual blindness apart from God. Until God illumines us, we do not perceive our natural state. We imagine instead that we are doing well and perhaps even worship God.

⁶¹⁷ CO 51, 357-358.

⁶¹⁸ Calvin has spoken in the sermons on Jeremiah about the biggest lie that the devil whispers, which is that our nature is good and not evil. This lie makes us imagine that we have no need of God. In Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil, he is constantly stressing what our real nature is like.

⁶¹⁹ CO 51, 359.

⁶²⁰ CO 51, 360.

⁶²¹ "At present, we shall merely subvert the strange absurdity of the Manichees in endeavoring to prove from the passage the existence of two principles, as if Satan could do anything without the Divine

Summary

This sermon does not present any new material in relation to the devil. It only shows Calvin's stress on the sovereignty of God and on our unredeemed nature.

Sermon on Eph. 6:11-17, October 1558

This sermon contains many of the same themes expressed in Calvin's sermons on the temptation of Jesus in the desert in terms the Word of God as a weapon against Satan.

Calvin begins this sermon by declaring that the purpose of Paul's remarks on the devil is not to elicit idle curiosity but rather to warn us against a deadly enemy⁶²² and not to be surprised by his attacks.⁶²³ At first glance, our situation against such an enemy seems utterly hopeless. We are told that the battle we engage with Satan is more difficult than all the battles we wage with human adversaries. Satan is far more cunning and powerful than human foes. When we battle human foes, we battle against men who are inspired by and follow the devil. However, they are not our real enemy.⁶²⁴ To find our real enemy, we must look behind our attackers and enemies to the one whom they

permission. Paul does not allow him the highest authority, which belongs to the will of God alone, but merely a tyranny which God allows him to exercise." *Comm.* Eph. 2:2.

⁶²² *Comm.* 1 Peter 5:8. Calvin speaks of the devil who battles us and is like a lion ready to devour us.

⁶²³ CO 51, 821. These opening remarks really summarize what Calvin has in mind when he speaks of the devil. He was not interested in the exotica surrounding the devil. His only concern was to make Christians aware of the reality of the devil so that they could be warned and prepared.

⁶²⁴ *Comm.* Eph. 6:12.

follow, Satan.⁶²⁵ If we look only to our tormentors and not to the source,⁶²⁶ we will never be able to be victorious. Moreover, Satan wishes to poison us with thoughts of revenge and make us despise God for not helping us.

Calvin goes on to say how the passage has been misused. Some have understood it to mean that God fights with the devil. The sense of the passage is clearly that the devil is under God's control⁶²⁷ and is used to carry out the judgments of God. God holds the devil in check. The movement in this sermon is very much like it was in the Book of Job. Calvin stresses the power of the devil and then moves on to say that the devil, albeit powerful, is under God's control.

Since the fall, the devil is called the prince of the world.⁶²⁸ It was we who gave the devil that title. Since the fall, we became totally captive to our corrupt natures⁶²⁹ and

⁶²⁵ Satan tries to obscure his presence. In some cases he appears as an angel of light. In this case he masks his presence by throwing before him attackers and tormentors. Calvin is no doubt thinking about those who are in the prisons in France. Their true enemy is not the jailer or the tormentors, but Satan himself. We must look beyond the obvious. On December 28, 1557 Calvin brought the plight of the French churches to the attention of the *Conseil* and was able, on January 5, to send 2 ministers from Geneva to minister to the French churches. His letter of December 31 cites one Mme. de Rentigny as an example of faith and courage in the French prisons. His letter to another prisoner, Mlle. de Longemeau on December 14, 1557 speaks directly of the enemies of truth who will tempt: "I am unwilling to let slip an occasion of declaring to you, that if the enemies of the truth are vigilant in pursuing your ruin, there are at least as many children of God who have by no means forgotten you." To Mademoiselle De Longemeau, 14 Dec. 1557, LC 3,389.

⁶²⁶ CO 51, 823.

⁶²⁷ Calvin stressed this point in his sermons on the Book of Job.

⁶²⁸ CO 51, 824.

⁶²⁹ Calvin has been the recipient of much bad press partially as a result of his remarks on our corrupt nature. What Calvin means by our corrupt nature is that, apart from God, we are incapable of approaching God and we are far more inclined to naturally follow the devil. The breach of human sin was so great that it took the death of Jesus to repair the rift that we created between ourselves and God. Our corrupt and sinful natures were not only responsible for the fall but are responsible for our propensity to follow the devil and to turn and rebel against God. Our corrupt nature does not mean that we cannot do anything and are incapable of any good. (although it does mean that we are naturally at

the devil. Yet even though the devil is the prince of the world we must never imagine that he can do whatever he wishes since he is strictly under the control of God.⁶³⁰ It may seem to us that the devil is all powerful, but that is because, since the fall, we are so alienated from the knowledge of the one who created us that our senses are twisted and corrupt. Our senses are so twisted and our judgment so perverted that indeed Satan rules and dominates us.⁶³¹ In this way, it is easy to imagine that Satan, and not God, rules the world. Satan is called the prince of the air. Satan's title as prince of the air does not arise from the created order but is a consequence of the fall of man.⁶³²

In terms of resisting such a prince, we are always trying to inflate ourselves and imagine that we can handle anything. Yet we must be aware that we cannot battle Satan on our own and must disavow ourselves of all false presumptions. The Scriptures refer to us as the slaves of Satan if we do not have Jesus as our King. Since Jesus is not enthroned within us, the devil is our prince and has authority over us.⁶³³ Our slavery to

odds with God). Calvin understood that we have a seed of governance within us, enabling us apart from God to create good and orderly governments. The Protestant insistence upon our corrupt nature, or as Luther put it our inward turning wills is in contrast to the more rosy view of human nature that was held by the Roman church of Calvin's day.

⁶³⁰ In fact to imagine this is to underestimate God. We can never imagine that the reign of God will be destroyed by the devil and his power. To imagine this is to have lost sight of the clarity that is in God.

⁶³¹ We give Satan permission to rule over us by virtue of our corrupt natures. We are, therefore, willing slaves to Satan. The idea of being willing is akin to the notion of a pact, making us no better than witches and our situation all the more repugnant.

⁶³² CO 51, 824. I use the term 'fall of man' because there was also the fall of the angels.

⁶³³ It is fascinating that there is no choice or middle ground. Our will is dominated either from Satan or from God. Yet this does not relieve us of moral responsibility. We are still culpable for all of our actions. When we do a wicked action, we are to blame and yet in a way the ultimate fault lies with the devil. Calvin notes that all events have three wills, the will of the devil, the will of the person and the will of God. In the Book of Job, the Sabbeans were culpable for their actions. They followed their own wills, but also there was the will of God who chose to test Job and, lastly, the will of Satan who used

Satan is a willing one. We are slaves to Satan and blinded to the truth of God.⁶³⁴ We remain slaves of Satan until God gives us our freedom. It is in Christ that we obtain our liberty from Satan.

Calvin adds that his remarks are not to terrify but to make us aware of our condition and our great need for God's help.⁶³⁵ We must pray that God not leave us in our natural state.

God exposes us to attacks.⁶³⁶ We are to resist the ambushes and attacks but not to let this deter us from our ultimate course and goal. The way in which we build character as Christians is by resisting temptation and by enduring temptations and trials by means of our perseverance.⁶³⁷ It is not enough to battle hard for a month or even for a year. The Christian life is one of continual battle.⁶³⁸ God put us in the world to battle until we reach our eternal rest. The earth is not merely a pilgrimage for the faithful, but a camp where we have enemies who attack us day and night. This is our hope, no matter how

the Sabbeans to afflict Job. Events arise from the meeting of these three wills. Although God is in control, the devil and we are responsible for our actions.

⁶³⁴ CO 51, 825.

⁶³⁵ This is a point that I have made all along in my study of Calvin's sermons on the devil. The point of the discussion about the devil is not to terrify but to bring us closer to God.

⁶³⁶ The expression that Calvin uses is that God does not wish us to be tree trunks. CO 50, 825. Yet while God may expose us to attacks, this is not the same as saying God caused or willed the attacks to happen.

⁶³⁷ The church in Paris was praised by Calvin for its endurance and perseverance under duress.

⁶³⁸ Calvin had the situation of the persecuted French very much in mind. He wrote on December 14th 1557 to Henri King of Navarre who was sympathetic to the Reformation, urging him to use his influence to stop the persecutions and bring their cause to the King of France. To the King of Navarre, 14 Dec. 1557, LC 3, 384-389.

severely we will be tested. Calvin closes this section of his sermon with an assurance that God will not abandon us to Satan.⁶³⁹

Calvin goes on to say that we should never despair that there is no paradise on earth free from troubles or persecutions.⁶⁴⁰ It is better to realize that we are in constant battle and have calamities without number. We must be armed to overcome them. We must not plead for all to be well⁶⁴¹ against the will of God.

Bien est vray qu'il nous pourroit traiter plus doucement, il nous pourroit tellement mettre à l'escart que nos ennemis ne pourroyent approcher de nous, que

⁶³⁹ CO 51, 825. If God were to abandon us to Satan, we would be lost.

⁶⁴⁰ A reference to the French troubles?

⁶⁴¹ Calvin was faced with a real dilemma. The persecutions in France persisted and he was faced with writing letters to his compatriots in prison. At times the letters encouraged them to keep the faith and not take the easy way out, which would be to recant. At other times he applauded the steadfastness of some in prison. Yet it was clear that many if not all of those in jail would be put to death. How can God be loving? It appears from these letters and his sermons that deal with suffering and the devil Calvin had three points to make: 1) suffering is an inevitable consequence of the Christian life; 2) suffering is never without hope and God does not abandon us totally to Satan; 3) our suffering is somehow redemptive. Calvin understood that suffering comes as a result of our unredeemed nature. Although we may be predestined to salvation, we choose to sin at times under no external compulsion. We sin freely as a result of our very nature and this rebellion causes suffering. Satan merely fans the flames of our natures. Yet despite the fact that we rebel, God never allows Satan to totally control or dominate us, so there is always the love of God behind our suffering. God assures us that we will never suffer more than we can bear. Suffering, therefore, is never devoid of the love of God. Our hope is to call upon God to help us. Thus suffering is never empty of God's love and there is always the hope to call upon God. Yet this does not always mean deliverance. That is what Calvin meant when he instructed people not to plead against the will of God. We will suffer. The redemptive aspect of suffering enters in another way. Insofar as suffering enables a Christian to overcome some of their nature and to draw closer to God and become more like Christ, the suffering of an individual is redemptive. The Christian life is one of struggling against ourselves and also the devil. To fight evil we must be ready on two fronts. We must be well armed. As seen in previous sermons, when we are attacked, we must never look to the attacker but beyond to Satan himself. When we battle we must not become passive but must be active in our resistance to the devil and his lies. Victory rests in overcoming the devil, not in demolishing our mortal enemies. In this way, Calvin could write to the prisoners in France, who had no hope of overcoming the French jailers, and speak of their ultimate victory over the devil. They were never to recant as that would be capitulation to the lies and schemes of the devil. One thinks of modern day figures such as Anne Frank and Corrie Ten Boom who refused to give in to evil and capitulate to the devil.

nous ne souffririons nulle molestes: mais il ne luy plaist pas. Il faut que nous ployons le col, et que chacun s'appreste au combat auquel Dieu nous appelle.⁶⁴²

We must simply bear it and get ready for battle. Calvin uses the example of the process of refining ore and adds that there is no rest.

After establishing the inevitability of battle and the need for armour, Calvin begins to speak of the armour against Satan. He begins with an admonition that it is useless to inquire why Paul used terms like the shield and the sword and the helm to refer to specifics of the Christian armour. The point Paul was making is that in our fights against the devil we are required to be armed from head to foot. The passage tells us that we must be vigilant and prepared.⁶⁴³ Paul also uses the terminology of the armour of Christ to indicate that we cannot arm ourselves against the devil but must accept the armour that God gives us in our fight.

The first weapon is the word of truth.⁶⁴⁴ When we serve God, we must do so with all of our hearts and not simply put on a show for the benefit of those around us. Our service to God must be devoid of hypocrisy.⁶⁴⁵ Justice is also a hallmark of our service to God. Yet we must never flatter ourselves into thinking that we are doing well, as the

⁶⁴² CO 51, 826.

⁶⁴³ CO 51, 827.

⁶⁴⁴ *Comm.* Acts 9:22, 4:1, 6:8, 19:23.

⁶⁴⁵ This was one of the main points in Calvin's sermons on the Book of Job. In his comments on the devil's remarks "does Job serve you for nothing," Calvin had argued that the most insidious poison that can take root in our hearts and that turn them away from God is hypocrisy since it is so often a sin that is undetected.

devil can easily twist us away from our integrity such that we come to believe that we no longer need God.⁶⁴⁶

We are never to give in or relax in our service lest we be exposed to the subtle attacks of the devil.⁶⁴⁷ Our service, without the armour and help of God, is frail and useless. Calvin warns his parishioners never to imagine that they can serve God without God's help. We must not only be vigilant but we need also to be constantly checking our armour. Calvin then leaves the battlefield and proceeds to discuss the nature of the world.

The world, Calvin argues, is a place of shadows.⁶⁴⁸ In order to see clearly, we require the light of Christ. Although we hear the gospel, we cannot profit from it if we do not use the light of Christ and if we are rooted in the world and its cares.⁶⁴⁹ We must leave the world and be purged of all of our ties with Satan.⁶⁵⁰ There is even the possibility of a fall once we have believed and of our own free choice going back to the

⁶⁴⁶ CO 51, 828.

⁶⁴⁷ Since the devil is the father of lies, it is imperative that our service to God be free of hypocrisy.

⁶⁴⁸ It would be easy to imagine that this is an allusion to Plato's allegory of the cave. Yet the world as a place of shadows was a very well-known and common reference in the late Middle Ages. Huizinga, *Autumn of the Middle Ages*, describes the late mediaeval world as a time that was rife with symbolism (although the religious symbols were losing their potency).

⁶⁴⁹ Calvin is not advocating a retreat from the world. He is saying that we should put worldly things in perspective and realize that the most important thing is our relationship with Christ.

⁶⁵⁰ CO 51, 830. Calvin's logic is quite simple. We are by nature slaves of Satan and require the grace of God to save us. God does so, but we cannot profit from our freedom if we do not sever our ties with the lies and illusions of Satan. Calvin considered our going back to the devil a free choice on our part since we do not act under any external pressure to do so. The decision, therefore, to leave Satan and follow God must be one of our own making.

devil. Calvin hints that God may give us over to the devil.⁶⁵¹ The efficacy of the gospel in our lives depends upon our efforts and active resistance of the world and the devil. Paul uses the title the “gospel of peace” to give us courage in the midst of our daily battles. Yet although we battle and are surrounded by enemies, we would die one thousand times an hour except God helps us.⁶⁵² The gospel will give us peace in our battles. The peace comes from accepting God’s help in resisting evil.

The shield of faith is a fitting analogy because, like a shield, faith will repel all the flaming arrows that the enemy throws at us. Satan does not only use violent means like flaming arrows but subtle ruses⁶⁵³ and lies to attack us. The term, flaming arrow, is used to illustrate the deadly nature of Satan’s attacks.⁶⁵⁴ We are confident in our armour as we have the armour of God and the protection of Christ to ward off the blows. We have the protection of God and we have the protection of Christ who takes care of our salvation and has promised to be a faithful guardian of our souls. Satan’s plan is to make us despair of the care and grace of God and to make us think that God has abandoned us. Satan encourages us to ask useless and frivolous questions about this passage, such as a detailed inquiry into the nature of the armour, and thereby make us miss the point of the passage.

⁶⁵¹ Whether this is temporary or forever is a matter of speculation. Calvin understood that God foreordained some to perdition and some to salvation. Election stood against reprobation.

⁶⁵² CO 51, 830.

⁶⁵³ *Comm.* 2 Tim. 4:4, 2 Thess. 2:1.

⁶⁵⁴ CO 51, 832, also *Comm.* 2 Thess. 1:1.

To ward off the blows, we must also look to the example of Christ. If we are tempted to gluttony, we have the example of Christ when he declared that all meats are created for our use.⁶⁵⁵ Should we be tempted to self-glorification, we must bear in mind that the life of Christ was always set against this. How are we to make use of the gospel? We must contemplate the faith.⁶⁵⁶ We must know that the promises⁶⁵⁷ of God cannot fail us and that we have God's word of protection and salvation.⁶⁵⁸ Thus, faith is like a shield. When the condition of the faithful is less than favourable, God protects us all the more against the devils of hell. We must always be aware of the force, power and violence of Satan and of his tricks and ruses. To combat this, we must involve God and know the use of his word.

Summary

In addition to painting a now familiar image of Satan as tempter, enemy and deceiver, in this sermon Calvin goes on to discuss the weaknesses of the devil and outlines our methods of defense. While in other sermons he noted that our method of defense was to approach God and ask for his help, in this sermon, by outlining the 'armour' of God, he speaks more clearly about how the faithful battle the devil.

⁶⁵⁵ It is interesting to note that Calvin uses the example of gluttony. In the sermons that dealt with the temptations in the desert, Calvin took great pains to point out the first temptation was not to gluttony.

⁶⁵⁶ CO 51, 833.

⁶⁵⁷ In part this is what Calvin meant when he spoke of the use of the word. To use the word means that we must not only read the Scriptures but apply them in our daily battle against the devil.

⁶⁵⁸ It is evident that to contemplate the faith was very much an experiential matter for Calvin. To contemplate the faith meant looking at our lives and reflecting on the promises that are in the Scriptures. Such comfort gives the faithful courage in the face of their enemies, as they know that God is with them.

The chief weapon is the word of truth. This is not merely bibliolatry: but when Calvin used such a term, he used it in conjunction with humbly and obediently serving God. The word of truth is not just the words of Scripture, but the living word rooted in our hearts and acted on in obedience. As Calvin notes, the gospel is of no use or profit to us unless we purge ourselves of ties with Satan and hold fast to Christ. The gospel of peace refers to the peace that comes when we release ourselves from Satan and battle him with the help of God.

Satan attempts to bring us to despair so that we will not use the weapons against him. The sermon is interesting in that in it Calvin also speaks of the example of Christ. It is important that we battle the devil and have the tools at our disposal; but to know how to use such weapons, we need only look at the example of Christ, specifically, his use of the word.

1559

Genesis Sermons

While one can find remarks about the devil within Calvin's sermons on the Book of Genesis, it is really only in his sermons on Chapter Three of Genesis that there is any detailed consideration given to the devil. I will only analyze those sermons on Genesis that discuss the devil at length. The Genesis sermons were only recently discovered and are in the process of being edited for publication. The references that I make in this text are to the actual folio numbers as one would find them in the archives of Geneva. An edited copy of the Genesis sermons before they were published, was made available to

me by the editor himself, Max Engammare.⁶⁵⁹ The page numbers I cite refer to the text as it was given to me by the editor, Max Engammare. The text will be published in a forthcoming edition of the *Supplementa Calviniana*, SC 8, but the page numbers that Engammare refers to and that I cite in my work may not be the same as will appear in there.

As Prof. Engammare has amply demonstrated, the Genesis sermons are fascinating in themselves, apart from any remarks about the devil. It is often noted that when God made clothes for Adam and Eve it was because he had compassion on them. Calvin argues that the clothing represents an article of shame and that the wearing of clothing is a constant reminder of our fallen state. This is a demonstration of the treasures that can be found within Calvin's sermons. Calvin has often been depicted as a pious kill-joy or a prudish ascetic. Yet, the sermons show that Calvin thought clothing was not an article of modesty but of shame and a reminder of our fallen nature. Our natural, unfallen state is that of nudity. With this thought, we turn our attention to Chapter Three of the Genesis sermons.

Contextual Remarks

The sermons on Chapter Three are relatively late sermons, from October 3 to 18, 1559. The global context has already been discussed in the sermons on the temptations

⁶⁵⁹ Prof. Engammare has saved me a costly trip to Geneva as well as a course in cryptology. From what Prof. Engammare has told me, the script was not easy to decipher or read.

of Jesus in the desert and will not be repeated.⁶⁶⁰ I will here restrict my remarks to any immediate context based on Calvin's letters and the registry records.

Sermon on Gen. 3:1-3, October 3, 1559

Calvin begins this sermon with an affirmation that our natures are totally inclined towards evil. We cannot on our own turn towards the good, as some philosophers claim. Our condition is far more serious than a weakness. Our corruption is not a matter of externals but of a deep interior condition. The evil comes not from without but from within. With this prologue on the source of our corruption, Calvin proceeds to the origin of our evil nature, which was the fall of man.

The devil chose the serpent, since the serpent was the most subtle and perhaps most intelligent of all God's creatures. In this way, Satan perverts what is good into what is evil by choosing such a fine creature. In addition,⁶⁶¹ the devil knew that this was the beast that would most likely be able to trick Eve and Adam, as it was the finest of God's animals. Calvin then goes on to say that certain people make a great mockery of the Scriptures when they say that Moses was telling a fable, since of course serpents don't speak.⁶⁶² In so doing, these individuals are actually undermining the faith in all of the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁶³ The term 'fable' in addition to its connections with those whom

⁶⁶⁰ In this regard, see my remarks on context as found in Chapter Three.

⁶⁶¹ fol. 53(a), p. 2. What this means is page 2 of folio number 53 a which is found in the archives of Geneva. The page number is Engammare's page number of his transcription.

⁶⁶² Here it is interesting to note that, for Augustine, the serpent spoke but did not understand what it was saying. *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI, xxviii.

⁶⁶³ Here the word 'fable' is used. Calvin made the same claim in his work, *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins qui se nomment spirituelz*, Geneva 1545. "Nous avons desja dict, que du

Calvin felt were Libertine in sympathy, also had links with the allegorical meanings ascribed to the Scriptures in mediaeval preaching. Calvin disavowed allegorical meaning in favour of what he called the 'plain sense' of the text.⁶⁶⁴

When Eve heard the serpent speak she knew it was something extraordinary and thus paid more attention to what was being said. It is clear however that the devil did not make the serpent speak. The serpent spoke with the permission of God.⁶⁶⁵ Here we have Calvin returning to his point of the sovereignty of God. God was in control. While the devil used the serpent, there is no creature of God which, if God wishes, cannot be used to tempt us. The world is full of temptations that are used to exercise our faith and purge us.⁶⁶⁶ The serpent therefore, is neither unique nor a symbol of the devil.⁶⁶⁷ The serpent was used by Satan with God's permission to tempt Eve. Having finished with the serpent, Calvin proceeds to discuss the method of temptation.

commencement, ilz se moquoyent apertement, quand on leur alleguoit l'Escriture, ne dissimulans point qu'ils la tenoyent pour fable." CO. 7, 173.

⁶⁶⁴ The plain sense of the text, is anything but plain. Calvin believed in the notion of *sola scriptura* and that, since God revealed Himself by means of the Scriptures, the Scriptures should be able to be interpreted by anyone who was a disciple of Christ and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Calvin thought the Scriptures were self-evident. Calvin's notion of the plain sense of the text came then from his conviction that the mind of the author and the literal sense of the text were one and the same thing. How did Calvin 'know' he was being true to the mind of the author? Calvin believed that this was the work of the Holy Spirit. For Calvin, Scripture is a jumble until the Holy Spirit enables one to read and discern what is in the text. Since the Holy Spirit is a person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit would see to it that the mind of the author of the Scripture is expressed in the literal sense of the text. Why the literal sense as opposed to an allegorical or symbolic sense? Calvin believed that the Scriptures were part of God's accommodation towards us. Wherein God would use the simplest language and terms to communicate with us and would not use confusing allegories or symbols.

⁶⁶⁵ fol. 53(a), p. 3.

⁶⁶⁶ fol. 53(a), p. 3.

⁶⁶⁷ Calvin notes that there are some who imagined the serpent not to be a serpent but an allegory for the devil himself.

The method of temptation involved the question, is it true that God forbade you to eat of all the trees that are in the garden? The fact that the temptation revolved around the question "Is it true," shows that Satan's method was to cast doubt or to show how absurd God's argument was. Why did God forbid one tree? What is God hiding from you? Calvin shows the subtle nature of the devil insofar as one question leads to many questions. Why would God create something that is not useful or that we cannot use? In fact, since God made the world for our use, why this tree? Eve now imagined that God's command was simply illogical and unreasonable. The devil hides himself and does not show his horns. His method was subtle and began by asking "Is it true?" The devil did not come out and say that in forbidding Eve to eat the fruit, God was simply being capricious. This, Calvin notes, was what the devil implied but Satan, like the serpent, comes about his point in a sneaky, twisting way.⁶⁶⁸ To cast doubts is the most effective way to attack our faith. Each time we doubt, our faith receives a shock and, finally, can be reversed or lost altogether.

Calvin was no stranger to doubt.⁶⁶⁹ At this time in his ministry, the opposition from the city magistrates was a thing of the past but there was a far more serious threat. Calvin was well aware of the tortures that awaited the French Huguenots and many of

⁶⁶⁸ "*Bref, il est tortu comme un serpent.*" fol. 53(a), p. 4.

⁶⁶⁹ "If God let us remain long in grief and be almost consumed by it, we cannot but feel, humanly speaking, as if he had forgotten us. When the anxiety this provokes seizes the mind of man, it plunges him in profound unbelief, so that he no longer hopes for any remedy. But if faith comes to his aid, he who thought God hostile or alien to him beholds in the mirror of its promise God's hidden and distant grace. [Christians] oscillate between these two emotions: between the occasions when Satan, by displaying the signs of God's wrath, drives them to despair and ruin, and those occasions when faith, recalling them to its promises, teaches them to wait patiently and rest in God until he again shows his

the missionaries that he sent to evangelize France. He had written to the French King and had tried to influence Henri de Navarre to influence the court of France but his efforts did not succeed. Calvin must have wondered if he was doing the right thing. Moreover, there were the daily problems involved in trying to model Geneva into a Christian city. In order to address some of these problems, the Consistory was set up and there were many means to educate the Genevan people to worship and practice the reformed faith and yet, as the records of the Consistory show, the people were still recalcitrant and kept to their old practices and beliefs. In addition to doctrinal confusion, Calvin despaired of the conspicuous consumption of the Genevans. As the records of the Consistory of September 27, 1559 show, Nicholas de Gallars protested that conspicuous consumption and excess cause great scandal. De Gallars protested the massive banquets. On October 11, perhaps as a follow-up to the protests of De Gallars, the records of the Consistory show by-laws being passed that limited the number of courses in a banquet to four.⁶⁷⁰

Returning to the sermon, Calvin goes on to analyze the method of questioning by suggesting yet another doubt that the question of the serpent may have raised in the minds of Adam and Eve, in this case, to doubt whether or not God had a right to forbid the eating of the fruit. After all, did God not know that this command would be too hard and too foolish to follow?⁶⁷¹ The devil seeks to lead us into rebellion by questioning

fatherly face...Faith does not obtain the victory at the first encounter but, exercised by many trials,[only] finally emerges the victor." *Comm. Psa. 22:2*. Also *Comm. Psa. 73:11* and *Gen. 42:9*.

⁶⁷⁰ *Annales*, CO 21,706.

⁶⁷¹ fol. 53(a), p. 4.

God. As Calvin notes, we cannot question and it is far better for us to have teachable hearts open to God.

Nous aurons beaucoup profité, quand nous aurons appris de nous rendre ainsi docilles, car le commencement de la foy, c'est de nous assubiectionner simplement à Dieu, de n'estre point sages à nostre fantasie.⁶⁷²

Calvin comments that such obedience does not lead to blind faith. Rather, such obedience shows that it is folly to try to control God or question God. If something does not please us or fit our whims, we cannot question God. Our attitude is to listen and apply what is said without embellishments or additions. We need to approach God and God's commands with suitable humility. Calvin notes that God's doctrines or words are found throughout the Scriptures.⁶⁷³ He adds that the temptation to reject certain passages of Scriptures, to question the commands of God, is a diabolical plot.⁶⁷⁴ Thus the method of temptation was to get Eve to question the logic of God. As Calvin adds, this is the same temptation that we face when we are tempted to question what God says to us in Scripture and to reject some doctrines as nonsense.

The temptation to question God's commands under the guise of appearing clever or wise is in fact the wisdom or cleverness of the devil that seeks to diminish the

⁶⁷² fol. 53(a), p. 5.

⁶⁷³ Calvin adds a polemic here. In speaking of those who agree that the doctrines in the Bible are to be followed, he adds that there are those who balk at the eternal election of God. They claim that they do not find this to their taste and thus reject it, fol. 53(a), p. 6 We cannot judge God's commands with our own reason. The lesson that we are to learn is that, when we find a doctrine that we think is absurd, we are not to give into this thought but, rather, subject ourselves to God.

⁶⁷⁴ fol. 53(a), p. 6.

kingdom of God, in this case by getting us to question some of its premises. Thus there is the danger of questioning.

Satan's method also involves doubt, which is the second danger that we face when approaching God's commands. There are of course many pretenders and one must first ascertain whether or not the doctrine we hear is of God. Once we are sure that it is, we must, says Calvin, fling all doubt away from us. The devil seeks to turn us here and there, making our faith waver and doubts abound. To rebuff doubts and temptations, we must stick to God's Word as our shield. The devil indeed can disguise himself but his aim is always the same, that is, the devil seeks to turn us away from the pure simplicity of the faith that we have in the Word of God. This was seen in the temptations of Jesus in the desert and it is seen in these Genesis sermons. Finally, when we are to obey God we must do so with confidence. Obedience to God can overcome temptations.

Et ainsi que nous avisions bien à nous, sachans que, quand il est question d'obeir à nostre Dieu, il faut que nous aions une telle certitude en nous, que nous soions asseurez de ne pouvoir fallir, quand nous luy serons obeissans et que cela soit pour surmonter toutes tentations.⁶⁷⁵

In sowing doubt in the mind of Eve, the devil is implying that God is making fun of Eve by saying she could eat all the fruits except one. Had Eve fought off the devil then, the earth would have remained a paradise. The warning to us is clear. We are not to give in to the temptations and trials of the devil but to resist and fight. While it is true

⁶⁷⁵ fol. 53(a), p. 7.

that God will not let us down and with his virtue we can overcome all temptations, we are not to be lax or to sleep in our resistance against temptations and evil.⁶⁷⁶

While Eve at first resisted, eventually she gave. Once more this is a lesson for us to be constantly on the watch for the trials and the assaults of the devil. Calvin warns that we are to endure trials and to persevere in them. Perseverance is a gift of God.

Et que nous le requerions, s'il nous a soustenuz pour un coup, qu'il continue; s'il nous a donné aujourd'huy vertu, que demain il l'augmente de plus en plus. Et selon qu'il luy plaira que nous soions tentez, qu'ainsi il nous arme de force à ce que nous demeurions invincible, et qu'il nous rafraichisse sa vertu.⁶⁷⁷

How do we resist Satan?

Et cependant que nous cognoissions le moyen de resister à Sathan, c'est à savoir d'autant que Dieu s'est monstré si benyn et si humain envers nous, que nous soions retenuz en son amour. Car qui est cause de nous distraire de luy et de nous en allienner du tout, sinon que nous ne pouvons gouster sa bonté? La vanitez de ce monde, les delices, les voluptez nous eblouyssent les yeux et Sathan a le moyen de nous seduyre. Et pourquoy? D'autant que nous ne pouvons pas prendre nostre plaisir en Dieu. Car si nous cognoissions que toute nostre felicité gist d'adherer à luy, comme il en est parlé au psaume, [Psalm 73:28 "mais quant à moi, il m'est bon de m'adjoindre à Dieu."] il est certain que nous serions muniz contre ces allechemens qui sont pour abuser ceulx qui sont despourvuz de sens et de raison. Puis qu'ainsi est donc, que nous apliquions, tant qu'il nous sera possible, tous noz sens à mediter et jour et nuict la bonté de Dieu envers nous et les grace infinies qu'il nous a elargies, et que nous soions raviz en son amour par ce moyen là, et que nous despitions le diable, quand il taschera de nous esloigner de la fontaine de tous biens.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ Calvin did not dwell on the fact that Eve 'fell' but instead commented that this is to show us that we can never be lax in our fights against temptations and trials. Eve's lesson is that our life is one of constant battle.

⁶⁷⁷ fol. 53(a), p. 8.

⁶⁷⁸ fol. 53(a), p. 9.

Unlike in the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert, where we are encouraged to resist the devil by a keen knowledge of the Scriptures and meditations on them, in this sermon the way in which we are to resist the devil is not to dwell on what God has not given us, in this case the tree, but, rather, to reflect on the goodness and love of God towards us.

Calvin returns to the devil by commenting on the latter's reply to Eve that she and Adam would not die, but God did not wish that their eyes would become opened and they would know everything. As Calvin notes, when the devil sees but a little opening, he uses it to his advantage. Thus we must be fully aware of the ruses of the devil. Moreover, we are always to utilize the armour of God. When we begin to doubt the Word of God we are lost, as this is the chief armour that we have against the devil's attacks. Calvin adds that he does not have time in this sermon to analyze the words of the devil to Eve.

Summary

In this sermon, one has almost a recapitulation of all the themes that Calvin has spoken of in other sermons that deal with the devil. The first point that Calvin makes is that God is in control and it was God who gave the devil permission or leave to use the serpent to tempt Eve. Calvin did not consider that the serpent was the devil, or was another form of the devil; instead, the serpent was merely an instrument used by the devil.

Calvin spends a good deal of time preaching about temptation. As we have seen in other sermons, he was always very keen to have his parishioners understand how they would be tempted so that they could be forewarned and ready. In this case, the method is the most deadly, that is, causing Eve to doubt the Word of God. In Calvin's mind, such a temptation was not trifling but deadly because the Word of God is our only weapon against Satan. Once doubt is sown about the veracity of the Word of God, then it is sown about the goodness of God and finally we become helpless in the face of Satan as we no longer are able or willing to call upon God.

What is somewhat unique about this sermon is that Calvin stresses that the method offered for resisting Satan is to obey God and to dwell on the goodness of God. In previous sermons, the method offered to resist Satan was to be well versed and steeped in our knowledge of the Scriptures so that, once rooted in our heart, they can be a weapon against Satan. This was the case for his early sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. Now we have a more experienced Calvin who notes that the way to resist the devil is not to concentrate on negative things or restrictions, as in the case of the ONE forbidden tree, but rather to think of the goodness of God towards us. There would appear to be a stress on the experience of the believer at this point. Once more, we have our daily experience used and valued as a means to resist Satan and to grow closer to God.

Sermon on Gen. 3:4-6, October 4, 1559

Calvin begins this sermon with a recapitulation of the methods that the devil uses in his assaults. The devil does not attack us openly but is subtle and disguised, so much so that we are not even aware of the attacks of the devil unless we are careful. It is interesting that Calvin does not begin with what the serpent said to Eve but, rather, with a warning that the devil's temptations are not obvious but subtle. Had the devil openly suggested to Eve to go against God, he would never have succeeded in his temptation since Eve would not have listened.⁶⁷⁹

The way in which we become aware of such tactics and resist Satan, Calvin repeats, is to *tenir si fermes à la parole de Dieu, que quand le diable usera de toutes ruses qu'il est possible pour nous en destourner, que nous persistions en la fermeté de nostre foy.*⁶⁸⁰ If we do not do this, of course, the devil can gain a foothold with us and lead us into rebellion against God. Eventually, if we persist in not listening to God we will become so hardened and unscrupulous that we will be so far from God that we will not care to even look for reconciliation.⁶⁸¹

Calvin uses the idea of rebellion to discuss the actual sin of Adam and Eve. He has prepared his listeners for the theme of rebellion against God and has warned them to be prepared for Satan's attacks since Satan wishes to induce them to rebel against God. He asks: what was the nature of the sin? Was it simply that they ate a fruit that was

⁶⁷⁹ fol. 61(a), p. 1.

⁶⁸⁰ fol. 61(a), p. 1.

⁶⁸¹ fol. 61(a), p. 2.

forbidden? To argue or think this is clearly foolish and childish, observes Calvin. He says that some people fast from certain fruits as a result. Yet a fast is only useful insofar as it prepares us to pray to God and to confess our sins and ask for mercy.⁶⁸² In and of itself it has no value. The sin of Adam and Eve was that they listened to Satan who sowed doubts in their minds about what God had said. Satan plainly accused God of lying and, at this point, does not rely on subterfuge but openly attacks God and blasphemes, as Calvin puts it, in 'full voice'. The devil wished to supplant God and take his place. Thus, the sin of Adam and Eve was not that they ate a fruit but rather that they disobeyed God and thought that God had lied. They turned away from the Word of God. At this point, Calvin has set the stage for the consequences.

Calvin has often stressed the need for the Word of God because this is our sole weapon against the devil. By showing that Adam and Eve had turned away from the Word of God, Calvin showed that they were defenceless against the devil and thus unable to resist temptations. Yet, it is not enough to know the enormity of the sin of Adam and Eve.⁶⁸³ It is imperative to look at the temptation of Adam and Eve from the point of view of knowing how the devil operates and tempts. The source of all evil is found in turning away from God. The first lesson, says Calvin, is to learn that we must subject ourselves to the majesty of God and capitulate to our whims.⁶⁸⁴

⁶⁸² fol. 61(a), p. 2.

⁶⁸³ fol. 61(a), p. 3. At this point we see once again Calvin's emphasis on utility. One can dwell on the enormity of the fall of Adam and Eve but that will not achieve anything. Rather, we are to learn about the reality and subtle nature of temptation. This is what we are to learn from this passage.

⁶⁸⁴ fol. 61(a), p. 3.

The second lesson, given the nature and method of the devil, is to listen to the Word of God. We must have faith in the Word of God. Faith is the mother and root of obedience. We must simply know and have a deep confidence in the fact that all that God teaches is good and just. If this is the case, the devil will not tempt us with his promises.⁶⁸⁵ We are so weak and fallible and susceptible to Satan that our only comfort can come if we put our trust in God.

La paix donc et le repos de nos consciences gist et consiste en ce que nous puissions nous remettre du tout entre les mains de Dieu. Bref, tout ce qui est desirable à nostre felicité et salut, il fault que nous cognoissions que Dieu nous l'offre par le moyen de sa parole, et que là, nous ne trouverons que redire, et que iamais nous ne serons frustrez de nostre attente, en y cherchant tout nostre bien et salut. Voilà pourquoy i'ay dit que la foy est la racine d'obeissance.⁶⁸⁶

How did sin enter into Adam and Eve? By means of the ears, or, as Calvin calls them, windows to receive the voice of Satan.⁶⁸⁷ If, instead, we apply our ears to the Word of God, then the devil can find no way to enter us. The devil has his empire over humanity because we listen to him.⁶⁸⁸ Yet if we listen instead to God, we will become invincible in our battles with the devil. The devil will never cease to battle us, and will apply infinite ruses against us, but we have the choice to listen to the Word of God. Here

⁶⁸⁵ fol. 61(a), p. 3.

⁶⁸⁶ fol. 61(a), p. 3.

⁶⁸⁷ fol. 61(a), p. 3.

⁶⁸⁸ This reminds one of Calvin's analysis of the phrase 'prince of the world'. As Calvin observes in his sermons, the devil is the prince of the world because we listen to the devil and give him that power over us. The same point is being made here. The devil is not portrayed as so powerful that we cannot resist and have no chance (although without the help of God this is clearly the case). The devil, rather, is shown as one who tries to seduce us with his voice and the choice of whether or not we listen to him and become his slave is up to us. Calvin makes the point that the devil dominates us because we listen to him. In his sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert, as we have seen, Calvin makes the same point. The devil is the prince of the world because we have crowned him.

we see a bit of a shift. In previous sermons, Calvin has spoken of the Word of God and how we must know and use it in our battles with the devil, but here he is adding the dimension of faith to the picture. We must first have faith and confidence in the Word of God and know in our hearts that God's words are for our benefit and salvation; after this, we can listen to the Word of God and allow it to grow in our hearts. Our faith will make it possible for us to be obedient to the Word of God. At this point, Calvin does not seem like the rigid intellectual who insists on a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. Rather, he seems to indicate that the faithful are to have not merely an intellectual relationship with the Word, but, more importantly, a relationship that allows them to grow with the Word of God as it takes root in their heart.

The Word of God and the promises of God become part of us and in our hearts by virtue of our experiences with God. As we experience God as Redeemer and Creator, we come to trust Him and this in turn deepens our relationship and ability to have confidence in the Word of God.⁶⁸⁹

The next point in terms of temptation and things to watch for is that of pride.⁶⁹⁰ After all, why did Adam listen, Calvin asks; was it not to satisfy his ambition to know all things?⁶⁹¹ Pride of course is linked with humility. Were we to give honour to the Word

⁶⁸⁹ The sermons paint a very different picture of Calvin than that which is generally held. Calvin is not the rigid logician or intellectual in his sermons. Instead, he is a very pastoral figure, intent on equipping the faithful for the numerous battles that will face them.

⁶⁹⁰ In Calvin's sermons that dealt with the temptations of Jesus in the desert, the issue of pride was discussed. It is easy for us to imagine that God has abandoned us or is too slow and to give into our pride and ambition. Calvin calls it illicit ambition as it goes against what God has ordained for us. Pride eventually leads to rebellion against God.

⁶⁹¹ fol. 61(a), p. 4.

of God and be humble and subject to God, then pride would never be allowed to go as far as it did in this case. Pride blocks our access to God because of our attitude. As Calvin notes, if we think we need nothing and do not need God's help then we are full of wind and do not give God any access.⁶⁹² In fact these people become like stones insofar as they are so hard that they cannot allow God to have any influence on them.

Ainsi donc en est il, que nostre Seigneur pourra faire decouler sa grace sur nous, mais ou elle seichera ou elle tumbera [tombera] en terre, que nous n'en sentirons rien, ce pendant que nous serons ainsi saisiz d'orgueil et d'outrecuidance. Il nous fault donc comprendre que la foy ne se peut separer d'humilité, et ainsi qu'il nous fault venir vuides à Dieu, comme pauvres mendians, estans affamez et destituez, cognoissans qu'il n'y a nul bien qu'il ne nous faille chercher en luy, et que c'est de sa pure liberalité et gratuité que nous avons tout ce qui nous est desirable.⁶⁹³

Calvin returns to discuss the devil. In this discussion he speaks of true wisdom and true knowledge. Indeed, true wisdom and true knowledge mean not to go beyond the limits that God has set for us.⁶⁹⁴ This knowledge, can seem very desirable to us and indeed laudable. After all, Adam and Eve fell for the sake of what Calvin calles "science." They wished to improve themselves and therefore should be applauded for their actions! This is how, says Calvin, the devil disguises himself as an angel of light.⁶⁹⁵ The temptation of the tree of knowledge was not that of a fruit but a self-improvement tool. The true temptation was to go beyond what God had ordained to be permissible.

⁶⁹² fol. 61(a), p. 4.

⁶⁹³ fol. 61(a), p. 4.

⁶⁹⁴ fol. 61(a), p. 8.

⁶⁹⁵ fol. 61(a), p. 8.

Ainsi donc notons bien que le diable nous seduira souventesfois, en nous proposant belles couleurs, et nous cuiderons; qu'estans absoulz par luy, nous ne devons point estre condamnez de Dieu et que le mal que nous ferons ne nous doit point estre imputé, d'autant qu'il y aura eu quelque belle apparence qui nous aura trompez. Et ainsi, voilà pourquoy i'ay dit, et nous le fault bien retenir, que la vraie science, la vraie doctrine et la vraie sagesse des hommes, c'est qu'ils cognoissent autant que Dieu leur permet et non plus.⁶⁹⁶

In fact when we do wish to know more than what God desires us to know, and what God has instructed in his word to us, we must be aware that it is Satan who is spurring us on.⁶⁹⁷

Summary

In this sermon Calvin presents the usual elements and offices of Satan, namely, Satan as tempter, deceiver and enemy. In addition, he also discusses how the devil leads the Christian to a fuller knowledge of God and stresses the need for the Christian to be very self-aware, since the devil uses our propensity to listen to lies against us. Since these ideas have been discussed elsewhere, I will not do so now because they will not add anything further to our discussion. Instead, I will move to some new elements contained within this sermon.

⁶⁹⁶ fol. 61(a), p. 9.

⁶⁹⁷ This is one reason why Calvin does not speculate beyond the Scriptures in his sermons or in his writings. While there were many speculations about the devil and the levels and types of torment in hell, Calvin refused to speculate or even to inquire above what was mentioned in the Scriptures. It is clear that this was not because Calvin lacked imagination or abhorred speculation, but because he understood such speculation to be a temptation of the devil and the first step towards rebellion against God.

The most important of the new elements can be garnered from the structure that Calvin gives to this sermon. He begins his sermon with a warning of the subtle nature of the devil. The devil's tricks and ruses are by no means obvious.

It is at this place that Calvin introduces a point that I think is fascinating and shows Calvin the pastor at work. Calvin adds that we must always remain vigilant against the lies and tricks of Satan not so much to give God glory, as we have seen in some of his earlier sermons, like those of the temptation of Jesus in the desert, but in order not to become so hardened to the Word of God that we become lost. Calvin is warning his people not to fall so captive to Satan that they can no longer hear God.

In this sermon, Calvin deepens his explanation of how the Christian is to use the Scripture. Since the devil is so clever, it is not good enough to simply know what is contained in the Scriptures, but the Scriptures are only useful against Satan when they are humbly and prayerfully received so that the Scriptures lead to an enriched relationship with God.

Sermon on Gen 3:11-13, October 6, 1559

The devil, we are told in this sermon in reference to Eve saying that the serpent had seduced her, has his nets out to catch us. The world is full of his ruses and tricks.⁶⁹⁸

Nous voions le monde plein de tromperies. Aujourd'huy il y a ceste maudite semence de gaudisseurs⁶⁹⁹ qui n'ont nulle religion, non plus que des chiens. Ils nous desborderont, s'il est possible. Il y a des especes infines d'abus, de fallaces et de ruses des hommes qui nous pourroient mener à la pippée, sinon que nous

⁶⁹⁸ fol. 76(a), p. 9.

⁶⁹⁹ A gaudisseur was a term of derision for Calvin. A gaudisseur de Dieu was one who mocked God.

soyons prudens pour nous garder. Mais quoy qu'il en soit advisons bien de ne chercher excuse, car quand nous aurons esté seduits, comme i'ay dit, il n'y a point de simplicité en cela, voire aux plus rudes et idiots. Il n'y a rien qui les excuse, que tousiours, quand ce viendra devant Dieu, il ne leur soit remonstré qu'ils se sont presentez et ont consenti à toutes les tromperies qui les ont mené à perdition.⁷⁰⁰

In terms of being seduced, Calvin reminds us that we seduce ourselves when we listen to the devil. We cannot blame the devil or anyone else. Seduction and disobedience is a matter of our capitulation and thus, we are ourselves to blame.⁷⁰¹

This sermon shifts the blame from Satan to us. We willingly listen to Satan and we willingly fall. We cannot blame the devil; we willingly sin. The implication is of course that, like Eve and Adam, we willingly fall of our own accord and we cannot say that the devil forced us to fall, or for that matter even that God willingly gave us over to Satan. Our election has been predetermined, but in this sermon Calvin seems to indicate that we can refuse to listen to God and, if we do so, we have no one but ourselves to blame.

Sermon on Gen. 3:14-16, October 7, 1559

Here Calvin notes that, unlike Adam or Eve, God does not speak to the serpent, but instead God passes sentence on him. This is because for the devil, *il n'y a point un telle raison, car son peché est irremissible.*⁷⁰² In terms of the enmity between the

⁷⁰⁰ fol. 76(a), p. 9.

⁷⁰¹ Once more we see Calvin's compatibilist view of human will coming into play. In terms of whether or not we listen to the lies of the devil and of others, we are free. Since we are free, that is no one or no thing forcing us, we are culpable for our actions.

⁷⁰² fol. 84(a), p. 1.

serpent and humanity, Calvin admits that the serpent was simply a serpent used by Satan as someone would use a stick to hit another person, yet the enmity signifies that we are to flee from Satan and not give his lies any place in us and secondly, to always be ready to repel his assaults.⁷⁰³ When we are told that we will bruise the head of the serpent with our heel, this indicates that in the fight with Satan, which is inevitable, we will defeat him.⁷⁰⁴ There are so many who are under the domination of Satan, who is their prince and would be our prince except that we have been regenerated by the spirit of Jesus Christ.⁷⁰⁵ The virgin Mary did not bruise the head of the serpent and salvation did not proceed from her. The head of the serpent was bruised by Jesus Christ since it is only through him that we are freed from the tyranny of the devil.⁷⁰⁶ While it is true that we battle Satan, Calvin is quick to remind his parishioners yet again that this battle is only possible through God.

Et c'est aussi pourquoy saint Paul, au seizieme chapitre des Romains, dit que Dieu brisera Satan souz nos piedz en bref. Voilà donc sa teste qui est cassée souz noz piedz, encore qu'il nous blesse le talon.⁷⁰⁷

Calvin leaves this point and goes back to what he calls the natural sense of the passage where the serpent's head is bruised. The first thing that we are to learn from this passage is that as Christians we will always be in battle with evil.

⁷⁰³ fol. 84(a), p. 5.

⁷⁰⁴ fol. 84(a), p. 5.

⁷⁰⁵ fol. 84(a), p. 6.

⁷⁰⁶ fol. 84(a), p. 5-6.

⁷⁰⁷ fol. 84(a), p. 6.

Ainsi donc congnoissons que le premiere article de nostre vie, c'est qu'il nous faut estre ennemys de Satan et qu'il nous faut guerroyer avec luy, c'est à dire contre luy, qu'il nous faut faire bon guet à ce qu'il n'ait nulle approche. Et ainsi que nous exercions telle inimitié avec luy, que se soit pour nous accorder et à Dieu et à sa volonté.⁷⁰⁸

The second item that we learn from this passage is that not only are we to battle Satan and be his enemy but we are also to be prepared and armed to resist him.

Or là dessus il faut nous armer quant et quant, car ce n'est point assez que nous tenions le diable pour nostre partie adverse et que nous taschions à le fuir et à le repousser, mais il faut quant et quant que nous aions les moiens, c'est à dire que nous aions prudence pour nous donner garde de ses astuces et pour n'estre point tracassez de luy à son plaisir. Et comment aurons nous cela? Il nous faut demander à Dieu. Ainsi donc, puis que nostre condition est telle que nous pouvons servir à Dieu sans batailler, estans destituez de toute defense, comme nous serions vaincus à chacun minute de temps, si nous n'estions secouruz d'en haut, que nous apprenions de prier nostre Dieu, qu'il nous munisse, que nous soions garnis et de la prudence de son saint esprit et de sa force invincible, tellement que nous cheminions tousjours en sa sainte vocation. Et combien que le diable nous suscite des scandales qui viennent à la traverse, et puis quelque fois il brouille tellement les choses que nous soions confus, qu'il nous propose de si grans obstacles, qu'il semble que le ciel doive estre meslé avec la terre et que nous ne devions trouver nulle yssue aux empeschemens qu'il nous met au devant, que nous continuions neantmoins au service de nostre Dieu.⁷⁰⁹

Naturally, says Calvin, the command to do battle in the face of an enemy that is so powerful and so cunning and deadly is one that can cause us to have doubts and to be afraid. Yet we are to rely on God's promise that he will arm us and also that God has mercy and pity on us so that we will not be led like lambs to the slaughter. Victory will

⁷⁰⁸ fol. 84(a), p. 6.

⁷⁰⁹ fol. 84(a), p. 6-7.

be on our side.⁷¹⁰ We are called to battle and, as Calvin says, God could easily protect us from all the blows. God wishes to train us, however, in humility so that we will always know that our salvation and hope rests in God's mercy. This is why God wants us to fight Satan on a daily basis. We are to take courage that, although we are wounded, the blows are not deadly and also that, at the end, the devil will be defeated.⁷¹¹

When we are attacked and humiliated by Satan, we are not to be like a warrior who will see that he is not mortally wounded and claim it is nothing, but instead :

*Cognoissons noz fautes pour en demander pardon à Dieu, mais contentons nous qu'il nous y donnera guerison et que nous eschaperons de sa main et de la tyrannie de nostre ennemy et de toutes les violences et astuces dont il use à l'encontre de nous. Et non seulement cela, mais que les plaies que nous avons receues nous seront converties pour augmenter nostre gloire et nostre triomphe. Il est vray que sont signes et marques de nostre infirmité, comme i'ay dit, et devons baisser la teste, mais aiant cognu l'amour que Dieu nous a déclaré, quand nous avons senti son secours, cela sera pour nous faire mieux triompher.*⁷¹²

Thus when God remarks that Satan will be bruised by our feet, it simply means that we will do battle with Satan on a daily basis, and that God will fortify us so that we can conquer and resist Satan.⁷¹³ Moreover, the passage reminds us that Satan will always attack us and will never rest.

⁷¹⁰ fol. 84(a), p. 7. One cannot help but wonder here how Calvin felt about this. Those who did resist evil resisted 'evil' in the form of the new French king, Francis II. Francis II was the successor to Henry II. Henry II had died suddenly in July 1559, and his successor was a weak, sickly boy very much in the control of Catherine de Medici and the powerful Guise family who were notoriously anti-Protestant.

⁷¹¹ fol. 84(a), p. 8.

⁷¹² fol. 84(a), p. 9.

⁷¹³ fol. 84(a), p. 9.

Summary

Calvin understood that the Christian life was one of constant battle against evil and against ourselves. While Satan is bruised, he is by no means destroyed and remains a powerful and deadly enemy. No new ideas are added in this sermon, but one is reminded of the reality of the Christian life as one of struggle and battle.

1561-1562

59th Sermon on the Harmony of the Gospels, on Mk.1, Lk.4, March 1561

The sermons on the harmony of the gospels, of which this is a part, are not part of the catalogue compiled by Raguenier. Calvin's sermons on the harmony of the gospels were printed on January 19, 1562. We can assume that Raguenier died in 1561 or 1560. Bernard Gagnebin⁷¹⁴ estimates that these sermons on the harmony of the gospels would have started after February 1560. T.H.L. Parker⁷¹⁵ estimates that the series was started in early July of 1560. Taking Parker's estimate, and noting that Calvin would have preached two sermons on the harmony of the gospels each Sunday, making a total of 8 sermons each month, we can calculate that the fifty-ninth sermon, would have been preached on the third Sunday in March 1561.

Calvin preached only one⁷¹⁶ sermon on the subject of diabolical possession,⁷¹⁷ the 59th sermon on the harmony of the gospels, on Mark 1, Luke 4. Since this sermon is

⁷¹⁴ SC 11, XX.

⁷¹⁵ T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching*, 152.

⁷¹⁶ CO 46, 734-757. The fact that he only preached one sermon on this subject is a testimony to his attitude about the devil. This is not to say that he ignored the devil. Later theologians, like Karl Barth, who used Calvin as their inspiration, ignored to a large extent the devil, lumping him in with death and sin.

part of Calvin's gospel sermons, we expect to find a strong Christological emphasis as was the case in the sermons on the temptations of Christ in the desert. Calvin shows this emphasis by making it clear that this is not simply a miracle story about a demoniac being cured but rather is linked with Christological doctrines.⁷¹⁸ What Calvin has in mind by doctrine in this case is that the story speaks not so much about the miracle but proclaims the office of Christ. If Christ were simply to cure the demoniac there would be little point or value in the story. The story has much more impact and points to Christ when Christ uses his office as prophet and teacher given to him by God.⁷¹⁹ As Calvin points out, at the end of the pericope we are told that the people were amazed at his doctrine. The passage is not only about the miracle but is a confirmation of the gospel. The whole world would know who had sent Jesus. Here we see, from the first few sentences of this sermon, Calvin's emphasis on God providing the means for our salvation. The passage speaks of the gospel and confirms the gospel, which is God's manner of self-revelation made flesh in Jesus Christ. As if to stress this point, Calvin displays a remarkable lack of interest in the details and fury of the possession.

Calvin did not ignore the devil but he never presented the devil apart from God's grace and election. Calvin was not interested in the terrors of the devil, apart from how the Christian is to be aware of them and how to resist the temptations. Even in this sermon, as we shall see, the devil's terrors are minimized to get to what Calvin understands to be the point of the sermon, namely, an illustration of the grace of God.

⁷¹⁷ Calvin did not question diabolical possession and wrote one letter to Viret in 1546 about it. In this letter he recounts the story of a man who was a blasphemer and a rogue who while mortally ill did not confess his sins. The story claimed that the man was taken away in the night by demons and carried off to a field. Try as they might, no trace of the body was found. Calvin notes that he sees no reason to discount this story. CO 12, 413.

⁷¹⁸ CO 46, 734. In particular the doctrines that concern themselves with the offices of Christ.

⁷¹⁹ Thus, even in the case of miracles Calvin stressed that God's purpose was always that which was useful for our salvation.

After stating the purpose of the passage, which is to show Christ, Calvin begins his analysis in the sermon by looking at the words of the devil. The devil's words or confession shows that the devils are constrained to pay homage to and worship God even though they do not willingly do so.⁷²⁰ This constraint and confession on the part of the devils has as its purpose to show that they are under the command⁷²¹ and control of God⁷²² and can do nothing without the permission of God.⁷²³ The devils are forced to confess to God. The devils are forced to confess and pay homage in the same way that a prisoner who has nothing but contempt for law and order is forced to come before the judge and pay respect to the judge.⁷²⁴ Here again we see Calvin's emphasis on God, in this case his Christological emphasis.⁷²⁵ Even the devils are forced to confess that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

⁷²⁰ CO 46, 735.

⁷²¹ CO 46, 735.

⁷²² Calvin's wife died on April 7, 1549, an event that marked Calvin with sadness and caused him to push himself into his work with renewed vigour. Calvin's insistence on the control of God, while part of his theology, may be seen in part, at least, as his way of coping with his wife's death.

⁷²³ This point was stressed again and again in the sermons on Job. See Chapter 4 above.

⁷²⁴ CO 46, 736.

⁷²⁵ Calvin's stress on the sovereignty of God can be understood as a caveat against dualism. The emphasis makes dualism an unviable option. One cannot say that the devil and evil are in some way willed by God since they stand against God and are the enemies of God. When the devil is understood as subject to the will of God then he may be taken seriously as a tempter, as we have seen. It is only in this way that we realize that we cannot battle the devil on our own terms as we lack the power. Rather, God battles the devil as the devil is subject to God. God does not directly will the devil's actions but instead permits it. Calvin understood that God controlled the devil but allowed the devil, within limits, to exercise his own will. As Karl Barth noted, this is a doctrine of hope as "if we did not know that even in the midst of sin and death we were utterly in his hands and at his disposal, how could we hope to be obedient and blessed?" *Dogmatics*, 2:1,595. Barth goes on to give an eloquent summary of the whys of evil which, I think, to a large extent is within the spirit of Calvin's understanding.

"To this our only answer is that God's supreme and truest good for creation, and therefore the good determined for and promised to creation is revealed in its full splendour only when its obedience and blessedness are not simply by nature, the self-evident fulfillment of its existence,

The devils knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God and as such they attested to God's honour and glory. It is interesting to note that in Calvin's mind this attestation of Jesus was very important, not just because it was a faulty or incomplete confession, but because Jesus' identity must be demonstrated by attestation or witness. Jesus commissioned the disciples to tell the world about Him and who he was, but the devils were not commissioned and thus their 'confession' was silenced.

The devils fell by their own choice, in the same way we did, the only difference being that God took pity on us and wishes that we be reconciled to him.⁷²⁶ The devils may have confessed who Jesus was, but are irredeemable.⁷²⁷

Et cela est pour nous faire tant plus estimer la bonte inestimable de Dieu, voyant que ceux qu'il avoit creez pour estre ses Anges, sont demeurez en leur perdition et ruine: et que la main nous est tendue, afin de nous ramener à la vie, laquelle nous estions comme bannis.⁷²⁸

its inevitable uses but when they are salvation from the edge of an abyss, when in its obedience and blessedness creation is constantly reminded of its creation out of nothing and its preservation from nothingness by the menacing proximity of the Kingdom of darkness, when its obedience and blessedness are therefore grace and salvation." Barth, *Dogmatics*, 2:1: 595

What Barth is saying is that evil exists to teach us not only humility but to make us aware of the grace and providence of God as a means to deepen our obedience and grasp of salvation. This understanding is only possible if one asserts that God is sovereign.

⁷²⁶ CO 46, 735. The implication here is that the nature of the devil is a mirror of our own nature. The malice and hatred of the devil towards God is what we are apart from God's reconciling purpose for humanity.

⁷²⁷ Calvin stresses this point. There is no redemption or reconciliation to God possible apart from God's gracious intervention. As we shall see in later sermons, such as the sermons on chapter three of Genesis, Calvin keeps to the notion that the devils are beyond redemption. Unlike us, who were predestined to be saved through Christ, there was no such provision made for the fallen angels or the devils.

⁷²⁸ CO 46, 735.

Not only does Calvin use the fall of the devil and the fate of the devils as a reflection of our own state, but goes on to say that this is a reflection of the goodness of God. The fate of the devils would be our fate were it not for the free⁷²⁹ intervention of God.⁷³⁰ The state of the devils is our state apart from the mercy and love of God. Since the devils have no hope of redemption or salvation, they can only assume that God has come to destroy them.

The devils give a partial confession and ask if Jesus is come to destroy them. Calvin notes this partial confession is to show that Jesus had come to bring holiness into the world and that the kingdom of the devils would come to an end.⁷³¹ There is no reconciliation possible between the kingdom of the devils and that of God since the two are polar opposites. This partial confession in a way shows how the kingdom of God is at war with that of the devil and, in this way, the partial confession shows the glory of God as one who is superior to and at odds with the devil.

Calvin notes that the devils were given the special knowledge that Jesus was indeed the Holy One or the Redeemer. Yet the knowledge of the devils was defective insofar as the confession was concerned only with who Jesus was and not what kind of a

⁷²⁹ I use the word 'free' to denote that God freely chose not to save the devils but freely chose to send Jesus so that we could be reconciled to Him.

⁷³⁰ We see here that Calvin uses the idea of reprobation to mean the natural state of all who have fallen (all of humanity and part of the angels) as the dark side of election. Those whom God did not elect or extend his hand towards will remain in the darkness and state of perdition. The fate of the devils, rather than being a means to instill terror and fear into the hearts of the parishioners, as it clearly was in the literature of Dante and the popular preaching of the time, is a way in which we see the glory and mercy of God. This is an example of the way in which Calvin never writes of the devil or evil apart from the mercy and love of God.

⁷³¹ CO 46, 736.

God he is. In other words, it is not enough to know that Jesus is God, or that God is sovereign, creator and ruler. This is what the devils know as well.⁷³² One must also know and act upon the fact that God has chosen to redeem us through Jesus Christ and is a *Deus pro nobis*. This deeper, experiential⁷³³ knowledge of the love and mercy of God is not found in the devils' confession, nor can it be, as the devil is the enemy of God. The knowledge of the devil is not based on a deep trust or love of God but is rooted in fear. A deeper confession can be found only in one who loves and obeys God.

The key for Calvin seems to revolve around the term 'obedience'. What was remarkable about Jesus was his utter obedience and submission to the will of God. In that obedience, Jesus is a model for us. A true confession and a true understanding of who God is not possible apart from this obedience. Calvin's understanding of the nature of confession can be seen to have links with his understanding of the function and use of the law. In its most basic level, the law terrifies us and we 'obey' for fear of reprisal. The second use of the law is to bring us to confession and repentance, where in this instance

⁷³² It is by means of faith that we come to know that God is merciful and loving. Calvin attacks the "Papisty" for their claims that faith is but a cognition of God. Calvin notes that faith must be more than cognition. It must be that we know God is our Father and that Jesus has come to unite us with God in everlasting life, and as such we are delivered from the everlasting death. Faith, apart from a relationship with God, is worthless. The devil has cognition but does not have a loving relationship with God and thus his confession is defective.

⁷³³ Calvin places great emphasis on the fact that our knowledge of God must not only be a knowledge of the attributes or the nature of God but must be a relationship in which we come to know, via experience, of the love and mercy of God. This is seen, among other places, in Calvin's letters to the French Protestants held in prisons in France. His letters are touching and speak of the love and mercy of God as something which they are to experience and grow in. The love and mercy of God is not something they are to wait for in the afterlife (as most of them met their deaths via execution and torture), but a love to be experienced and tasted during their lives. I use the term experiential here to connote that this type of knowledge does not have its basis in academic or factual knowledge, is not faith by *assensus*, but is a knowledge of God tested by the daily experience of God's mercy and love.

we obey the law and God since we are deeply sorry for what we have done. The third use of the law is to bring us closer to God. True confession follows much the same pattern. The devils feared God for the possibility of God destroying them. Thus they trembled. Yet the devils are not capable of a deeper confession of God, since they do not and will not obey nor submit willingly to God.

There is a great difference in the type of confession shown by the devils and our confession of God. The difference is like the confession of a God by those who have not been illumined by the Holy Spirit (the unelect) and the confession of those whose eyes have been opened by God.⁷³⁴ The confession of the non-elect, or for that matter the devils, will be one that is based on superstition and fear. A true confession of God is one that is born out of the lived faith experience and rooted in the mercy and love of God. Once more, true knowledge of God, can only occur when God takes the prior initiative and illumines us.⁷³⁵ Yet the devil, Calvin adds in a polemical twist, has a deeper confession than many non-religious people⁷³⁶ who may acknowledge a God but who mock his teachings and service.

⁷³⁴ Miracles and marvels do not cause true confession. Although Jesus' identity was shown by what he did and the witness and attestations of the apostles, Calvin understood that only the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and thus God's prior action made it possible for a true confession that Jesus was the Holy One of God.

⁷³⁵ CO 46, 738.

⁷³⁶ Calvin no doubt has both the Roman Catholics and the "Libertines" in mind. In 1545 he wrote the treatise *Contre la Secte des Libertins*, the full title being: *Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des Libertins, qui se nomment spirituelz* in which he wrote against the Libertines or Quintinsts, as they followed the teachings of Quintus. Among their claims, as Calvin understood them, was the idea of *le diable, le monde, le peché pour une imagination qui n'est rien.*" CO 7, 181. Even though the Libertines of this tract were a Dutch sect, with a small following, the fact that Calvin preaches about the devil in such a way as to stress his reality may indicate that Calvin felt there were those in his

There is no possibility of reconciliation between the realm of the devil and that of God. The devil knows that this is the case and thus the more God wishes to show his goodness in the world, the greater the efforts of the devil to destroy and cause harm.⁷³⁷

Yet the devil does not restrict himself to possession. The devil shows his anger by blinding people to the truth. Blinding is far more deadly than possession as it can separate us from God. When we are blinded, we can no longer search for the true God.⁷³⁸ The spiritual blindness of some is a judgment of God on those who have rejected God's word.⁷³⁹ "*Mais voyla comme le diable est possedé de furie telle, qu'en cognoissant, il ne cognoist pas. Ce que nous voyons aussi bien en tous incredules.*"⁷⁴⁰

Calvin goes on to consider the meaning of the phrase the "Holy One of God". The phrase clearly shows a separation of Christ from the rest of us. He is special. We have a certain *sainctete* but this is imputed to us by God. Unlike our *sainctete*, Jesus' *sainctete* is from nature since he was born without sin.⁷⁴¹ As Calvin points out, Jesus' holiness⁷⁴² was not only for himself but also for us.

congregation, the Genevan Libertines, who he felt, understood the devil in a similar fashion to that of the Quintinists.

⁷³⁷ CO 46, 738.

⁷³⁸ *Instit.* 1541, 1.5.13, CO 3, 79-80.

⁷³⁹ The devil seeks to blind and to destroy the faithful. Calvin also wrote of idolaters as being blinded, "for they [idolaters] do not find that 'middle place' that they are in search of, but Satan straight way presents himself to them, as an object of adoration, whenever they turn their backs upon the true God." *Comm.* 1 Cor. 10:19-23.

⁷⁴⁰ CO 46, 739.

⁷⁴¹ As in the temptation sermons, Calvin shows the contrast between our nature and that of Christ. CO 46, 740.

⁷⁴² I have translated *sainctete* as holiness.

Voyla donc les richesses de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ qui sont pour remedier et subvenir à nostre povrete et disette, d'autant que nous sommes vuides de tous biens.⁷⁴³

Yet if we know this, or believe that Christ was filled with holiness for our benefit, our confession still is no better than that of the devils. We must go further. At this point, Calvin uses the incident to launch into a discussion about the nature of our knowledge of God as Redeemer. Christ was sanctified in order that our sins be purged and we be regenerated and reconciled into God's service. A true confession of Jesus as the Holy One requires an acknowledgment of Jesus' purging of our sins.⁷⁴⁴ Thus, the devil's confession was silenced, as the devil does not repent and wishes only that we worship him (the devil) rather than God. Jesus came to abolish lies, injustices and darkness.⁷⁴⁵

The devil was also silenced because he tried to imply that he has some means to approach Jesus. This is to insult or belittle the gospel. Although the devil claimed that he knew Jesus was the Holy One, the devil has no secret insights⁷⁴⁶ or means to access God. The gospel proclaims only Jesus Christ. Yet, although the gospel claims that we have

⁷⁴³ CO 46, 741.

⁷⁴⁴ There are many parallels with the uses of the law at this point. The Christian use of the law is to bring one to a closer relationship with God, but this is only possible after one repents and turns around. Here again we see that true knowledge of God as Redeemer requires an acknowledgment and recognition of our sins. It is only after this point that we can come to know God as Redeemer.

⁷⁴⁵ CO 46, 742.

⁷⁴⁶ Calvin's 1549 work against predicative astrology speaks of the same idea. Calvin's main reason for banning astrological practices was that people sought their fortune in the stars and consulted the stars for secret hidden knowledge of the future and of their fate. In this sermon, the devil makes the same claim that somehow he had hidden knowledge. Calvin was well aware of how deadly the trap of hidden knowledge was and so took pains in the sermon to point out that the devil has no secret insights or means to access God.

access to God only by means of Christ's righteousness, there exist many frivolities and pretenses that claim to bring us to God.⁷⁴⁷ The devil, who has nothing in common with Christ, seeks to introduce lies. Since the devil cannot simply overturn Scriptures, he seeks to do so by subtle means.⁷⁴⁸ The devil encourages nonsense and lies like the books that deal with the childhood⁷⁴⁹ of Jesus. By adding false elements to the gospels, such as false ceremonies or works that tell of the childhood of Jesus, the devil appears to honour Jesus but in fact is trying to discredit⁷⁵⁰ the gospel message.⁷⁵¹ If the devil had his way,

⁷⁴⁷ Here we see Calvin's idea that was expressed, among other places, in his reply to Sadoleto, that the 'true' worship of God consists in worshipping God and obedience to God as He declares Himself in Scripture and not to add to that any man-made notions or ceremonies. Calvin felt such accretions were unnecessary and were the lies and tricks of Satan to turn us away from the Word of God. Jean Calvin, *A Reformation Debate; Sadoleto's Letter to the Genevans and Calvin's Reply by John Calvin and Jacopo Sadoleto. With an Appendix on the Justification Controversy*, ed. John C. Olin (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

⁷⁴⁸ CO 46, 742.

⁷⁴⁹ In the sixteenth-century there was considerable fascination with stories about the childhood of Jesus. In this sermon, Calvin refers to "books that deal with the childhood of Jesus." In Calvin's time there was one known apocryphal work called the *Protoevangelium of James*. The *Protoevangelium* had achieved a measure of fame in the Middle Ages and was republished in 1531. It was a very popular book. It speaks of Jesus being born in a cave and of Mary weaving the temple curtain, among other things. From the phrase "books that deal with the childhood of Jesus," we cannot say with any certainty whether Calvin was speaking of the book *Protoevangelium* or simply speaking of the general interest in any book that dealt with the childhood of Jesus. The sixteenth-century fascination with the childhood of Jesus did not end with the *Protoevangelium*. In 1564 an important text on the apocryphal literature connected with Christ's childhood was published in Basel: *Apocrypha, hoc est narrationes de Christo, Maria, Joseph, cognatione et familia Christi, extra Biblia est*. Calvin died in 1564 and it is highly unlikely that he was aware of this work, but the work is important as it alludes to the interest in the apocryphal childhood narratives. The publisher responded to a demand. This makes it quite likely that when Calvin preached about the "books that deal with the childhood of Jesus," he was both referring to the *Protoevangelium* and responding to the curiosity about such texts in the minds of his parishioners. The reader is referred to E. Hennecke's book for a fine overview and a little of the history of the New Testament apocrypha. E. Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. 1, ed. W. Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL Wilson (London: Lutterworth Press, 1963-1965)

⁷⁵⁰ It is a common artifice of Satan to trouble men's consciences under a false pretext of the gospel that the truth of the gospel may be brought into confusion." *Comm.* Col. 1:23.

⁷⁵¹ CO 46, 743.

we would no longer be able to discern truth from fiction in the gospel.⁷⁵² We could not discern what is essential from the fashion of the day.

Et voila comme obliquement et sous terre Satan a voulu abolir l'authorité qui est en l'Evangile, afin que les hommes demourassent là en suspens, et qu'ils ne sceussent à quoy se tenir. Autant en est-il des miracles qu'ils on là escrits, qui sont autant les bastelleries qu'ils attribuent à nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ.⁷⁵³

The devil's biblical⁷⁵⁴ ruses are very clever⁷⁵⁵ as the fake gospels are often attributed to Mark or Luke and the lies are often mixed with the truth. The confused people, instead of knowing Jesus as the truth, life and the way, will adore⁷⁵⁶ various

⁷⁵² In terms of fiction, 1549 was the year in which Calvin published his *advertissement contre l'astrologie qu'on appelle hudiciare, et autres curiositez qui regnent aujourd'huy au monde* (Geneva, 1549) CO 7,509-542. In this work, Calvin wrote against the superstitions that claimed that the stars could predict future events. The work had its roots in the 1546 work, *Advertissemens sur les jugemens d'astrologie à une studieuse damoyselle* (Mellin de Saint Eclair) which appeared in Lyons, France. This work advocated a return to astrology. Calvin's 1549 work notes that it is God who governs our lives. Evidently Calvin was aware of the 1546 work since from 1546-1549 he tried to persuade the Council to get rid of the almanacs that carried traces of the old superstitions and astrology. Calvin's polemics here against fictions and false doctrines can be seen in the same light. Calvin was adamant that one can only worship God by means of the Scripture and not by using artificial doctrines or ceremonies. Astrology was yet another scheme to entice people away from a reliance upon God.

⁷⁵³ CO 46, 743.

⁷⁵⁴ As we have seen in the sermons that deal with the temptation of Jesus in the desert, the idea of *Sola Scriptura* was more than an abstract theory. It is only by means of the Scripture that one can know God and only by means of God that one can battle the devil. The Scriptures or Word of God (Calvin uses the two terms, indicative of his understanding that Scripture is the self-revelation of God), not only teach us of God in a detached or theoretical fashion, but are a resource allowing us in a sense to develop a relationship with God as we come to know more and more. In terms of the devil, our knowledge of God is put to the test, since we use our faith and trust in God to battle the devil. The Scriptures are necessary for our faith is not blind, but founded upon God Himself. When the devil twists the Scriptures, the devil is disarming the faithful and seeking to make them utterly defenseless before him.

⁷⁵⁵ *Comm.* Gal 5.9.

⁷⁵⁶ In the late Middle Ages, there was a great deal of veneration of the saints. The veneration of saints and holy relics were part of the pious mindset of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, Louis IX, the saint King born in 1224, was known for his collections of relics and conversations with holy mystics. In the later Middle Ages, the artistic depiction of the saints was that the saints were very much part of ordinary life. The veneration of these familiar figures served not so much a religious function, but acted as a buffer between the known and comfortable of earth and the unfamiliar realms of heaven and hell.

saints, statues⁷⁵⁷ and images.⁷⁵⁸ Moreover, the people will be so charmed by the stories about the childhood of Jesus that they will not pay enough attention to what is contained in the Scriptures. Although the priests preach free will, claims Calvin, they speak of intercessions and other devotions in order to go to heaven. This is what the devil wants. The devil has always sought to make some claims to have access to God and adds intercessions and other confusions and poisons to cloud the path to God. The devil's aim is to create such confusion⁷⁵⁹ that one would no longer be able to distinguish truth from

In some ways, the veneration of the saints bridled the imagination of the Middle Ages by offering a half-way zone between heaven and earth. This may explain why it was only when there was a waning in the veneration of the saints, that we find fantastic visions of the divine. By the time of the Reformation, despite Calvin's remarks, the veneration of the saints as it had once been was all but dead. It was a vestige of itself and the saints were all too familiar. The familiarity was what caused their demise. Once the saints were gone in all but name, the road was opened to the imagination. Huizinga suggests that one of the reasons for the fascination with the devil and the witch in the Renaissance and late Middle Ages was because, without the saints and their buffering abilities, the imagination could run without checks or balances. In some ways, the devil served the function of the saints. In Germany the devil was a popular figure in plays as he terrorized nuns and greedy characters to the delight of the audience. The witch too served as a mysterious half-way figure. The witch was human and yet her (it was often a her) pact or contract with the devil meant that the witch served the devil and in this way was connected to the shadowy realms of heaven and hell. Perhaps without the saints, who could intercede and cure diseases and find lost items, the popular imagination turned to the witch, who by her intercessions was able to create storms, cause cattle to die, or the plague to recur. In Calvin's time, there were those whom he referred to as having a Manichaean understanding of the devil insofar as they ascribed all evil acts and bad luck to the direct work of the devil. Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 202.

⁷⁵⁷ And doubtless we see Satan almost in all ages has been endeavoring to make the bodies of God's saints idols to foolish men." *Comm.* Jude 5:9.

⁷⁵⁸ Calvin saw the veneration of the saints, the stress on apocryphal gospels, and other stories as not only frivolous but a plot on the part of the devil to lead people away from the gospel and the truth. His polemics against it are interesting because Calvin asserted that unless enlightened by God one cannot worship God but instead worships idols. It is clear that for Calvin, the unregenerate, or unelect, simply worship the devil and are blind. Calvin's contrast and polemics, therefore, cannot be seen as a criticism but must be understood in the light of election. That is to say, when one is elect one has to see the actions of the blind, the veneration of the saints, and statues, and extra gospels in order to give thanks to God for having one's eyes open to worship God. The polemics in this case, and I think in all cases, can only be understood from the standpoint of Calvin's preaching to the elect.

⁷⁵⁹ As Calvin notes, For they [idolaters] do not find that middle place that they are in search of but Satan straightway presents himself to them, as an object of adoration, whenever they turn their back on the true God." *Comm.* 1 Cor 10:19-23.

falsehood. The remedy for such confusion is to know that Jesus is the son of God and to be aware of why he was sent to earth as our only master.⁷⁶⁰ We must close our eyes and ears to other doctrines or falsehoods, as such doctrinal confusion is part of the devil's plan.⁷⁶¹

Calvin⁷⁶² goes on to say that the devil, who is such a ferocious enemy of God and of the truth, is in fact a mirror of what we were when we were unredeemed and slaves to the devil.⁷⁶³ The possessed man is like us as we were before redemption. The confession of the possessed man was faulty, reflecting only on facts. Likewise, our confessions of God when we are unredeemed are equally, if not even more, lacking. The devil was violent with the man when expelled and this too is a reflection of our fate when we rebuff the devil.⁷⁶⁴ The devil will be violent in his attacks against us when we repel him. Our task in life is not to listen to the lies and whispers brought about by Satan. We must renounce ourselves and our pride in order to be reconciled to God. Although this is a great trial and lifelong combat,⁷⁶⁵ it is the lot of the Christian.⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁰ *Comm.* Gal 3:1.

⁷⁶¹ CO 46, 744. The devil is seen as not only the mortal enemy of God but one who is calculating and has a plan for the destruction of the faithful. The devil is far more than a caricature with a pitchfork, but a cunning and deadly enemy who not only attacks the faithful on a personal level but is engaged in larger plots to confuse the truth and obscure the gospel itself.

⁷⁶² Calvin describes the devil not in order to terrify his congregation or for theatrical effect but as an enemy of God and a mirror of our unredeemed state.

⁷⁶³ Calvin was not interested in the exotica surrounding the devil and did not describe the powers of the devil or the works of the devil to any great extent.

⁷⁶⁴ CO 46, 744.

⁷⁶⁵ Calvin invariably combines action with the Christian life. For Calvin, the Christian life was not one of contemplation and passive meditation. It was a life of full engagement and headlong battle with the devil and the forces of evil.

Calvin leaves this line of pursuit to consider the fact that the people were astonished at the doctrine. The people had some apprehension⁷⁶⁷ of God, enough to know that the miracle was of God.⁷⁶⁸ The point to be stressed was that they were astonished at the doctrine, not the miracle. Calvin argues that miracles are not as important as the Scriptures.⁷⁶⁹ Although they were astonished, this was not enough to know God. The doctrine presented was not really a new doctrine but Jesus Christ was at its heart. The newness was that the gospel must not be separated from the law. It is an agreement in substance and doctrine. The newness was the arrival of Jesus Christ and the restoration of the Church. Calvin closes his sermon with a reiteration of the fact that the doctrine is both new and old and to announce that Msr. R. Merlin will preach next Sunday.⁷⁷⁰

Summary

The devil, as illustrated in this sermon, seems to serve two functions. The first is that he is clearly the enemy of God and of humans and, since we resist the devil, he will torment us, as was the case of the possessed man. We have seen this was a minor point in this sermon. The major point pertaining to the devil is that he deceives.

⁷⁶⁶ CO 46, 744-745.

⁷⁶⁷ This apprehension is our natural knowledge of God which is not enough for salvation but is enough to leave us without an excuse and condemn us before God. *Instit.* 1541 1.3.3, CO 3, 50.

⁷⁶⁸ CO 46, 746. As Calvin wryly notes, their apprehension was greater than that of "Papisty" of his time.

⁷⁶⁹ This is what we would expect. A miracle, while spectacular, does not teach us anything about the nature of God. God may choose to enact miracles, but chose Scripture as his mode of self-revelation.

⁷⁷⁰ CO 46, 748.

In his office of liar and trickster, the devil seeks to distort the Scriptures, in this case, by adding new doctrines and ideas to blind people to the message of the Scriptures.⁷⁷¹ The devil seeks to focus our attention on miracles and stories of Jesus' infancy in order that we stay away from the Scriptures. Yet, what is fascinating in Calvin's sermon is that he does not just leave it at this point and warn the faithful to stay away from the new doctrines and practices. Rather, he uses this as a vehicle to launch into what he considers the true meaning of the pericope which is about a true confession of God.

The devil's faulty confession was an illustration of how not to confess or know God. A true confession or knowledge of God is more than noetic. A true confession or knowledge of God must be one that is rooted in obedience to God, humility and our daily experience of God as Redeemer and Saviour. Once again, we see that the devil is used to bring the faithful into a fuller knowledge of God but, unlike in the case of any of the other sermons, the devil does not prod us into a full confession of God by means of his torments.⁷⁷² In the present case the devil's confession forces us to consider our own confessions.

⁷⁷¹ One of the things that fascinates me about this period, and about Calvin in particular, is his insistence on the true plain meaning of the text. Yet when Castellio (Sebastien Castellio was a colleague of John Calvin's whom Calvin had hired at the Genevan college) offered a different interpretation, this was not accepted. It may be that for Calvin, the devil was so powerful and subtle that it was all too easy to distort the Scriptures, a fact that would lead to the inevitable dissolution of the church and Kingdom of God.

⁷⁷² The idea of torment is not at the forefront of this sermon. The devil torments us and this does cause us to reflect on the love of God, but this is not the central issue here.

In addition to causing us to reflect on the nature of our confession, the devil also enables us to reflect on the mercy of God. There is no redemption for the devils. They will always be the enemies and condemned by God. Ultimately, they will be destroyed by God. This state, Calvin reminds us, was our state prior to our redemption and justification through Christ. Like the devils, we too were hated by God and at odds with God. This aspect of the devil makes us not only reflect on the mercy of God but also on the state of our own hearts, perhaps causing us to repent and to think a little more deeply about our relationship with God and the state of our souls.

Sermon on 1 Sam. 28:7-18, August 8, 1561

On August 8 1561, Calvin preached on 1 Samuel. This sermon deals with 1 Sam. 28:7-18, which considers the witch at Endor and the apparition of the prophet Samuel. The sermon is preserved in Latin although it is certain that Calvin preached it in French.

The devil uses tricks to deceive men. He twists the truth, *Diabolus vero corruptionem.*⁷⁷³ The claim that one can speak with the deceased is but a trick of the devil.⁷⁷⁴ The ghost of Samuel was of course not a real ghost but a false Samuel, a pseudo-Samuel, a trick of the devil. God would never allow his prophet to be so used.⁷⁷⁵ However, God allowed the devil to conjure such a fraud,⁷⁷⁶ and the ‘ghost’ was able to tell some events accurately. Calvin notes that the devil is not able to know the future.

⁷⁷³ CO 30, 644.

⁷⁷⁴ *Comm.* Acts 7:5 and Acts 23:11 where Satan, we are told apes, the powers of God.

⁷⁷⁵ CO 30, 650, “*Spectrum, inquam, siquidem certum est non fuisse verum Samuelem, neque enim unquam Deus permisisset suum prophetam talibus diabolicis coniurationibus subiici.*”

⁷⁷⁶ CO 30, 645, 650.

What the devil knows is by means of fraud.⁷⁷⁷ It is God who gave the 'ghost' the ability to speak of the future and it is God who gives the devil some knowledge of the future events.

Saul was attracted to the witch because he imagined the witch would give him some special insights and knowledge. People are attracted to the so-called hidden knowledge of the spirits. This knowledge acts like a drug on people, it stupefies the senses, and, in the end, people will no longer have a sense of good and evil. People are drawn by their insatiable curiosity.⁷⁷⁸ The witch at Endor was totally taken in by the illusions and falsehoods of Satan.⁷⁷⁹ In contrast to the witch, we are to have no trade with the devil. The devil attempts to trick people with promises of hidden knowledge. The danger of such illicit knowledge is that we are not to seek what God does not require us to know, or what God has not revealed to us.⁷⁸⁰ Our curiosity after hidden knowledge, is surely a trick of the devil who uses such mysteries as a bait to trap us.

Summary

The main issue, in terms of the office of the devil, in the Samuel sermons, is that of the devil as trickster. The devil is shown as one who can go to great lengths in order to

⁷⁷⁷ CO 30, 652.

⁷⁷⁸ CO 30, 645. Yet even if the devil has certain knowledge, his knowledge is full of lies and fraud. "*multa fraude habere.*" We should not desire more than what God has decided for us to know in terms of our salvation. *Inde ergo discamus non appetere nisi quod bonum est et licitum, et nullas rationes quaerere nisi quas Deus dederit et verbo suo approbaret.*" CO 30, 645.

⁷⁷⁹ Once more one has the idea of the witch as one who willingly gives herself to Satan.

⁷⁸⁰ CO 30, 640, We are urged to keep to the Word of God and not deflect to the left or the right. This is healthy advice. *Dignum sane considerataione exemplum, ex quo discamus rectam semper viam insistere, quae nobis verbo Dei praescribitur, et numquam ab ipsa vel ad dextram, vel ad laevam deflectere.*"

deceive. But there is also the smaller theme of the ‘hidden’ knowledge of the devil. How much does the devil know? Can the devil predict or does the devil know the future?

Calvin’s answer was that the devil can know and do only what God permits. The devil has no ‘special insights’. In this sermon, the parishioners are warned not to try to circumvent God and seek ‘special’ knowledge. The sermon is among other things a caveat to the overly curious. As Calvin notes in his 1559 *Institutes* “What was God doing before the Creation?” Answer, “Creating Hell for the curious.”⁷⁸¹ This sermon is a warning to parishioners to be content with the knowledge that God has ordained for them, and not attempt to contact spirits or other ‘illicit’ means.⁷⁸²

Concluding Remarks and Some Elements Contained in Calvin’s Miscellaneous Sermons on the Devil

The following will be a combination of a further summary of what Calvin has said in the miscellaneous sermons about the devil as well as an inquiry into some possible ramifications. The first point that can be made is the relationship between predestination or election and the devil.

The Devil and the Preservation of the Saints

Within these sermons, the devil is portrayed as a trickster and clearly as the one who tries to get the faithful to turn away from God. In the sermons on Genesis, it seems

⁷⁸¹ *Instit.* 1.14.1.

⁷⁸² Astrological predictions were probably what Calvin had on his mind.

that the devil wins and the temptation works. While Calvin adds in these sermons that we have the weapons to deal with and repel the devil, he also notes that at times we abandon the weapons and willingly listen to Satan. Thus, the question must be asked, What is the relationship between the devil and his temptations and the preservation of the saints?

The traditional understanding, fortified by the *Institutes*, is that once elected always elected. God will never lose you because you were chosen from before the foundation of time. This doctrine later became enshrined as the ‘preservation of the saints’.⁷⁸³

Calvin felt that predestination was a complex issue, incomprehensible, a labyrinth and an abyss.⁷⁸⁴ God’s secret election was not only a mystery but Calvin thought it a terrible decree and lamented that only a few out of an incalculable multitude should obtain salvation.⁷⁸⁵ Predestination can only be understood from within the context of faith. Once that is the case, as Calvin said, “no doctrine is more useful.”⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸³ I use the word enshrined because it was one of the five points of the so-called Tulip theology put forth at the Dutch Synod of Dort, which tended to ossify Presbyterianism for many years. The P in the TULIP acronym referred to the preservation of the saints.

⁷⁸⁴ Sermon 40 on Job, CO 35, 502; Sermon 44 on Deut., CO 26, 410.

⁷⁸⁵ *Comm. Rom* 9:27.

⁷⁸⁶ Calvin’s views of predestination are often compared to those of Saint Augustine. While it is not my intention in this thesis to go into a long discussion of Augustine’s understanding of predestination, I will make a few notes. It is well known that Calvin borrowed much of his understanding of predestination from Augustine, even ascribing to Augustine the idea of double predestination. It is clear that at the end of his life, Augustine had to propose double predestination. What is not so well understood is how Calvin and Augustine differed on the matter of predestination. Mark Vanderschaaf in his fine article “Predestination and Certainty of Salvation in Augustine and Calvin,” *Reformed Review* 30 (1976): 1-9, makes the case that there is a fundamental difference in the use of predestination in the theologies of Calvin and Augustine. While I cannot comment on Vanderschaaf’s understanding of Augustine in any depth, he is correct in saying that for Calvin the doctrine of predestination and double predestination had as its purpose or telos that of offering comfort and a certainty of salvation to the faithful. Calvin understood predestination as a form of assurance. Vanderschaaf makes the point that in the case of Augustine this assurance was not present. For

Among other things it teaches us to glorify God. In the earlier *Institutes* (1536, 1539) the doctrine of predestination is contained within the doctrine of providence but later, in 1559, Calvin shifts his discussion to the doctrine of the Christian life. I think this is in keeping with his understanding that the doctrine was useful and perhaps not to be understood so much from the point of view of Divine decree but of the Christian life and our daily struggle between doubt, the devil and the love and mercy of God's free election.

On the surface, the answer to the question of the devil and the preservation of the saints seems obvious. God is sovereign and the devil his subject. Since the devil is the subject of God, he stands no chance to win and, in the end, is always beaten. I believe that the issue, as we have seen in the sermons, is not so cut and dried. The devil is not presented simply as a 'straw man' that is raised up but is always defeated.

In the Job sermons as well as those on the temptations of Jesus in the desert, as we have seen, Calvin notes that the devil did not tempt the soul of Job or of Jesus, lest they fall. In these sermons, we see that Calvin understood the soul to be made of a will and an intellect. It is clear that the devil tempts the intellect insofar as he twists Scriptures and, as we have seen with Eve in the Genesis sermons, causes people to doubt the veracity of the Word of God. The intellect is clearly challenged by the subterfuges

Augustine, after the fall of humanity, God elected some to be saved. God's actions are posterior to the fall of humanity. In the case of Calvin, the actions of God were prior to the fall. The elect were elected before the foundations of the earth. Calvin is infralapsarian in his understanding. Calvin's God is in control, the elect are elected not as a reaction to the fall, but before the foundations of the earth. Thus the difference is between an infra and a supra lapsarian view of the fall.

and tricks of the devil. The devil, as we have seen, attempts to blind us to the truth. Yet not only the intellect, but the will is also challenged by the devil.

As we have seen, the devil tempts us by making use of our very nature against us. The temptations that we experience are not foreign or artificial but stem from our unredeemed or carnal nature. The devil merely fans the flames of our desire. Like Eve, we willingly listen to the devil and, in so doing, we make the devil our prince. In the sermons on Jeremiah, we were told that Satan uses our vanity to whisper to us that we are not all that bad. Our nature prefers lies and is naturally at war with God.⁷⁸⁷ In fact, there are those who willingly give themselves over to the lies of the devil. Paul likens these people to witches, insofar as they freely gave themselves to the devil.⁷⁸⁸ It is clear that Calvin is referring to the elect at this point. The unelect do not willingly give themselves to Satan because they cannot discern God and thus their choice to follow Satan is not free. As we have seen, Calvin even speaks of those who become so hardened against God by willingly giving themselves to the devil, that, as a stone cannot absorb water, these people are immune to God.⁷⁸⁹ Has the devil ‘won’?

It seems to me that insofar as the devil is able to tempt both our intellect and our will, he tempts our soul. Since the devil is able to tempt our soul it is possible for us to freely fall. This does not contradict the assertion that God will not give us over to Satan, but it does say that we can freely give ourselves to Satan and declare him our prince and

⁷⁸⁷ CO 53, 329,333.

⁷⁸⁸ CO 51,341.

⁷⁸⁹ Sermon on Genesis 3: 4 Oct. 1559, fol.. 61(a), p. 4.

leader. This may explain why in Calvin's sermons he is very insistent upon urging the Genevans to hold fast to God, to pray and to humbly submit and to battle the devil lest they fall. If the battle were all pre-determined, then there would be little point in such a stress on the vigilance. After all, our greatest battle, Calvin argued, "is against ourselves and against our vices; this is where we must exert ourselves."⁷⁹⁰

The Devil and the Knowledge of God

In these sermons the devil can be seen to reveal God both as Creator and Redeemer. What was discussed in the close of the Job sermons is also applicable here in part, yet, unlike in those sermons, here the devil does not reveal God mainly by terror. That is, we do not run to God or have recourse to God because we are fleeing from the devil. In these sermons, it can be argued that there is another way wherein the devil reveals to us God as Creator and Redeemer. We first turn our attention to the knowledge of God as Creator.

God as Creator

In my discussion of Calvin's sermons on Job as well as the temptations of Jesus in the desert, I discussed how God is revealed as Creator mainly by the fact that God is sovereign and, since the devil is part of God's creation, he is subject to God. But I think that the idea of election or predestination, so key in the miscellaneous sermons, also speaks of God as Creator in terms of a witness to God's affirmation of Creation. As Karl Barth in a similar vein would say,

⁷⁹⁰ Sermon 54 on Job, CO 33, 679.

In our teaching concerning the election we must always bring in the fact, definitely and basically and as the meaning and substance of all our assertions, that of and from Himself God has decided for this loftiest and most radical movement towards His creation, ordaining and constituting Himself its Friend and Benefactor.⁷⁹¹

The fact that God chose to elect us means that God has moved towards Creation and has made the ultimate step as *Deus pro nobis*. Our election therefore makes us think about God as Creator by means of His move towards an affirmation of Creation. The devil, in his temptations and attempts to make us doubt the veracity of God's word and ultimately the truth of our election when he seeks to get us to despair, causes us to reflect upon our election in Jesus. The devil's temptations make us use the weapons that God gave us to combat him, namely, the Word of God which has its ultimate expression in Jesus. Yet it is our election that reveals God as Creator and also as one who moves towards His Creation as Friend. Insofar as the devil's tactics cause us to pray and seek comfort in God when they attempt to get us to despair and doubt, the devil makes us reflect on our election and strengthens our understanding of our life as elect and, therefore, the devil enables us to gain a deeper knowledge of God's move towards his Creation and, hence, of God as Creator.

The Knowledge of God as Redeemer

The same doctrine of election, when pushed into our consciousness by the antics of the devil, can also make us more aware of God as Redeemer. This is accomplished by the fact that, when the devil tempts us, we require the assistance of God to help combat

⁷⁹¹ Barth, *Dogmatics* II.2.26.

the devil. We seek God's help by means of prayer and humility, but of course none of this would be possible were it not for the fact that God elected us to salvation.

Thus, the temptations of the devil, which cause us to oscillate between doubt and despair, enable us to think in gratitude on the fact that we are no longer hated by God but that God has elected us. This makes it possible for us to battle the devil and to gain a deeper understanding of what it means to say that God is our Redeemer.

The Devil and the Knowledge of the Self

The sermons that we have treated in this chapter speak clearly of our unredeemed nature and how easy it is for us to listen to the lies and treachery of Satan. The knowledge of self that is gained by means of the devil's work is surely that of the self as in need of Divine mercy. This knowledge of self, in turn, leads us to a deeper knowledge of God both as Creator and Redeemer. Calvin linked the knowledge of God with the knowledge of self, as we cannot know God unless we realize that we are sinners and in need of God. The devil assists us in our understanding of ourselves by tempting us, which makes us aware of our weaknesses and our need for divine help. The devil shows us our weaknesses. The devil also acts as a mirror for us. The devil is a natural enemy of God and hates God. The devil wants to usurp God and thwart God at every occasion. The character of the devil is a mirror of our own unredeemed nature. Like the devil, our unredeemed nature hates God and all that God stands for.

The Devil and Scriptural Interpretation

A particularly interesting point in these sermons is the emphasis on false doctrines and twisted understandings of the Scriptures. The devil's tricks in subverting the Scriptures and twisting them or in causing us to doubt them are aimed to blind us so that we can no longer have recourse to the 'true' God who, as Calvin understood, was revealed to us chiefly by means of Scripture and the witness of Christ. Calvin emphasized the 'plain' sense of the text and felt that, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, God could clearly be seen by means of the Scriptures. Of course, by this Calvin did not only refer to reading the Scriptures but he meant a prayerful and obedient application of what was contained therein.

Yet despite what Calvin understood to be the plain sense, there were those like Sebastien Castellio who arrived at different conclusions when looking at the same piece of Scripture. Who was right and who was wrong? Was it possible for a Christian to arrive at a different interpretation of the same passage? I think that Calvin would have to say that it was not possible for this to happen. Such differences are the work of the heretic and the devil who seeks to confuse our understanding of Scripture and cast doubt on it. Note that Calvin was working against the criticisms from the Roman Catholic Church, which had accused the reformers of making a nose of wax out of Scripture when they attempted to apply the principle of *sola Scriptura*.

The devil exposes the heretics and the many false interpretations. When we prayerfully obey God's commands, the heretic and the false interpretations and man-

made accretions will be exposed for what they are, namely, dangerous subversive attempts by Satan to overthrow the Kingdom of God. As such, the heretic must be silenced. The devil acts as a hermeneutical key insofar as it is the devil who fuels the false interpretations and the misguided understandings. The false interpretations are important since they enable us more carefully to reflect on Scripture and thus, once again, we grow closer to God.

The devil's work in fueling heresies enables us to work harder at discerning truth from fiction and this in turn leads us once more to God. The devil, therefore, acts as a hermeneutical key enabling us to engage in a deeper reflection upon Scripture in order to refute the lies that are produced.

I have found this theme of the devil leading us closer to God throughout the sermons that we have looked at in this thesis. This should not come as a surprise. Brian Armstrong has demonstrated, among other things, that Calvin's theology was practical and that its real goal was to edify the saints and bring them closer to God.⁷⁹² With such a theology, it should come as no surprise that even the devil would have a use in edifying the saints and bringing them closer to God.

⁷⁹² Brian Armstrong, "Duplex cognitio Dei or The Purpose and Relation of Structure, Form and Purpose in Calvin's Theology," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition, Historical Studies in honour of Edward J. Dowey Jr.*, eds. Brian Armstrong and Elsie Anne McKee (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1989), 135-153.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEVIL IN RELATION TO CALVIN'S THOUGHT

Introduction

While the previous chapters have focused closely on an analysis of the sermons that deal with the devil, this chapter will gather together the results and suggest some ways of arriving at a more ordered, systematic understanding of Calvin's preaching on the devil. As with all attempts at systematization, one must bear in mind that the systematization that will be suggested may or may not have been present in Calvin's mind. The parallels that I will draw are I believe, helpful in coming to a deeper appreciation of his thought on the devil. However, before we can discuss further implications and systematizations, we need to look briefly at Calvin's audience.

Calvin's Audience

In order to approach the subject of Calvin's audience, or those to whom Calvin was speaking when he preached, it is necessary to ask why Calvin put so much stress on the evil nature of the devil. This begs a question. The devil was not an unknown quantity in sixteenth-century Geneva. One way to measure the notoriety or the presence of the devil, is to consider the witch hunts. Where there are more witch hunts there will be more talk of the devil. While William Monter⁷⁹³ has shown that the witch hunts were not as wide spread nor as malicious in Switzerland as they were in other countries (notably France), they did exist. Since the devil was not an obscure figure in the sixteenth century and it was already generally understood that he was evil, why did Calvin stress the evil nature of the devil so much?

There are several ways to approach this question. The first way is to understand the difference between a Catholic and a Protestant understanding of the devil. As we have seen, Geneva was reformed but, in practice, many of the people still prayed to saints and had a Catholic understanding of ritual and services. It can generally be said that the Protestant concern for the devil was greater than the Catholic.⁷⁹⁴ This is strange,

⁷⁹³ *Witchcraft in France, Switzerland and the Borderlands During the Reformation* (Ithaca: New York University Press, 1976); also, William Monter, "Witchcraft in Geneva, 1537-1662," *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971): 197-204.

⁷⁹⁴ There is a caveat to this statement. Because of the Protestant insistence on *sola Scriptura* and mediated experience, there were no Protestant mystics who fought with the devil. Luther battled the devil throughout his life but generally such themes are absent from most of the Protestant reformers. Thus, among the Protestant reformers one does not find the experiences of Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) who fought with the devil and felt that the devil would present terrifying visions and physically attack her. For more on such experiences, the reader is referred to J. B. Russell, *The Prince of Darkness: Radical Evil and the Power of Good in History* (Ithaca, NY; Cornell Press, 1988) esp. 172-177.

as the Protestants did not create a diabolology but merely borrowed theirs from the Catholic church. The Protestant concern for the devil can be understood as arising out of the idea of *sola Scriptura* and also as a consequence of the general abandonment of many church rituals. The insistence on the primacy of the Scriptures or *sola Scriptura* meant that Protestants were forced to reckon with the texts that spoke of the devil. In the more liturgical Roman church it was possible to ignore passages if they did not fit a feast day or fit with the liturgical calendar. The Protestants did away with exorcism rituals and house blessings, which were the chief way in which people thought the devil could be controlled, expelled and contained. Hence, to a largely Catholic populace, the Protestant insistence on *sola Scriptura* and the expunging of many of the church rituals surrounding the devil implied that the devil had either vanished, since one no longer needed rituals, or that the devil was more powerful than ever, since he was being preached about. Calvin's stress in his sermons on the evil nature of the devil would indicate that he believed that some people of Geneva thought the devil had been vanquished and was no longer a force to be reckoned with.

I am not convinced that Calvin appreciated the power of rituals. On the one hand, his stress on *sola Scriptura* led him to reply to Sadoletto that one had to be very careful not to introduce artificial elements within worship because this not only pollutes the service but is the worshipping of an idol. Calvin did not think that one worshipped an idol such as a plaster and gilt statue but, rather, that once one strayed away from God's chosen means of self-revelation, namely, the Scriptures, the floodgates were open and one strayed away from God and found an idol, that is something from our imagination

instead. As we have seen, one of the main offices of the devil, according to Calvin's preaching, is to pervert and twist Scripture so that the people no longer come to know God. On the other hand, the people of Geneva, as one sees within the records of the *Consistoire*, were reformed in name only. The implications of *sola Scriptura* were lost on many of the people, who looked for ritual and comfort within a church service. Somehow, I imagine that *sola Scriptura* must not have seemed enough. Calvin had preached that our defence against the devil consisted in a sound knowledge of Scripture and its attendant humility before God, and yet the people still prayed to St. Felix for protection or kept statues of saints (Calvin called them *marmousettes*) in their homes for good measure. The Genevan religious Reformation must have been a shock to many people. The priests and the bishops were expelled and services of preaching and Bible studies were put in the place of the elaborate Roman liturgies. By getting rid of the rituals that were linked with the expulsion of the devil, I think that there were many people in Geneva who were simply afraid or at least confused. How were they sure that the devil was contained or could be expelled? Perhaps one reason that Calvin stressed the idea of the devil being *tenu en bride* is that for many of his parishioners the devil seemed to be on the loose once more. The devil was no longer contained by the comfortable rituals of the Catholics and expelled by ceremony. One could no longer even rely on the protection of the saints. The parishioners had to be assured that this malevolent force was not rampant but held in tight check by God Himself. Calvin seems to make this point in all the sermons that I have studied that deal with the devil. The fact that this point, of the devil being in check, is present in one form or another in all of

Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil attests to its importance in Calvin's theology. As Calvin preaches in one of many places; "*Or Satan est aussi sujet à Dieu, d'autant qu'il ne faut point imaginer que Satan ait aucune principauté que celle qui luy est donnée de Dieu.*"⁷⁹⁵

Lest I give the impression that all rituals connected with the devil were abandoned, it will be useful to recall that, oddly enough, one is asked to renounce the devil in the baptismal rite of both Presbyterian and Lutheran services today. While we have so far garnered some reasons why, for Protestants, the devil was a subject of great concern, our question still remains. If the devil was known to people, and there was little doubt that the devil bore only ill will, why did Calvin have to emphasize the evil nature, power and reality of the devil so much? The fact that Calvin was a Protestant and abandoned rituals and applied *sola Scriptura* only partially answers the question. Another, deeper answer lies in a consideration of his audience at the time.

In 1545 Calvin addressed the Libertines, who felt that the devil was not an entity at all, and hence it would be meaningless to speak of a nature of the devil. The devil was merely a result of our own misplaced wishes or ideas. No doubt, making reference to the Libertine understanding, which he understood to be prevalent in one form or another in Geneva throughout his ministry, Calvin writes in his 1559 *Institutes*:

Having above refuted that nugatory philosophy concerning the holy angels, which teaches that they are nothing but good notions or inspirations which God excites in the minds of men, we must here likewise refute those who foolishly

⁷⁹⁵ Sermon on Job 1:6-8, CO 33, 60.

allege that devils are nothing but bad affections or perturbations suggested by our carnal nature.⁷⁹⁶

As mentioned, the Libertines felt that the devil was a creation of our imaginations apart from which he did not exist. While the sect that Calvin referred to and criticized was called the Quintinists, there is little doubt that the early supporters of Calvin and the reformed movement in Geneva were sympathetic to some of the ideas of the followers of Quintin. Whether or not they even knew Quintin or had read any of his works does not matter. It is clear from what Calvin preached on the devil that he believed there were some who did not take the devil seriously and who may have understood the devil to be no more than a bad affection or perturbation of the mind.

Why was this so dangerous? In Calvin's view, as expressed in the sermons, such a view would have undermined our need for the protection of God. If the devil were not real, but just a bad notion, then we would not need the Scriptures to battle the devil. Since there would be nothing to battle or to struggle against, we would never grow spiritually. Calvin's emphasis on these items in his sermons can be understood as partially the result of his speaking to the Libertines in the congregation.⁷⁹⁷ Calvin

⁷⁹⁶ *Instit.* 1.14.19. The reader may be surprised that in this chapter I refer to the *Institutes* whereas I have analyzed the sermons. I did this to show that the sermons flesh out the remarks made in the *Institutes*. Our reading of the *Institutes* is enriched when we read the sermons. I also use the *Institutes* at this point to demonstrate that Calvin was a consistent thinker and that his remarks on the devil made in the sermons are also found in his *Institutes* and *Commentaries*. Within Calvin scholarship it has been the custom, until recently, to privilege the *Institutes* over all of Calvin's other writings. I use the *Institutes* at this point to illustrate that Calvin's *Institutes* can not be fully appreciated unless one approaches them by means of the sermons.

⁷⁹⁷ When Calvin wrote his treatise against the Libertines in 1545, he did not have the Genevans in mind but rather the French and in particular the French speaking regions of the Netherlands. Because the names are the same, there is sometimes confusion. Williston Walker, for example, in *John Calvin, Organizer of Reformed Protestantism (1509-1564)* (New York: Schocken, 1969) 293-215, makes this

stressed the evil nature of the devil no doubt as a warning to those who felt that this was not needed.

On the other hand, as Calvin wrote in his *Institutes* of 1559, there were those for whom the devil was all too real and who were fascinated by the surrounding *exotica*.⁷⁹⁸ These people fell into two camps, those who were fascinated by the diabolical and saw the work of the devil everywhere, and those who understood that the devil was in control

mistake. However much Calvin had the Netherlands in mind and sought to warn them against this dangerous sect, the Genevan Libertines perhaps did share some points with it. Why else would Calvin stress the reality of the devil, and even say that some think the devil a bad idea, if those ideas were not current in Geneva? Moreover, why would Calvin emphasise the power of the devil unless there were those who ascribed no power to the devil? If Calvin were not refuting ideas that he felt to be current in Geneva, there is no way he would have stressed those points about the devil since his emphasis goes beyond what would be necessary in order to make a point. From the sermons it is clear that there are those whom Calvin preaches to, who imagine the devil not to be a force to be contended with. Either these people were content to banish the devil with song and ritual or, as indicated in the 1559 *Institutes*, they did not really think the devil was worth bothering about.

⁷⁹⁸ In the Middle Ages there was a fascinating genre of vision literature where a visionary would see and enter the gates of hell, and live to tell the story. Such visionary literature inspired the illuminated manuscripts telling of the visit to hell of King Tondale, but it was also part of the general fascination with hell and the devil. In Calvin's time the *Malleus Maleficarum* had already undergone multiple editions and although the witch hunts were less severe in Geneva than in other parts of Europe, the witch, hell and the devil were very much on people's minds. Perhaps one of the reasons for this can be found in the form of persecution. Servetus was executed for heresy by the state. In general, the state prosecuted heretics but if one counts the number of legal state killings of heretics in the 1500's, the number is very few. William Monter makes the point that there is a linkage between heresy trials and witchcraft trials. For example, the witches' sabbath was an obscure idea in the *Malleus* but was largely accepted. Monter notes that this idea arose from the heresy trials. Monter's point is that works like the *Malleus* perhaps had less of an effect than was commonly understood. The *Malleus* was not reprinted from 1520 to 1585. Many common notions in the witchhunts came from the heresy trials. The witch hunts were more deadly as they were not state matters and witches were tried by special witch tribunals. I think Monter is correct. Heresy trials captured the imagination and fueled many of the ideas that followed into witch hunts. The witch was first and foremost a heretic, and only after that was the witch considered capable of changing elements, flying or causing evil. Thus while early witch hunts concentrated on the witch being a heretic, later witchhunts were more imaginative. Monter's ideas help my point. If the interest in the witches and the devil was fueled only by works such as the *Malleus* it would be hard to understand why the devil was such a hot topic. The *Malleus* did not enjoy a wide readership and was out of print during the time of Calvin. On the other hand it may be the case that the heresy trials were responsible for bringing the devil into play. After all, the devil fuels the heretic. The devil twists the Scriptures and it is the devil who brings the heretic to the faithful in the first place! William Monter, "Heresy Executions in Reformation Europe, 1520-1565," in *Tolerance and intolerance in the European Reformation*, eds. Peter Grell and Bob Scribner (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1996) 48-65.

of all the evil and violent things in nature. The latter separated God and the devil and granted the devil autonomy over the world, storms and violent acts. Calvin calls these the Manichees.⁷⁹⁹ Unlike the Libertines, in whose respect Calvin had a specific man and a specific group in mind, although he used this to attack those who had similar understandings, the same was not true with regard to the Manicheans. There are no specific Manichees, but Calvin speaks of the Manichean tendency that he finds in Geneva.

It was against this melange of Catholic practices, Libertine attitudes and Manichean tendencies that Calvin preached and stressed the nature of the devil. To those who prayed to saints for protection against the dangers of the devil, Calvin preached that the devil is evil and so powerful that we on our own stand no chance against him. To those of the Libertine persuasion, Calvin's message was that there is a devil whose nature is malicious and whose intent is to destroy us. To the Manichees, the devil's nature was utterly malicious and Calvin supported this idea.⁸⁰⁰ Our best weapons are useless. Given Calvin's audience at the time, it makes sense that Calvin stressed more than one aspect of the nature and work of the devil in his sermons.

The devil was well known in the sixteenth century and it is fair to say that, like the saints, the devil had become an object of familiarity. The morality plays nearly always included the devil and his minions. This well-known devil was, in the plays,

⁷⁹⁹ Actually these were in turn influenced by the Cathars of 1140, who had ascribed great power to Satan. There are sporadic references to the Manichees in Calvin's 1559 *Institutes* 1.14.3.

⁸⁰⁰ With the nuance that the devil was under the control of God and not an autonomous entity.

easily tricked and frightened by simple rituals or holy water. When the Protestant Reformation took root in Geneva, the people lost many of the familiar rituals. The plays were banned unless approved by the Council. The devil was no longer a comic figure. Moreover, the saints, to whom many of the Genevans had prayed for protection against the devil, were no longer in evidence, as the Protestants actively discouraged devotion to the saints

In the late mediaeval mind, the devil, along with the saints, was part of an intermediate step before God. It was simpler to fight the devil in morality plays or by rituals than it was to appeal to God for help. This is one reason why Calvin felt it was of the utmost importance that people be instructed about the nature of the true God as revealed in the Scriptures. The devil had become so familiar that the people were at risk of trivializing him or becoming so worried by his power as to be terrified into inaction. Thus Calvin stressed, in his sermons, the nature and work of the devil but always in conjunction with the love and providence of God as, I think, he sought a balance between the two extremes of either dismissing the devil or ascribing too much to the devil. In his sermons Calvin tried to show that God is not an unknown figure of terror, but always a God for us who protects us from the devil and who guides us in our lives. It is at this point that we can proceed to discuss further the nature and work of the devil as Calvin preached about it.

The Nature and Work of the Devil

The Nature of the Devil

In asking questions concerning the nature of the devil, we are asking questions that deal with the essence and character of the devil. It is clear that in Calvin's sermons the devil is a malevolent being who freely chooses to act this way and is thus culpable for his actions.⁸⁰¹ "*Voila donc les diables qui ont esté maudits d'eux mesmes, et ce qu'ils sont cruels, pleins de rebellion, pleins de mensonge, pleins de meschanceté.*"⁸⁰²

In his preaching, as we have seen, Calvin stresses the fact that the devil seeks only to destroy.

Voici Dieu qui nous declare que Satan est un lyon bruyant, qui a tousiours la gueule ouverte pour nous engloutir....Ainsi donc voila pourquoy l'Escriture nous dit que le Diable est prince du monde, voire afin de nous humilier en premier lieu, et puis de nous instruire à crainte et sollicitude, que nous invoquions Dieu, le prians qu'il ne permette point que nous tombions entre les laqs de Satan.⁸⁰³

The nature of the devil, as described in Calvin's sermons, is to be as an enemy, a liar⁸⁰⁴ and trickster and a tempter⁸⁰⁵ and one who is totally corrupt of his own making. Even his name means enemy,⁸⁰⁶ one who seeks to *nous navrer*, and whose blows are

⁸⁰¹ "Wherefore, without controversy, we must conclude, that the principle of evil with which Satan was endowed was not from nature, but from defection; because he had departed from God, the fountain of justice and of all rectitude." *Comm. Gen.* 3.1.

⁸⁰² Sermons on Job, CO 33, 61.

⁸⁰³ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 62. In this quote we have the terms *diable* and *Satan* used without distinction.

⁸⁰⁴ Truth he assails with lies, light he obscures with darkness." *Instit.* 1.15.15.

⁸⁰⁵ *Comm.* John 8:44.

⁸⁰⁶ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 609.

deadly. The devil has an infinite number of tricks in his bag to tempt us.⁸⁰⁷ The devil is described as an enemy both of God and of the believer. We now turn our attention to the description of the devil as enemy of God and of the believer.

The Devil as an Enemy of God and the Believer

Calvin makes it very clear that the devil is our enemy. There is no way in which we can appease the devil.⁸⁰⁸

...le diable est tousiours apres nous pour nous ruiner, s'il peut: que quand nous luy serons eschappez d'un costé, il suscitera incontinent une autre tentation nouvelle.⁸⁰⁹

There is no possibility of negotiation with the devil for he is a deadly and relentless enemy. Calvin preached that the devil is our mortal enemy whose blows are not trifling but lethal. In the *Institutes* of 1559, Calvin remarks that the devil is a soldier who is indefatigable and implacable:

Being forewarned of the constant presence of an enemy the most daring, the most powerful, the most crafty, the most indefatigable, the most completely equipped with all the engines, and the most expert in the science of war.⁸¹⁰

Moreover, as Calvin preached, we are to give no quarter to such an enemy.

⁸⁰⁷ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 68.

⁸⁰⁸ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 62. It is interesting to observe that God's providence and protection extends to the individual and is not restricted to an abstract idea of God holding Satan back. Here Calvin shows to his people that God will intervene with us as individuals and give us the means to resist and to fight Satan.

⁸⁰⁹ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 68.

⁸¹⁰ *Instit.* 1.15.13.

Il ne faut point que nous luy ouvrions la porte, ne qu'il ayt abbatu toutes les murailles, mais si tost qu'il aura un petit pertuis, le voilà entré. D'autant plus donc devons nous tenir bon et nous remparer au double de la parole de Dieu, sachant que se sont noz vrayes armes: c'est nostre glaive, c'est nostre heaulme, c'est nostre bouclier, c'est nostre hallectret, brief c'est tout nostre harnois, dont nous serons bien equippez pour sustenir toutes les alarmes de Sathan, et pour les repoulses, moienant que nous aions la parole de Dieu, Or il nous y faut estre tellement excercer que le diable ne treuve nulle ouverture.⁸¹¹

The devil is the enemy of the believer⁸¹² and God⁸¹³ but, unlike any ordinary enemy, he is immensely clever and powerful, so much so that we would not have any chance against him if it were not for the fact that the devil is *tenu en bride*.⁸¹⁴ This means that Satan's power against us is held back by God and that the devil cannot utterly destroy us.

Il n'y a donc nul ordre que nous puissions prendre courage, si ceste doctrine nous estoit ainsi proposée simplement, ce seroit pour nous rendre confus, tellement que nous serions vaincus, devant que Satan approchast, et la seule apprehension de nostre foiblesse et de la force que Satan a ça et là à l'opposite, comme il est nommé un lyon bruyant qui cherche sa proie toutes pars, et comme nous sommes sa proye à la verité, que cela seroit pour nous faire escouler comme eau. Et ainsi que nous soions consolez de ceste promesse pour esperer en Dieu, qu'il aura

⁸¹¹ Sermons on Gen. fol. 53(a), p. 12.

⁸¹² Sermons on Job, CO 33, 62.

⁸¹³ This much, therefore, he has of himself, and his own iniquity, that he eagerly, and of set purpose opposes God, aiming at those things which he deems most contrary to the will of God." *Instit* 1.15.17. See also Sermons on Job, CO 33,59 and *Comm.* Genesis 3:1-3.

⁸¹⁴ As we have seen in our discussion of the trials of Job, this is perhaps one of Calvin's favourite terms about the devil. It was a doctrine of comfort and support in the face of trials and temptations. In speaking about this doctrine in his *Institutes*, Calvin notes:

"How do we have confidence in the face of trials when they call to mind that the devil, and the whole train of the ungodly, are in all directions held in by the hand of God as if with a bridle, so that they can neither conceive any mischief nor plan what they have conceived, nor how much-soever they may have planned, move a single finger to perpetrate, unless in so far as he permits, nay, unless insofar as he commands, they are not only bound by his fetters, but are even forced to do him service - when the godly think of all these things they have ample sources of consolation." 1.17.11.

encores pitié de nous et que, selon la misericorde, il nous retira de l'abisme de perdition auquel nous sommes tresbuechez.⁸¹⁵

As a consequence of being held in check by God,⁸¹⁶ the devil may appear before the throne of God, not because he is a willing servant of God, but because the devil is forced to obey. In speaking of the fact that not only the angels but the devils are before the throne of God, Calvin notes:

mais aussi les diables d'enfer, qui lui sont ennemis et rebelles tant qu'il leur est possible, qui taschent de ruiner sa maiesté, qui machinent à brouiller tout: qu'il faut que ceux-la (en despit de leurs dents) soyent suiets à Dieu, et qu'ils lui rendent conte de tout ce qu'ils font, et qu'ils ne puissent rien attenter sans sa permission et son congé.⁸¹⁷

The devil carries out the judgments of God in the same way that an executioner carries out the sentence of the judge.⁸¹⁸ Satan is the 'minister' of the wrath of God.⁸¹⁹ The devil is like a prisoner in a box forced to sit in the presence of a judge and lawgivers.⁸²⁰ The devil chafes at the authority of God and unwillingly obeys God because he is forced to obey God who is sovereign. The devil can do nothing without the permission of God. While it is true that the devil is under the control of God and has no

⁸¹⁵ Sermon on Gen. 3, fol. 84(a), p. 7.

⁸¹⁶ God controls the wicked and overrules even the devil himself. *Instit.* 1.17.7.

⁸¹⁷ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 58.

⁸¹⁸ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 107.

⁸¹⁹ *Instit* 2.4.3, 1.14.18, *Comm.* 2 Cor. 12:17, *Comm.* Matt. 12:29. Also from Calvin's Job sermons, CO 33, 110,

“Ainsi donc combien que nous ne voyons pas les diables à l'entour de nous, combien aussi que nous ne voyons pas les Anges, si faut-il que nous ayons ceci pour conclu, que Dieu envoie et les uns et les autres, voir pour nous maintenir d'un costè, et pour nous affliger de l'autre.”

⁸²⁰ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 109.

power other than what God grants to the devil, it is also the case that the Christian should be ready to battle with the devil. This means that the Christian must be aware of the *astuce* and ruses and tricks of Satan. The question of the tricks of Satan leads us naturally into a discussion of the devil as trickster.

The Devil as Liar and Trickster

The devil is described as a liar who lies of his own choice.

His being a liar does not arise from his nature always having been against the truth, but from his defection by a voluntary fall. This description of Satan is very useful to us, so that everyone may take care to beware of his snares and also to repel his power and force 'For he goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' (1Pet. 5.8) and is furnished with a thousand tricks to deceive. So much the more should believers be armed with spiritual weapons for the fight, and so much the more earnestly should they watch with vigilance and prudence... And it is not surprising that Satan tries so hard to extinguish the light of truth, for it is the only life of the soul. Hence the chief and most deadly weapon for killing the soul is falsehood.⁸²¹

It is part of the character of the devil to be a liar. In addition to being an enemy who never tires of his goal to destroy, Calvin also preaches of the character of the devil as liar and trickster. The devil, "tasche des tous costez a nous abysmer, et quand il voit qu'il n'a rien gagné, par un point, il invent et machine une autre ruse nouvelle."⁸²² In terms of ruses the devil is indeed creative, "il a des cautelles infini, qui se forgent en sa boutique."⁸²³

⁸²¹ *Comm. John 8:44 from Calvin's Commentaries, the Gospel According to Saint John*, eds., David and Thomas Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids, MI.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1959) 228.

⁸²² Sermons on Job, CO 33, 68.

⁸²³ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 68.

Christians are advised to be well aware of the tricks and devices that the devil uses so that they are prepared.

Advisons donc de bien cognoistre ses astuces, comme saint Paul aussi dit que c'est la sagesse des chrestiens de savoir de quel artifice le diable use.⁸²⁴

Or voici Satan qui est notre ennemi, il a des cautelles, et des astuces plus dangereuses, et plus meschantes que tous les ennemis du monde, il demande à precipiter tout en ruine: nous savons la puissance qu'il a comme desia il a esté traité.⁸²⁵

The tricks can be broken into two different types or, better, methods: the internal and the external. The first temptation of Jesus in the desert can be said to involve an external temptation as the devil was an external agent, in this case using bread to tempt. The second temptation of Jesus in the desert, the temptation to throw himself from a pinnacle, can also be said to involve an external method as the Scriptures were the agent of temptation. Thus an external source was used, in this case the Scriptures, to bring Jesus to the point of disobedience.⁸²⁶

The devil used Scripture and twisted it by leaving out crucial phrases or by adding some in order to deceive and to tempt. In the case of Saul's visit with the witch at Endor, the same external method was used. In this case, the devil conjured a pseudo-Samuel in order to bring Saul to the point of despair. In both cases the devil lied and deceived. Another such trick is found in Calvin's sermons that deal with the temptation

⁸²⁴ Sermons on Genesis 3, fol. 53(a), p. 9.

⁸²⁵ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 64.

⁸²⁶ Sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. CO 46, 621.

of Eve in the garden of Eden. The devil uses Scriptures against her, making her doubt the very Word of God. The devil sowed doubt in her mind by changing the Scriptures.⁸²⁷

Calvin notes that the impulse to question the wisdom of God is but diabolical wisdom, for the devil seeks always to sow doubt into our minds and rebellion against God.⁸²⁸

Satan also never ceases to tell us to doubt the Word of God, even though that word is more tested than gold or silver.⁸²⁹ The devil's plan was to get Eve to turn away from God and believe the lies of the devil.

Satan, par la bouche du serpent, la veut destourner de Dieu, elle[Eve] est là comme à l'eschole de tromperie et de mensonge; et ce pendant, la verité de Dieu est comme foulée au pied, et elle s'accorde à ces blasphemes. Il y a eu donc une privauté trop grande et maudite.⁸³⁰

But the devil does not need Scriptures or external agents to tempt us. He can use our very nature against us. As Calvin puts it, the devil fans the flames of our desires. The devil's nature is akin to our unredeemed nature and he is very clever at finding out where we are weakest. Thus we are incited to rebel against God or despair of the love of God by virtue of our very nature. These internal temptations are far more dangerous than external temptations and Calvin notes the need for us to be keenly aware of our own nature and weakness in order to combat the devil.⁸³¹ This was seen in the Job sermons.

⁸²⁷ Sermons on Gen. 3, fol. 53(a), p. 7.

⁸²⁸ Sermon Gen. 3, fol. 53(a), p. 6.

⁸²⁹ Sermons on Gen. 3, fol. 53(a), p. 7.

⁸³⁰ Sermon on Gen. 3, fol. 84(a), p. 4.

⁸³¹ Once more, the knowledge of self is always a factor in our spiritual growth.

The aim of the devil was to drive Job mad with despair.⁸³² Job was tempted to despair of the love of God in the face of afflictions, yet Job did not succumb.

Calvin's references to the lies and the tricks of the devil are not just a matter of dry information. Calvin points out that once we are aware that the devil is a liar and a trickster we can be on our guard. Since the tricks of the devil are not trifling but deadly blows, it is all the more imperative that we be prepared and able to defend ourselves.

While being aware of the tricks of the devil necessitates the battle-readiness of the Christian, the devil as liar, trickster and enemy of God and others is also revealing of our own nature. Like the devil, we are also naturally enemies of God and in the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert Calvin goes as far as to say that we are hated of God. Apart from God's grace, there is no hope for any relationship with God. We are enemies and hated of God. When Calvin speaks of the nature of the devil, he has a two-fold reason: to disabuse his parishioners of the idea that the devil trifles with us; and to enable parishioners to see their true (unredeemed) nature. The devil's enmity with God is consequently also revealing of our own unredeemed nature.⁸³³

In Calvin's preaching on the devil there is always a two-fold purpose. First Calvin speaks of the devil and then uses Biblical references to the nature of the devil to show us that the devil is a mirror of our unredeemed state. Unlike the devils, for whom God shows no mercy, God has been merciful to us. Our souls are so tainted and so

⁸³² *Instit.* 1.18.1.

⁸³³ Since Calvin had such a high regard for Augustine and since he often agreed with him, one can guess that Calvin's emphasis on sinful human nature was influenced by Augustine

corrupted that only God's mercy can help us.⁸³⁴ We are so tainted that our unredeemed nature causes us to actually turn away from God and go towards Satan.

Et ce n'est point sans cause que Dieu nous hait: mais c'est d'autant que son image a este comme effacee en nous, et que Satan nous a imprimé ses marques: et d'autant que Dieu est iuste, il faut qu'il haysse iniquité.⁸³⁵

The hateful and destructive actions of the devils are in fact what we are apart from God's grace and election. The two-fold stress makes the faithful realize that they need God to protect them from such an enemy, and they are eternally thankful for being elected and called out of the wicked darkness that is the nature of the devil.

The idea that our nature is the same as the devil's apart from grace raises the question of whether there is salvation for the devil.⁸³⁶ Calvin answers a firm no. The devils, unlike us, are not called into a relationship with God, and the sacrifice of Christ did not extend to them. The devils are condemned to remain enemies of God and live in their wickedness. They chose their path of their own volition. Calvin is very careful when he speaks of the volition or the will of the devil. The devils cannot do all that they wish, as they are under the control of God. The devil himself, or Satan, executes the commands of God. The devil is used to punish the wicked and to chastize and test, but he is never given full freedom. The devil is always held in control or in check. Since the devil is not fully autonomous, to what extent can we say that he is guilty of his actions?

⁸³⁴ CO 46,592.

⁸³⁵ Sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. CO 46,592.

The fact that the question of demonic culpability is dealt with in the sermons, and it is not specifically addressed in the biblical text, indicates that Calvin had in mind those who perhaps with some limited understanding of predestination would argue that the devil is not really guilty of his actions as he was predestined to fall. By extension, we may claim that we are not really guilty of our sins and wrongdoing as we have fallen natures. Calvin answers this question in his sermons on Job. The bandits who destroyed Job's children were acting of their own volition, as does the devil when he tempts and seeks to destroy us. Likewise when we do evil, we do so of our own volition and are culpable.

Calvin distinguishes between actions done under coercion and actions that are free. We are responsible for all actions done freely, that is, all actions not under coercion or an action that has no determining antecedents. Insofar as the devil is not forced or constrained to do evil, he is guilty. Calvin's view can best be described as that of a compatibilist. God is in control and all events are governed by the counsel of God. While the devil is 'free' to exercise his free will, the devil, like everything else, is under the control of God who has the ends determined.⁸³⁷ The end result is always within the will of God. The devil will always do evil. In fact the devil can do nothing except that which is evil or in Calvin's words, the devil is by his fall so far alienated from communion

⁸³⁶ I use the term devil in the singular to mean Satan, but Satan is part of the collection of beings called the devils. Therefore, when we discuss if there is salvation for the devils, we discuss at the same time if there is salvation for the devil himself, or Satan.

⁸³⁷ Calvin believed that God was omniscient and when God had a plan, God knew what the result would be. The end result is known by God.

with all that is good, that he can do nothing but what is evil.”⁸³⁸ God’s will is accomplished by Satan since Satan is under the control of God and *tenu en bride*.

God often actuated the reprobate by the interposition of Satan; but in such a manner that Satan himself acts his part by Divine impulse, and proceeds to the extent of the Divine appointment.⁸³⁹

Like the devil, Calvin held us responsible for all actions that were free, that is, free of determining antecedents or coercion. Although by virtue of the fall we are more likely to choose evil, and usually do, we are still culpable for all our actions that are free.

To recapitulate, the devil is by his very nature, namely, in his essence and character, evil. The devil is not coerced into being our enemy, nor is he forced in his attempts to destroy us and God. The devil freely chooses this course of action. Thus, one can say that the very nature of the devil is depraved and corrupt.

The Work of the Devil

A discussion of the nature of the devil leads us naturally into a consideration of his work and office. The nature of the devil concerns itself with questions of what the devil is like apart from what he does. Perhaps a more modern term would be character. The work of the devil concerns itself with what the devil does, or how he manifests himself to us. Once the nature of the devil is clearly established, and it is worthwhile to note that Calvin invariably begins with the nature of the devil when he describes him in

⁸³⁸ *Instit.* 1.17.8.

⁸³⁹ *Instit.* 1.18.1-2.

his sermons, he moves on to the work of the devil. Calvin discusses the nature of the devil in his sermons before proceeding to the work of the devil in order then to show his parishioners that the devil tempts and attempts to destroy, not due to any external coercion or pressure but from the devil's own nature. This answers the question of why the devil works as he does. After a discussion of why, Calvin moves on to what he considers the more useful discussion of how the devil acts or, as I have called it, the work of the devil.

In understanding the work of the devil, it is important to note not only what he does but also why and how the devil does the things that he does. This shows Calvin's ongoing concern with usefulness. While it is important to understand that the devil tempts and is our enemy of his own volition and not coerced by God or any external agent to act in this manner, understanding how the devil works is important so that we can be on our guard against him. Calvin spoke of the work of the devil in the following areas: 1) as tempter; 2) as 'director' of our experiences; 3) as revealer of hidden sins; 4) as agent or servant of God; 5) as a hermeneutical tool to interpret Scriptures.

The Devil as Tempter

The work of the devil is to destroy us and to destroy God, since he is the mortal and indefatigable enemy of both. Yet it is not enough to state this. The devil's works are not random acts of terrorism but planned attacks. The devil, as Calvin points out, is always ready to find the weakness in our armour and as such, in order to mount his attacks, must know our weakness and nature. To show this point, in his sermons Calvin

often describes the human condition and shows how the devil uses our very natures as weapons against us to tempt us. This can be seen in many instances such as, for example, when Calvin describes human pride in his sermons on the Book of Job:

Ainsi donc ordinairement quand Dieu permet à Satan de tenter ses fideles, c'est pour leur faire servir le tout comme de medecine. Et en ceci voyons nous une bonté merveilleuse de Dieu, qu'il convertit le mal en bien: car qu'est-ce que peut apporter Satan sinon tout venin, et poison? car nous savons qu'il n'a que mort en luy: car il en est appelé le prince. Ainsi donc tout ce que Satan pourra produire tend à la ruine des hommes, et pour les abismer. Or cependant Dieu trouvera le moyen, que le mal qui est en Satan nous sera converti à salut. Et voyla comme S. Paul a esté mediciné, comme il le confesse, apres avoir parlé des revelations si hautes, qu'elles luy estoyent donnees. Dieu (dit-il) a prouvé que je ne m'eslevasse point par trop (2. Cor. 12,8). Voila une bonne provision, et bien utile pour S. Paul, car nous savons que l'orgueil est pour nous precipiter aux abysmes, qu'il n'y a rien qui irrite plus Dieu: car il faut qu'il se declare tousiours ennemi des orgueilleux...⁸⁴⁰

The devil is aware of our condition and character, which permits him to fan the flames of our desires. Calvin paints images of our nature or human condition and shows to his listeners that the devil will use these points to attack us. The devil is shown in Calvin's sermons to have a keen understanding of human nature. In the Genesis sermons the devil is portrayed as sowing doubt, knowing that Eve would succumb to curiosity and self-improvement.⁸⁴¹ In the sermons on Saul and the witch at Endor Calvin points out that we are insatiably curious and will seek all sorts of ways to get secret knowledge. This is the work of the devil, who knows we are curious and sets up traps such as witches and illusions to make us believe that some secret knowledge can be attained in

⁸⁴⁰ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 78.

⁸⁴¹ Or, as Calvin puts it, science.

this way. Or, as we have seen, the devil tries to use our nature so that we will fall into either the abyss or despair of God. The devil uses our impatience with God's help to tempt us into acting on our own.

The work of the devil is never presented in isolation from our human nature. I believe that Calvin had a purpose in doing this. For him, the devil was not a random tempter, but his temptations were useful. When our human nature is presented as tempted by the devil, one can detect a bifold revelation of both our own characters and that of the devil. The devil's temptations succeed in making us miserable and are difficult to surmount. This is because the devil has a keen knowledge of our weakness and flaws. We often give in to temptations and listen to the lies of Satan. It is a struggle not to listen to Satan. Calvin calls our ears windows to allow Satan to enter.⁸⁴² The fact that we find the temptations of Satan so difficult is not only a testimony to the prowess of Satan but is also a reflection of our human nature.

Our nature, which apart from God's grace Calvin understood to be miserable, is shown in the light of the malicious nature of the devil in order to highlight the fact that we are, like the devil, enemies of God. Calvin preaches that the devil is prince of the world because we have given in willingly to his lies and his domination. It is we who crown the devil as our leader. The ease with which we listen to the devil testifies to the fact that our natural condition or state is that of an enemy of God. The devil is clearly God's enemy but Calvin often, if not always, mentions our nature after he describes the

⁸⁴² Calvin ascribes this metaphor to Bernard of Clairveaux. *Instit.* 2.1.4.

devil's nature. Calvin does this to highlight the grace of God. Calvin is showing his parishioners in a theatrical way that the nature of the devil is not so strange or foreign. It is true the devil is the sworn and indefatigable enemy of God, but so are we. Our nature is like that of the devil. We listen willingly to the devil who is often our spiritual father.

In contrast to those who felt that the devil was the master of ill weather (the Germans burned witches who were felt to have caused calamity in the weather) or of events in nature, Calvin presents the work of the devil in conjunction with our nature. The devil is our enemy and seeks to destroy, but does not do so randomly. Rather, the devil has a keen knowledge of us and uses this knowledge to tempt us. The main office of the devil is as tempter. The devil seeks to tempt us where we are the weakest. In the case of the temptation of Job, the devil sought to bring the weakened Job to despair so that he would curse God and die. In the case of Jesus in the desert, the temptations were to get Jesus to use his power to help himself and thus disobey God's commands. In each case, the devil tried to get Job and Jesus to give in to their human nature. Job was tempted to despair and Jesus was tempted to use his powers to help himself.

The devil tempts by using our own natures against us and by sowing doubt in our mind about the love and providence of God. The devil often tries to bring us to either the pole of despair, where we believe that God has forsaken us and salvation and help is up to us, or that of pride, where we think that salvation and help can be best accomplished through our own methods and means. To make matters worse, the devil plants doubts in our mind about the weapons that we have against him. The chief weapon that we have is

God. If the devil can cause us to doubt the love and providence of God by getting us to act in despair or pride against God, then the devil has won.

Similarly, if the devil can cause us to lose interest in the sword of Scripture, then we cannot counterattack him. Thus the devil will try to twist Scripture and make us doubt God and our faith and lose hope altogether. The temptations of the devil are never random, as what will tempt one person will have no effect on another. The temptations are always deadly and geared towards the individual. In the case of the temptations and trials of Job, the temptations and tribulations caused Job to reflect on his relationship with God and on himself causing a deepening of both.

The temptation to despair, Calvin notes, is the most deadly of all the temptations of the devil. It is insidious and appeals to our nature and Calvin stresses that we should always be on guard against it. In order to be on guard against the temptations of the devil, it is necessary that we know both ourselves and God. This was the opening remark in Calvin's 1559 *Institutes*, that true knowledge consists of the knowledge of God and of the self. In order to be ready for the attacks of the devil, we must be aware of the love and providence of God and also of our own nature. Upon election and redemption and by the action of the Holy Spirit, we become aware of ourselves in relation to God. For the first time, we are able to perceive the attacks of Satan that always try to separate us from God. The unelect are blind and driven by their nature and by Satan and yet do not know what is happening. Calvin comments that the elect see the temptations and the tests of Satan and are aware of all the dangers that surround us. We realize that we would be

destroyed 1000 times a day, if God did not protect us. This leads us to the second work of the devil, although this second work is unintentional.

The Devil as 'Director' of Our Experiences

Calvin has sometimes been accused of being a theologian who had little use for human experience. He is misunderstood as one for whom Christian life is subjection to a sovereign God with little or no place for our experience. Yet Calvin was a pastor who tried to show the use of doctrines to the Christian life. Théodore Bèze, in his life of Calvin, writes that Calvin's sole object was to show that the gospel he preached did not consist in mere speculation, but in Christian practice."⁸⁴³ Recently, some scholars like David Demson and William Balke⁸⁴⁴ have been drawing attention to the role of experience in Calvin's theology. Their work, mainly concentrated on the *Institutes*, concludes that Calvin uses experience in tandem with the role of the Holy Spirit and Scripture. That is to say, the Holy Spirit move us to a deeper understanding and appreciation of Scripture. By experience, Demson and Balke understand Calvin to mean the experience of the Holy Spirit in one's life as a guiding hand. As we have seen in our review of the sermons, Calvin was not interested in discussing the devil or God on their own but, rather, in relation to us. In the sermons where he deals with the devil, one sees that Calvin was speaking of the Christian life, of the experience of being Christian.

⁸⁴³ "*Ut evangelium quod annunciabat ostenderet non in speculatione quadam, sed in ipsa christiana vita positum esse.*" Theodori Bezae, *Vita Calvini*, CO 21, 139.

⁸⁴⁴ David Demson, "The Image of Calvin in Recent Research," *Papers from the 1986 International Calvin Symposium*, William Balke, "The Word of God and *Experientia* According to Calvin," *Calvinus Ecclesiae Doctor*, ed. W. H. Neuser (Kampen: Kok, 1978)

Calvin is not exactly clear what he means by experience.⁸⁴⁵ On the one hand, experience teaches: with experience as our teacher, we find God just as he declares himself in his word.”⁸⁴⁶ Even the stupid are taught by experience. *Experientiam esse magistram stultorum.*⁸⁴⁷ But Calvin had no use for unmediated or naked experience. “Faith cannot arise from a naked experience of things but must have its origin in the Word of God.”⁸⁴⁸ Calvin was a little more sure of the role of experience when speaking about the goodness of God. The goodness of God will always be in doubt unless we really feel and experience its sweetness ourselves.”⁸⁴⁹ We must experience God as a faithful teacher.⁸⁵⁰

We can come to know by faith as well as by experience. Calvin goes so far as to say there is a knowledge associated with faith. Commenting on the prophet Joel and experience, Calvin notes:

⁸⁴⁵ Experience is a difficult if not impossible term to define. It would be a mistake to try to locate the type of philosophical discussion that is found in Hans George Gadamer in Calvin’s work. Calvin’s definition of experience is a working one. For Calvin, our experience was our reflections on our activities or events that occurred to us. We experience x insofar as we come to recognize x as an entity and reflect on it. Our experiential knowledge of God is composed of our reflections on our life experiences and upon Scripture. Calvin understood the relationship between God and humanity to be one-sided with the ontological priority given to God. When we experience an event, our reflections on this event in terms of our knowledge of God are useless, unless the reflections are tested by means of Scripture, or God’s self-revelation. In this way, our life experiences lead us towards God insofar as they are reflections upon a prior action of God towards us.

⁸⁴⁶ *Instit.* 1.10.2.

⁸⁴⁷ Calvin, *Comm.* Psalm 49, CO 31, 486. Calvin understood that it was in the Psalms that one could find the most information and discussion of experience.

⁸⁴⁸ *Comm.* John 20:29.

⁸⁴⁹ *Instit.* 3.2.15.

⁸⁵⁰ *Comm.* John 6.37.

There is a two-fold knowledge: the knowledge of faith which is received from the word alone and the knowledge of experience, as we say, which depends on its effect. Therefore the faithful always acknowledge that salvation for them rests in God: but sometimes they stagger and suffer grievous torments in their minds, and are tossed here and there. However it may be, they certainly do NOT FEEL [emphasis mine] God to be their Father. Therefore, the prophet now treats of real knowledge when he says that they shall know they have a God. How are they to know this? Of course by experience!⁸⁵¹

Yet at other moments Calvin notes that the knowledge of faith is superior to experience.⁸⁵² It is clear that, for Calvin, Christian experience was the reflected life of a Christian in the light of the Holy Spirit. Here is the child's answer from Calvin's *Catechism of the Genevan Church*:. The minister has asked how we know that our faith in God is real. The child replies:

Child: Experience teaches us that faith is a special gift of the Holy Spirit. Experience also shows this.

Minister: How?

Child: Our mind is too simple and frail to be able to grasp the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us through faith: and our hearts are too prone to distrust or to have perverse confidence in ourselves or other creatures. But the Holy Spirit by his illumination makes us capable of understanding those things which would otherwise be incomprehensible to us, and fortifies us with certitude and seals and imprints the promise of salvation in our hearts.⁸⁵³

For Calvin, experience is such an integral part of our life before God that one cannot find a section that deals with experience in his theology. Nonetheless, while it is

⁸⁵¹ *Comm.* Joel 3.17.

⁸⁵² *Comm.* Isa. 14.1.

⁸⁵³ *Le Catechisme de Genève*, C0. 6,45 (translation mine).

not the purpose of the present study to discuss Calvin's understanding of experience in detail, some points will be helpful.

The first point is that experience is useful to understand the Scriptures. This can be seen in Calvin's introduction to his commentary on the Psalms where he claimed that he felt qualified to write a commentary on the Psalms since he had himself experienced the struggles of the Psalmist.⁸⁵⁴ Our own experience allows us to reflect upon what is in the Scriptures. Calvin had no place for unmediated experience, as we have noted. Our own experiences, when seen in the light of the Scriptures, cause us to identify more with the Scriptures and perhaps understand them a little more and, in consequence, understand God's providence and message for us. The movement was always from experience to Scripture and back again. It is when we meditate on our experiences in the light of Scripture that we grow. In terms of our own struggles, Calvin found it very strange that while God is providential and loving we do not feel this and feel rather sad and abandoned at times. When we are despondent, we are helped only by remembering and calling on the promises of God.⁸⁵⁵ It is the promise in the Gospel that gives us the strength to go on. Yet at times, this seems insufficient. The same Scriptures can have different effects on us. The same Scriptural passage that shows us the mercy of God can also show us that we have not lived up to our faith.

How is our soul healed? Calvin understood that this happens through faith in God and in the promises of God even when outwardly we cannot see evidence of God's hand

⁸⁵⁴ Calvin's Preface to the readers of his commentary on the Psalms, CO 31, 15-19.

or help. This is especially true in the times when we are tempted by the devil. Outwardly, it appears that God has abandoned us utterly. The cure for our anxiety is to listen to the word.⁸⁵⁶ The Scriptures once more are a key to the interpretation of our experiences. In times when we are severely tested, our reading of the Scriptures confirms that we are supported and protected by God. Thus, we experience an event as either bad or good and reflect on it in the light of the promises of God.⁸⁵⁷ It is important to bear in mind that Calvin gives priority to the Word. The experiences that lead us towards God are *a posteriori* reflections seen through the lenses of Scripture. As Balke notes, Experience is a phenomenon alongside the Word. The whole point is truth and reality. Truth leads to reality. The scripture is true, we shall experience it to be so. That fills knowledge of faith with eschatological power.”⁸⁵⁸ Balke also reminds us that Christian experience is essentially guided by the Holy Spirit. It is the sealing of the Spirit that enables us to view the Scriptures and promises of the mercy of God as true. It is the Holy Spirit who enables the Scriptures to become efficacious and take root in our hearts.⁸⁵⁹

From the above, it can be said that Calvin considers the devil in relation to our experience in the following ways. We experience trials and temptations, that is, they happen to us and we reflect on them. But the devil, who knows our nature and character, tempts us where we are the weakest. Then, in the light of our reflections and the devil's

⁸⁵⁵ *Comm.* on Psalm 56, CO 31, 548.

⁸⁵⁶ *Sermons on Job*, CO 32, 194.

⁸⁵⁷ *Comm.* Psalm 60, CO 31, 577.

⁸⁵⁸ Balke, “The Word of God and Experientia According to Calvin,” 26.

⁸⁵⁹ *Instit.* 3.6.4.

temptations, the Holy Spirit illumines us so that when we reflect on the temptations we do not just ascribe them to bad luck or fate but recognize the source which, in this case, is the devil. The Holy Spirit here is essential because of Calvin's understanding of the role of reason in matters of faith. The unelect can experience trials and troubles but they will never arrive at the next step because their faculty of reason is utterly blind in spiritual matters. The elect, and we can presume that Calvin assumed he was preaching to the elect, are enlightened by virtue of the Holy Spirit and God's grace. As such, they can understand the true nature of the temptations and the terror wrought by the devil. This leads them not only to an appreciation of the goodness and protection of God, but also to a much greater spiritual awareness of themselves. In this sense, one can say that the devil leads or directs the faithful towards a greater knowledge of God. My findings do not contradict what Demson and Balke have ascertained from the *Institutes*, but add to them. As we go through life, the Holy Spirit does guide us. The devil's temptations act as a spur to our reflections. Were we to go through life without any temptation, then it is doubtful whether we would ever appreciate and come to experience the goodness of God in our lives.

One result of the individualism of the Renaissance was that issues of self-awareness became important and the point of one's personal sin was emphasized. Prior to the Reformation one could pray for the souls of the departed and there was an understanding of the cooperative nature of salvation. Sinners were never left alone with their sins. Even after their death, they could be helped and prayed for. Questions of feeling the love of God in the light of diabolical temptation would have never occurred

to a mediaeval thinker. At that time, the individual did not battle the demons alone but could call upon Michael the Archangel and his angels for help as well as the pantheon of saints. With the stress on *sola Scriptura* as well as the triumph of nominalist ideas, one could no longer count on the angels for such protection. While Calvin does say that indeed the angels are encamped around us or we would be utterly destroyed, the individual was very much alone in his or her battle with temptation. The believer had to know about the attacks of the devil and be ready and vigilant at all times. Thus Calvin stressed what was 'useful' for us to know about the devil in this particular context.

The devil's temptations act as channels through which our seemingly random experiences become focused and we see them in the light of a providential and loving God. It is as if the temptations shine a light on all the obstacles to which we were hitherto blind. The devil, in this sense, although unwittingly, directs our human experiences towards a deeper knowledge of God that is rooted in our experience of God's providential care. In this way, experience can teach us about God, since the experience is not random but directed by God for the purpose of leading us closer to God. It can be said that the devil himself acts as a hermeneutical key in our knowledge of God. The devil's temptations are, as Calvin repeatedly preached, not random but directed and ordained by God. God is aware of our trials and temptations. The temptations, in turn, since they are directed at our weaknesses, force us to reflect on God's providence and whether or not we will be delivered from the trials we experience. In this way, the devil acts as a key whereby we can come to grasp in an experiential manner the grace and providence of God.

The Devil as Revealer of Hidden Sin

We have seen that, by virtue of the fact that God is in control of the devil and his temptations, the temptations are not random acts of terror but lead the believer to a deeper awareness of self and God. In addition, temptations and trials can act to root out hidden sins that would otherwise be undetected. The sins are undetected, for they do not respond to the ordinary means of detecting a sin. In Calvin's understanding, it was the law that convicted us of sin. The law has three functions or offices,⁸⁶⁰ but it is in the first and the second that we are convicted of our sins and realize our great need for God's mercy. Yet although Scripture does show us how we have fallen short of the mark, the sin of hypocrisy is one that is untouched by reflection upon Scripture alone. The sin of hypocrisy can only be brought to the light by the lived experience of temptation, testing and deliverance.

This was seen in the temptations of Job. The sin of pride, "does Job serve you for naught," could never have been brought to light were it not for the temptations and trials. As Calvin argued, the deeply rooted sin of pride could never have been brought to light apart from the temptations. The devil is used by God in order that this sin be exposed and purged.

Notons donc qu'icy le diable monstre une maladie, de laquelle nous sommes tous entachez, iusques à tant que Dieu nous en ait gueris par sa grace, c'est qu'en temps de prosperité nous pourrons benir Dieu, mais s'il nous afflige, que nous changeons de propos, et alors commençons à murmurer contre lui, et oublions

⁸⁶⁰ Calvin understood that the law, as expressed in the decalogue among other places, had three functions. We will discuss Calvin's use of the law in the section on the devil and the law of this chapter.

tout ce que nous avions attribué de louange, cependant qu'il nous traitoit selon nostre souhait.⁸⁶¹

Calvin argues that one's dedication to God can only be tested by means of temptations and trials. God tests us and tries us. In fact, God is like an umpire.

But to calm all the impulses of passion, the most useful consideration is, that God arms the devil, as well as all the wicked, for conflict and sits as an umpire, that he may exercise our patience.⁸⁶²

Likewise, Jesus was tempted to use pride and turn stones into bread. The devil is used as an instrument of God to uncover hidden sins and our true nature.

The Devil as Tenu en Bride and Servant of God

As Calvin stresses in the Job sermons, the most useful thing to know about the devil, in fact the most useful doctrine all around, is that the devil is *tenu en bride* or held in check by God.⁸⁶³

Ainsi donc c'est l'un des articles le plus necessaire que nous ayons, de savoir que le diable est tenu en bride, et quelque chose qu'il soit enragé contre nostre salut, que neantmoins il ne peut rien faire sinon d'autant qu'il luy est permis d'enhaut.⁸⁶⁴

Not only is the devil held in check by God, but God actually uses Satan as his servant to accomplish his will. Thus the devil is the instrument of God and is used to chastize the wicked or enact God's judgment on the wicked. The devil is also used to

⁸⁶¹ Sermons on Job, CO. 33, 69.

⁸⁶² *Instit.* 1.17.8.

⁸⁶³ The idea of the devil being held in check is also to be found in Calvin's *Genevan Catechism*, CO 6, 17.

exercise the faithful in battle. The devil is portrayed as a kind of spiritual sparring partner for the faithful who, by trials and temptations, will be made stronger. The devil is God's headsman and God's servant. He executes the judgments of God. He is also used to protect God from the charge of evil. As Calvin argues in the Job sermons, when we are tempted and afflicted it is the hand of Satan, not that of God, that actually assaults us. The devil exercises his free will in tempting and assaulting the faithful. Although the devil is used by God to punish the wicked or test the faithful, when trials come it is the devil, not God, who does the actual tempting. Calvin argues this way by making use of his compatibilist view of freedom.

The doctrine of the devil being *tenu en bride* is useful because it shows the sovereignty of God. At a time when there were reports of terrible persecutions of the Huguenots and threats of invasion, it was important to be assured that God was in control even of the devil, who seemed rampant in Calvin's Geneva. Calvin's emphasis on the devil being controlled or held back can also be understood as a polemic against both the Manichees and those who held to a folk faith where the devil was feared. Folk tales of the devil abducting people abounded. The fact that the devil was *tenu en bride*, meant that God was in charge and did not allow the devil to destroy. It was also a demonstration of the love of God who chose to fill the world with temptations to exercise our faith. Since the devil is *tenu en bride*, the temptations themselves are under the control of God and thus useful training exercises for the faithful.

⁸⁶⁴ Sermons on Job, CO 33, 61.

The Devil as a Hermeneutical Tool to Interpret Scripture

One of the chief functions of the devil, as Calvin preached, is to lie and to twist the Scriptures. Calvin was very adamant that the faithful know the Scriptures so that they would not be tricked by the subtle changes that Satan introduces. Heresies and heretics are rampant because of the work of the devil. The devil always seeks to destroy or at least corrupt the Scriptures. Calvin was not tolerant of heretics. He understood that they destroyed the faithful by twisting Scripture and, in this sense, were no better than devils.

Stephan Zweig⁸⁶⁵ argues that Calvin's intolerance and persecutions arose from his almost insane desire for absolute control. In a less partisan study, Timothy Wadkins⁸⁶⁶ traces out the roots of Calvin's intolerance by making references to specific doctrines. His choices are the Church, the conception of God and the use of Scripture. It is clear that one can find reasons for Calvin's intolerance towards heretics by making an appeal to various doctrines, like the church or predestination, yet one can pick almost any of his doctrines and argue a case. While doctrine cannot be overlooked, such a method misses the essential element in intolerance. A heretic was not put to death because he or she had a different view of the church than the magistrate, but because the 'heretic' proposed a different set of truth claims. The heretic argued that there were different truths that were essential to salvation. Hence, any study that claims to consider

⁸⁶⁵ Stephan Zweig, *Castellion Contre Calvin, ou Conscience contre violence*, trans. A. Hella (Paris: B. Grosset, 1946).

⁸⁶⁶ Timothy H. Wadkins, "A Recipe for Intolerance: A Study of the Reasons Behind John Calvin's Approval for the Punishment of Heresy," *Journal of Evangelical Theology* 26/4 (December 1983): 431-441.

tolerance cannot overlook the notion of truth. The battle, then as now, was with conflicting truth claims.

In John Calvin's mind the heretic was one who perverted the truth of God and, hence, was in league with the devil. This was no small matter. It was high treason against God Himself.⁸⁶⁷ Heresy is sedition against God.⁸⁶⁸ Once God's honour has been so tarnished, it is the task of the faithful, the elect, to restore the honour of God. Calvin understood the faithful to be the lieutenants of God, responsible for the vindication of His honour.⁸⁶⁹ God's honour is so important that our personal feelings should be suppressed.

The heretic is the enemy of God and of the faithful. They are Satan's emissaries.⁸⁷⁰ Much of Calvin's thought on the treatment of heretics is found in his work *An Christianis Judicibus Haereticos Punire Liceat*, which was written as part of his explanation of the errors of Servetus. In this work Calvin notes that no one is opposed to capital punishment for the incorrigible criminal.⁸⁷¹ The heretic belongs in the same category. In fact there are two reasons why heretics should be killed. The first is when

⁸⁶⁷ Sermon on Deut. 26, CO 28, 245; also, Sermon on Deut. 13, CO 27, 245.

⁸⁶⁸ *Comm.* Deut. 13, CO 24, 362.

⁸⁶⁹ Sermon on Sam. 11, CO 29, 647; Letter from the prisoners at Chambéry to the pastors of Geneva, July 1555, CO 15, 696; Calvin's letter to Cranmer, April 1552, CO 14, 313.

⁸⁷⁰ Calvin to Viret, April 1542, CO 11,439; Calvin to Frelon, February 1546, CO 12, 281-282.

⁸⁷¹ It is interesting that in this same document, *An Christianis Judicibus Haereticos Punire Liceat*, Calvin begins to argue by saying that no one opposes the death penalty for noxious criminals. Why then, should it be different for the unrepentant heretic who obscures the true church, confuses the faithful and insults the honour of God.

they are stubborn to the point of being blocked and refuse to listen, and the second is when they are reprobate and persist in detestable errors.⁸⁷²

Lest this give the impression that Calvin declared open season on heretics, each was to repress and expose the heretic according to their station in life. The magistrates⁸⁷³ were to repress heresy by means of the sword,⁸⁷⁴ the minister with preaching. The idea of not punishing the heretic was deemed fanatical. Not to punish or at least to recognize error is to obscure the true church, the *vera ecclesia*. A mark of the *vera ecclesia* is sound doctrine.⁸⁷⁵ Calvin had no use for magistrates who did not take their task as defenders of the truth seriously. In speaking of the Donatists and Castellio, he noted:

Such is that dog Castalio⁸⁷⁶ and his companions, and all like him such also were the Donatists; and hence, as I have mentioned, Augustine cites this testimony in many places, and shows how ashamed Christian princes ought to be of their slothfulness, if they are indulgent to heretics and blasphemers, and do not vindicate God's glory by lawful punishments...If this be so, it follows that kings are bound to defend the worship of God, and to execute vengeance on those who profanely despise it, and on those who endeavour to reduce it to nothing, or to

⁸⁷² In Calvin's opinion, Servetus satisfied both these conditions and thus it was justifiable to put him to death.

"Tam si quis hominem tam pestiferum fuisse non putat ut tollendus fuerit e medio, hoc quoque errore sobrios et dociles breviter expediam. Duas esse causas sani omnes concedent, cur puniendis falsorum dogmatum autoribus maior adhibenda sit severitas: si idem sit eorum contumacia, ut reprobi et a se ipsis damnati nocere pergant: deinde, si detestanda sit ac minime tolerabilis errorum impietas. Nunc, an in Servetum utriusque criminis poena iure competat, videndum." CO 8, 480-481.

⁸⁷³ *Comm.* Dan. 4:1-3; *Comm.* Acts 5:34.

⁸⁷⁴ Heresy was a capital offence punishable by death. This was in the Justinian code.

⁸⁷⁵ CO 8 gives some fascinating insights as to why Calvin thought heretics should be punished.

"Prodit alter fanaticus ex suo antro, qui Servetum vocat optimum suum fratrem: et ideo puniendos esse negat haereticos, quia sacris oraculis sensum quisque suo arbitrio affingati ut certa veritas quasi nubibus obvoluta lateat. Ita bonus interpretes fidem ex hominum cordibus delere mavult, quam poenis subiicere qui eam labefactant. Qualis enim exstabit religio, quibus notis discernetur vera ecclesia, quid denique erit Christus ipse, si incerta sit ac suspensa pietatis doctrina?" CO 8, 464

⁸⁷⁶ Calvin called Castellio 'Castalio' in his writings.

adulterate the true doctrine by their errors, and so dissipate the unity of the faith and disturb the Church's peace.⁸⁷⁷

Not all differences of opinion merited the name 'heresy'. Calvin was tolerant in matters of worship. For example, it did not matter to Calvin whether the minister prayed by using fixed prayers or prayed *ex tempore* from the pulpit.⁸⁷⁸ In his letters he complains to Bullinger that he lets many things slide past him, or else he would spend all his time refuting errors.

Such small matters were matters of indifference. Matters of indifference were matters that were not clearly noted in Scripture and did not affect our salvation. In this list were ethical⁸⁷⁹ and ceremonial matters.⁸⁸⁰ Sometimes, as Calvin remarked to Sadoletto, it is "best not to fight if you disagree with someone who otherwise knows Christ and his word but to hold open."⁸⁸¹ Calvin was well aware that it was not always possible for there to be full agreement.⁸⁸²

Yet in those matters that were essential to salvation, as Calvin defined them, he was anything but tolerant. What is the difference between heretics and those who hold a

⁸⁷⁷ *Comm. Dan.* 4:1-3.

⁸⁷⁸ John Jansen, "Calvin on a Fixed Form of Worship - a Note in Textual Criticism," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 15/ 1 (February 1962): 282-287. Jansen argues that based on a letter Calvin wrote to Somerset on October 22, 1548, the arguments that supported Calvin's use of a fixed form of prayer or liturgy are not as clear as was first supposed.

⁸⁷⁹ 'Ethical' referred to whether or not one should eat meat on Fridays, how to dress, how to observe holidays. The ceremonial referred to the liturgy, what the pastor should tell the people and how it should be done.

⁸⁸⁰ *Instit.* 3.19.7; 4.10.22.

⁸⁸¹ Calvin, *Letter to Sadoletto*, OS 1, 478.

⁸⁸² *Instit.* 4.1.12.

minor difference of opinion or schism? “The former corrupt the purity of the faith by false dogmas, whereas the latter sometimes, even while holding the same faith, break the bond of union.”⁸⁸³ How does Calvin decide what is a false dogma? This brings us to a consideration of his understanding of truth.

In Calvin’s mind there clearly was a truth. Indeed, nothing is less tolerable than when God’s truth is turned into a lie.”⁸⁸⁴ Calvin thought that it was possible to distinguish truth from error. A preconceived conviction of God’s truth is the foundation of faith.⁸⁸⁵ The Lord is truth,⁸⁸⁶ and the truth flows from God. The church is to keep this truth and to defend it.⁸⁸⁷ Even the theologian has a role to play. The task of the theologian is “to strengthen consciences by teaching things true, sure and profitable.”⁸⁸⁸

Calvin does not offer a list of false dogmas, but does define what he calls the “proper principles of religion”: 1) God is one; 2) Christ is God and the Son of God; 3) our salvation rests on the mercy of God; 4) and the like.⁸⁸⁹

The phrase ‘and the like’ is unusual for Calvin. It would seem that he was certain in his own mind as to what the essential truths were and perhaps thought them so self-evident that they were not worth expounding. So we might conclude that Calvin defined

⁸⁸³ *Instit.* 4.2.5.

⁸⁸⁴ *Comam.* Eze. 13:19.

⁸⁸⁵ *Instit.* 3.2.6.

⁸⁸⁶ *Instit.* 2.8.31, *Instit.* 1.2.1

⁸⁸⁷ *Instit.* 4.1.10.

⁸⁸⁸ *Instit.* 1.14.4.

⁸⁸⁹ *Instit.* 4.1.12.

heresy in terms of a violation of these four principles. Calvin understood the main principles of religion to be clearly understood and unquestioned by all. One could imagine that the clearest definition of heresy and false dogmas would be found in Calvin's polemics. In terms of his polemics, according to Charles Partee,⁸⁹⁰ yet another 'list' emerges, that of his belief in the 1) precedence of the Word over Church, 2) faith over love, 3) the continuing humanity (flesh) of the risen Christ.

The lists are different. Calvin's essentials of the faith are not the same as the list he defines based on his polemical writings, yet this can be accounted for as follows: Calvin's polemics are always directed at a single issue, whereas in the *Institutes* he is considering the entire dogmatic tradition.

Calvin's phrase 'and the like', gives us a clue as to how he understood the truths that were essential for salvation. The 'and the like' means that Calvin thought it was obvious. The Creed was a list of articles of faith that was accepted by most of the Reformers. Calvin accepted the Apostles Creed without question. It is within the Creed that the articles of faith are presented. The Creed, "gives in clear and succinct order, a full statement of our faith, and in everything which it contains is sanctioned by Scriptures."⁸⁹¹ This may explain the 'and the like'. For Calvin the essentials are to be found within the Creed which he accepts. The doctrines presented in the Creed are "the

⁸⁹⁰ This is from a paper delivered by Prof. Partee in Edinburgh, October 1994 at the international Calvin Congress.

⁸⁹¹ *Instit.* 2.16.18.

leading articles of redemption in a few words.”⁸⁹² Calvin’s understanding of the Creed as that which contains salvific truths may help to explain why he noted that Servetus persisted in detestable errors, since Servetus was anti-Trinitarian.

We must now ask ourselves how Calvin’s ideas of truth led him to his position of intolerance vis-à-vis heretics. Calvin, as we have seen, argued that there was a clear truth and that heretics pollute the truth. Calvin understood that these basic truths were put forth in the Creed. Thus the heretic is one who goes against these basic truths.

The devil makes us aware of the heretic. But the devil does not only produce heretics and twist the Scriptures. We are warned that the devil seeks to destroy the Scriptures at all costs. Thus, the devil serves to keep the faithful alert and attentive to the Scriptures.

One can also understand the work of the devil from the stand point of Calvin the exegete. Calvin considered the task of interpreting Scripture to be one which stayed close to what he called the plain sense of the text.⁸⁹³ One was not to add any other doctrines or comment more than the text demanded. Calvin thought that an overly curious mind was a trap of the devil and that we are keen to add other doctrines or rituals, since we do not wish to serve God. The exegete was not to contravene the basic

⁸⁹² *Instit.* 2.16.18.

⁸⁹³ I have argued that the plain sense equals Calvin’s sense of the text. Calvin was well versed in the critical tools of his day, and used them to get back to what he understood was the text before the accretions and layers of interpretation had, in his mind, corrupted the author’s intention. Calvin believed that given a ‘pure’ text, that is a text that is as close to possible to the original text, and the Holy Spirit which guided the hand of the exegete, one really could be true to the intention of the author. The Holy Spirit has been called the Achilles heel of Protestantism and one can see why.

truths and yet, as shown with Calvin's dispute with Sebastian Castellio over, among other things, the interpretation of Solomon's Song of Songs, there is more to being an exegete than following the plain sense and the basic truths. It is here that the devil shows himself to be a hermeneutical tool for the exegete.

The devil not only shows the exegete the heretic, but also warns the exegete to beware of the his/her own unredeemed nature and voice that would encourage misinterpretation of Scriptures.⁸⁹⁴ As Calvin often preached, we are so easily tempted by the devil because the devil is our father and we share his nature. Thus the exegete is warned, through the temptations of the devil, to be careful. Insofar as the devil is a warning against not only the heretic but ourselves in the interpretation of Scripture, the devil can be understood as a hermeneutical key.

One may well ask: what is the role and function of the Holy Spirit at this point? Surely the Holy Spirit would act as a guide against such errors. This was the Protestant understanding at the time of Calvin and has been referred to as the Achilles heel of Protestantism. While Calvin understood that the role of the Holy Spirit was to enlighten and to guide us, he was not naive enough to assume that this guidance was a safeguard against errors and idolatry, insofar as we often worship a god of our own image. Calvin would answer that, while the Holy Spirit does inspire and guide us and is responsible for our ability to decipher the Scriptures, we have free will and can choose either to listen to our own nature and the temptations of Satan, or to follow God.

⁸⁹⁴ I owe this insight to Prof. John Van Den Hengel of Saint Paul University in Ottawa.

The Devil and Calvin's Doctrines, or the Use of the Devil

Having discussed the nature and the work of the devil as shown in Calvin's sermons, I shall now proceed to systematize Calvin's views of the devil in two ways. The first is to consider the structure of Calvin's sermons that deal with the devil in order to show that the structure of those sermons is useful in ascertaining his understanding of the use of the devil. The second is to consider the devil in relation to some of Calvin's key doctrines, notably the understanding of the knowledge of God to which Calvin himself so often refers in his preaching on the devil.

The Structure of Calvin's Sermons on the Devil

The structure of Calvin's sermons is very revealing of what he is trying to teach. Calvin's sermons can not be understood from content alone, but one must also pay attention to the order in which he says things, the structure of his work. This is true of the *Institutes* as well as the sermons. The structure of the *Institutes* breaks down the treatment of the knowledge of God into first, the knowledge of God as Creator and Redeemer and then, the Christian life. His *Institutes* (after 1536) were arranged following the Creed, but were deliberately structured in this manner. The structure tells us something of Calvin's thought. Likewise, one can see a structure within the sermons that Calvin preached on the devil. In the *Institutes*, he notes that he will speak of the devil only insofar as it is useful for our salvation. This stress on utility is maintained in sermons dealing with the devil. Nowhere does Calvin dwell on *exotica* or on points that he deemed were neither relevant nor useful for salvation. With this point in mind, we can

understand Calvin's sermonic structure. When Calvin speaks of the devil in a sermon, he generally begins with his terrors and presents him as both a deadly and treacherous enemy. Invariably, in the same passage, he shows his parishioners that we would be like lambs led to the slaughter were it not for the fact that the devil is held in check or controlled by God. This structure within Calvin's sermons is, I think, deliberate. It is as if Calvin were presenting the devil as one who is deadly but under the control of a loving God who protects us. Calvin thus moves from the terror of the devil to the love of God.

There is a deeper level of structure that can be discerned from the sermons. After demonstrating that our daily experience shows that we are not destroyed by the devil, Calvin notes that it also proves the existence of a loving God. He also, within the same sermon, often moves from a theoretical level, where Scriptures are cited to prove the devil is under the control of God, to an experiential level, where he points out that our daily experience bears witness to divine protection and providence.

This is indicative of the way in which Calvin views Christian experience in the *Institutes*. Christian experience must always be evaluated in the light of Scripture or doctrine. On its own, unmediated experience is useless but, when reflected upon in the light of Scripture, it becomes a tool to teach. Here we see that very structure. Calvin starts with Scripture and shows that the devil is wicked and malicious. Then he uses Scripture to show that the devil is under God's control before moving to the experience of the believer who is not destroyed 1000 times a day but sustained. The experience of being sustained, when reflected on in the light of what Calvin spoke about in the

Scriptures, shows the faithful the love and mercy of God. Within his sermons, Calvin is demonstrating his theology or understanding of Christian experience, which is that it teaches when mediated by Scripture.

The devil plays a key role in bringing the Christian towards a deeper knowledge of God. In the next section I will address some of the more traditional elements in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God in order to show how the devil is an important factor in it.

The Knowledge of God

Calvin opens his 1559 *Institutes* with the remark that all knowledge consists of two parts, the knowledge of ourselves and the knowledge of God. The *Institutes* then proceed to discuss the knowledge of God the Redeemer and Creator, ending with a large section on the Christian life. Since it is not the mandate of this thesis to describe in detail the understanding of Calvin's theory of the knowledge of God, I will restrict myself to some summary remarks as a background against which we can see how the devil is an important tool in the development of that knowledge.

The knowledge of God is one of the major themes in Calvin's theology. While there are many ways to look at Calvin's understanding this knowledge, I will consider it in the following ways: 1) all knowledge of God is accommodated, that is, we cannot perceive God at all apart from God's prior initiative and accommodation to our senses; 2) knowledge of God is practical, that is, it is salvific; 3) knowledge of God is broken into knowledge of God the Redeemer and of God the Creator; 4) knowledge of God

involves a knowledge of self as well as of God. These points will be treated in the following series of five remarks.

The Epistemological Underpinnings of Calvin's Notion of Accommodation

Calvin was steeped⁸⁹⁵ in the idea of abstractive versus intuitive knowledge. Intuitive knowledge or perception arises from the direct experience of that object. Abstractive knowledge is something gained by an abstraction from its existence, since we cannot directly experience the object. In Paris, the theologians who taught Calvin were steeped in Ockham and Duns Scotus. According to Ockham, as he is commonly understood,⁸⁹⁶ it was not possible to have direct intuitive knowledge of God. The statements that we make using intuitive knowledge are meaningful because our words signify the object independently of our words or statements. On the other hand, when we make statements based on abstractive knowledge, our statements are meaningful by virtue of their logical relation one to another, that is, they have an oblique meaning. The first type of meaning is called signification, where our statements and terms stand for the object, and the second type is called supposition, where the meaning of the terms comes from the fact that the terms act as substitutes for the things signified". For example, the meaning of the statement God is like a "mother", is that the term "mother" can stand in for God. It is a component in the proposition "God is like"... Ockham added one more refinement in his understanding of how we speak about God, that of first and second

⁸⁹⁵ By virtue of the fact that he was a student at the University of Paris and taught by John Major.

⁸⁹⁶ I say 'commonly understood' since much of Ockham's thought is being revisited. His thought is far more subtle than many had previously thought, but his influence may not have been as widespread as was once believed.

intentions. A first intention is an act of the mind that is made in response to an external fact. Such an act has a subjective and an objective part. The objective part is the thing that is signified, and the subjective part refers to the state of our soul or how we feel. Ockham believed that we are more sure of the subjective or aesthetic than the objective. In addition, there are second intentions which do not signify anything at all, but are signs of signs. These have meanings only in their grammatical structures.

Ockham's claim that one could not have any intuitive but only abstractive knowledge of God, meant that the knowledge of God and our speech about him was to be understood by means of terms and propositions. In the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the task of theology was seen to be one of defining the terms and propositions about God (terminist logic).⁸⁹⁷

In this, two paths were followed. One was to consider theology in terms of language and knowledge with the idea that the language and the terms used would lead to a deeper understanding of the objects themselves, or God. The second approach, of literary humanists like Erasmus,⁸⁹⁸ was to consider the other pole, the subjective, and to note that the meaning of the term signified, or God, may not be sought in the grammar or

⁸⁹⁷ This is not meant to be an exhaustive discussion of Ockham. His influence on Calvin is a hotly debated topic. Some scholars, notably Heiko Oberman, maintain that Ockham had a great influence on Calvin, but more recent work as shown in the 1998 International Calvin Congress, questions this assumption. For a more complete explanation of Ockham's philosophy, the reader is referred to Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol III *Ockham to Suarez*, (New York : Paulist Press, 1983), 43-111.

⁸⁹⁸ Erasmus' main interest was with the language itself and, thus, while he was interested in first intentions his main focus seemed to be with the primacy of second intentions or how terms stand for terms and oblique meaning.

the logic of the terms, but rather by a consideration of the intention of the author of the Scriptures.⁸⁹⁹

Calvin, on the other hand, believed that we have direct intuitive knowledge of God by virtue of His Word. In the Word of God we can directly intuit or encounter God. It is not a matter of how we felt or what terms we used. Rather, in the Word we come to experience God and what the Word tells us about God in a direct and objective manner. Now, Calvin's idea of accommodation can be understood from this background in the following way. While we can directly experience God by His Word, the movement must always be from God in order that God retain his freedom and objectivity. Calvin was clear that any attempt to speak of God, or have knowledge of Him on our part leads only to errors and idols.

Even though one can have direct intuitive knowledge of God, there remains the problem of our separation from God by means of our sinful nature. Calvin noted that in this state it is impossible for us to reach or even worship God. Once again, our only hope is via God's prior initiative, or our election and justification. Calvin's idea differed from that of St. Thomas, who, to say it in a very general and simple way, understood that our real knowledge of God can be derived through sense experience of the natural world. Ockham's idea of placing the knowledge of God within the realm of abstractive knowledge meant, in the end, that one could never come to know God in his being but only through terms and significations. Calvin understood that we are directly

⁸⁹⁹ The mind of the author was to be sought in the subjective pole.

encountered by God and God speaks to us as if face to face. The knowledge of God is determined by God's being and nature. Since this is the case, there is the problem of our senses being unable to handle the glory and the Being of God. Thus Calvin used the idea of accommodated knowledge. The Word⁹⁰⁰ is God's accommodation to our sense, it is God's being or essence speaking to us in a way in which we can understand. We encounter God, but the knowledge is accommodated to our senses so that we can understand. Thus although we have direct intuitive knowledge of God, the way in which God deals with us is by means of accommodation.

Knowledge of God as Practical

What did Calvin mean by practical? He was always keen to stress that what was to be taught in theology had to be useful to our salvation. When he discusses the devil in the *Institutes*, for example, he does not go on to speculate about diabolology but, after a few remarks, says that this is enough to put the faithful on their guard. The same was true for his presentations in his sermons. In his one sermon about possession, Calvin did not go into great details about its horrors. His remarks are sparing and he always has in mind the salvific intent of what he says. Since we cannot come to know God on our own apart from God's prior initiative, our knowledge of God is limited to what God wishes us to know, and this kind of knowledge is useful for our salvation. The kind of knowledge that we obtain of God is not arid or speculative. We do not know so much

⁹⁰⁰ Calvin was not entirely clear as to what he meant by the Word. The Word is not simply the Scriptures, nor is it Jesus Christ, but can best be understood as the entity of the Scriptures enlivened by God's Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is what makes it possible for us to hear the voice of God through the Scriptures.

what God is as what kind of God deals with us. All true knowledge of God issues in worship and obedience. The devil's confession that Christ was Lord was true enough but it was, as Calvin preached, a faulty confession in that the devil did not wish to worship or honour God. It was merely factual. Likewise, our knowledge of God, if it consists only in facts or doctrines or ideas, is as faulty as that of the devil. Our knowledge of God must lead us to piety and worship. Calvin believed that the purpose of preaching was to bring people to God, the church being where God is rightly worshipped and the gospel preached. Our knowledge of God always takes place within the context of a relationship with Him. One of the main doctrinal roots of this position can be found in a consideration of Calvin's understanding of the *imago Dei*. In that understanding, our faculty of reasoning, when it comes to matters of the divine, is totally corrupt and, while some vestige of the *imago Dei* remains in us after the fall of humanity, it is a horrible deformity that cannot lead us to God but serves only to condemn us if we plead total ignorance of God. Calvin made it very clear that we are enemies of God apart from God's grace towards us. This we have seen in the sermons on the temptations of Christ in the desert as well as in the numerous references in the sermons that speak of our natural unredeemed nature as children of Satan.

The practical nature of the knowledge of God can also be linked with the so-called two-fold theory of the knowledge of God, that is, the knowledge of God as Creator and as Redeemer. The created order itself is a theatre⁹⁰¹ and a mirror of the

⁹⁰¹ *Instit.* 1.5.5.

Creator himself.⁹⁰² God makes himself known by means of the visible creation or theater of God. Yet this knowledge is not a true knowledge but akin to a dim awareness of something divine. Our knowledge of God through creation is seriously flawed as a result of the Fall and the gap between us and God still widened by human sin.

It is to alleviate this condition that God introduces Scripture, a form of accommodation to us. As Calvin puts it, "The knowledge of God, which is more clearly shown in the ordering of the world and in all creatures, is still more clearly and familiarly explained in the word."⁹⁰³ Yet Scripture would remain to us just a book unless it were sealed in our hearts, as Calvin would say, by the testimony of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts that enables the record of God's works to become the Word of God.

In Jesus Christ God showed Himself as Redeemer. The knowledge of God the Redeemer is known only through Christ. It is perhaps in God as Redeemer that the practical aspects of the knowledge of God are most evident. In Book 3 of the *Institutes* Calvin discusses the benefits of Christ and how we participate in them. All of the benefits of Christ, namely the fact that He mediates between us and God to allow the breach to be healed, are useless unless we become united with Christ.⁹⁰⁴

⁹⁰² *Instit.* 1.5.11.

⁹⁰³ *Instit.* 1.10.1 As Alister McGrath notes "The content of Scripture is divine but the form in which that content is embodied as human. Scripture is the *verbum Dei* not the *verba Dei*, the record of the Word, not the Word itself." *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 154. Scripture represents God's persona or essence mediated through the person and actions of the human Jesus and in the stories of the Scriptures. Scripture represents how God is known. It is God's chosen form of accommodation.

⁹⁰⁴ *Instit.* 3.1.1.

Yet the knowledge of God the Redeemer is useless and of no benefit to us unless we act as believers in faith and become united with Christ. Calvin defines faith as a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine good will towards us, which, being grounded upon the truth of the gracious promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds and sealed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁰⁵

Faith concerns itself with the reflection of God’s good will towards us. It is rather, a reflection on what God is.⁹⁰⁶ As such, faith is a means rather than an end. Its value is that it enables the faithful to have the *imago Dei* gradually restored within them. It enables the process of sanctification.⁹⁰⁷ The knowledge of God, Calvin stresses, does not rest in doctrines or propositions or dogma but is founded on Christ and is made powerful by contemplation of the good will of God towards us. In fact, the whole goal of theology is to restore the doctrine of Christ. Without Christ, all of our doctrines and searching are simply in vain.

For how comes it that we are carried about with so many doctrines, but because the power of Christ is not perceived by us? For Christ alone makes all other things suddenly disappear. Hence there is nothing that Satan tries so hard to do as to raise up mists to obscure Christ; for he knows that by this means the way is opened up for every kind of falsehood. Therefore, the sole means of retaining as well as restoring pure doctrine is to set Christ before our eyes, just as He is with all His blessings, that His power may be truly perceived.⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁵ *Instit.* 3.2.7.

⁹⁰⁶ *Instit.* 3.2.6

⁹⁰⁷ Calvin linked justification and sanctification by arguing that once we are justified by God’s love the process of sanctification follows immediately.

⁹⁰⁸ *Comm.* Col. 1:12, CO 52, 82-83.

Our knowledge of God, particularly as God the Redeemer, is founded on the benefits of Christ, which become useful to us by means of faith.

Calvin's great contribution was to link faith with the action of God towards us and to stress the practical nature of the knowledge of God, thus saving it from doctrines and dogma that would deal with the essence of God. Yet, while the knowledge of God is grounded in faith, it is also linked with Scripture, as it is only by means of God's record that one can know God. The danger is that this could deteriorate into a form of bibliolatry, where one's daily experiences in faith become lost or bent to conform to what is felt to be contained in Scripture.⁹⁰⁹

We feel the presence of God by our experiences in the Christian life. The knowledge of God the Creator is an *a posteriori* reflection upon the Creation after we come to know God as Redeemer. Yet the knowledge of God the Creator should be more than a passive reflection. Calvin adds that with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit we see more clearly and yet, while such reflection is important, it is evident that our knowledge of God the Creator must be somehow grounded within our experience. It is not enough to deduce God as Creator, we must experience this fact as well and act on it. Calvin himself was aware of this problem. He was aware that although the Lord may have made

⁹⁰⁹ Something of this was seen in Presbyterian churches at the turn of the century in Canada, where there was an application of the notion of 'fencing' the table for the Lord's Supper. This meant that the minister would read out a list of what qualities it would take to be a worthy recipient of the Eucharist. The procedure was designed to make people reflect and not to take the Eucharist lightly but, as the list was read out, there were some instances where no one in the congregation would take the sacrament. Here is a case, in my opinion, of the subjugation of faithful reflection and daily experiences of the benefit of Christ to the Scriptures. The practical element can often be lost.

himself evident in the Creation, it is crucial to feel the presence of God and not just deduce it from God's works.

The Lord is manifested by his perfections. When we feel their power within us, and are conscious of their benefits, the knowledge must impress us much more vividly than if we merely imagined a God whose presence we never felt. Hence, it is obvious that, in seeking God, the most direct path and the fittest method is not to attempt with presumptuous curiosity to pry into his essence, which is rather to be adored than minutely discussed, but to contemplate him in his works, by which he draws near, becomes familiar and in a manner communicates himself to us.⁹¹⁰

It is interesting to note that Calvin's discussion of the devil in his 1559 *Institutes* is placed within his doctrine of the knowledge of God the Creator. After his brief discussion of the devil, he concludes with the words: "Meanwhile, having been placed in this most beautiful theatre, let us not decline to take pious delight in the clear and manifest works of God."⁹¹¹

Calvin's manner of situating the discussion of the devil gives us a clue as to how he understood the devil to function within this doctrine. This situating not only indicates that the devil is part of creation, but also that we come to know God as Creator by our experiences and, in particular, by our experience of the devil. We do not know the devil by contemplation, but because of his works and temptations. The fact that his presentation of the devil is contained within the doctrine of the knowledge of God the Creator may suggest that, for Calvin, our experiences with the devil could lead us to know God as Creator. Each day, Calvin reminds us in his sermons, we are surrounded by

⁹¹⁰ *Instit.* 1.5.9.

innumerable dangers and troubles and pitfalls of the devil. The fact that we are not destroyed points to the all-important idea that the devil is *tenu en bride*. This idea, as Calvin so often preached, refers to the fact that God is not only sovereign but a God of mercy and providence. Our daily victory over death and deadly trials leads us to understand God as sovereign and hence as Creator, not merely a passive Creator or an unmoved mover, but one who has chosen to interact with creation by caring for us. In this way our experiences with the devil lead us to reflect upon God as Redeemer.

Our knowledge of God as Redeemer involves our being aware of our sinful nature and need of salvation. Once we are elect and our eyes are open, we become aware of our sinful nature and repent. Calvin ascribes this to the work of the Holy Spirit. We become convicted of our sin through the Law. Yet, as we have seen with Calvin's sermons on Job, there can remain the hidden sin of hypocrisy which is not detected by means of the Law and perhaps not even by the Holy Spirit, whose guidance we may not follow. The sin of hypocrisy would prevent us from true service to God and true repentance. Likewise, the poles of pride and despair, as we have seen in the sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert, act as a barrier, since we feel that we have no Redeemer and that God has abandoned us, or, that we can take the matter of our salvation on our own shoulders. The Law may condemn us, but we need a motivation from beyond ourselves to enable us to come to the point of repentance.

⁹¹¹ *Instit.* 1.14.20.

In addition, there is the problem of 'knowing' God as our Redeemer. It is perhaps one thing to acknowledge that through Jesus' death and life our sins are forgiven and we have access to God, but this is exterior to ourselves. To truly know God as Redeemer it is necessary to experience our redemption every day in saving acts of God.

The devil and his actions address both of these concerns. To the first, namely, the problem of hypocrisy, we have seen from the sermons on the Book of Job that the work of the devil is to highlight and make possible the rooting out of this sin of hypocrisy by trials and temptations. In order to arrive at a knowledge of God it is necessary to come to a point of awareness of the self as sinner in need of God's grace. The sin of hypocrisy, which is the most deadly sin, is the one that hinders us from this realization. The temptation that we do not need God and that we are not altogether bad and in need of salvation is the one flaw that would hinder, if not stifle, our Christian journey. So deep and hidden is this sin that ordinary means cannot reveal it. Ordinarily we are convicted of our sinful nature when we read the law and the Scriptures. In them we see ourselves for the first time as in a mirror and realize our shortcomings before God. Yet the sin of hypocrisy would prevent us from a realization of what we are. Thus Job was tested for this hidden sin in order to see whether he served God for naught. The devil was called to test Job and, by adversity, was able to find out that Job was indeed righteous. It seems that only the devil was able to do this. Ordinary methods did not work and the question of Job's true intentions remained a mystery. The devil, using his tricks and his knowledge of Job, was able to test so that if he had any hypocrisy it would have surfaced

as rebellion. The aim of the devil is to drive a wedge between the faithful and God by means of disobedience and rebellion.

Thus it can be said that the devil is needed by Calvin in his doctrine of the knowledge of God in order to facilitate our experiential awareness of God's love. In a similar way, the devil's trials act as caveats to our tendency towards pride and despair. If we inflate ourselves with pride, we must be aware that the hateful nature of the devil is in fact our own nature. If this were not the case, then we would not find it so easy to listen to the devil. If we despair, we must be aware of the fact that we are protected from such a deadly and evil enemy. God not only protects us but gives us the means to combat the devil. Hence the devil leads us towards a realization that God is our Redeemer. Since we combat the devil daily, we experience God as Redeemer daily, and not just as Redeemer of the world, but in a very personal way as a God for us as individuals.

Knowledge of God as it is Linked with a Knowledge of the Self

The opening statement in Calvin's 1559 *Institutes* is that all true knowledge is knowledge of God and knowledge of the self. As has been indicated in the earlier sections, one can have a perception of God through the created works or by knowing facts about God as shown in the Scriptures, but a true knowledge of God, which entails a reception and participation in the benefits of Christ, involves faith. Moreover, in order to participate in the benefits of Christ one must repent and allow the process of sanctification to occur. In his sermons Calvin stressed our true unredeemed nature as enemies of God, unwilling and unable to change from our path of destruction.

Repentance flows from faith. Calvin notes that a man cannot seriously engage in repentance unless he knows that he is of God. But no man is truly persuaded that he is of God until he has embraced his offered favour."⁹¹² The knowledge of God as Creator and especially as Redeemer also means that we come to know ourselves as sinners, unworthy and in need of both the grace and mercy of God and of repentance. The knowledge of self, in conjunction with the knowledge of God, refers to the self in relation to God. Calvin always linked the two: one can never have a knowledge of God without a knowledge of the self both as sinner and as one in need of grace and redemption. Calvin sums it as follows:

When reflecting on what God gave us at our creation, and still continues graciously to give, we perceive how great the excellence of our nature would have been had its integrity remained, and, at the same time, remember that we have nothing of our own, but depend entirely on God, from whom we hold at pleasure whatever he has seen it meet to bestow; secondly, When viewing our own miserable condition since Adam's fall, all confidence and boasting are overthrown, we blush for shame, and feel truly humble.⁹¹³

As Calvin writes, most of mankind agrees with the idea that the second part of wisdom is knowledge of self, yet this self-knowledge is different. The self-knowledge that we attain, when we relate it to God, is not confident or boastful but rather humble and contrite.⁹¹⁴ Yet there are obstacles to our self-knowledge, as Calvin notes in his 1537

Catechism:

⁹¹² *Instit.* 3.3.2.

⁹¹³ *Instit.* 2.1.1.

⁹¹⁴ *Instit.* 2.1.3.

Being sinners from our mothers' wombs, we are all born subject to the wrath and retribution of God. And, having grown up, we pile upon ourselves an even heavier judgment of God. What can we expect in the face of God, we miserable ones who are oppressed by such a great load of sins and soiled by an infinite filth, except a very certain confusion as his indignation brings? Though it fill man with terror and crushes him with despair, yet this thought is necessary for us in order that, being divested of our own righteousness, having given up faith in our own power...we may learn from the understanding of our own poverty, misery and infamy to prostrate ourselves before the Lord, and, by the acknowledgment of our iniquity, powerlessness and utter ruin, give him all the glory of holiness, might, and deliverance.⁹¹⁵

The keywords here are knowledge of self and profound humility before God.

Yet, as Calvin goes on to say, in this same Catechism:

If this knowledge of ourself, which shows us our nothingness, consciously enters into our hearts, an easy access of having the true knowledge of God is made to us. Or rather, God himself has opened to us, as it were, a first door to his kingdom when he has destroyed these two worse pests, which are self-assurance in front of his retribution and false confidence in ourselves.⁹¹⁶

The problem is, how does God overcome these pests? We can be so blinded to our own sins that we no longer reflect on ourselves in the face of God. Calvin understood that we come to a greater self-awareness by means of the law. Our conscience will never be pricked unless it is compared to the glory of God. Only in this way will we become aware of ourselves in relation to God.

The process by which we attain knowledge of the self is linked with that of regeneration. We see ourselves in relation to God and in relation to God's glory once we

⁹¹⁵ OS. 1, 382.

⁹¹⁶ OS. 1, 382.

have been called to turn to God. Thus, seeing how far short of the glory of God we are, we become contrite and humble. Calvin, as I shall point out below in the section on the uses of the law, understands the place of the law in this process but the problem of self-knowledge remains. As we have seen in our review of the sermons on the trials of Job, it is possible for us to have a hidden sin of pride and be so blinded as never to arrive at a self-realization of this at all.

The Role of the Devil in the Knowledge of God

Having discussed some of the more traditional elements in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God, I will now proceed to consider in a more specific way the use of the devil in the knowledge of God.

The Devil in Terms of the Practical Nature of the Knowledge of God

It is here in regard to the practical nature of the knowledge of God that the role of the devil is very clear. While the knowledge of God is practical in that it does not rely on propositions and is concentrated more on what God does for us or in relationship to us, the Christian must use the Scriptures to reflect and to come to understand God's actions. Yet, the devil and his temptations add a far more practical aspect to our reflection.

The devil's temptations and trials are part of our daily Christian experience. The devil fans the flames of our desire and makes us aware of what we are. This constant attack on us makes us more deeply aware in a practical and experienced way of the saving hand of God. As Calvin puts it, the most useful doctrine to know is that the devil is *tenu en bride*. Were it not for this, we would be destroyed. The fact that we are

preserved and live to battle another day is experiential proof of the saving power of God in our lives. For Calvin it was so important for the Christian to feel the love of God. The temptations of the devil and consequent saving by God are a very concrete way to accomplish this.

The devil assists us in our knowledge of self in two ways. The first way is by comparison of ourselves with the devil. The devil acts as a mirror and his actions and hatred strike a chord with us and we realize our unredeemed nature. Thus, our conscience condemns us. The second way in which the devil assists in our self-knowledge is by means of his temptations and trials. Such trials force us to see ourselves for what we are in relation to God. The trials force us to see ourselves as sinners in need of the grace and mercy and protection of God. In this way, we will come to hear the voice of the Redeemer.

Max Engammare⁹¹⁷ has identified what he calls levels or voices of conscience in Calvin's sermons on Genesis, Chapter 3. By this, Engammare means levels that Calvin identified the sinner as going through. There are four levels. First, when we commit an act that is condemned by God and before others. This act is the lowest or first level. It is the lowest level because we avoid actions simply because they are condemned by God and by others. We have no sense in ourselves that the action is wrong, but we are well aware that it is not condoned. In this case, we are judged by the community. The second level is when we judge an act by means of conscience and judge it to be either good or

⁹¹⁷ Max Engammare, "Le paradis à Genève" *Études théologiques et religieuses* 69 (1994/3): 329-347.

bad. Unlike the first level, the second level involves some measure of self-awareness. The third level is when an action is condemned by God's words and Scriptures and our actions are declared as evil. While the first two levels of conscience can be ascribed to the unelect, this third level is exterior to us. In the third level, we are condemned not only by our own conscience or by the community but by the Scriptures. The fourth level is when we hear the voice of the Saviour and find grace. At this level, it is not a matter of refraining from actions because they are condemned but acting in harmony with the will and voice of God. The fourth level of conscience can only happen after repentance.

Engammare notes that Calvin uses these four levels within his sermons on the third chapter of Genesis. In the sermons, Engammare finds a progression where, eventually, we hear the voice of the Saviour after having passed through other steps towards repentance. The problem is that, although these levels are present, there is nothing to force us to pass from one level to another. Indeed, we could have such a callous conscience that we never condemn our actions at all. It is at this point that the devil acts as a spur to push us towards the voice of the Saviour. By means of trials and tests, the devil shakes us out of our complacency. It is easy for us to imagine that all is well when there are no troubles but, once the devil begins to make himself felt in our lives, we are forced to listen to our conscience, or our own voice. Since we are being tempted and are at the edge of an abyss, it is clear that we will search elsewhere for comfort or answers. It is at this point that the elect will seek God, whom Calvin understood to be revealed in Scripture. Upon reading the Scriptures, we will come to realize that our actions and our lives fall short of the glory of God and indeed God

condemns us. We come to see the terror of the devil. At the same time we are not destroyed but given the means to overcome the devil. The Scriptures, as we have seen, are our chief weapon and defence against the devil. This merciful action of God leads us to repent and brings us to the point where we can hear the voice of the Saviour or come to the fourth level of conscience.

The Devil as a Form of Accommodation

The devil is used by God to test and in some cases to chastise us. The devil is also used to deliver the wrath of God to the wicked. Calvin was schooled in rhetoric and it has been well demonstrated that the roots of Calvin's use of rhetoric can be traced back to the ancient orators of Greece and Rome. The accommodation on the part of God was not merely to bridge the gap between the human and God by virtue of our ignorance and defaced image of God, but also to persuade and to overcome our natural defiance and enmity with God. Thus, the accommodating⁹¹⁸ work of God can be said to include not only Scripture but the entire creation itself which, as the *Opera Dei*, points to the

⁹¹⁸ Calvin was not the first Christian apologist to use accommodation. The term was known and used by the Church fathers. For example, in Origen accommodation is at work through the allegorical sense of Scripture. It can either make the Scriptures clear or confuse the ungodly. Origen understood that Scriptural language is a way in which God makes himself known to us.

“Just as when we are talking to very small children we do not assume as the object of our instruction any strong understanding in them, but say what we have to say accommodating it to the small understanding of those whom we have before us, and even do what seems useful for the education and bringing up of children, realizing that they are children; so the Word of God seems to have disposed the things which were written, adapting the suitable parts of the message to the capacity of the hearers and to their ultimate proof.” Origen, *Contra Celsium* 4.71, 5.16, as quoted by R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event* (Richmond, Va.: John Knox Press, 1959) 226.

Origen used the word ‘accommodation’ to refer to the fact that God changes his language depending on his audience. As he notes in cases like this, Or is it allowable for the sake of accommodation, when we are associating with a child not to talk the language of older mature people, but to talk in a child’s language?” Hanson, p. 227, quoting Origen *Homilies on Jeremiah* 18:6.

Creator. Calvin uses the idea of accommodation throughout his works. The first and most obvious ways are the instances where he used accommodation to explain a Scripture.⁹¹⁹ Calvin refutes here, among others, the Anthropomorphites who would claim that God has hands, feet and ears since these are terms that are used in Scripture. This, notes Calvin, is easily refuted:

For who is so devoid of intellect as to not understand that God, in so speaking, lisps with us as nurses are wont to do with little children? Such modes of expression, therefore, do not so much express what kind of a being God is, as accommodate the knowledge of him to our feebleness.⁹²⁰

In addition to the linguistic accommodation, God uses other avenues of accommodation. Calvin was fond of noting that creation itself was a form of God's accommodation to us, insofar as creation reflected us back to the Creator. But perhaps more than a teaching or rhetorical tool, Calvin understood that when God accommodated to us the purpose was always salvific. Accommodation is but a bridge across the chasm between humanity and God. It is in this way that we can understand the role of the devil as part of God's accommodation to us. Although we are told in Scripture and inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit as to its truth,⁹²¹ as well as all about the saving acts of God and the providence and love of God, we often do not feel that God is so providential. While God may bless us and save us daily, we still do not see the truth. The devil is introduced

⁹¹⁹ *Instit.* 1.13.1.

⁹²⁰ *Instit.* 1.13.1.

⁹²¹ *Instit.* 1.7.5.

at this point to tempt us and to introduce adversity in our lives. This causes us to reflect on our own character and the nature and love of God.

The Devil as a Bridge Between God and Humanity

One of the burning questions of sixteenth-century theology was the knowledge of God. How does one know God and what language can be used to speak of God? The devil, in Calvin's understanding, was not some autonomous malevolent being, but an agent of God, used by God to effect divine will. As such, the devil is a form of God's accommodation towards us insofar as he points to God. Furthermore, the devil is able to cause us to reflect on our experience and feel the love of God in a personal way. The devil, it would seem, acts as a bridge between God and our experiences. The devil can force us, and Calvin thinks only the devil can do this, to reflect on the hidden sin of hypocrisy which would act as a barrier towards our continual regeneration in Christ.

The main shortcoming in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God is the problem of assurance. How are we sure that God is for us? What are the proofs? While Calvin answers this question by making reference to the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit and the witness of Scripture, there still would remain some anxiety about God's purpose. This would be especially evident in times of affliction. Christ calls us, Calvin notes, to take up our cross. Adversity teaches.

This Paul teaches, when he says that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience. God having promised that he will be with believers in tribulation, they feel the truth of the promise; while supported by his hand, they endure patiently....Patience, therefore, gives the saints an experimental proof that God in reality furnishes the aid which he has promised whenever there is need. Hence also their faith is confirmed, for it were very ungrateful not to expect that in

future the truth of God will be, as they have already found it, firm and constant.⁹²²

Another reason why we are afflicted is so that our faith be made more valuable through testing and tribulation. We are trained in obedience and this obedience is necessary lest we revert to our old carnal natures and rebel against God.⁹²³ Calvin believes that our faith journey is one of constant testing and training in obedience.

We will be afflicted, and in these afflictions it is not just a matter of resigning ourselves to them, but rather to enter into the process. Whether poverty, or exile, or imprisonment, or contumely, or disease, or bereavement, or any such evil affects us, we must think that none of them happens except by the will and providence of God; moreover, that everything he does is in the most perfect order.⁹²⁴

We know by the fact that we are sustained in times of trouble that God is for us. We know also that God is for us from the fact that our faith and patience are tested. Yet, to imagine that God on the one hand provides troubles for us, then rescues us in order that we grow in faith and understanding, is disconcerting because it would imply that God is the author of evil. Calvin refutes this in the *Institutes* and the sermons by arguing that the devil and the wicked are always under the control of God such that they cannot lift one finger apart from his consent and will.⁹²⁵ Calvin spares God from the charges of being the author of evil by noting that the wicked and Satan follow their own desires

⁹²² *Instit.* 3.8.1.

⁹²³ *Instit.* 3.3.4.

⁹²⁴ *Instit.* 3.8.3.

⁹²⁵ *Instit.* 1.7.11.

when acting in evil ways. God merely holds them in check and directs their fury. Hence, when we are afflicted, it is the hand of Satan and not of God that strikes us.

Thus for Calvin the devil is a very important element in our experiential understanding of the providence and love of God. We are surrounded on all sides by enemies. God is not to be understood like an ancient Greek god who directed the fates, but as one who does preserve and rescue us from innumerable dangers. The devil is necessary in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God inasmuch as it is only by means of the devil that we can be afflicted and tested and it is only through such affliction that we come to an experiential knowledge of the providence and love of God .

In order to gain a knowledge of God both as Creator and Redeemer, the experiential is needed, but there are other steps.

The Devil and Hope

I have noted how the devil can be understood in terms of Calvin's doctrine of the knowledge of God, but of course there are other avenues that are possible. One fascinating issue is the relation of the devil to hope. Calvin lived and preached in a context of uncertainty and violence. His own city of Geneva had no army and was at the mercy of its diplomatic efforts. (The Perrinists spared no efforts in attempting to appease the Bernese with the aim of joining the Swiss confederacy.) The French refugees were streaming in to avoid the persecutions of the increasingly hostile French kings, the

population was exploding, the infrastructure rewritten as a result of the reform.⁹²⁶

Calvin, as we have seen, was not unaware of the plight of the French churches and at times brought the situation to the Genevan counsel. The letters were more than just sporadic encouragements to people who were being persecuted. Calvin was keenly interested in the Huguenot cause. The edict of Saint Germain was passed in France on January 17, 1562, allowing the Protestants to hold services, provided they were not held in cities. The edict did not settle the matter. The powerful Guise⁹²⁷ family under François de Guise were trying to divide the Protestants by inciting the German Lutheran princes against the Huguenots.⁹²⁸ On March 1, 1562, while François de Guise was on a mission to visit the German prince Duke Christoph in Wurttemberg, Guise and his troops came

⁹²⁶ The Roman Catholic Bishop of Geneva, deposed in 1534, had a full court with all the lawyers and civil service. The French Protestant refugees were by and large well trained in the legal profession and gradually took over what was once the province of the Church court in Geneva. The process took some time and was not without its problems as the records of the city counsel attest.

⁹²⁷ The Guise family was powerful at court. The reason was that Catherine de Medicis was Queen regent since her husband Henry II had died. The King of Navarre Antoine de Bourbon, whose wife Jeanne D'Albret was very sympathetic to Calvin and whose brother, Louis de Conde, was a known evangelical, had led Calvin to hope for much support from the King of Navarre. Calvin was upset that the King of Navarre did not take the chance to influence the French court, feeling that if this were the case much trouble could have been avoided. The Guise family sympathized with the Spanish and with Rome and were so unsympathetic to the French Evangelicals that in 1559 the French Protestants devised a plot to get rid of Duke François. The conspiracy of Amboise was lead by Jean De Barry de La Renaudie. Calvin was asked his opinion and he commented that he was against it. He understood that kings, whether bad or good, were put in that place by God and that one had no right to lead or instigate an insurrection. In his 1559 *Institutes*, there is a very reluctant admittance by Calvin that, in the case of a very bad king who openly went against the gospel and all the teachings of God, one had a right to lead an insurrection, as in this case one would be doing the work of God. While many have criticised Calvin for his reluctance to approve revolutions and revolts, one has to bear in mind that Calvin's time was one of instability, persecution and wars. Calvin witnessed all too often the bloody aftermath of revolutions and revolts. La Renaudie visited Calvin in December 1559 and Calvin's reaction is recorded in a letter to Jean Strum, March 23, 1560, CO 18,38-39, and in a letter dated May 11, 1560 to Vermigli, CO 18,81, also to Bullinger, CO 18,83-85, and April 16, 1561 to Admiral Coligny himself, CO 18, 425-31. On March 15, 1560 the plot failed and the Guise family became more intent on ridding France of the Huguenots.

⁹²⁸ The German connection was established by Francis I, who, in an attempt to stabilize his realm, promised the German Lutheran princes that the Lutherans in France would be tolerated.

upon French Protestants holding a service near Vassy. His soldiers killed 60 of the 1,200 and wounded some 250. Calvin's efforts with the French were often diplomatic as when he would plead with the King of Navarre, who had become a Protestant,⁹²⁹ to become more effective in the French court and to intervene against the Guise family on behalf of the Protestants.⁹³⁰ Some of Calvin's most touching letters are those he wrote to the women in a Paris jail after they had been arrested for going to a religious service.⁹³¹ Three of them were burned on September 27, 1557. His reaction to the torments was both pastoral and compassionate.

In all of this, Calvin does not give up hope. The persecutions are terrible and yet there is always hope. God does not abandon us. Calvin's sermons on the devil show that the Christian must not give up in resisting evil, but be active. Our battle with Satan is never over and the devil finds new ways to tempt us every day. Calvin had some very useful points to make regarding the Christian and evil.

The Devil and Predestination

I touched on the issue of whether or not one could fall and argued that, based on Calvin's sermons on the devil and his understanding of free will, one could. This idea has ramifications for Calvin's doctrine of predestination, more particularly for the

⁹²⁹ To the King of Navarre, Dec. 14, 1557, LC 3,384-389.

⁹³⁰ Calvin had high hopes for the King of Navarre and sent Theodore de Beze as an envoy. Yet as he wrote to Sturm on November 5, 1560, he considered Henri to be apathetic and sluggish. The mission as he wrote on the December 4, 1560, in a letter to Bullinger, was a failure. To Sturm, 5 Nov. 1560, LC 4,146-147. To Bullinger, Dec. 4, 1560, LC 4, 148-149.

⁹³¹ Calvin letters, CO 16, 632-634.

traditional understanding of predestination as was expounded in the synod of Dort, namely, that once one is elect one can never fall. Does this mean a reworking or a rethinking of all the ideas of predestination? Can we ‘fall’? I think what my work has shown is that Calvin was a pastor and that the contradictions that we find in his work should not surprise us. The rigid systems that we impose upon Calvin’s thinking are of our own creation. At times, we impose far too much rigour and doctrinal exactitude on him. If anything, my findings should be a warning to any theologian who tries to make a systematic theologian out of John Calvin.

The Devil and the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit guides us but it is unclear in Calvin’s theology how this is accomplished. Perhaps he thought this to be an idle question. While the Word was important for Calvin, the Word was ineffectual without the work of the Holy Spirit. As Calvin writes:

A simple manifestation of the word ought to be amply sufficient to produce faith, did not our blindness and perverseness prevent. But such is the proneness of our mind to vanity, that it can never adhere to the truth of God, and such its dullness, that it is always blind even in his light. Hence without the illumination of the Spirit the word has no effect; and hence also it is obvious that faith is something higher than human understanding. Nor were it sufficient for the mind to be illumined by the Spirit of God unless the heart were also strengthened and supported by his power. Here the Schoolmen go completely astray, dwelling entirely in their consideration of faith, on the bare simple assent of the understanding, and altogether overlooking confidence and security of heart.⁹³²

⁹³² *Instit.* 3.2.33

The Spirit is always linked to the Word, insofar as one is never guided in a direction that would be contrary to the Word which can act as a sound 'test' of the spirits.⁹³³ The Holy Spirit seemed to have the role of leading, or regenerating. God regenerates and governs his own people by the influence of the Holy Spirit."⁹³⁴ More directly, The Lord by his Spirit, directs, bends and governs our heart and reigns in it as his possession."⁹³⁵ The Holy Spirit also acts to protect us from error and enable us in the process of sanctification and regeneration, leading us towards God. The Spirit is invaluable in faith building.

The devil, it seems, has many of the same functions as the Holy Spirit. The devil clearly leads people towards God by making them reflect on their own natures and turn towards God as Redeemer. In addition, as we have seen, God uses the devil to lead and chastise us, sometimes by bending us in the direction that he wants us to go. The devil, like the Holy Spirit, leads and guides us towards God. The reader is reminded that the devil does not lead us to God voluntarily. The devil assists us despite his will to destroy us. The trials of the devil also are invaluable in faith building. As a result of fighting the attacks of the devil, our faith is transformed from mere assent to a faith full of confidence and security. This transformation is only accomplished when our faith is tested in the furnace of the devil's trials. Calvin seems to have a functional

⁹³³ *Instit.* 1.9.3.

⁹³⁴ *Comm.* 2 Cor. 5:16, CO 50,69

⁹³⁵ *Instit.* 2.3.10.

understanding of the Holy Spirit.⁹³⁶ It would seem that Calvin was less interested in the person of the Holy Spirit or in the person of the devil than he was in their functions in relation to us. This stress on functionality or relations can be seen throughout Calvin's theology.⁹³⁷ I have only touched the surface of Calvin's understanding of the Holy Spirit in order to highlight some aspects of Calvin's understanding of the devil.⁹³⁸

The Devil and the Law

Calvin's understanding of the uses of the devil, can be shown to have remarkable parallels with Calvin's understanding of the use and function of the law.⁹³⁹ Calvin understood that there were three main offices or functions of the law: the Law as a mirror, or *usus elencticus*; the law as political, or *usus politicus*; and, finally, the normative use of the law, or *usus renatis*. We turn now to the first use of the law, or the *usus elencticus*.

⁹³⁶ By functional I mean that I have found Calvin never speaks of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity in abstraction from what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit is not passive.

⁹³⁷ This notion is being discovered by theologians. At the Seventh International Calvin Congress in Seoul, Korea, August 22-26, 1998, Michael Beitner presented a paper on Calvin and Relations in which he described the many instances throughout Calvin's theology where ideas are presented in relation to another, rather than on their own. We see this with Calvin's understanding of the devil.

⁹³⁸ Lucien Richard wrote a fine work that speaks of how Calvin understood the Spirit in relation to the Christian life. Lucien Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1974). Richard stresses the point that Calvin's understanding of the Spirit can never be understood apart from the Word of God and the Christian life.

⁹³⁹ One of the best, if not the best work concerning Calvin and the law, is by I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick Pub, 1992). In this work, Hesselink shows that the principal use of the law for Calvin was its third use. He shows that in fact all of Calvin's thinking concerning the law is coloured by his understanding that the law serves to bring Christians closer to God.

The first use of the law works like a mirror. The law of God, as expressed in the decalogue and the gospels, condemns us and unmasks and exposes our sinful natures. In the law, Calvin preaches that there is a 'mirror of perfect righteousness.'⁹⁴⁰

mais quand la Loy vient en avant, alors le peché se cognoit, et faut qu'un chacun, en despit qu'il en ait, s'humilie devant Dieu, ou bien qu'il grince les dents comme rebelle: mais tant y a que Dieu nous reveille bien par la Loy et nous ameine en cognoissance de nostre malediction: bref, c'est comme si quelqu'un avoit le visage tout maschuré, chacun se pourra mocquer de luy, mais il n'y verra goutte: si on luy apporte un miroir, il a honte de soy, il s'en va cacher et se laver quand il se void ainsi estre defiguré d'ordure: ou s'il y a telle deformité, qu'un homme face peur de son regard: quant à luy, il ne pensera point que ce vice-là procede de sa personne, iusques à ce que le miroir luy soit présenté devant les yeux.⁹⁴¹

The self-recognition is a crucial step. As Calvin observes, this use of the law, which is to show us what we are, functions both with the believer or elect and the non-believer. For the latter, the law serves merely to condemn and to leave them without excuse. They cannot claim that they did not know the law existed.⁹⁴² For believers, the law serves to guide or lead them towards God by teaching them humility.⁹⁴³

This means that dismissing the stupid opinion of their own strength, they (the children of God) come to realize that they 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. For God's mercy is revealed in Christ to all who seek and wait upon it in true faith. In the precepts of the law, God is but the rewarder of perfect righteousness, which all of us lack, and conversely, the severe judge of evil deeds. But in Christ his

⁹⁴⁰ Sermon on Gal. 3:19, CO 50, 535.

⁹⁴¹ Sermon on Gal. 3:19, CO 50, 535.

⁹⁴² *Comm.* Rom. 3:3.

⁹⁴³ *Instit.* 2.7. 8-9, *Instit.* 2.5.10.

face shines, full of grace and gentleness, even upon us poor and unworthy sinners.⁹⁴⁴

The devil, as we have seen, has a similar office. The devil's hateful nature is certainly a mirror of our own nature. Our propensity to listen to the devil and the ease with which we are tempted is an attestation to this fact. Thus, we cannot claim ignorance of our own nature, due to the fact that we see it reflected in all of the actions and terrors of the devil. The face of the devil serves to leave us without the excuse that we are ignorant of the true darkness of our nature.

For the faithful, however, as we have seen, the very hateful nature of the devil leads us to a great humility and awe before God. The hateful nature of the devil enables us to see that, apart from the love and mercy of God, we would be the slaves and the children of Satan. This is a profoundly humiliating recognition. The second use of the law, to which we will now turn, enables us to reflect in another way.

The second use of the law is primarily the law as restraint. In Calvin's words,

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. But 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 have wantonly indulged. Consequently, they are neither better nor more righteous before God.⁹⁴⁵

⁹⁴⁴ *Instit.* 2.7.8.

⁹⁴⁵ *Instit.* 2.7.10.

This use of the law is mainly to keep social order. The people follow the law not because of any inner love or affection but because they are afraid of punishment. Like the devil, they are bridled by the law and obey it begrudgingly. The second function of the law serves mainly for unbelievers. For believers, such fears may be the initial concern but then they are moved towards serving the law with love and affection.

The devil is used by God to punish the wicked and to chastise the faithful. For the unbeliever, the terrors of the devil and the fear of hellfire may keep them on the 'straight and narrow'. Thus the devil serves as a restraint for these people. Likewise, for the believer the devil's temptations and terrors act as a deterrent since they are told they will be chastised by Satan. However, the trials of the devil lead the believer into a more profound understanding of the love of God. Believers serve God not because they are afraid of being given to the devil but because they realise that God protects and loves them.

The third use of the law⁹⁴⁶ only functions for the believers or the elect. The third use of the law finds its place among believers in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."⁹⁴⁷

Calvin understood the Christian life to have two parts. The first is repentance, where the Christian puts off the old Adam; and the second is the regeneration of the

⁹⁴⁶The third use of the law is unique to Calvin, although he may have gotten the idea from Martin Bucer. Martin Luther only had two uses of the law. Calvin's third use of the law, and the emphasis that he places upon it as the normative use of the law, serves to stress that Calvin understood the Christian life as dynamic involving an active God of mercy and a receptive, growing community of faith. It also shows Calvin's emphasis on sanctification.

imago Dei, sanctification. As we have seen in Calvin's sermons, the process of sanctification involved battling with the devil and constant vigilance. We find this confirmed in his 1559 *Institutes*:

We confess that while through the intercession of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified, that is, consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to the obedience to the law.⁹⁴⁸

Thus, the third use of the law is when the law becomes such a part of the Christian life, that the law is no longer obeyed out of fear or compulsion. It is when the law is served in love. The only true obedience to God, as Calvin understood it, was a joyous and free obedience. As we saw in the Job sermons, the devil obeys God because he is forced to. This third use of the law corresponds to Engammare's "fourth voice" that he found in the sermons on Genesis. The third use of the law brings believers closer to God enabling them to hear the voice of the Redeemer.

The main function of the devil, I have argued, is to bring the faithful into a more meaningful relationship with God. While the devil has other offices, namely, to punish the wicked and chastize the faithful, in his sermons Calvin emphasized the positive use of the devil to bring the faithful into a deeper relationship with and understanding of God. This function of the devil, like the third use of the law, is only applicable to the faithful.

⁹⁴⁷ *Instit.* 2.7.12.

Thus one could say that, in parallel with the law, the devil has three offices, the chief or principal of which is to lead the believer into a deeper relationship with God. While the devil does not take the place of the law, it is interesting to note the parallels between the function of the law and the function of the devil. Perhaps the close parallels are a reflection on Calvin's emphasis on sanctification and utility. Calvin could not envision a devil who tempted without reason and whose work would not lead the elect into a deeper understanding of God. This is because the devil is under the control of God who freely chose to be a *Deus pro nobis*. Whether or not Calvin was aware of the parallels when he spoke of the devil is unclear.

*The Christian and Evil, or What Calvin Has to Offer the Church
and the Christian Today*

One of the greatest difficulties facing us today is the problem or the question of evil. Do we admit there is evil, or are bad events simply misfortunes? How do we speak of tragedy? What language do we use to describe atrocities such as mass murder or torture? It is clear that the language of psychology has failed us in many instances. To explain a mass killing as a psychological aberration does not satisfy many of us. The horrific case of Paul Teal (Bernado) flaunts the inadequacies of our psychological models. Are those who perpetrate evil acts mad? It is tellingly clear that there are

⁹⁴⁸ *Instit.* 3.14.9.

individuals like Paul Teal or Ted Bundy who function ‘normally’ in all respects save one: they enjoy killing.⁹⁴⁹

Moreover, there are events such as Bosnia, Rwanda or the Pol Pot massacres which defy all attempts to explain or even to understand what happened. The contemporary mainstream Christian has all but abandoned talk of the devil or reflections on the rule of the devil. To most mainstream Christians such reflection is best left in the archives or is the domain of fringe groups. As we have seen from Calvin’s sermons on the devil, Calvin had a nuanced, subtle approach to the devil which I think can offer us much today. Calvin did not hesitate to acknowledge that there is a devil and that the devil is simply evil and bent on destroying us. While no one would use Calvin’s ‘plain text’ method today, I believe that his conclusions are valid.⁹⁵⁰

Many attempts are made today to discuss terrible events without recourse to an entity like the devil. Thus evil is sought within the consciences and hearts of individuals. Since most of us believe that we are essentially good, evil must be a deviation from the norm and, hence, reasons for the behaviour are sought within one’s background, schooling, life experiences and so forth. We look for something which would have made an otherwise good individual go wrong. Calvin, of course, understood that human nature is essentially evil and at war with God. While to some this seems like a very dark view

⁹⁴⁹ It is not the purpose of this thesis to go into long reflections on madness or normalcy, I am making these points to show that Calvin’s comments on the devil have a lot to offer to the dialogue on evil.

⁹⁵⁰ This is not to say that I am uncritical of Calvin. Calvin was a product of his time. He was intolerant of heretics, “Papists”, anabaptists, Manichees, sophists, Libertines and others. Yet Calvin’s conclusion that we do not suffer outside of the love of God is something which I think has much to offer us.

of the human soul, I believe there is much truth in this assertion. When Calvin says that we are at war with God, he means that we simply do not want to be ruled by God or by anyone else, and that in our hearts we are anarchists. Suppose for a moment we abandoned the axiom that all humans are essentially good and began with Calvin's idea that human nature is corrupt and depraved. From this assumption, or axiom, we need no longer look for an aberration to account for evil; it is simply part of our human nature. But we cannot simply say that we are born this way and have no choice in the matter. We are still culpable for our actions, notes Calvin, in the same way that the devil is culpable for his actions. What makes us therefore give in to evil so much? Calvin maintains that there is a malevolent being, created by God, who willingly rebelled and is bent on our destruction, namely the devil.

Far from being a red-tailed character with a pitchfork, as we have seen, the devil that Calvin envisaged is a clever, evil creature who knows exactly how to tempt and destroy us. The devil is the prince of the world for the reason that we have willingly given in and listened to him. Now it does not take much imagination to see that much of our world is indeed ruled by what Calvin would understand to be the devil. While one can attempt to explain mass destructions, suicidal environmental actions and unparalleled greed in other ways, to explain it as our willingly listening to the devil is equally plausible.

Yet Calvin does not leave us to mire in darkness and despair. This is where his greatest insight vis-à-vis the devil lies. Calvin did not leave the battle with the devil in

the heavens, but placed the battle on earth. It is the task of the Christian to battle with the devil by first being aware of his existence and of his works. This is why Calvin was so insistent that the listeners know how the devil worked. For the devil works not only with individuals, but also within institutions and countries. The devil is the prince of the world.

Armed with the knowledge of the devil and his actions, the first task for the Christian is to recognize evil for what it is, the work of Satan, and then we are called to fight it. How do we do so? Calvin gives his listeners the weapon of choice which is Scripture. It is in Scripture and in the message of joy and love of Scripture that the lies and tricks of Satan are exposed and revealed for what they are, namely, attempts to destroy. Thus, the first task for Christians is to be conversant and steeped in Scripture so that they can recognize systems as evil or, indeed, individual actions as evil. The first step in our battle plan is to expose the enemy. Yet Calvin preached that Scripture not only exposes the enemy, it repels him. One can think here of the many examples where the words of Scripture have galvanized individuals and communities into action against evil. Scripture, insofar as it is the Living Word of God, is more than just words on a paper. It represents an accommodation of God. As such, Calvin would also say that it is the task of preachers today not to neglect the devil but to preach about him and on the need for Christians to resist and expose the devil.

I do not see the task of exposing the devil as trying to find evil everywhere, but rather one of exposing all the works and the lies of the devil that threaten to choke and destroy us.⁹⁵¹

Calvin understood that the Christian life is one of constant battle, both against Satan and against oneself, for the reason that we are so prone to listen to the devil. We are even prone to reinvent the Scriptures to suit ourselves, and the devil acts as a dire warning in this regard. Yet, in addition to the reality of and the struggle against the devil, Calvin adds his second insight, which is that the devil is *tenu en bride*. There is no possibility of the devil triumphing forever. The devil can only do what God allows him to do. To me this means that when we do expose the devil and his lies we must do so in faith and realize that our task is not futile or hopeless.

I think that it would be too simplistic to think that Calvin understood our tests to be only individualistic and private. Very often the Christian is tested in the public arena and forced to stand up for what is right. This was the case of Job. Job had to speak his mind before the arguments of his friends. Such public statements are never easy. Yet, no matter how severe our trials are, the fact that the devil is bridled means that we never suffer without hope. We can always pray to God who will offer us the means to endure the trial. At times, as Calvin wrote to those in the French prisons, our trials mean death.

⁹⁵¹ This is not an easy task. Walter Wink has written a fine series of books on the subject. His third book, *Engaging the Powers*, shows just how difficult it is to expose systems and values which are considered correct, or competitive or healthy for a vibrant economy. See Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers, Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

God gives us support and hope but this does not imply a magical rescuing or a cessation of all aggression.

A final insight that Calvin offers is that of the devil leading us to a deeper awareness of God. As we struggle with evil and begin to expose it for what it is, we come to see ourselves surrounded by evil. Rather than making us paranoid, such an insight deepens our awareness of the mercy and love of God. God protects us in uncountable ways. Thus, the question for the Christian when misfortune falls should not be "Why did this happen?" but rather, "It is amazing that such an accident did not happen before."⁹⁵² God protects us in so many ways that we can only get an occasional glimmer of the depth of God's love for us. We can never come to a full appreciation of how much God loves us. At best, we can only see through a glass darkly!. This insight enables us to come to feel the love of God and lifts our faith from the theoretical to the practical and makes it come alive for us.

Thus Calvin offers the churches and Christians the following challenges: 1) to acknowledge the reality of the devil and the reality of human nature; 2) to be in constant battle against the devil and evil, both inside and outside of ourselves ; 3) to be aware that, since the devil is controlled by God, no matter what the trial, we never suffer outside of hope; 4) to know that our trials will lead us closer to God.

I noted that I would show how the devil functions as an integral key in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God. As I have demonstrated, the devil acts as a

'missing-link' in Calvin's understanding of the knowledge of God. The devil enables us to attain a full and true knowledge of God. The devil does this by making use of our experiences while we are tempted. As I have shown, our experience of temptation drives us to a deeper, experiential knowledge of God, where we feel the love and providence of God.

A final remark: It is interesting that the subject of the devil has been ignored by Calvin scholars. While Calvin does not dwell at length on the devil, his remarks reveal a man who had a profound insight into human nature, the process of sanctification and, above all, the reality of the Christian life and the struggles that it entails. My work has only just touched on the surface of many topics. Further work should be done on Calvin's understanding of the Holy Spirit. My work has hinted that Calvin's sermons show that he has a very functional understanding of the Holy Spirit, whereas in his *Institutes* he is more careful to maintain that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. It is interesting that the devil vanished from Protestant thinking not long after Calvin except as an occasional figure to terrify people. Why was this the case? My work has also claimed that the devil is a necessary key for our knowledge of God. This is a new idea that to my knowledge has never been developed or studied. It seems to me that the devil, in his role as bringer of the knowledge of God, not only enables us to use our experience, but also enables us to experience the love of God in an almost mystical way. There are also some tensions in Calvin's thoughts. I alluded to some of these in the body

⁹⁵² I think this is a fine correction to the current 'why me' thinking or simplistic theologies that claim God will always protect the faithful.

of my text. Calvin's compatibilist notion of freedom, for instance, does not really answer the question of culpability. The devil is culpable because he freely chooses to do evil and is not forced to do evil. We are culpable because we do evil while we are not forced to do evil. Yet if our nature is evil or depraved, to what extent are we culpable for our actions? It is clear that we are culpable after the Holy Spirit illumines our minds because we have a choice and can distinguish between good and evil, but are the non-elect culpable? Calvin would say that they are, insofar as they are not forced to do evil. My work also alluded to the debate over natural theology as it is found in Calvin's thought. If the image of God is so ruined in us because of the fall, what does it mean to say that this image is restored? Is it recreated? Or is it merely redrawn? The reader must bear in mind that 'total depravity' is not altogether negative. What it means is that it is impossible for us to search for God, battle the devil, or accomplish anything in the spiritual realm, without God's prior action and grace. Our totally depraved nature makes it absolutely necessary that God acts first in our lives. Much has been said of the 'seed of divinity' that remains within us after the Fall, but we must always remember that according to Calvin, this 'seed' serves only to condemn us if we try to plead that we never imagined a God or heard of God. It is my opinion that it is within these tensions that one can arrive at a truer picture of John Calvin. Do these tensions invalidate Calvin's thought for today? Calvin's notion of total depravity and our subsequent need for God's prior action of grace and love is something that is not only relevant but important to underscore. At a time of theological and ethical relativism, it is useful to remember that our best efforts are useless unless God first comes to us. Calvin's

soteriology is one that is firmly rooted in the grace of God. We respond to the grace of God simply because our response is borne by grace.

While the question of the culpability of the non elect remains a question in my mind, if one accepts the idea that we are culpable if not forced externally to do an action, then Calvin is remarkably consistent in his thinking. In fact, his notion of culpability enables us to grant autonomy to those who are non-elect. The non-elect are not mere pawns who cannot help their behaviour, but, autonomous human beings, who can be held responsible for their actions. The fact that they are spiritually blind has no bearing on the question of culpability. Another fascinating area to study would be the implications of Calvin's understanding of the devil to the question of spirituality. Calvin believed that the temptations of the devil enable us to use our daily experiences and grow in understanding. The implication is that our experiences cannot lead to a deeper understanding of God without temptation and trials. Calvin has hitherto been understood as a top-down thinker, but my work has shown that Calvin made great use of our experiences. Is it possible to arrive at an understanding of the love of God from experience alone? Calvin's sermons seem to suggest that, in fact, this is the case. The ontological priority remains with God, insofar as our trials are 'controlled' by God, but our experiences lead us to a more profound understanding of God. Our experiences show us that we are utterly dependant on God. Schleiermacher claimed that such an understanding of our utter dependance on God is a necessary step towards our understanding of God and growth in Christ. I think that Calvin is making the same claims. Calvin's sermons suggest that without a deep appreciation of our dependance on

God, our knowledge of God will be shallow. Calvin as an 'experiential' theologian needs much further study. It is my hope that this work will be used by other scholars as a stepping stone in their research.

Concluding Remarks

In the introduction I stated my hypothesis as follows: a study of Calvin's preaching on the devil would show that Calvin attributes a series of positive functions to the devil, including especially his role in our coming to a full and true knowledge of God. I have argued the hypothesis in the following steps. After presenting the question in the Introduction, I went on in Chapter One to place Calvin the preacher in his context and to present briefly the textual history of the sermons. I felt this was important because Calvin is well studied as a theologian but Calvin the preacher is not as well known. In Chapters Two through Four I treated the sermons in which Calvin spoke at greater length of the devil. In Chapter Two I looked at Calvin's very important sermons on Job. In Chapter Three I considered Calvin's equally important sermons on the temptations of Jesus in the desert. In Chapter Four I turned to what I have called the miscellaneous sermons. These are a number of occasional sermons in which Calvin preached on

selected Biblical texts. Among these we should note the recently discovered series of sermons on Genesis 3:1-16.

In Chapters Two to Four, my general approach was to introduce the sermons in question and then to present the content and development of thought found in them insofar as the content and development touched on Calvin's preaching on the devil. The presentation was such that the reader could 'follow' Calvin's sermon without my having to quote the sermon in its entirety. The presentation of each sermon in this way constituted an important and essential first step in the argumentation of my hypothesis. Generally speaking, each of these presentations was followed by a summary in which I highlighted the more important remarks Calvin made concerning the devil in the specific sermon in question. This highlighting constituted a second step in the overall argument to establish my hypothesis. I ended each of these three chapters with some concluding remarks. These concluding remarks went beyond the content of the sermons and I tried to draw out some implications of Calvin's thoughts on the devil as presented in the sermons for some of Calvin's other doctrines, specifically his doctrine of the knowledge of God. In these remarks I tried to present, in a more integrative fashion, what Calvin had said in his various sermons and what had been summarized in a more punctual fashion at the end of the presentation, or summary, of each sermon. These concluding remarks to each of the three chapters became the third step in my effort to establish my hypothesis.

The presentations in Chapters Two through Four are meant to lead progressively to the discussion of Chapter Five, which serves as the fourth, and in some ways the most important, step in the arguing of my hypothesis. In this chapter, I have returned to a number of the themes that surfaced over the course of the examination of Calvin's sermons in which he spoke at length about the devil. Chapter Five's more synthesising presentation allowed me to bring out the relationship that exists between Calvin's rich and nuanced understanding of the nature and role of the devil and his overall theological understanding or position. To this end, I included citations from Calvin's *Institutes* as well as his commentaries to bolster my argumentation. Over the course of Chapter Five I tried in a special way to highlight the relationship between what Calvin said about the devil and his understanding of our experiential knowledge of God. This was an important step, as Calvin's insights on the role and place of Christian experience are to a large extent unknown. The chapter closed with a number of references to other theological themes in Calvin's thought. The treatment of these themes opens the way to further studies.

As a final step in the argumentation of my hypothesis, I would like to underscore further the role of the devil in relation to our real or experiential knowledge of God.

As we have seen, the devil has, according to Calvin, an intimate knowledge of human nature. Given this intimate knowledge and the access it provides the devil, we need to take the trials of the devil very seriously. These trials lead us, in fact force us, to reflect on ourselves. This self-reflection would not surpass the bounds of personal

reflection were it not for the fact that the devil is, according to Calvin, *tenu en bride*. The devil, in Calvin's understanding, is not only a creature of God but is also, albeit unwillingly, obedient to God. The devil is used by God and is in the service of God.

God's plan is to make Himself known to us and to effect our salvation. It follows that God would use the devil to further His plan and make Himself known to us. In this divine plan, the trials and temptations caused by the devil bring the believer into a closer relationship with God. These trials that we experience and our consequent experience of the providence and grace of God lead us into an experiential knowledge of God both as Creator and Redeemer.

For Calvin, this deeper experiential knowledge of God comes to us by way of our experiencing God as Creator and Redeemer in the midst of our trials at the hand of the devil. We experience the attacks of the devil, but we also and especially feel the saving hand of God. The love and protection of God, in turn, allow us to walk more closely with God. Furthermore, our reflection on ourselves and our particular situation is directed by the Holy Spirit so that we come to see ourselves as sinners. Thus, the trials brought about by the devil uncover hitherto hidden sins, such as, for example, the sin of hypocrisy.

In this context, the attacks of the devil come to be seen by Calvin, and perhaps by us if we accept Calvin's insight, as necessary elements in our daily lives. They lead us into a deeper understanding of God. We could even ask if we could have a knowledge of God without the devil. It is unfortunate that previous scholars have, for the most part, ignored Calvin's treatment of the devil. In this way they have missed an essential

component in Calvin's overall understanding of the real and experiential knowledge that the Christian has of God.

In this dissertation, I have tried to show not only that the devil is an important aspect of Calvin's theology but is an indispensable element in Calvin's doctrine of the true knowledge of God. Without the devil and his attacks, we are left with a merely theoretical or noetic understanding of God. Such 'knowledge' is no better than that of the devils themselves. We cannot experience the saving power of God and we cannot understand the love and providence of God for us personally. For Calvin, without a consideration of the role of the devil, our confession of God would, at best, be faulty, for it would lack the all-important element of our personal experience of God's love and salvation enabling us to escape the temptations and trials of the devil.

The study of the devil in Calvin's thought has been overlooked by scholars. It is my hope that this study not only fills this gap but also points to new avenues of Calvin scholarship. Finally, in conclusion, I would note Calvin's words: "we must here likewise refute those who foolishly allege that devils are nothing but bad affections or perturbations suggested by our carnal nature."⁹⁵³

⁹⁵³ *Instit.* 1.15.19.

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