An Analysis of
John Calvin and the Will
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INTRODUCTION

Christians have often debated questions of human liberty. In fact, it may be a fair historical judgment to say that this is by and large a uniquely Christian debate. As one noted historian of philosophy put it, "It remains a fact that Aristotle spoke neither of liberty nor of free will....Among Christians, on the contrary, and especially among the Latins, liberty at once comes to the forefront."[1] For a thousand years after Augustine, Latin Christianity busied itself with questions over how grace and freedom related to the will and intellect in the salvation of a sinner. Theories mushroomed until finally the Reformation appeared! Championing "Scripture alone," the Reformers often emphasized their biblical teaching without directly discussing their philosophical framework. This is especially true of John Calvin.

What is Calvin's view of the will and the intellect? That Calvin did not believe in "free will" is quite evident. What is not so evident is what he meant by "free" and "will." Several articles have appeared in the last two decades trying to map out Calvin's elusive moral psychology.[2] One recent monograph by Dewey Hoitenga has gone one step further.[3] Hoitenga elaborates, critiques, and then *corrects* Calvin's philosophy of the will. Our purpose will be to examine Hoitenga's critique and then analyze these corrections in light of Calvin's reply to Albert Pighius.

HOITENGA'S CRITIQUE AND CORRECTIVE OF JOHN CALVIN

The Intellectualist and Voluntarist Debate

The relationship between the human will and intellect have by and large been dropped by Reformed theologians in the late twentieth century. At the same time, Reformed philosophers such as Hoitenga have been forced to reconsider the issue as they wrestle with current

[1] Etienne Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, trans. A H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 307. Gilson attributes the rise of debates over liberty of exercise to the "moral preoccupation" of Christians (ibid., 308).

[2] These articles include A. N. S. Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" *Vox Evangelica* 12 (1981): 72-90; John H. Leith, "The Doctrine of the Will in the Institutes of the Christian Religion," in *Reformatio Perennis: Essays on Calvin and the Reformation in Honor of Ford Lewis Battles*, ed. B. A. Gerrish and Robert Benedetto (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1981), pp. 49-66; and Richard A. Muller, "*Fides* and *Cognitio* in Relation to the Problem of Intellect and Will in the Theology of John Calvin," *Calvin Theological Journal* 25 (November 1990): 207-24.

[3] Dewey J. Hoitenga, Jr., *John Calvin and the Will: A Critique and Corrective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

epistemological debates. Hoitenga is writing this critical evaluation of John Calvin's anthropology in an attempt to "motivate Reformed theologians and philosophers to develop a consistent and sound Reformed theory of the human will."[4] To encourage this development, Hoitenga proposes some corrections for Calvin's anthropology, "without questioning or modifying Calvin's teaching about the will's dependence upon divine grace."[5]

Hoitenga's thesis is that Calvin's view of the human will is inconsistent in two respects. First, Calvin's teaching on the will before the fall is inconsistent with his teaching on the will after the fall. Second, Calvin is inconsistent with the Augustinian principle of nature continuing after the fall.[6]

In order to understand the first inconsistency, it is necessary to review the medieval debate over the *primacy* of the two faculties—intellect and will—in determining action.[7] Is the intellect the uncontested governor of the will, or can the will resist the intellect's lead and turn away? A pure intellectualist (like Plato[8]) says that the will always follows the intellect's direction. This is unacceptable to Christians both because sin is excusable on pretense of ignorance, and also because it cannot account for the fall of Adam. A pure voluntarist (like Descartes) says that the will can even cause the intellect to withhold assent from a "clearly perceived" truth.[9] This also is unacceptable to Christians, because man's culpability for sin requires a knowledge of God, which cannot be willfully erased no matter how unwelcome it is (e.g. Rom 1:18-20). Therefore, the possibilities for Christian philosophers have been either a modified intellectualism or a modified voluntarism.

Thomas Aquinas is Hoitenga's example of a modified intellectualist. Aquinas took Aristotle's definition of will as "rational appetite" and presented it a separate power of the soul, distinct from the intellect and the bodily passions. As appetite, the will has two components: inclination (to seek good) and choice (to select the good). This appetite is rational because the

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[4] Ibid., 12.

[5] Ibid., 15.

[6] Ibid., 12, 14. It should be noted that Hoitenga sees an *overall* consistency in Calvin's thought (ibid., 63). This book seeks to tighten it up even more.

[7] This debate is foreign to modern readers, for there is a "modern prejudice, originating in Hume, against belief in such noetic faculties or powers of the soul" (ibid., 15). According to Hoitenga, it is impossible to examine the human "noetic and volitional states and functions...apart from the powers that produce them" (ibid., 16).

Both Hoitenga and Muller indicate a second way that medievals understood primacy, viz. what would be most important in the glorified state—the intellect (seeing God in a beatific vision) or the will (loving God as the highest good)? See Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 24 and Muller, "*Fides* and *Cognitio*," 211-12, 222.

[8] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 28.

[9] Ibid., 42. Hoitenga notes that Descartes position is incoherent, for at times he advocates intellectualism.

intellect directs it by providing judgment on good ends and judgment on good means to those ends. Had Aquinas stopped here, he would have been a pure intellectualist. However, the need to account for the fall led Aquinas to speak of double-mindedness, i.e. the will can somehow distract the intellect from its better knowledge.[10]

John Duns Scotus is Hoitenga's example of a modified voluntarist. A voluntarist regards "free choice of the will...as the *essence* of the will."[11] Scotus claimed that the will is analogous to the divine will in being "self-moved."[12] In this way, man is both capable of following the intellect and also of acting irrationally. Disobedience is "ultimately unintelligible."[13]

By comparing Aquinas and Scotus, we can discern two definitions of free will. This is very important for the book's later critique of Calvin. First, freedom of spontaneity is our "ability to act in accord with our own beliefs and desires" apart from external coercion. Hoitenga calls this the "*minimalist* definition of free will."[14] Second, freedom of contrary choice is the will's "ability to act in either of two alternative ways presented to us by the intellect."[15] Hoitenga calls this the "*maximalist* definition of free will."[16] Voluntarism requires the maximalist definition.[17]

With these definitions of intellectualist and voluntarist in mind, we are ready to consider Hoitenga's thesis.

First Inconsistency: From Intellectualism to Voluntarism

According to Hoitenga, Calvin is inconsistent because he first "claims that the intellect governs the will and yet clearly implies that it does not."[18] Thus Calvin moves Adam

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[10] Ibid., 24-34.

[11] Ibid., 34. To a voluntarist, "freedom is the *defining* characteristic of the will" (ibid., 35; cf. 40, 125). Muller agrees with this classification, stating, "For Scotus, then, the will is not merely an intellective appetite that receives directions from the intellect, but a formally distinct and coordinate faculty of soul which, by its freedom of choice, determines even the extent of our knowledge of any given object" ("*Fides* and *Cognitio*," 214).

[12] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 35.

[13] Ibid., 39.

[14] Ibid., 30.

[15] Freedom of contrary choice is also called "freedom of indifference."

[16] Ibid.

[17] These definitions of freedom are commonplace in philosophy. To some it may seem odd that a Reformed man like Hoitenga holds to the freedom of contrary choice. Reformed historian William Cunningham shows that nothing in Reformed confessional literature demands that a Reformed thinker either hold to or deny "the self-determining power of the will" (William Cunningham, "Calvinism, and the Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity," in *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*, ed. James Buchanan and James Bannerman [reprint of 1862 ed., Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967], 476).

[18] Ibid., 23.

from intellectualism in Eden to voluntarism east of Eden. As proof, Hoitenga identifies the faculties and their relationships from Calvin's description of the original man:

> Thus let us, therefore, hold—as indeed is suitable to our present purpose—that the human soul consists of two faculties, understanding and will. Let the office, moreover, of understanding be to distinguish between objects, as each seems worthy of approval or disapproval; while that of the will, to choose and follow what the understanding pronounces good, but to reject and flee what it disapproves.[19]

The intellect is here (though not with Aquinas' division into means and ends).[20] Moreover, both components of the will are present—choice (as seen in the quotation) and inclination (as seen in a later reference to the will's "own desires"). Hoitenga asserts that Calvin presents an intellectualist view of the will because Calvin says that "the will is always mindful of the bidding of the understanding" and "completely amenable to the guidance of the reason."[21] Upon stating this, Calvin immediately switches to voluntarism in saying that Adam "fell solely by his own will" and that "his choice of good and evil was free."[22] Thus Calvin's account of the will in the created state and his account of the will during the first sin do not coincide.

Hoitenga further supports Calvin's voluntarist account of the fall by comparing it to the fallen condition and to the reverse action of conversion. In the fallen state, the will is the man's "chief seat."[23] The sinner "readily averts his mind, as much as he can, from the feeling of sin" and "tries to evade his innate power to judge between good and evil."[24] In conversion, faith means that the will freely follows the illuminated intellect. Both components of the will produce faith: inclination (in that God draws us) and choice (in that faith is obedience).[25] The "chief part of faith" is "that firm and steadfast constancy of heart."[26]

Since Calvin is so firm on voluntarism in later accounts, why did he first describe Adam using an intellectualist account? Hoitenga claims it stems from Calvin's distrust of philosophers. How can pagans tell how the original man functioned when they see only ruin

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[19] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. F. L. Battles (London: S. C. M. Press, 1961), 1.15.7.

[20] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 47.

[21] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.7, 1.15.8.

[22] Ibid., 1.15.8.

[23] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.27, cited in Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 51.

[24] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.22.

[25] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 55.

[26] Ibid., 60. Muller's article is specifically a response to R. T. Kendall's contention that Calvin had an intellectualist view of faith lest faith be synergistic. After showing how Calvin sees faith as lodged deep in the heart (along with a true knowledge of God), Muller concludes, "Calvin, then, does not intend to argue a purely cerebral meaning of faith when he identifies faith as *cognitio*, knowledge" ("*Fides* and *Cognitio*," 217).

around them now and know nothing of the restoration in Christ?

Having pointed out the inconsistency, Hoitenga closes the chapter by proposing a better description of Adam's condition, by means of "a Scotist gloss on Calvin's own language."[27]

Second Inconsistency: No Natural Will in Fallen Man

According to Hoitenga, Calvin is also inconsistent with the doctrine of creation implied in the Augustinian principle of nature continuing after the fall.[28] According to this principle, in the fall man lost his supernatural gifts but not his natural gifts, which were only corrupted.[29] Calvin shows his adherence to this principle by stating it four times in the *Institutes*.[30] Hoitenga cites Calvin to show that supernatural gifts were "*activities* or *exercises* of the will and intellect, not the natural powers of will or intellect themselves."[31] The natural gifts are intellect and will. The intellect lost its "soundness" and the will lost its "uprightness."[32] Therefore, according to Hoitenga, the "intellect should retain its natural ability to distinguish between good and evil ends, and between suitable and unsuitable means....and [the] will should retain, for all its depravity, something of its created inclination to goodness besides its new inclination to evil, as well as its ability to choose between these contrary inclinations."[33]

Calvin only retains the powers of the intellect, but nearly destroys the powers of the will. Only evil inclination remains, so choice is eliminated. Instead of affirming with philosophers that "all things seek good through a natural instinct" (which Hoitenga says he should have acknowledged), Calvin says that "like an animal [man] follows the inclination of his nature, without reason, without deliberation."[34] Such a view of fallen man cannot account for moral

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[27] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 65.

[28] Ibid., 100.

[29] Calvin wrote, "Meanwhile the well-known statement flitted from mouth to mouth: that the natural gifts in man were corrupted, but the supernatural taken away. But scarcely one man in a hundred had an inkling of its significance" (Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.4).

Hoitenga later explains that the Augustinian principle is not representing "a 'two-story' relationship between nature and grace, on which grace is merely added (the *superadditum donum*) to a human nature that requires little or no internal healing from the effects of sin" (Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 113).

The name "Augustinian" is misleading. Lane and others note that this saying did not originate with Augustine, but is first found in Peter Lombard's *Sentences* (Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" 88, n. 89).

[30] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.4, 2.2.12, 2.2.16, 2.5.19. Calvin agreed with this principle, saying, "For my part, if I wanted clearly to teach what the corruption of nature is like, I would readily be content with these words" (ibid., 2.2.4).

[31] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 71.

[32] Ibid., 72.

[33] Ibid., 72-73.

[34] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.26, cited in Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 76-77.

choices in fallen man between good and evil (as "abundantly attested to in the history and literature of the world").[35] According to Calvin, Romans 7 teaches us that only believers have internal moral conflicts.

Two main defenses are made for Calvin's approach. First, the soteriological defense claims that Calvin is merely concerned for polemics. He does not want to give the semi-Pelagians any foothold. After all, Calvin acknowledges that fallen people do civil and external goodness. To this, Hoitenga responds that though Calvin does acknowledge these, he gives no theory to account for them. Besides, arguing against the semi-Pelagians only required that Calvin guard against the will being assigned the first step to salvation. Because God must take the initiative to restore supernatural gifts, does that require that the natural gifts be destroyed? Does not grace presuppose nature?[36]

Second, the minimalist defense claims that a person may still be responsible even if he lacks any inclination to good and (hence) any power of contrary choice. Calvin himself thinks that freedom from compulsion is sufficient to guarantee responsibility. "But is this really so?" asks Hoitenga. Two questions are unavoidable: "Is the fact that we entered the bondage of the will by a free choice sufficient for maintaining responsibility for the continued evildoing in which that bondage consists? And can one lose an original power of choice for goodness and still be responsible for the evildoing one commits?"[37] Aristotle shows that both questions can be answered yes, since a man may have freely sinned initially, but then developed a habit that has now taken away his freedom.[38]

Although the minimal defense is tenable, it suffers from a more serious weakness than just inconsistency. It assumes that maintaining responsibility is all that matters. This would be true if consistency was the only goal. However, Calvin's denial of the Augustinian principle with respect to the will is *defective* as well, for in general terms, Calvin "cannot explain adequately the moral character of human action in that state."[39] Hoitenga also lists four consequences, as summarized here:

> First, too much power is ascribed to the created will, since by its own choice the will destroyed itself in the fall.
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> Second, Calvin cannot account for the moral choices made by the fallen will between good

[35] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 77, 90.

[36] Ibid., 81-85.

[37] Ibid., 87-88.

[38] Ibid, 88.

[39] Ibid., 70.

and evil.

Third, Calvin cannot account for the moral conflicts felt by fallen people.

Fourth, without the natural powers of the will within unbelievers, "there will be no analogy in their fallen experience by which they can even understand the gospel itself."[40]

According to Hoitenga, it is possible to correct this defective theory while still avoiding the concept of merit.

Why does Calvin promote this defective view? Hoitenga says that it due to Calvin's preoccupation with the danger of pride.[41] But to dissuade against self-reliance, do we have to deny existence? If Adam was not allowed to boast before he sinned, does he have more room to boast now, after having lost his supernatural gifts? Must we deny the natural gifts? In actuality, Calvin runs into an opposite error. He leads men to complacency, for it is self-evident that motivation presupposes belief in ability. Thus we have Augustine's famous dilemma: Denying free will leads to complacency, but affirming free will leads to pride.[42]

In the final chapter of the book, Hoitenga proposes a remedy of Calvin's defective view of the will. He begins by asserting that fallen man has "some genuine level of moral goodness apart from conversion."[43] Citing the Augustinian principle, Hoitenga proposes that common grace not only restrains man's evil inclination, but also promotes "the natural capacity for contrary choice between morally good and evil alternatives..., together with the possibility of exercising this capacity for development of moral virtue and vice."[44] Citing Romans 2:14-15, Hoitenga states that fallen nature is still capable of doing what the law requires and that the fallen conscience still faces choices between good and evil. In contrast to this interpretation, Calvin takes "heart" as a reference to the intellect.[45] Citing experience, Hoitenga says it is strange to affirm that there are externally right deeds without there being proper motivation inside. Therefore, based on principle, Scripture, and experience, Hoitenga proposes that we copy Calvin's model of the intellect and use it as a basis for a theory of the will.

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[40] Ibid, 89-90.

[41] Ibid., 93.

[42] Ibid., 93-105. The dilemma apparently appeared first in Augustine's writings: "Only let no one dare to defend the freedom of the will in any such way as to attempt depriving us of the prayer that says, 'Lead us not into temptation;' and, on the other hand, let no one deny the freedom of the will, and so venture to find an excuse for sin. But let us give heed to the Lord....For some He hath let be lifted up to pride through an overweening trust in their own wills, while others He hath let fall into carelessness through a contrary excess of distrust" (Augustine, *On the Gospel of St. John*, liii, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, 14 vols., ed. Philip Schaff [reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994 (1888)], 7:293-94.

[43] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 108.

[44] Ibid., 108.

[45] Ibid., 112-13. In reply, "heart" probably refers to both the intellect and the will.

Having considered both inconsistencies, we shall analyze Hoitenga's assertions in light of a fresh examination of Calvin's own thought.

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF THE WILL

Introduction

Is John Calvin's moral psychology as inconsistent as Professor Hoitenga asserts? The only way to discover the answer to this question is to consider Calvin's writings afresh. Rather than considering the *Institutes* (as Hoitenga does almost exclusively), we will use Calvin's *Reply to Pighius* as the basis for our search.[46] Several reasons commend this approach. First, this is Calvin's "fullest treatment of the relation between grace and free will."[47] Second, the controversy with Pighius profoundly affected Calvin's thought. Ideas that were challenged and rethought became the basis for later works and the definitive version of the *Institutes*.[48] Third, Hoitenga's work does not make much use of this work. There is a large store of thought directly pertaining to the will, which might (as Richard Muller said) provide "hints as to how Calvin understood the disorientation of faculties to have taken place in the fall."[49] We will postpone the question of whether Calvin is an intellectualist or voluntarist to the end. First, let us consider the two alleged inconsistencies.

First Inconsistency: Non-Existent

Adam's Created State

Hoitenga has claimed that right after Calvin said that the will was always subject to the intellect, he switched his view to account for the fall. According to Hoitenga, this occurred within the same section of the *Institutes*, even in back-to-back paragraphs![50] Even though no

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[46] John Calvin, *The Bondage and Liberation of the Will: A Defense of the Orthodox Doctrine of Human Choice against Pighius*, ed. A. N. S. Lane, trans. G. I. Davies (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).

[47] Ibid., xiii.

[48] Regarding Pighius' inadvertent contribution to Protestantism, Lane comments, "In the 1539 *Institutio* Calvin came dangerously close to teaching the destruction of the will, in that such a misinterpretation is at least excusable. Pighius' challenge on this point, so vehemently rejected by Calvin, did cause him to qualify his teaching, first in his reply to Pighius and later in the 1559 *Institutio* and other works. Calvin was indebted to Pighius in that the latter moved him to clarify his position and to remove its ambiguities" (Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" 83).

[49] Muller writes this in the foreword to Hoitenga's book, calling for Reformed historians to consider more writings than just the *Institutes* (Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 9).

Since Hoitenga will lament a section in the *Institutes* as dealing "all too briefly" with an issue (ibid., 75), one wonders if this first English translation of Calvin's reply to Pighius came out after Hoitenga had finished the bulk of his manuscript. The book is only cited two times, each in footnotes (ibid., 149, n.1; 151, n. 13). Until this English translation appeared, most scholars seemed to limit themselves to what the *Institutes* said about the will. (Lane is an exception to this generalization.)

[50] See the first two paragraphs of Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.8.

teacher is completely consistent, including Calvin (especially in his views on baptism), it would seem quite remarkable for Calvin to make such a drastic change in such short space. Is there any way to make sense of this apparent change of mind?

First, some of Hoitenga's own quotations from the *Institutes* suggest that Calvin held a voluntarist view of Adam's will *before* he actually sinned. For example, in a side remark, Calvin says, "We admit that man's condition while he remained upright was such that he could incline to either side."[51] As Hoitenga notes, this is not only a freedom of contrary choice, it is one of contrary *inclination*![52] But if Adam had this "while he remained upright," surely we can say that Calvin held to a voluntarist view of the will in the Garden. Consider this further example. Calvin writes, "The grace of persisting in good would have been given to Adam if he so willed.... Therefore, he had the ability if he had so willed, but he did not will that he should be able."[53] Hoitenga uses this as a parallel case for conversion, in which the will is primary.[54] Thus Adam's will stood in a powerful position to choose good or evil. Surely Calvin considered this state to have continued long before the Fall.

But if someone should argue that these two citations relate merely to the fall in Calvin's mind, and just exacerbate Calvin's inconsistency, let us delay no longer but go directly to Calvin's treatise. Calvin gives an explicit description of the "pure state" of man, which is clearly before man sinned, for this description is immediately contrasted with the fallen state:

> We also, when we debate about the soul, first define clearly its parts, the mind and the will, and we teach that it is the function of the mind to go before the will and to guide it—hence the name ἡγεμονικόν. Then we go on to say that the will is in a good condition when it does not expose itself to be dragged this way arid that by the passions, but attends to the rule of the mind. Finally [we teach] that the whole person is properly constituted when right reason rules in him, which both guides the will in the appropriate direction and restrains the sensual passions by its reins as a charioteer does to a team of wild horses.[55]

Here Calvin makes his voluntarist convictions quite clear. Calvin does not say that the will is automatically linked to the mind, but rather says that the will is able to "expose itself" to the passions or to "attend" to the mind. Therefore, the intellect directs, but whether the will follows (as it should) or not is uncertain. What is certain is that "man as created by God was free and in

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[51] Ibid., 2.2.10.

[52] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 49.

[53] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.3.13.

[54] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 64-65.

[55] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 77.

control of himself."[56]

This interpretation of the created state can be supported in the *Institutes* as well. Lane has two important translations from passages often used to purport Calvin's intellectualism. First, when we read that "the intellect is to us, as it were, the guide and ruler of the soul; that the will always follows it beck,"[57] Lane notes, "'Always follows it beck' is too strong a translation. The Latin implies only that the will is mindful of (*respicere*) reason."[58] Similarly, when we read of "the will being thus perfectly submissive to the authority of reason,"[59] Lane notes, "Again, 'perfectly submissive' is too strong for 'prorsus consentanea.'"[60] Does not Calvin suggest, in the midst of his philosophical discussion of the soul, that the will is not inevitably governed by the intellect, when he says, "Indeed, in another place we shall see how firmly the understanding now governs the direction of the will..."?[61]

Therefore, since there is a plausible explanation for the *Institutes*' consistency and since there is Calvin's separate testimony regarding the created power inherent to Adam's pure will, we conclude that Calvin should be given the benefit of the doubt for consistency.

The Will in the Fall and in Conversion

Professor Hoitenga rightly states that Calvin had a voluntarist view of the fall and of its converse action of initial faith (conversion). Let us briefly review each of these points to confirm Calvin's voluntarism before considering the second alleged inconsistency.

John Calvin firmly believed and taught that it was man's fault which first led him into sin.[62] Calvin agreed with Augustine that "the origin of sin derived from man's voluntary fall, not from God's act of creation."[63] Thus man's will is the original source of sin.[64] Calvin confesses this

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[56] Ibid., 71. In another place, Calvin asserts that "man was made with free choice" in the sense that Pighius understood "free choice" (ibid., 92).

[57] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 1.15.7. Henceforth, we will identify this translation of the *Institutes* as "Beveridge" in contrast to the Battles translation left unmarked.

[58] Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" 86, n. 9. The Battles translation of the *Institutes* agrees with Lane.

[59] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.7 (Beveridge).

[60] Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" 86, n. 10. The Battle's translation is "completely amenable" (*Institutes*, 1.15.8). Even more than the meaning of words, one must note that this phrase is the stated purpose for which choice was added to the will. Whether it would do it or not is not said.

[61] Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.15.7. Renowned Calvin scholar Richard Muller disagrees with this conclusion, as is clear in his affirmation of Hoitenga's two allegations of inconsistency (Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 9).

[62] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 40, 46.

[63] Ibid., 91; cf. ibid., 172.

[64] Calvin notes that sin "occurred through the fault of his own will" (ibid., 144).

succinctly in Book Two:

> We do not deny that man was created with free choice, endowed as he was with sound intelligence of mind, and uprightness of will. We do declare that our choice is now held captive under bondage to sin, but how did this come about except by Adam's misuse of free choice when he had it?[65]

Adam "became corrupt through his own fault when of his own accord he rebelled against God."[66]

Regarding initial faith, Calvin also holds voluntarist view. He writes, "God bends our heart so that we assent to the gospel. That assent is properly called ours, but not in such a way that it should be understood to derive from us."[67] Calvin's doctrine of calling also includes both the mind of repentance and the enjoyment of God's love known through the gospel.[68] Muller seems to be quite correct in his conclusion regarding Calvin's "soteriological voluntarism."[69]

Second Inconsistency: Possible, but Non-Existent

Professor Hoitenga's second inconsistency is more difficult to assess. He has written that Calvin did not remain true to the Augustinian principle, in that Calvin retained the natural intellect for man (though corrupted), but he did not retain the natural will for man at all.[70] Calvin obviously did not intend to be make a distinction like this between the intellect and the will, because he attributes the same effects of the fall to both of them. They are both "defective and corrupted by sin."[71] However, to clear Calvin from this charge, we must first reconsider the Augustinian principle and then consider how Hoitenga has understood it.

The Augustinian principle states that as a result of the fall, "The natural gifts in man were corrupted, but the supernatural taken away."[72] Calvin invokes the Augustinian principle in his reply to Pighius:

> Adam was created according to the image of God and adorned with remarkable gifts of righteousness, truth, and wisdom, with the added assurance that not only he but all his

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[65] Ibid., 47.

[66] Ibid.; cf. ibid., 70.

[67] Ibid., 120. Calvin refers to this again in Book Six, saying that the heart of a believer is "bent and formed by his Spirit" (ibid., 205). To Calvin, "heart" normally means "will" (see ibid., 209).

[68] Ibid., 216.

[69] Muller, "*Fides* and *Cognito*," 215.

[70] Hoitenga seems bent on making Calvin's view of the fallen will to be like that of an animal: "Not only does Calvin here deny any sense of moral goodness in the fallen state, he does so by almost completely denying that there is even any desire in the will for distinctively human happiness" (*Calvin and the Will*, 77-78).

[71] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 213.

[72] Calvin, *Institutes*, 2.2.4.

> descendants would live in this state if he continued in the innocence which he had received. But he did not long remain in it, and so, because of his ingratitude, he was stripped of those gifts and thus was deprived of that likeness to God and put on a new image. Being made subject to ignorance, weakness, unrighteousness, and vanity, and having sunk into such wretchedness he also involved his offspring in it.[73]

Several things appear here. First, the supernatural gifts are virtues ("righteousness, truth, and wisdom"), not "activities" or "exercises" as Hoitenga calls them.[74] In fact, Calvin specifically denies that he is referring to activities. In between the faculty and its acts, Calvin insists there is a middle category: "To will well and badly are qualities or opposed habits which belong to the power itself."[75] Habits were stripped from the soul. Second, these "habits" did not decline (like Aristotle's rise and fall of moral virtue), but were instantly taken away.[76] In fact, it appears that they were taken away *by God*, and not as some natural consequence. Indeed, Calvin makes it quite clear elsewhere that man's nature was corrupted as a *punishment*.[77] Third, man lost the image of God. In discussing Irenaeus, Calvin mentions that "the freedom with which he is dealing is the image of God, in accordance with which Adam was created."[78] Calvin's proof for such a bold statement is that since this image is only restored in Christ, it must have been lost in Adam.[79]

The real issue in all three observations is that Adam by sinning lost his *freedom* to do good as a habit of will. For example, from another angle, Calvin can say, "The freedom of the will is its soundness."[80] But Adam lost "soundness" of will in the fall. Having lost freedom to do good, fallen man must of necessity be in bondage to sin.[81] Calvin expounds much on this doctrine—the *bondage of the will*. In the fallen state, man "has been deprived of his abilities and reduced to utter poverty."[82] Both the faculties of the soul were severely affected by the fall:

> I say, as the facts themselves declare, that our power of reasoning, which has its seat in the mind, and our ability to will, which resides in the heart, are both defective and corrupted by

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[73] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 46-47.

[74] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 71.

[75] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 209. Hoitenga would have benefited from the context surrounding this passage.

[76] Calvin makes it very clear that although the Aristotelian notion of "habits" (i.e. dispositions) is helpful, the Christian must realize that these can be given and taken away instantaneously, without prior progress or decline (ibid., 149-50). Hoitenga brings up Aristotle's notion as if Calvin had never used it himself (see *Calvin and the Will*, 88).

[77] E.g., see Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 93, 96, 182.

[78] Ibid., 72.

[79] Ibid. This is Calvin's common way of ascertaining what Adam was like before he fell. Calvin infers this from what Christ creates in believers now (see examples in Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 71, 84, 89, 112).

[80] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 84.

[81] This, according to Calvin, is the true biblical doctrine of "freedom" (see ibid., 68-69, 88).

[82] Ibid., 156.

> sin. I say that man thinks, chooses, wills, attempts, and does nothing except evil because of that corruption which has taken the whole of the human soul under its control.[83]

We can expect only to sin![84] This corruption makes us sinners "unable not only to will or resolve anything good, but even to conceive the thought of it."[85]

This total inclination to evil is where Hoitenga's chief charge lies. How can the will be said to retain its natural powers to seek good, if it is only inclined toward evil and so can only choose evil?

Before giving our full reply, we should first note that there is also a logical *fallacy* to Hoitenga's objection. He says that since there is not an inclination to do good after the fall, fallen man has lost the free choice he originally had. However, Hoitenga calls the inclination to do evil "new;"[86] therefore, we infer that man had only one inclination in the beginning (using his model of the problem). But if man had free will before the fall, when he only had an inclination to do good, why can he not have free will after the fall, when he only has an inclination to do evil? Why must he still retain the inclination to do good in order to maintain the Augustinian principle?

This type of argument cannot suffice, however. We must answer directly from Calvin's writings. Professor Hoitenga is correct in seeing both inclination and choice as things kept together in Calvin's thought. Consider this excellent summary of the reformer's position, given by Calvin himself:

> Now we affirm that the human race, on losing that freedom which it had received in creation, fell into wretched bondage....We say that man in this state of bondage is not endowed with a free ability to *choose* both good and evil, so that he could conform to whichever he pleased. For he is held bound under the yoke of sin, so that he cannot in any way *desire* the grace of God until he is freed by the grace of Christ.[87]

To this assertion, Pighius replies that it is absurd to say that fallen man can only sin, and he also invokes the Augustinian principle (just like Professor Hoitenga).[88] Calvin's reply to Pighius applies equally well to Hoitenga.

Calvin first acknowledges the true honor and propriety of "all the feelings which naturally occur in man," such as married love, love for parents, fear of hunger, and joy at happy

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[83] Ibid., 213.

[84] Ibid., 140.

[85] Ibid., 135.

[86] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 73, 109.

[87] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 184 (emphasis added).

[88] Ibid.

outcomes. These have been "implanted in our nature from its very creation."[89] However, our corruption gave birth to ἀταξία, that is, "the unregulated overflowing of the feelings which caused us to have evil desires and by these desires to become rebels of God."[90] All originally good human feelings now have "some smack of defilement."[91] The otherwise good fruit is spoiled. Therefore, Calvin concludes that our "desire for a thing which is otherwise an honourable example of its kind and praiseworthy is never without some blemish...."[92]

This reply goes a long way toward answering Hoitenga's objection, who acts as if Calvin never mentions "such good impulses as courage, cooperation, honesty, loyalty, and the sense of duty itself."[93] There is a big difference here between what Calvin considers "good" and what Hoitenga considers "good." To Calvin, a truly good work is one "which was entirely pure and perfect, which lacked any blemish at all."[94] To Hoitenga, good is "whatever helps."[95] Calvin would not deny that fallen man has such "good" in him, so Hoitenga's objection here is moot. In addition, if we were to grant to Hoitenga his (poor) definition of the supernatural gifts as faith, hope, and love,[96] how could we then say that man's natural virtues retained their goodness, since everything done apart from faith is sin (Rom 14:23), just as Calvin asserts? Hoitenga has taken Calvin's vocabulary about man never doing good and then inserted his own definition of goodness, when in reality Calvin affirms that all sorts of "good" deeds are done by fallen man in Hoitenga's sense of what is "*good* in and for human beings."[97] Hoitenga is not true to his principle, for if fallen man lost the supernatural gifts of faith and love, on what basis can he chide Calvin for only limiting the good works of unbelievers to external goodness?[98] What is wrong with the basic interiority of Calvin's definition of a good work, when he says, "Since the worth of good works depends not on the act itself but on perfect love for God, a work will not be righteous and pure unless it proceeds from a perfect love for God"?[99] Those who give good gifts may still

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[89] Ibid., 186.

[90] Ibid., 186-87.

[91] Ibid., 187.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 116.

[94] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 27.

[95] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 26.

[96] Ibid., 128.

[97] Ibid., 82.

[98] Ibid., 116.

[99] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 27.

be evil (Matt. 7:11).

Positively speaking, in what way *does* Calvin adhere to the Augustinian principle? Calvin does try to keep some function of the will permanent, lasting through the fall into the fallen state. Consider this very important section in which Calvin differentiates between four claims about the will as something "free, bound, self-determined, or coerced:"

> People generally understand a *free will* to be one which has it in its power to choose good or evil....There can be no such thing as a *coerced will***,** since the two ideas are contradictory....Therefore we describe [as coerced] the will which does not incline this way or that of its own accord or by an internal movement of decision, but is forcibly driven by an external impulse. We say that [the will] is *self-determined* when of itself it directs itself in the direction in which it is led, when it is not taken by force or dragged unwillingly. A *bound* will, finally, is one which because of its corruptness is held captive under the authority of evil desires, so that it can choose nothing but evil, even if it does so of its own accord and gladly, without being driven by any external impulse.[100]

Of these four choices, Calvin says that the choice of a fallen man is "self-determined." This characteristic is essential to the will and thus persists through the fall into the fallen state. Indeed, we have Calvin's word on it, that the state is irrelevant to this quality of the will, for "it is with a will that is self-determined that people act both well and badly."[101] This characteristic of the will is true for all those with a will, even God Himself. When God is said to be "the greatest degree willing" to be good, Calvin calls this being "self-determined."[102]

How can we square this "self-determinism" with the radical loss of freedom seen earlier? Perhaps the best answer is simply to say that Calvin believed that the will of wicked men is free to incline toward and choose any earthly pursuit they would like, but, since these men lack faith and love, their otherwise honorable pursuit will be plagued with ἀταξία and thus be sin, to which they are in bondage.[103] Therefore, it seems safe to assume that Calvin was a consistent voluntarist, similar to John Duns Scotus.

FINAL ASSESSMENT

Dewey Hoitenga's book *John Calvin and the Will* is a challenging introduction to a

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[100] Ibid., 69 (emphasis added).

[101] Ibid., 140.

[102] Ibid., 148.

[103] Leith says that Calvin may have retained this limited scope of the freedom of indifference, as long as "fallen man does not have the freedom of contrary choice in the relationship to God" ("The Doctrine of the Will," 53). We may never be able to make a hard and fast historical judgment on this point, because Calvin did not talk much about it. Calvin agreed with Melanchthon, who (according to Calvin) "did not want to discuss in too much detail [what men can do in public affairs and outward behavior], because it is not of great importance for faith" (*Bondage and Liberation*, 29).

perennial issue in Western Christianity—the freedom of the will. The questions that Hoitenga gives are excellent for focusing the issues and for drawing out the possible consequences. It is regrettable, however, that such a fine work is marred by some wrong presuppositions, such as what constitutes a "good" work. Hoitenga does not meet Calvin with the reformer's own terminology; therefore, in one sense, Hoitenga forfeits his right to *correct* Calvin. Hoitenga also neglects to discuss Calvin's view of original sin.[104] Granted, every author has a right to discuss what he wants to discuss, but Hoitenga questions the legitimacy of holding men responsible when the will lacks the power to obey, which is a legitimacy based on original sin, as seen in Calvin's writings. Although Calvin linked culpability with the individual's personal will, he ultimately derived man's culpability from the fall, in light of the Adam's full power of free choice.[105] Moreover, Hoitenga almost wholly neglected the issue of merit in defining a good work. Instead, Hoitenga focused on only half of the reformer's main concerns, those that attacked the semi-Pelagian view of the will taking initiative in conversion. This truncated discussion affects not only the analysis in the book, but also its conclusion. Hoitenga writes:

> It is by divine creation that human beings possess a rational-moral *nature* consisting of reason and will; by divine revelation and regeneration that God's grace restores to that nature the spiritual gifts of faith, hope, and love that it lost in the Fall. On that much, Catholic and Calvinist are agreed. It remains only for the Calvinist to revise Calvin's concept of the fallen will, and for the Catholic to revise the Thomist intellectualist view of the will, in order to unite them in a common Christian anthropology.[106]

By ignoring the issue of merit in all good works and misrepresenting Calvin's denial of Christians doing anything *really* good,[107] Hoitenga seems to have a strong desire to modify a lot of Reformed theology. Perhaps, however, this apparent desire is simply an ignorance of historical Reformed literature. After all, he does confess in the preface, "I have not studied this tradition."[108]

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[104] Hoitenga passes over this issue quickly in a footnote (*Calvin and the Will*, 152, n. 18).

[105] See Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 39, 149, 183, 184, 187, 144, 145, 150; cf. Lane, "Did Calvin Believe in Freewill?" 80-81.

[106] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 128.

[107] Calvin, *Bondage and Liberation*, 26-27.

[108] Hoitenga, *Calvin and the Will*, 13. As part of the Reformed tradition, the original version of this article included the following poem, "Of Man by Nature," by John Bunyan:

From God he's a backslider,
Of ways he loves the wider;
With wickedness a sider,
More venom than a spider.
In sin he's a considerer,
A make-bate and divider;
Blind reason is his guider,
The devil is his rider.

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