CALVIN'S CONCEPTION OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

by

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This work has involved a study of Calvin's Sermons and Commentaries as well as of his Institutes. It is necessary, in studying Calvin's teaching, especially on a subject such as the Christian Life, to read widely throughout his writings. The background of our modern theological thinking is so different from Calvin's that we are apt to misinterpret his use of words and brief phrases such as "repentance", "self-denial", "bearing the cross", "consecration", unless we also study their use in more varied contexts than occur in the Institutes alone. After we study Calvin's other writings we are able to come back to the Institutes and find there a content in his teaching and language which we might otherwise miss. In this work an attempt is made to define the background against which Calvin's language about the Christian Life can be best understood.

Calvin himself felt that his teaching in the Institutes might fail to be understood in its true significance unless it could be amplified, for he apologised for the brevity of his section on the Christian Life, and at the same time expressed the hope that one day he might find time to write a much fuller treatise on this subject. Yet he also expressed doubt as to whether, on account of his natural love for brevity, he himself would not be better to leave this task to others.

This work has also involved a study of Calvin's ethics. Calvin's judgment on the various moral problems that faced the men of his time
can illustrate for us his views on the nature of the Christian life, for his ethical outlook on such problems is partly determined by his doctrine of the Christian life as a whole.

It is difficult, on a first reading of Calvin, to see how some aspects of his teaching on the Christian life can be reconciled with others aspects. At times he seems to speak with a great breadth of outlook, at times he is most "narrow" in his pronouncements; at times he seems to advocate a way of living and an attitude very much absorbed in this present world and its problems, at other times he seems to advocate extreme "other-worldliness"; at times he writes as if he were a man full of optimism about the victory and joy of the life lived for Christ in this world, at other times he describes the Christian life as if it had little else but labour, tears, misunderstanding and disappointment to offer the follower of Christ; at times he seems to say emphatically that there is no other rule of life to be applied to the problems of living except to follow Jesus Christ crucified and risen as He calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, at other times he seems to depart from such a rule and to appeal for a life lived according to the natural order and general ethical principles.

It seemed, at first therefore, an impossible task to give to each aspect of Calvin's teaching its due place within a systematic treatment of the Christian life. Yet it became possible to work towards this end, when the Christian life was viewed as the outcome of our participation in the sanctification of Christ, when the life, death and resurrection of Christ are interpreted as His course of self-sanctification, when the nature and extent both of our participation in the death of Christ and in His resurrection are
properly understood, and when Calvin's constant appeal to the order of nature is viewed in the light of the new and true order which Christ has already established in bringing in the Kingdom of God and renewing the image of God within the present creation.

This involves viewing the Christian life now in one aspect and now in another very different aspect. Such a process has inevitably involved a certain amount of apparent repetition. It has necessitated a treatment that is spiral rather than logically systematic, for Calvin's view of the Christian life, since it is centred in Christ's person and work, reflects the many-sidedness of the Word of God, and is bound at least to tax the patience of those who wish for everything to be neatly and logically defined and arranged.
The following editions of Calvin's works have been used:

Ioannis Calvini Opera - Corpus Reformatorum (edited by C. Paum, E. Cunitz and F. Pauss, Brunswick 1863 ff). This edition is referred to throughout as C.C.

Institutio Christianae Religionis (edited by A. Tholuck, Berlin 1846)
Ioannis Calvini - Opera Omnia (Amsterdam 1667 ff.)
Calvin's Institutes and Commentaries (Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh 1843 ff.)

Johannes Calvin - Predigten über das 2 Buch Samuels (edited by Hanns Rückert, Neukirchen 1936)

The following works have also been consulted:

T.F. Torrance - Calvin's Doctrine of Man (London 1949)
                   Royal Priesthood (Edinburgh 1955)
                   Kingdom and Church (Edinburgh 1956)

T.H.L. Parker - The Oracles of God (London 1947)
                   The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Edinburgh 1962)

J.F. Jansen - Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ (London 1955)

W. Niesel - Die Theologie Calvins (Munich 1938)
              Calvins Lehre von Abendmahl (Munich 1930)

F. Brunner - Vom Glauben bei Calvin (Tubingen 1926)

W. Kolfhaus - Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin (1939)

A. Göhler - Calvins Lehre von der Heiligung (Munich 1934)

E. Mühlaupt - Die Predigt Calvins (Berlin 1931)

J. Beckmann - Vom Sakrament bei Calvin (Tubingen 1926)

H. Engelland - Gott und Mensch bei Calvin (Munich 1934)
W.A. Hauck  -  Die Erwählten  
               Calvin und die Rechtfertigung  
               (Gütersloh 1950)

F. Wendel  -  Calvin, Sources et Evolution  
               de sa Peneté Religieuse  
               (Paris 1880)

H. Quistorp  -  Calvin's Doctrine of the  
               Last Things  
               (London 1956)

My own work  -  Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament  
               (Edinburgh 1963) has also been referred to.
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PART I

CHAPTER 1

The vicarious self-offering and sanctification of Jesus Christ as priest and king

The language of the Bible about the death of Christ

Christ as propitiatory victim

The life and death of Christ as His consecration to priesthood

The consecration of Christ by the Spirit

The consecration of Christ as king

The royal priesthood of the Mediator
To Calvin, the New Testament interpretation of the Cross and the New Testament language about the Cross are as harsh and offensive as the actual historical event of the crucifixion itself. Therefore when he speaks about the nature and meaning of the sufferings and death of Christ, Calvin does not hesitate to use harsh and crude language. He often speaks in terms which, unless carefully interpreted, might seem to imply unworthy ideas of God.

Christ, says Calvin, paid the price of our peace and redemption, and the penalty of sin. His task in offering atonement was to "interpose between us and God's anger and satisfy His righteous judgment". In doing this He substituted Himself in our place, and transferred to Himself the guilt which made us liable to punishment.

(2) Inst. 2:12:3
(3) Inst. 2:16:10
(4) Inst. 2:16:7. Vide est, quomodo in vicem nostram ubique se supposuerit ad solvendum nostrae redemptionis pretium.
(5) Inst. 2:16:5. Haec nostra absolution est, quod in caput filii Dei translatus est reatus, qui nos tenebat poenae obnoxios.
In discussing the nature of Christ’s sufferings Calvin can speak of Him as bearing the vengeance, anger, or hatred of God, or at least the signs of such vengeance. Being accursed on the Cross He was "beaten and struck by the hand of God". In this way He appeased the wrath of God, and gave God satisfaction.

Such is Calvin’s language when interpreting the Cross. It is his language because it is the language he finds in the Bible. To him such language is so integral an aspect of the Cross itself that to allow ourselves to be taken aback by it is to take offence at The Cross itself, and to refuse to use it is to refuse to glory in the Cross.

It is true that Calvin recognises that such language, like all our human language about God, is "inappropriate", and thus inclined to be misleading. In speaking of the atonement he seeks continually to correct false impressions that might arise from the


(3) Serm. on Isa. 53:4-6, C.O. 35:624.

(4) Inst. 2:12:3; comm. on Isa. 53:5 & 10, C.O. 37: 258 & 263.


(6) When we read of God as looking down on earth to search out good and evil, or of the Spirit as descending upon men, we know that God does not need to look in order to see, nor can the Spirit ever be thought of as enclosed in any place or channel. Strictly speaking, therefore, such expressions are inappropriate. Yet they stand necessarily as the only adequate expressions we have for the spiritual events and realities which they have been used to signify, even though they only point beyond themselves to such. They "enable us gradually to form some apprehension" of things "which our reason cannot all at once comprehend". Cf. comm. on Ps. 14:2, C.O. 31:137; and serm. Matt. 3:13-17, C.O. 46:585-6. It is especially in speaking about the nature of God e.g. in attributing passions and even contrary passions and conflict of will to God, when
language he is using. In one sentence he can say unequivocally
that Jesus bore, as if in our place, the hatred of God; yet in the
next sentence he insists with equal emphasis that Jesus never was
hated by God. He insists that even in afflicting Jesus, God at
the same time loved Him. Indeed, even when he was enduring God's
wrath, Jesus could be no other than the object of His love, "For
how could He reconcile the Father to us if He had incurred His
hatred and displeasure"? It must not even be imagined that God
first hates us and then, being reconciled, begins to love us, for
as Augustine says, "He loved even when He hated us".

But though the language which Calvin uses in speaking of the

(6) contd. when strictly speaking we could say that God was not
subject to such things, that Calvin notes the necessary
impropriety of Scripture. Cf. serm. on Deut. 4:36-3, C.O. 26:216
il est vray qu'a parler proprement, Dieu n'a point des
affections diverses...mais ic treaty ces choses selon nostre
capacite; and serm. on Eph. 4:29-30, C.O. 51:648-9 Nous savons
gu'en Dieu il n'y a nulle passion; c'est aux hommes de se
contrister et se fascher; Dieu est immuable. Mais pource que
nous ne comprenons la hauteesse qui est en luy,...voilà pourquoy
il use de similitude; et c'est a cause de nostre rudesse. Cf.
also comm. on Matt. 23:37, C.O. 15:644; and on Matt. 21:37, C.O.
45:593-4.
(1) Serm. on Deut. 21:22-3, C.O. 27:700
(2) Serm. on Isa. 53:4-6, C.O. 35:623
(3) Serm. on Gal. 3:13, C.O. 50:210; cf. Inst. 2:16:11
(4) Inst. 2:16:3-4.
Atonement is thus inappropriate, it is nevertheless unavoidable. Even though we know it is liable to mislead there are no more suitable terms in which to speak about the atonement than those which the Bible uses when it speaks of propitiation and appeasement and substitution. Only by the use of such language can the theologian hope to unfold the true meaning of the death of Christ, and the preacher to convey a true sense of the power and relevance of the Cross to those to whom he proclaims the Gospel.

The background of Calvin's thought in using such language to interpret the death of Christ is the sacrificial ritual of the Old Testament. That is why the term "blood" is mentioned so often in this connection. Calvin thinks in the first place of Jesus as fulfilling in His death the role of sacrificial victim offered to God as a propitiation for the sins of the people. It is only as we interpret the atonement with such Old Testament patterns and analogies that we can find its true meaning. "That these things may take deep root and have their seat in our hearts, we must never lose sight of sacrifice and oblation".

It is true that Calvin can also speak of Jesus as fulfilling the role of a legal substitute who in some fictitious legal situation steps into the place of the accused in order to hear and meet the condemnation of the judge and satisfy the law. In this connection he regards it as significant that the crucifixion was preceded by a legal trial in which Jesus "sustains the character of an offender and evil doer" and is condemned by a judge to die

(2) Inst. 2:16:6.
unjustly and on the evidence of false witnesses, thus proving that He suffers for another's and not for his own crime. But Jesus did not die primarily as a substitute legal victim in a court of moral law, bowing before the necessity that one worthy man should fulfill the demands of justice in order that others might go free. He died rather as a propitiatory victim fulfilling in a unique way that cannot be deduced from any general moral principles a destiny and office decreed for Him by His Father. "The only end which the Scripture uniformly assigns for the Son of God voluntarily assuming our nature...is that He might propitiate the Father to us by becoming a victim".

But Christ in His death fulfills not only the role of propitiatory victim offered for the sins of men, but also of the priest who consecrates himself in blood to the service of the heavenly sanctuary in order that he might be fit to offer acceptable sacrifices to God. In the ritual of the temple the blood acted not only as a seal of the propitiatory offering but also as a laver to purge the defilement of the priest, who in his consecration was himself sprinkled with blood and thus

(1) Inst. 2:16:5.
(2) Cf. comm. on Exod. 28:1, C.O. 24:428. Ac certe non fuit penes totum humanum genus obtrudere aliquem Deo, qui se ad veniam et pacem impetrandam ingereret, imo ne Christus quidem ad Deum placandum idoneus fuisse, nisi munus subsidi patris decreto sibi imposuitum.
(3) Inst. 2:12:4.
cleansed before he entered the sanctuary. Moreover not only the priest but the whole temple and all the vessels were sanctified through the sprinkling of the blood. Calvin, reasoning from such Old Testament analogies sees in Christ's death the perfecting of His own self-sanctification to His eternal priesthood on our behalf. The crowning feature of this infinite love shown in the incarnation lies in the fact that through putting on our human nature, He who could not be subject to death nevertheless becomes capable of dying, and of offering Himself in death. The human nature which He assumed was the temple which He Himself sanctified through His blood and in which He consecrated Himself through death in order, as eternal High Priest, to offer Himself in expiation of our sins. Calvin translates \( \textit{τελιωθεὶς} \) in Heb. 5:9 by "having been sanctified" and links this verse up with John 17:19 ("For their sakes I sanctify myself...") to prove that the sufferings of Christ are to be regarded as His initiation into His eternal priesthood, and His death in enduring the cross as a "a solemn kind of consecration".

The self-consecration of Christ to His eternal priesthood

(1) Comm. on Exod. 23:16, C.O. 24:433 \textit{Ita Christi sacerdotium sanguine dicatum fuit, ut ad nos Deo reconciliandos efficax esset.}


(4) Comm. on Heb. 5:9, C.O. 55:64. \textit{Finis ultimus vel remotior (ut vocant) cur pati Christum nessesse fuerit: nempe quod in suum sacerdotium hoc modo fuit inauguratus. Ac si deceret apostolus, crucis tolerantiam et mortem solenne fuisse consecrationis genus in Christo.... Sanctificatus melius quadrat contextui, quam perfectus.}
took place not only during His death but throughout His whole life. Christ effected the reconciliation between God and man not only through His death but through the "whole course of His obedience". He declared even at His Baptism that righteousness was being fulfilled in His submission there and then to the will of His Father. He did not only die to redeem us from the curse of the law but was born to do so.

Therefore though it may be right to ascribe salvation "peculiarly and appropriately" (quasi peculiare ac proprium) to His death, He nevertheless from the moment of His birth began to pay the cost of our redemption. Likewise though the "highest illustration" of the sanctification by which we are reconciled to the Father belongs to the death of Christ, nevertheless His sanctification was effected throughout His whole life.

It is when we consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the vicarious sanctification of Jesus Christ that we are able to see most clearly the significance of His earthly life in this same connection. The sanctification of Jesus for His task as Mediator in His life and death is the work of the Spirit. In the Old Testament the priest, the tabernacle and its appendages, were consecrated by being anointed with oil as well as by being sprinkled with the blood of sacrifice. The oil was a type of

(2) Ibid.
the Spirit, and the unction was a sign of the sanctification of the priest by the Spirit for his office. All this was in figure and type. Christ however was the true tabernacle of God whose body was the temple of Deity, and the true high priest whose consecration in reality took place not with oil but with the Spirit. Thus Jesus was consecrated by the fullness of gifts bestowed upon Him through the Holy Spirit to be the Mediator between God and man.

It was the consecration of Jesus in His human life by the unction of the Spirit that enabled Him to offer Himself to God in sacrifice. It was His consecration as Priest by the Spirit that made Him acceptable to God. Calvin interprets Heb. 9:14 as meaning that Christ "suffered by the Spirit" and that otherwise His death would not have been efficacious to appease God.

(5) Comm. on Exod. 28:42, C.O. 24:435. Quomodo haec inter se consentiunt, unctum fuisse ut per spiritum se offerret, offerri tamen ab alio?
Christ in His life and death fulfilled the Mediatoral office not only of Priest but also of King. His consecration to His eternal priesthood was also His consecration to become the eternal King and Head of the Church His body. He assumed our flesh not only that in it He might offer Himself as a sacrifice but also that in it He might become our triumphant champion in warring to death with sin. In our flesh He destroyed those things that held us in bondage and fear. As our substitute and representative He engaged "at close quarters with the powers of Hell and the terrors of eternal death, and having delivered Himself, as it were, into the power of those things that held us down, and yet were powerless to hold Him, He broke through their power and proved Himself victor.

Calvin emphasizes in many passages that in the person of Jesus Christ and in the one action of Jesus Christ both the office of Priest and the office of King in the Old Testament find their fulfillment and their true meaning. Under the law both offices were separate and distinct, and when each office was worthily filled, and both the Kingship and the Priesthood flourished, then the state of the people was happy, for these offices were like the two eyes of the body -- "the priest, a mediator between God and men-- and the King, sustaining the person of God in governing the people."

(1) Inst. 2:12:3.
(2) Inst. 2:16:11.
But in Christ both offices are united in the same person. He is both priest and king at once. Calvin finds this fulfilment of the two offices in one person foreshadowed in such passages as the story of Melchizedek, who is both priest and king in a manner quite unique in the Old Testament; in Psalm 110 where the One who has been seated in royal dignity at the right hand of God is addressed as "priest for ever"; and in the vision of Joshua in the book of Zechariah, crowned with two crowns, one a royal diadem and the other a sacerdotal mitre indicating a union of royalty and priesthood in the same person which could be fulfilled only in Jesus Christ.

It is in connection with the kingly aspect of the royal priesthood of Christ that his unction and sanctification by the Spirit finds especial significance.


(4) Ibid.

(5) Christ was called Messiah, says Calvin, "in view of the nature of His kingly office, still the prophetic and sacerdotal unctions have their proper place" (Inst. 2:15:2, cf. comm. on Exod. 30:23, C.O. 24:445). Elsewhere he looks on the office of prophet in the Old Testament as belonging properly to the priests who should have been ministers of the Word, (Comm. on Mal. 2:7, C.O. 44:437. A iure sacerdotii non posse divelli docendi munus) but since they neglected it prophets were raised up to make good their neglect. (Comm. on Micah 3:11-12, C.O. 43:334, Comm. on Zech. 7:1-3, C.O. 44:220). The prophetic office was therefore an extraordinary office, munus quasi extraordinarium (Comm. on Zech. 7:1-3, C.O. 44:220).
The "royal unction" of Christ by the Spirit consisted in His being given the Spirit "without measure" or in unlimited abundance and thus the fullness of all gifts and virtues in such a way that all His people may be enriched by drawing from His fullness of virtue and grace.

Calvin constantly reminds us that the gifts bestowed upon Christ in His sanctification by royal unction were spiritual, His kingdom being not of this world. This fullness of gifts consisted in all the virtues that resided in His human nature - His "power, wisdom, righteousness, purity and life." Calvin insists that these virtues must not be restricted to the six or seven mentioned in Isaiah 11:2, but should include the "meekness, chastity, sobriety, truth and holiness and the like virtues enumerated in other parts of Holy Scripture (2 Tim.1:7, Gal.5:22-3) and which filled the human nature of Jesus.

(1) Inst. 2:1b:5.
(2) Comm. on John 3:34, C.0.47:4-5
(3) Inst. 2:1b:4; comm. on Isa. 11:2, C.0.3c:235; comm. on Luke 4:17-18, C.0. 4b:140-1; comm. on Heb. 2:11, C.0. 55:28. Solidam plenitudinem sanctitatis in eam effudit Deus, ut inde hauriamus omnes.
(4) Inst. 2:1b:4-5.
(5) Comm. on John 7:38, C.0.47:181.
The sanctification of the Church in the royal priesthood of Christ

The "connection of the priest with the people"

The sanctification of the Church in the sanctification of Christ

The sanctification of Christ imparted to the Church by the Spirit
In several passages in the Old Testament such language and symbolism is used as indicates an exceedingly close "connection of the priest with the people" in the fulfilment of the priestly function in the temple. When the priest entered the sanctuary he had the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the two stones on the shoulders of the ephod (Exod. 28:9-12), and he had twelve jewels representing the twelve tribes on his breast-plate (Exod. 28:15-21). All this Calvin regards as of deep significance. It indicated that the priest "was not separate for private advantage but that in his one person they were all a kingdom of priests". This meant that whatever the priest did in sanctifying himself, in entering the sanctuary, in making atonement for the sins of the people, he acted in the name of the people and represented them with such close identity that it was as if the people themselves acted in his own person. "In the person of one man all entered the sanctuary together!"

(2) Comm. on Exod. 28:9, C.O. 24:431. Hinc sublata fuit occasio invidiae, quot populus intelligeret, unum hominem non discerni ab alius privati commodi gratia, sed in unius persona omnes esse regnum sacerdotale.
(3) Comm. on Heb. 6:19, C.O. 55:81. Nam pontifex non suo tantum, sed populi etiam nomine in sanctum sanctorum ingrediebatur... ut in unius hominis persona omnes sanctuarium simul ingredierentur.
It was because they were thus to be associated with their priest in his sanctification as with their King in his triumphs that Moses called Israel a sacred kingdom implying that they shared not only in royal liberty but in the sanctification of the priests chosen from their body.

This intimate connection between the priest and people in Israel is a foreshadowing of the way in which Christ identifies His Church with Himself in His work as Mediator. In everything Christ does in fulfilling the office of His own royal priesthood He acts as the Head of the Church His body and in such close association with His body that all His members are involved in the vicarious activity of the Head. So close and real is this involvement of the whole Church, the body, in the fulfilment of the royal priesthood of Christ, the Head, that we can speak as if what has been fulfilled in the person of Christ has really and actually already been fulfilled in all His members. "Language which is exclusively appropriate to Him is transferred to us in consequence of the intimate communion existing between the head and the 2 Members." Here in Calvin's mind we possibly have a relationship similar to that between the sign and thing signified in the

(2) Comm. on Dan. 7:27, C.O. 41:84. Christus...nihil sibi proprium usurpat, sed communicat nobiscum quidquid habet, ae in utilitatem nostram refert: ideo merito vocamur reges, quam ipse regnat: et quæammodum iam dixi, quod non nisi in solam eius personam proprié competit, ad nos transfertur propter communicationem, cuae est inter caput et membra.
sacrament - a mystery of sacramental relationship so close that the sign though distinct from the thing signified may be spoken of as identical with it.

Therefore as the Church can be regarded as having already triumphed in Christ's victory and as sharing even now in His glory and Kingdom so it can also be regarded as already sanctified in the once-for-all sanctification of Christ. "All the saints have a full consecration in the one offering of Christ", says Calvin, preferring to translate τελειωθήκεν in Heb. 10:14 by "consecrated" rather than perfected. Calvin therefore frequently speaks in the past or perfect tense when he refers to the sanctification or consecration of the Church, though he varies his phraseology. "We have been consecrated to God by Christ's death", Christ has "so to speak, presented us to the Father in His own person", or "devoted us to the Father with Himself".

Calvin, then, finds deep meaning in the text, John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth", which he seldom fails to quote.

(1) Ibid. C.0.55:26.
(3) Cf. also in comm. on Heb. 2:10, C.0. 55:28.
(4) Comm. on 1 Pet. 3:18, C.0. 55:264. Quid hoc sibi vult, nisi nos Christi morte ita fuisse Deo consecratos, ut illi vivamus et moriamur.
(6) Inst. 2:15:6 Nos secum patri dicavit.
whenever he speaks about sanctification. It is true that Jesus' self-consecration to His royal priesthood was in a sense entirely vicarious, unique, and something done in separation from the rest of humanity. It was nevertheless in our name that Jesus stood and acted before God. In His atoning and sanctifying work He acted not only as our substitute but also as our representative in the deepest sense of this word. In His person, then, we have indeed been presented to the Father in a full and complete act of consecration to royal priesthood. "Moses called your fathers "a sacred kingdom", writes Calvin paraphrasing 1 Pet. 2:9, "because the whole people enjoyed, as it were, royal liberty, and from their body were chosen priests, both honours therefore were at the same time joined together. But now you are royal priests indeed in a more outstanding way because you are each of you consecrated in Christ that you may be associates of His Kingdom and partakers of His priesthood".

The fact that we have been once-for-all consecrated as a royal priesthood in Christ can be the basis of the confidence with which we can continually approach God in worship and prayer.

and thus seek to live the Christian life. In making us a royal priesthood Christ has opened up for us an entrance into heaven not only symbolically but in reality. The fact that the blood of Christ is "always in a manner distilling before the presence of the Father" means a "perpetual consecration of the way" by which we can come to Him. In coming to Him our status is always assured. "The whole value in which the faithful are held by God depends upon the sanctity of the priesthood". Therefore no matter how polluted and sinful we may feel ourselves we can be assured that God accepts us and looks on us as those who have this royal and priestly dignity. Christ has sanctified us in order that our faults may not be imputed to us when we come before God. Christ in His priesthood is thus the pattern and mirror in which when God sees us He chooses us to be His Children and the "patron" under whose protection and sponsorship we can securely shelter and act in priestly capacity.

(2) Ibid. p. 129 Haec est perpetua viae dedicatio, quod coram facie patris semper quodammodo stillat sanguis Christi ad irrigandum coelum et terram.
But it is not enough merely to rely on the fact that we have been once and for all consecrated in Jesus Christ unless we allow that sanctification to be at the same time worked within us. Christ "has been sanctified, says Calvin, in order that we might be truly regenerated to serve God and walk in uprightness of life".

While we can rest with full assurance that all that is required for our perfection has been accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ, nevertheless He continues to perfect what He has already fully perfected, by working within us through the power of His Spirit so that the virtue of His death may produce its fruit within us. The fact that once for all we have been wholly sanctified in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, unfolds its true significance not only in our justification and acceptance with God, but also in the gradual impartation to us through the Spirit of the actual holiness which dwelt in Christ. "He consecrated Himself to the Father that His holiness might come to us; for as the blessing of the first fruits is spread over the whole harvest, so the Spirit of God sprinkles us with the holiness

(1) Cf. comm. on John 17:19, C.O. 47:385 Nos...patri obtulit, ut spiritu eius renovemur, C.O. 46:477
(2) Serm. on Luke 2:50-2 Voyla donc nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ qu'il n'a defailli en rien, tellement que quand nous oyons qu'apres avoir esté crucifié, il est ressuscité, qu'il est monté au ciel, voyla la perfection de tout ce que nous pouvons souhaier. Et nous avons aussi de quoy pour contenter nostre foy, et ou nous reposer seurement. Mais notons que nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ ne laisse pas encore aujourd'huy de besongner tellement par la vertu de son saint Esprit, que la mort qu'il a enduree pour un coup, produit son fruict et son effet en nos: sa resurrection nous profite à vie...Ainsi on peut dire qu'encores aujourd'huy le Fils de Dieu continue a parfaire ce qu'il a vrayment parfait, ouy pour l'appliquer a nostre usage, afin que nous en sentions le profit,
of Christ and makes us partakers of it. Nor is this done by
imputation only, for in that respect He is said to have been made
to us righteousness; but He is likewise said to have been made
unto us sanctification."

This inward sanctifying work of the Spirit is, however,
to be regarded simply as the impartation to us of the
sanctification which has already been worked out for us completely
in Christ. The Church can receive its sanctification only by
sharing in the one royal and priestly unction that was poured out
on Jesus Christ. Calvin insists on this point in many different
ways and places. God has made the human nature of Jesus which was
sanctified by the Spirit the residing place of all the virtues of
the Spirit which are required to transform men into new creatures,
re-created after the image of God revealed in Jesus.

(1) Comm. on John 17:19, C.O. 47:385 Ipse patri se consecravit,
ut eius sanctitas ad nos perveniret. Sicuti enim a primitia
benedictio diffunditur in totum proventum, ita spiritus Del
nos Christi sanctitate adspergit facitque eius participes.

(2) We cannot think or speak of the divine nature of Christ as
being sanctified, cf. John 17:19, therefore it is through the
human nature of Christ alone that divine revelation and divine
life are communicated to the human race. Inst. 2:13:4, 3:2:1;
Deus est, nos sanctificat, sed humanæ cuoque naturæ vic
sanctificandi inest.

(3) Serm. on Matt. 2:23 ff., C.O. 46:457. Vray est quand il a
vestu nostre chair, que rien ne luy a defailli. Car nous
scavons ce qui est dit par le Prophetie Isae, que l'Espritt de
Dieu a reposé sur luy, l'Espritt de sagesse et d'intelligence
l'Espritt de force et de discretion, l'Espritt de crainte de
Dieu. Bref, il a falu que Jesus Christ receust en sa nature
humaine, et vestist tout ce que nous pouvons desirer, et qui
est requis a nostre felicité: voire, et a falu qu'il receust
tout cela en perfection. And Comm. on John 17:22, C.O. 47:388
Everything that Christ possessed of spiritual wealth and virtue, whether as a gift from His Father or as a result of His own self-sanctification, He possessed not for His own sake, for He had need of nothing, but "to enrich the poor and needy". He sanctified Himself not for the sake of any personal gain that could possibly come to Himself but in order that the whole body of the Church, and indeed the whole world might be filled with His sanctity.

Calvin finds in the Old Testament ritual of the consecration of the priest an illustration of the way in which the sanctification of Christ is imparted to us. In this rite, the ointment was poured first over the head and flowed down over the whole body. So in the communication of His gifts to the Church Christ is simply causing the heavenly anointing which He has received as Head "to flow over the whole body of the Church".

The human nature of Jesus Christ, then, has been made the sole channel through which salvation and life and virtue can flow to the Church. A Christian must seek to find his true well being in Christ and not apart from Christ.

(2) Serm. on Matt. 4:1, C.O. 46:596.
(4) Another Old Testament analogy used by Calvin for this transference of sanctification is that of the consecration and blessing of the first fruits of the harvest being transferred to the whole harvest. Cf. comm. on John 17:19, C.O. 47:385; on Matt. 2:23, C.O. 45:103; on 1 Cor. 16:20, C.O. 49:545.
Everything that has been given to Christ in His sanctification is given for the very purpose of being communicated and imparted to the Church by the Spirit. In sanctifying the Church the Holy Spirit neither brings to the Church nor creates within the Church anything that was not first in Jesus Christ who now, seated at the right hand of God seeks to transfer His own virtue and gifts to the Church that it may be preserved and adorned and equipped for its task.


PART I
CHAPTER 3

The participation of the Church in the Sanctification of Christ

The mystical union between Christ and His Church

The Holy Spirit as the bond of this union

Faith as the bond of this union

Justification and sanctification as the twofold fruit of faith
We have seen that the power of sanctification resides in the human nature or flesh of Christ which has been made the dwelling place of all the fullness of virtue, and the channel or fountain from which we must draw, and can draw without stint, whatever we need for our salvation. It follows that our participation in the sanctification of Christ depends on our union with the human nature of Christ. Christ must "present Himself to us and invite us into such a relationship that truly we are united to Him, that He dwells in us in such a way that everything that belongs to Him is ours."

(1) See pp. 20-1
Calvin finds that Jesus' words in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, about the life giving and nourishing power of His flesh and the necessity that men should eat His Flesh refer to the power that resides in His human nature or body. Therefore he does not hesitate to say that the flesh of Christ itself has been "filled with the sanctification of the Spirit" (perfusa sanctificatignone spiritus) and that the flesh of Christ is the channel through which the power of Christ flows to His people, and the source from which we derive life. Cf. comm. on John 6:51, C.O. 47:152-3; and C.O. 9:30-1.

(2) See pp. 21-2
Or notons que non seulement Jesus Christ, entant qu'il est Fils eternal de Dieu, a en soy toute perfection de biens: mais en sa nature humaine... il a encore receu toute plenitude... C'est à fin qu'il en distribue à tous ses membres, et que nous puissions... de sa plenitude, ne craignans point que ceste fontaine tarisse.

It would have been of no advantage to us if Christ had merely died and risen again unless He had also bestowed upon us this "second blessing" of ingrafting us into His body and thus communicating to us His benefits. The unction which flows down from the head over the body is to be shared only by those who are members of the body. Calvin notes that in defining the means by which we are saved it is better to use the phrase in Christ rather than by Christ, for the former phrase has more expressiveness and force and denotes the union with Christ which is such a necessary part of the Gospel. In uniting us to Himself and making us His members, Christ dwells in us and He "not only brings Himself close to us by an undivided bond of fellowship, but by a wondrous communion which grows with us daily more and more into one body until He becomes altogether one with us".

(1) Comm. on 2 Tim. 1:9, C.O. 52:352; and on 1 Cor. 1:5, C.O. 49:310.
(2) Ibid. Nous ne pouvons communiquer a nulle grace du S. Esprit qu'estans membres de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ: and serm. on Tit. 1:7-9, C.O. 54:442. Il reste maintenant de savoir comme nous pourrons parvenir a ces vertus. . . . Il faut que Dieu y besongne. Et comment? Que nous soyons membres de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ.
(4) Serm. on Titus 1:7-9, C.O. 442-3 Car quand saint Paul veut definir en brief la fin de l'Evangile, et son vray usage, il dit que nous sommes appellez pour communiquer a nostre Seigneur Iesus, pour estre unis tellement avec luy, que nous y soyons incorporez, et qu'il habite quant et quant en nous, et que nous soyons conjoints ensemble d'un lien inseparable.
(5) Inst. 3:2:24...quia Christus non extra nos est, sed in nobis habitat, nec solum individu societatis nexit nobis adhaeret, sed mirabili quadem communione in unum corpus nobiscum coalescit in dies magis ac magis, donec unum penitus nobiscum fiat.
The nature and reality of this "mystical union" of the Church with Christ in human nature or flesh Calvin regards as one of the great mysteries of the Gospel. It is a real and substantial union by which believers living "out of themselves" thus live in Christ. By means of it Christ becomes "of one substance" with us and we become "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh." Yet it is at the same time essentially a spiritual union effected by the power of the Holy Ghost in such a way that there is no "gross mixture" of Christ and ourselves. Moreover this union is effected by faith alone and cannot be experienced apart from faith. Yet it is effected also by the Sacraments which are given to faith and which must be regarded as concrete and visible means whereby we are brought into this union.

The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were instituted by Christ in order to make this union continually effective in the life of the Church, and to impress upon us continually that this union is the source of our justification and sanctification. Since we are creatures who must see with our

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(1) Inst. 3:11:10, Cf. R.S.Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, Chapter X11.
(3) Inst. 4:17:3 & 5, comm. on 1 Cor. 11:24, C.O. 49:437.
(4) Inst. 3:1:3.
(5) Inst. 3:11:10, 3:1:3.
(7) Cf. R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament, especially ch. X11.
eyes and handle with our hands, the Lord's table is set before us in order that we may know that the ascended Christ is not separated from us but that we are so united to Him that He has nothing of His own which He does not wish to communicate to us. The visible signs of the bread and wine which we eat and drink, and which represent the body and blood of Christ show us how real is the fact that "our souls are fed by Christ just as our corporeal life is sustained by bread and wine".

As the Lord's Supper is a repeatedly given sign to us that we live by continually drawing life from our union with the human nature of Christ, so Baptism is a visible sign that we have really been once-for-all initiated into the mystery of this union with the body of Christ. As The Lord's Supper shows that God continually supplies us from Christ with the food which sustains our life so Baptism is to be thought of as the sign that we have been once-for-all ingrafted into the body of Christ or implanted into Christ. Baptism is a sign of our initiation into that "secret conjunction by which we grow up together with Him."

(1) Comm. on Ps. 51:9, C.O. 31:615-6.
(3) Inst. 4:17:1.
(4) Inst. 4:18:19.
(5) Inst. 4:17:1.
In discussing the mystery of how we can be so united to the human nature of Christ as to become "bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh", Calvin does not forget that in the Ascension Jesus Christ has taken His human nature beyond this earth to Heaven where it will remain until His second-coming in glory.

It is obvious then that the nature of any union between Christ in heaven and ourselves on the earth is such a mystery that it cannot be conceived by the human mind. Moreover it cannot be effected by any process, spiritual or moral or otherwise, which falls within the natural order of things.

It is therefore the Holy Spirit alone who can effect this union, for it is the Holy Spirit alone who can so join things in heaven and things on earth that heavenly things can be grasped by human minds and that the life and virtue of what is in heaven can be shared by those who are yet on earth. It is the Holy Spirit alone who can bring into real being that wonderful relation of mystery between Christ's heavenly body and His Church on earth.

(1) C.O. 9:72; 9:221; Inst. 4:17:26; sermon on 1 Cor. 10:15-18, C.O. 49:667.
(3) Serm. on Eph. 5:32, C.O. 51:768 Car...ce n'est pas que nous devions prendre ceste audace de penser d'approcher de Jesus Christ, comme si nous estions conoiants a luy de nous-mesmes et de nostre nature propre; mais ceci se fait en la vertu de son S. Esprit et p 769 Voyla donc comme par la vertu de l'Esprit et non point par ordre de nature, ni d'une façon commune, nous sommes des os de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ et de sa chair, que nous sommes membres de son corps.
which is so clearly depicted in the act of participation in the
Lord’s Supper and in Baptism.

The Holy Spirit has already united heaven and earth, God
and man, through the conception of the God-man in the womb of the
Virgin. But even this miracle by itself does not effect the final
consummation of God’s purpose to join mankind to Himself forever.
The miracle of the incarnation needs to find its completion in the
miracle of the incorporation of the Church into the body which was
assumed at the incarnation. This further miracle too is an
incomprehensible work of the Holy Spirit. In speaking of the
union between Christ and His people Calvin can speak, with
safeguards, of the Holy Spirit as bringing Christ down into the
lives and hearts of His people. He seems to prefer to speak of the
Holy Spirit as raising men up from earth to heaven there to dwell
with Christ and there to partake of Christ. He can speak of the
Holy Spirit as the link which binds us to Christ and also as the
channel by which everything which Christ has and is is derived to
us.

(1) Serm. on Acts 2:1-4, C.O. 48:634, Quand nous venons à caste
sainte table, cognissons cue c’est un secret qui surmonte
tous nos sens, et pourtant qu’il faut yci donner lieu à la
foy. Et que nous scachions cue ce qui ne se peut concevoir
par les hommes s’accomplit neantmoins par la grace secrete et
invisible du S. Esprit:car voyla comme nous sommes faits
participans du corps et du sang de Iesus Christ.


(4) Inst. 3:1:3. Huc summa reedit, Spiritum sanctum vinculum esse,
quo nos sibi efficaciter devincit Christus.

Inst.4:17:12. Vinculum ergo istius cojunctionis est Spiritus
Christi, cuius nexu copulamur, et cuidam veluti canalis per
quem, quicquid Christus ipse et est et habet, ad nos derivatur
From the point of view of the human subject, it is faith that is the bond of union between Christ and His people. Calvin speaks in most exalted language about what the possession of faith does for the believing man. By faith we "obtain possession of the heavenly kingdom". Faith enables us to put on the righteousness of Christ so that it becomes ours. Faith enables us to partake of the life made available through the death of Christ. But all this is possible only because faith actually unites us to Christ and inserts us into His body, creating the bond that enables us to receive, possess and enjoy Christ Himself for the blessings which are His gifts cannot be received and enjoyed by us apart from communion with Himself by faith. So much, indeed, does our union with Christ depend on our faith, that its depth and power is determined by the measure of our faith.

In saying all this about the power of faith, we need in no way take back anything that has already been said about the Holy Spirit as being the sole effective bond between Christ and those

(1) Inst. 3:2:1.
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:21, C.O. 50:74.
united to Him, for it is the "principal work" of the Holy Spirit to create in the heart of man the faith which unites him to Christ, therefore it is equally true that we are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit alone and by faith alone. Calvin uses the same language in relating union with Christ to faith as he does in relating it to the Holy Spirit. Faith, rising from the human heart, can penetrate the heavens. It can root our earthly life in the heavenly Lord, and convey to our souls the heavenly life of Christ as the root conveys strength to the tree which it nourishes. It can thus "translate into us what is proper to Christ", and give us a free participation in His benefits. It can enable us while living an earthly life to enjoy also a heavenly life, and while living in this world at the same time also to live in heaven.

Faith is thus an entirely supernatural gift - a new capacity created within man whereby what is in heaven is really

(1) Inst. 3:1:4.
(2) Cf. e.g. serm. on Eph, 3:14-19, C.O. 51:491. Iesus Christ habite en nous par fo...Il habite en nous par la /sonS. Esprit
possessed and enjoyed by him. It effects such a secret and wonderful communion with Christ that even though Jesus Christ remains entire in heaven, He is nevertheless grasped so firmly and possessed so completely that He may be said actually to dwell in our hearts. Therefore, even though the man of faith stands before God devoid of all purity and all good he nevertheless finds in Christ alone all the purity and life he needs, for by faith he possesses and lives by what he does not find in himself but in Christ alone.

Calvin, in exalting the power of faith, does not hesitate to add that faith has the power to reach through the humanity of Jesus even God Himself. He speaks of faith as being able to rise "from the flesh of Christ to His divinity" and as being able to penetrate "above all the heavens, even to those mysteries which the angels behold and adore". Faith unites man to God and makes God to dwell in man. It should be noted that the movement of faith in thus laying hold of what is in heaven and bringing it

(1) Serm. on Eph. 3:14-19, C.O. 51:491. Nous avons une union secréte, et qui est admirable, et par dessus tout ordre de nature, d'autant que Jesus Christ ne laisse point d'habiter en nous, combien qu'il soit au ciel...il habitera en nos coeurs, voire par le moyen de la foi.


down to earth is reciprocal in Calvin's thought, to the movement of the Holy Spirit who brings the heavenly grace of Christ down into the human heart, and raises our hearts up into heaven in response to His grace.

Calvin defines what we receive from Jesus Christ by faith as a "double grace"\(^1\), or a twofold benefit, the whole of which can be summed up for the purpose of theological discussion under two headings: Justification and Sanctification. "The whole may be thus summed up: Christ, given to us by the kindness of God, is apprehended and possessed by faith, by means of which we obtain in particular a twofold benefit (duplicem gratiam); first, being reconciled by the righteousness of Christ, God becomes, instead of a judge an indulgent Father; and, secondly, being sanctified by His Spirit, we aspire (meditemur) to integrity and purity of life."\(^2\)

Justification and sanctification together comprise a "twofold cleansing" (double lavement) giving both the purity which comes by imputation, given through justification, and also an "actual purity" (purete actuelle) which comes by the process of sanctification and reformation of life.\(^3\) When Christ insisted that Peter must be "washed" if he wished to have part in Himself, He meant by the figure of washing to refer both to the free pardon which is bound up with justification, and the newness of life which is the effect of sanctification.\(^4\)

Expressing the same thing in another way, "Christ

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(1) C.0.6:107. Cf. serm. on Gal.2:17-18, C.0.50:437-8.
(2) Inst.3:11:1; Cf.3:11:14. & 3:218.
(3) Serm. on Gal.2:17-18, C.0.50:437-8. Cf. comm. on Acts 15:9, C.0.48:347
lives in us in two ways. The one life consists in governing us by His Spirit and directing all our actions; the other in making us partakers of His righteousness, so that, while we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in the sight of God".  

Justification is "the acceptance with which God receives us into favour as if we were righteous". It is simply another word for the forgiveness of sins, for our adoption into the family of God, and our coming under God's paternal favour. Justification refers to our status before God, and it involves the communication of the righteousness of Christ to us by imputation in such a way that apart from any inward change of heart and mind that may have taken place within us, and in spite of the fact that within us there may be nothing but unrighteousness, we nevertheless really possess by faith once for all and at the same time the perfect righteousness of Christ as our own. Justification is thought of by Calvin as the completed step out of alienation to God into His divine favour and into His kingdom. This takes place at the moment when faith is created in the heart of man. Our confidence in our salvation and our final acceptance at the judgment seat of God must rest on the fact of this once-for-all justification which gives us the right to claim as our own the full and perfect righteousness of Christ.


(2) Inst. 3:11:12.

(3) Inst. 3:11:21. "Justification may be termed in one word the remission of sins."

(4) Inst. 3:11:24. Hinc et illud conficitur, sola intercessione iustitiae Christi nos obtinere ut coram, ut coram Deo iustificemur. Quod perinde valet acsi diceretur, hominem non in se ipso iustum esse, sed quia Christi iustitia impuistione cum illo communicatur, quod accurata animadversione dignum est. Siquidem evanescit nugamentum illud, ideo iustificari hominem iuro, quonian illa Spiritum Dei participat quo iustus redditur.

(5) Inst. 3:11:11
Calvin thinks of sanctification rather as the gradual process of man's becoming more and more in the course of time conformed to Christ in heart and outward life and devoted to God.\(^1\) Sanctification is the consecration and dedication of both body and soul to God.\(^2\) As Christ sanctified Himself in consecrating Himself to the will of the Father in the sacrifice of the cross, so our sanctification consists in offering ourselves to God as a sacrifice through which His will can be accomplished. Our sanctification is thus the fulfilment of Christ's presenting us in His own person to the Father in His sacrifice.\(^3\) Since such sanctification demands the offering of what is pure and holy, and since God's will leads us against the will of this world, our sanctification implies the renouncing of the world and the cleansing of ourselves from the pollution of the flesh.\(^4\) But only God can thus cleanse. Therefore it is God who sanctifies us by regenerating our hearts, by renewing us in every part of our being, by mortifying within us the lusts of the flesh which are so contrary to His will, by framing our hearts into obedience to His law, and by more and more making us outwardly Christian.\(^5\) Calvin can speak of all this as a very gradual process. It takes place "little by little"\(^6\) and sometimes only through hard discipline. Our sanctification will be

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\(^1\) Comm. on John 17:17, C.O. 47:385.

\(^2\) Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:1, C.O. 50:84. Ergo ut te rite sanctifices Deo, et corpus et animam illi in solidum dicare oportet.

\(^3\) Comm. on John 17:19, C.O. 47:385. Dicitur etiam factus esse nobis sanctificatio, quia nos in sua persona quodammodo patri obtulit, ut spiritu eius renovemur in veram sanctitatem.

\(^4\) Comm. on 1 Thess. 4:3, C.O. 52:161.


\(^6\) Cf. comm. on Rom. 8:11, C.O. 49:146.
completed only after death when we will be completely renewed and glorified in the likeness of the heavenly Lord. Yet even here and now the process, that is to have such a glorious completion, has begun through the inward work of the sanctifying Spirit of Christ. Calvin, when he wishes to vary his language, can use many other terms such as repentance, mortification, new life, conversion, regeneration, to denote exactly the same as he means by the word sanctification.

Calvin distinguishes clearly between justification and sanctification. It must not be imagined, however, that these could ever be separated in reality. They are distinct, but they can be separated the one from the other only in thought, but never in experience. They are to be seen in their indivisible unity with each other in the person of Christ in relation to whom no one could possibly experience one without the other. To try to separate the one from the other would be like trying to tear Christ in pieces. "As Christ cannot be divided into parts, so the two things, justification and sanctification, which we perceive to be united together in Him, are inseparable. Whomsoever, therefore, God receives into His favour, He presents with the Spirit of adoption, whose agency forms them anew into His image." No more than the light of the sun can

(1) Inst. 3:11:6. "To be justified is something else than to be made new creatures."


(3) Inst. 3:11:6. Cf. comm. on Rom. 8:9, C.0.49:144. Ac semper tenendum est illud apostoli consilium, gratuitam peccatorum remissionem a spiritu regenerationis non posse disliungi: quia hoc esset quasi Christum discerpare.
be separated from the heat which is given along with that light can we
separate between justification and sanctification. As Kolfhaus points out,
they are together the one and the same act of God towards us and the one
can be made neither the cause nor the consequence of the other.

Yet in actual practice the one always involves the other. The one
act of union with Christ which enables us to lay hold of the gift of
forgiveness puts us also into such a relation to the living Lord that we
become involved in an inevitable process of sanctification and ultimate
redemption from all evil. The gift of faith from Christ is always
accompanied by the gift of repentance. Faith, if it is true faith, will
grasp in Christ not only justification but also sanctification. "Let the
faithful... learn to embrace Christ, not only unto righteousness, but also
unto sanctification, as He was given us for both these ends, lest through
their lame faith they rend Christ in pieces." Faith hears in the word
of God not only the promises which engender trust, but also the commands
which compel obedience. It apprehends not only that God wills to receive
us in His mercy, but also that He wills to govern and direct all our ways

(1) Serm. on Gal. 2:17-18, C.O.50:438. Ce sont deux choses coniointes
comme d'un lien inseparable, comme la clarté du soleil ne peut point estre
separee de sa chaleur. Ainsi ces deux graces (c'est à sçavoir notre
justice et la remission de nos pechez) sont inviolablement coniointes avec
ce renouvellement qui est fait par l'esprit de sanctification.
(2) W. Kolfhaus. Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin p.60-61.
(3) Comm. on Ps.32:11, C.O.31:323.
(4) Comm. on Rom. 8:13, C.O.49:147. Discant ergo fideles non in iustitiam
modo, sed in sanctificationem quoque amplecti, sicuti in utrumque finem
nobis datus est, ne mutila sua fide eum lacerent. Cf. serm. on Matt.
3:1-2, etc. C.O.46:495. Il y a deux choses qui sont requises à nostre
salut: L'une, que nous cognosions que Dieu veut ensevelir nos fautes,etc....
Or la foy apprehende encore une autre chose en Jesus Christ: c'est qu'il
nous apporte l'Esprit de renouvellement.
and to reform our whole being.¹

Therefore though the act of faith which incorporates us in Christ is to be thought of as having a justifying virtue independent of any accompanying repentance or sanctification, it must not be imagined that such faith can exist apart from works.² Though we have here to distinguish justification from sanctification without confusion, we must understand the practical implications of the fact that each is merely one aspect of a twofold grace. We are justified for this very end — that afterwards we might worship God in holiness of life.³ Typical of Calvin's insistence on sanctification as the inevitable accompaniment of justifying faith is his interpretation of the meaning of the wedding garment in the parable of the King's wedding feast — a passage which could lend itself to an extremely one-sided emphasis on justification alone. "As to the wedding garment, is it faith, or is it a holy life? This is a useless controversy, for faith cannot be separated from good works, nor do good works proceed from any other source than from faith. But Christ intended only to state that the Lord calls us on the express condition of our being renewed by the Spirit after His image, and that, in order to remain permanently in His house, we must 'put off the old man with his pollutions' (Col. 3:9, Eph. 4:22) and lead a new life, that the garment may correspond to so honourable a calling."⁴

(1) Serm. on Matt. 3:1-2 etc., C. O. 46:496-7. Iesus Christ...nous est donne... pour iustice, et sanctification.... Ainsi donc non sans cause i'ay dit que la foyn seulement apprehende que Dieu nous est pitoyable, et qu'il nous veut recevoir à merci, mais quant et quant qu'il nous veut gouverner, et qu'il veut tellement reformer la corruption de nostre nature, que son Esprit nous gouverne en toute iustice.

(2) Comm. on Ps. 103:3, C. O. 32:75, Nam hi sunt gratiae veniae effectus, quod Deus nos spiritu suo gubernans, concupiscientias carnis mortificat, et nos purgat a vitiiis, verumque piae et rectae vitae sanitatem restituit.

(3) Comm. on Rom. 6:2, C. O. 49:104. Cf. serm. on Gal. 5:22-6, C. O. 51:50. Nous disons que Iesus Christ ne nous est pas seulement donne a fin que par son moyen nous obtenions remission de nos peches devant Dieu; mais c'est a ce qu'estans regenerez par son saint Esprit nous cheminions en nouveauete

The self-offering of the Church in thankful response

The sanctification of the Church in Christ involves the priestly self-offering of the Church

Such self-offering must be made with integrity of heart

It involves the total immolation of self

It sanctifies all our activity as an acceptable offering to God

It is a eucharistic offering arising from thanksgiving and love

It is also accompanied and inspired by fear and trembling

Both gratitude and fear must be dominated by a desire for the glory of God

This self-offering possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit
Though the Church has been once for all consecrated in Christ to participate in His Royal Priesthood, Calvin frequently appeals to men to consecrate themselves, echoing in various ways the Apostolic appeal to "present your bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service".  

Sanctification is not only a gift to be received, but is also a demand laid upon us. It involves not only participating by faith in all the virtue and grace which have their source in Christ, but also dedicating ourselves entirely to God in body and soul, offering ourselves to God in a true sacrifice of thanksgiving, yielding up ourselves to be conformed to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, renouncing the world and all our sins.

(1) Rom. 12:1.  
(2) Comm. on Rom. 12:1, C.O. 49:234. Hoc ergo principium recti ad bona opera cursus est, si intelligamus nos esse Domino consecratos... Itaque duo sunt hic consideranda... Primum nos esse Domini: deinde eo ipso sacros esse oportere, cuia hoc Dei sanctitate indignum est, ut illi quicquam offeratur non prius consecratum.  
(3) Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:1, C.O. 50:84. Ergo ut te rite sanctifices Deo, et corpus et animam illi in solidum dicare oportet.  
(4) Comm. on 1 Thess. 4:3, C.O. 52:161. Quid valeat nomen sanctificationis, iam alibi saepius dictum est, nempe ut renuntiantes mundo, et carnis incinamentis exuti, nos Deo velut in sacrificium offeramus; nihil enim illi offerri decet, nisi purum ac sanctum.
The sanctification of the Church in Christ therefore involves the self-offering of the Church to God through Christ. All this is beautifully and fully expressed in the prayer with which Calvin closes one of his lectures on Malachi 2:9. "Grant Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned to take us as a priesthood to thyself, and hast chosen us when we were not only in the lowest condition, but even profane and alien to all holiness, and hast consecrated us to thyself by thy Holy Spirit, that we may offer ourselves as holy victims to thee; O grant that we may bear in mind our office and our calling, and sincerely devote ourselves to thy service, and so present to thee our efforts and our labours, that thy name may be truly glorified in us, and that it may really appear that we have been ingrafted into the body of thy only begotten Son; and as He is the chief and the only true and perpetual priest, may we become partakers of that priesthood with which thou hast been pleased to honour Him, so that He may take us as associates to Himself; and may thus thy name be perpetually glorified by the whole body as well as by the Head. ---Amen."

The Christian man then, in all that he does, should regard himself as acting in the capacity of a priest, offering both himself and all his works and possessions in a sacrificial act of thanksgiving at the altar of God's grace. Frequently Calvin's phraseology in his prayers implies that the Christian man must strive to devote himself or "deliver up" himself wholly to God and to consecrate himself and all his members to the service of the Word of God.

"Grant Almighty God", that as thou hast made us a Royal Priesthood in thy Son, that we may daily offer to thee spiritual sacrifices \( (\text{spirituales hostias}) \), and be devoted \( (\text{sacri}) \) to thee both in body and soul.\footnote{1}

In making this priestly offering of our service to God we must remember that the acceptability of the sacrifice depends upon the consecration of the priest. Therefore no sacrifice that we can offer, even in the name of Christ, is pleasing to God unless it be given from a heart devoted to the praise and glory of God. Therefore Calvin constantly appeals for the wholehearted devotion of the self to God without dissimulation as a first condition of living the Christian life. In the story of Cain and Abel, the verse about Abel's sacrifice reads, "The Lord was pleased with Abel and his gifts". "He begins with the person", Calvin comments, and then adds "We offer first ourselves, and then all that we have" \footnote{2}

The basis of the Christian life is the willing sacrifice of the heart, apart from which all our good works and virtue is in vain. "For the virtue of the virtues, the source and fountain of all holiness, justice and upright dealing is that our aim is towards God, that we seek His honour, that we belong to Him, and that it is He who governs us". \footnote{3}

No one has emphasised more than Calvin our duty to serve God in daily life and in outward conduct. We must let God control not only the affections of our hearts but also our feet and our

\begin{footnotes}
(3) Serm. on Deut. 8:3-3, C.O. 26:609.
\end{footnotes}
hands and our substance. We must love our neighbour as well as our Lord. Yet at the same time no one could insist more than Calvin that unless at the same time our hearts are so reformed that we can serve God with a true inward motive proceeding from an unfeigned love of God, and with a pure affection, then any measure of outward reformation of life to which we may have attained even with the greatest effort is worthy only of being called a vain hypocrisy displeasing in the sight of God. It is not enough to abstain in outward conduct from lending our hands to evil doings and our feet to evil ways unless we at the same time purify our hearts from evil affections. In this matter of reforming the life in order to obey the will of God the heart must step out well in front of the feet and the hands, and must keep going on ahead.

Calvin uses the adjective "rond" to describe the heart which is thus devoted wholly to the service of God with no reserve of any kind. To serve God with all our heart and all our soul is to serve

(1) Serm. on Deut.5:17, C.0.26:333. Nous avons mal profité en l'escole de Dieu, si nous gardons seulement nos mains de mal faire, et que nos coeurs cependant ne soyent point reformez.

(2) Serm. on Deut.5:8-10, C.0.26:268. Nous sommes aussi admonnestez de venir à Dieu avec une affection pure et dritte, Car ce n'est point assez que nous ayons retenu nos pieds, et nos mains, et nos yeux de mal faire: mais il faut que le coeur marche devant, et que Dieu soit servi de nous en vraye affection; et ceste affection - la ne doit point estre contrainte: mais doit proceder d'une vraye amour de Dieu. Cf. serm. on Deut.26:16-19, C.0.28:283. Ce n'est point donc assez d'appliquer nos mains et nos pieds à bien faire: mais il faut que nostre coeur marche en premier degré. Car si nous servons à Dieu par force, tout cela ne sera rien.
God with "rondeur" and "intégrité", a quality of heart which Calvin frequently refers to as if it were the one virtue to be aimed at by those who would serve God well. To have rondeur of heart means freedom from all hypocrisy or double-ness. It means that there is no sphere of inward affection that is given over to the devotion of anything other than God, not the least secret regret at being committed wholly to God, and no hidden reserve of possible energy that could be put into any channel other than the service of God. It means, to use Calvin's own illustration, that there is no little hidden "back shop" in which a side line of business is carried on with secret customers—or to use a more modern expression, that there is nothing "under the counter" to save it from being thrown into this wholehearted sacrifice of heart and life to God. When the scripture describes Job as a "sound" man (Fr. entier) Calvin interprets this adjective as denoting this quality of rondeur.

This integrity of heart is a gift of God. It comes when Jesus Christ is allowed to reign without resistance or reserve or dispute,

(1) Cf. e.g. the following: Serm on Deut.26:16-19, C.0.28:284. Moyse ne parle simplement de l'affection; mais il veut que le coeur soit rond et pur. "Tu me servira donc de tout ton cœur et de toute ton âme", c'est à dire, en intégrité: que nous ne soyons point doubles, comme on en verra d'aucuns qui auront quelque belle monstre, mais cela s'escoule tantost: et puis il y a quelque arrière boutique, qu'ils ne serviront à Dieu qu'à regret. Il faut donc que le coeur se desponde devant Dieu, et que nous lui presentions nos pensees, et nos desirs, et que nous tendions à nous assuettir du tout à lui. Voila comme il sera servi et honore: voire, non pas à nostre guise, mais selon sa Loy. And sermon on Job 1:1, C.0.33:27.
for the Lord Himself seeks to possess our affections at their deepest level. Calvin notes that Job had not only "soundness" (rondeur et integrite) in heart, but also "uprightness" (droiter) in outward conduct, and from this combination of "sound and upright" he draws the lesson that wherever there is this true integrity of heart it is bound to produce the fruits of godly and upright conduct. The service rendered to God which arises from such integrity of heart Calvin calls a "spiritual service such as is commanded in Holy Scripture". Only such service is acceptable to God. Realising therefore that our outward members act only as they are moved by the heart, and that God judges our actions according to the disposition of the heart, we must begin all our efforts at reformation of life by making it our first aim to attain by the grace of God this inward integrity.

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 4:1-3, C.0.53:345. Que nous cognosissions qu'en premier lieu nostre Seigneur veut posséder nos affections et comme nos entrailles, cu'il veut là régnier et avoir son siege. Et ainsi mettons peine et efforçons-nous de nous nettoyer de tout feintise.
(2) Serm. on Job 1:1; C.0.33:29. Cf. serm. on Deut. 26:16-19, C.0.28:284. Si nostre coeur estoit du tout adonné à Dieu, l'exécutio survroit quant et cuant.
(3) As opposed to a service déguisé et bastard. Serm. on 1 Tim. 4:1-3, C.0.53:345.
(4) Comm. on Ps. 119:80. C.0.32:249. Hic autem pronuntiat spiritus Dei nullum placere Deo obsequium, nisi quod ex cordis integritate profectum sit.
(5) Comm. on Matt. 5:29, C.0.45:180. Si purus esset animus, oculos quoque et manus haberet sibi obsequentes, cuibus certum est nullum inesse proprium motum.
(6) Serm. on Deut. 10:12-14, C.0.27:35-6. Il faut commencer par le coeur. Cf. comm. on 1 Tim. 2:9, C.0.52:275. Guamquam ab affectu semper est incipientum. Also serm. Tit. 1:15-16, C.0.54:492.
This self-offering implies a readiness to go to extreme lengths in sacrifice, in conformity with the death of Christ. Christ, in consecrating Himself to His Royal Priesthood, offered Himself in death upon the Cross. In the same way our consecration of ourselves as Royal Priests should mean not simply a superficial dedication of everything we do to God, but rather the complete offering of our lives in face of the possibility that God's will for us might also be excruciating sacrifice. In this self offering we are not only priests but victims. "Grant", says Calvin in the prayer already quoted, "that we may offer ourselves as holy victims to thee". Since it is by Christ's death that we are consecrated to God, we must be willing to "live and die to Him". We must carry on life in our hands always offering it to God as a sacrifice, ready to retain it as long as He \textit{live} leaves it in our hands, and ready to yield it up to His disposal should He demand it at any moment.

To yield to God our life in this way, willing to endure whatever

\begin{itemize}
\item[(1)] Comm. on Ps.44:23, C.O.31:447. \textit{Sit haec continua nostra meditatio, bibendum esse calicemque nobis porrigit Deus, nec posse Christianum esse, nisi cui se in sacrificium Deo offert.}
\item[(2)] Comm. on Mal.2:9, Amst.Edn. p.588,615. Cf. serm. on 1 Cor. 10:15-18, C.O.49:670. \textit{Car aujourd'\textit{huy} nous ne sommes point seulement comme les Levites, portans les vaisselle\textit{s} du temple: mais nous sommes les vaisselle\textit{s} mesmes du temple, nous sommes mesmes les temples de Dieu, nous sommes les sacrifices.}
\item[(3)] Comm. on 1 Pet.3:18, C.O.55:264.
\item[(4)] Comm. on John 12:25, C.O.47:289. \textit{Nam hic legitimus est amandae vitae modus, si in ea manemus quandiu Domino visum fuerit, et eiusdem arbitrio subinde parati sumus ab ea migrare, vel, ut uno verbo dicam, si eam quasi manibus gestantes offerimus Deo in sacrificium.}
\end{itemize}
cross or chastisement He may bring upon us is "the sacrifice of obedience" that is acceptable to Him.

When the wholehearted offering of ourselves is made in a response of faith and gratitude to Christ, then the rest of life becomes sanctified as an offering also acceptable to God. When the heart is offered first to God in repentant sacrifice, then all the rest of our works can become sacred offerings. Calvin argues that when our hearts are purified by faith, then "purity is diffused over our works so that they begin to be pleasing to God".

There is no limit to the extent to which sanctity may be diffused throughout all our works and activities through the attitude of our hearts. Calvin finds a great deal of significance in the text in Zechariah 14:20. "In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar". He reminds us that inscribed upon the tiara of the priest were the words, "Holiness to Jehovah". This is the source of the holiness of everything else around him. The mention of the bowls before the altar reminds us that everything in the temple, even the candlesticks and the incense are sanctified through the holiness of the priesthood. The inclusion of the pots and horses in the sphere to

which this holiness extends reminds us that "nothing would be so profane as not to change its nature", and that the people of God, "whatever they ate or drank... would still offer a pure sacrifice to God both in eating and drinking and even in warfare".  

This means that in living the Christian life we must never forget that we are always priests consecrated to God and bound to offer whatever we do as a sacrifice. Whether we are engaged in teaching others in the Church, or in helping the poor or our neighbours, or in prayer, we must at the same time regard ourselves as offering therein a priestly oblation to God. Nothing that we do, however good in itself, is acceptable to God unless it is

offered in this way as a sacrifice of gratitude in response to and 1
in union with Him who has made us a Royal Priesthood. Nor must
we ever forget when we eat and drink and clothe ourselves or even
enter our homes that our use of even the mundane gifts of God must
be sanctified by the word of God and prayer, such things being
witnesses of His bounty to us in order that we might render
thankful homage to Him.

Our self-offering must be motivated primarily by gratitude. It
is not in any sense propitiatory, but is a eucharistic offering in
praise and gladness. In consecrating ourselves to God in all our
activity we must remember that it is only through Christ's self-
consecration of Himself and Christ's propitiatory offering of
Himself that we have been made a Royal Priesthood, and are worthy
to offer anything to God. Therefore in making our offering of
ourselves and our activity we have "no other altar but Christ".

(1) Serm. on Deut.8:3-9, C.O.26:609. Car un homme pourra estre
chaste, il pourra s'abstenir de toute injure, de toute
fraude et nuisance...mais cependant ce ne sera rien sinon
cu'il rapporte tout à ceste fin, c'est de se dedier à Dieu
en sacrifice.
(2) Serm. on Deut.20:2-9, C.O.27:607-8, on 1 Cor.10:15-18, C.O.
49:664, on Deut.2:10-14, C.O. 611, 617-8.
Of comm. in loc. C.O.
In the offering which we ourselves make, relying on the sacrifice of Christ, we must have no thought of fulfilling any imperious demand or of winning anything from God in return. Our Christian life therefore must be a voluntary sacrifice offered not merely with right motive and intention but also with a real gladness which arises from the love we have for Him to whom our self-offering is made.

God's glory shines forth most in His free and spontaneous grace. Therefore the response of man to such grace must be a voluntary and spontaneous response of the heart in love. It is only through such spontaneity that all the affections of the heart in true rondeur and integrity can be given to God. In a response compelled by force or fear alone something would be kept back in reserve. Therefore gratitude enables us to give everything. God, therefore, seeks rather to win us by love, than compel us by threats. He wills that we should come to Him with a frank and 

(1) Serm. on Deut. 7:7-10, C.O. 26:525-6. David proteste que la Loy de Dieu luy a esté plus douce et plus amiable que miel...cu'il s'est decié du tout à bien faire, et à cheminer selon Dieu. Et ainsi donc pour offrir à Dieu sacrifices volontaires. Cf. serm. on Deut. 6:8-10, C.O. 26:267. Le voulons - nous donc aimer? Voulons - nous estre reformez à son obeissance pour prendre tout nostre plaisir à son service?


(3) Serm. on Deut. 5:8-10, C.O. 26:269. Il aime mieux nous gagner par sa bonté, que de nous retenir par menaces.
serene boldness and that we should take real pleasure in His service, 
Even when it is a question of conforming our ways in obedience to 
His law, such love must be our inspiration and motive, for such love 
is the meaning of the law, and true happiness can be found in 
conforming ourselves thus willingly to His will as it is revealed 
in the commandments.

Calvin therefore frequently seeks to incite his congregation 
to the Christian life by reminding them of what Christ has done for 
them, and shewing them how impossible it is that anyone should 
remain impassive to such love. Woe to the man who does not 
allow the goodness of God to overwhelm him and to constrain him to 
a complete surrender of the will and heart to God, and to inflame him 
with a burning affection to serve his Lord!

(1) Serm. on Deut.5:3-10, C.O.26:266-7. Jamais (di-ie) nous ne 

savons que c'est d'observer la Loi de Dieu, et nous reigler 
selon icelle, que nous commencions par cest amour. Et pourquoi? 
Car Dieu demande des services volontaires, il ne veut pas 
seulement que nous le servions par une crainte servile; mais 
il veut que nous y venions d'un courage franc, et alegre, que 
mesme nous prenions plaisir a l'honorer. Or cela ne se peut 
faire que nous ne l'aimions. Ainsi notons que le commencement 
d'obeissance et comme la source, et le fondement, et la racine, 
c'est cest amour de Dieu, que nous ne soyons point forcez de 
venir a lui, mais que nous y prenions nostre plaisir singulier: 
cognissant aussi que c'est nostre vraye beatitude, et que nous 
ne demandions sinon d'estre gouvernez selon sa volonté, et d'y 
estre du tout conformez. Cf. serm. on Deut.10:12-14, CO 27:37. 
Serm. on Isa.53:9-10, C.O.35:653. Voyla Jesus Christ, le Fils 
unique de Dieu, qui est emprisonné, et nous sommes delivrez: 
il est condamné, et nous sommes absous: il est exposé à toutes 
vergongnes, et nous sommes establis en honneur: il est descendu 
aux abysmes D'enfer, et l'ouverture nous est faite au Royaume 
des Cieux. Quand donc nous oyons toutes ces choses, est-il 
cuestion de nous tenir endormis, nous plaire, et nous flatter 
en nos vices?

(2) Serm. on Deut.10:12-14. C.O.27:33. Puis donc que nostre Dieu 

nous traitte si humainement, quelle ingratitude sera-ce quand 
ous ngviendrons nous ranger a lui entoute obeissance?...Malheur 
donc, et double malheur, quand nous ne serons point veincus 

Since our self-offering involves making a solemn and total sacrifice of all that we have and are, Calvin does not forget that in the fulfilment of our Royal Priesthood we must be inspired by fear and trembling as well as by love and gratitude.

There is a "servile and constrained fear" of God such as the wicked have who dread and flee from the judgment of God which they cannot escape, and such as those have who serve God because they fear damnation. Such servile fear is cast out of the heart by faith and love. There is, however, a true fear of God which must arise and must remain in the human heart whenever God draws near to man in redeeming grace. This fear Calvin also calls"reverence".

In contrast to the servile fear which drives us from God, this fear rather inspires us in our trembling to submit ourselves to God in subjection to His will. Calvin describes it in the Institutes as

(2) Serm. on Deut.6:4-9, C.O.26:440, and in Deut.3:3-9, C.O.26:609
(3) Serm. on Luke 1:11-15, C.O.46:29. Ainsi quand nous avons cela, que Dieu nous aime, qu'il nous est favorable, voyla toute crainte qui est facilement deschassee de nous. Non pas que n'ayons quelque crainte...Notons bien donc que nous ne pouvons pas estre vides de toute crainte. Encore que Dieu nous testifie qu'il sera nostre pere, et qu'il nous propose sa grace si doucement que rien plus, encore est-il impossible que nous ne le craignions.
(4) Serm. on Deut.10:12-14, C.O.27:36.
(5) Ibid.
a "voluntary fear flowing from reverence of the divine majesty"; but more frequently, at least in his sermons, he insists that such reverential fear for God is inspired mainly by the mercy and fatherly love of God. It is important to note that for Calvin it is the apprehension of God's goodness, and of our utter dependence on His grace that should make the Christian believer tremble, and yet even in and through his trembling draw him dearer to God.

Fear and gratitude are thus inseparable as the motives by which we live our Christian lives. Since our fear of God is inspired by God's goodness and fatherhood, it follows that it is always mixed with love towards God. Reverence for God unaccompanied by love towards Him would immediately turn into the servile fear which drives men away from God rather than towards Him, or it could turn to a hatred which desires to dethrone God. It is equally true to

(1) Inst. 1:4:4. (see above)
(2) Serm. on Deut. 6:4-9, C.0.26:440. D'autant que le Seigneur a esté pitoyable, et qu'on l'a gorneu doux et benin, voilé pourquoi il a esté craint et redouté... Il faut que nous ayons cogneu la misericorde de Dieu... ou jamais nous ne pourrons craindre, ni approcher de luy pour le servir. Serm. on Deut. 8:3-9, C.0.26:609. Il entend la reverence que nous luy portons, non seulement comme á nostre maistre mais comme á nostre pere.
(3) Serm. on Matt.3:9-10 etc. C.0.46:543. Et en estions nous dignes? Non: et pourtant apprenons de cheminer en crainte et sollicitude, et cognoissons que tout ainsi que Dieu a desployé sur nous une telle bonté, c'est bien raison que nous cognoissions que nous tenions tout de luy; et le cognoissant, que nous tremblions sous son Empire, cue nous ne levions point les cornes, et n'avons nulle presomption.
(4) Serm. on Deut. 10:12-14, C.0.27:37. Ceste reverence-la demande aussi bien l'amour. Car Dieu veut estre honore d'une affection cordiale. Si nous adorons sa maisté, et cependant qu'elle nous soit terrible, et que nous soyons effrayez: nous voudrions qu'il ne fust plus Dieu, pour l'arracher de son siege s'il nous estoit possible... Ainsi il est impossible que nous craignions Dieu sinon en l'aimant, ie ci que nous luy portions une reverence droite, et nous soyons affectionnez envers luy, et que nous sentions quelle est
say that there cannot be true love and service of God unless true fear of God is also present in the heart of the one who professes to love and serve. Calvin underlines the plea of Moses that God desires to be served and honoured and also loved. Such reverence and love must always be joined together in service. Without the one, the other cannot be genuine.

Both the gratitude and the fear which inspire our self-offering to God must find their true fulfilment and expression in one overmastering desire — zeal for the glory of God. It was for the glory of God that man was created, and God seeks always in the heart of the redeemed an ardent zeal to minister to His glory.

Indeed, "there is no part of our life, and no action so minute that it ought not to be directed to the glory of God". And in the more mundane actions of life such as eating and drinking it becomes all the more necessary to think of God and to relate our activity consciously to His name and His glory, that we might not sin against

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1 sa bonté, et que c'est là qu'il nous faut chercher tout nostre bien. Si donc nous n'avons ceste amour, la reverence aussi sera nulle, elle sera aeneantie.

2 Serm. on Deut.6:3-15, C.O.26:458. La crainte donc va en premier lieu;...Sachons que Dieu n'acceptera nul service de nous, sinon devant toutes choses nous avons appris de le craindre; c'est à dire, de luy porter une telle reverence, que nous demandions de luy obeir.

3 Serm. on Deut.10:12-14, C.O.27:36.

4 Serm on Job 1:5. (CR le principal est, qu'il nous faut regarder comme nous avons à glorifier Dieu en toute nostre vie; car voila aussi pourquoi nous sommes creez, et que nous vivons Quand donc nous voudrons que nostre vie soit approuvee de Dieu, que nous tendions tousjours à ce but-la, qu'il soit benit et glorifie de nous, et que nous ayons un tele zele et une affection ardenté de servir à sa gloire.

Him by doing anything without such an end in view. If we can become consciously concerned to maintain and expand the glory and honour of earthly causes and earthly rulers when we are called upon to do so, we should be far more concerned with maintaining, even if it had to be only in language, the glory of our heavenly king, and such concern should give real meaning to the confession and praise of His name in public worship - a practice which can otherwise seem a trifling matter.

This desire for the glory of God should be so intense that it should turn to anguish of heart when the honour of God is wounded. It ought so to consume us that, as in the example of our Lord Himself, no amount of suffering will make us shrink from maintaining it. All human relationships, however precious and near must be renounced, if in maintaining them we are in any way

(1) Cf. sermon on Job 1:2-5, C.O. 33:41-42.
(2) Comm. on Matt. 10:32, C.O. 45:291. Porro Christi confessio, etsi a majori hominum parte, quasi res levis negligitur, hic temen in precipuo Dei cultu et singulare Pietatis exercitio censetur, et merito. Nam si terreni rege pro gloriae suae amplitudine tuenda et amplitudine opibus subditos suos ad arma vocant, cur non lingua saltem asserent fideles coelestis regis sui gloriarn?
(3) Serm. on Job 2:7-10, C.O. 33:125. Ainsi donc Job n'a peu souffrir de tel blasphemes, comme aussi il est dit au Pseuma (69:10), que le zele de la maison de Dieu nous doit ronger le coeur; et nous doit consumer, et l'opprobre cu on luy fait doit revenir sur nous: qu'il fait que nous voyons angoissez en cela, quand nous voyons que l'honneur de Dieu est blessé.
allied with those who are against the Lord. All our desires for personal ends, no matter how good and noble these ends may be, must be entirely subordinated to this desire for the glory of God. We must subordinate to this all-consuming aim not only the desire for our own safety, but also the desire for our sanctification. Even our concern for our own salvation must never become of such importance to us that we forget that all that matters in this world and the next is the glory of God. Why should all the world not perish, including ourselves, rather than that the name of God should be brought to dishonour? It is right indeed, that a man should have an anxious concern over the salvation of his own soul,

1 Serm. on Gal. 5:11-14, C.0.51:13. Quando les hommes bataillent contre Dieu, qu'il nous soit recommande par dessus toutes choses que sa gloire nous soit recoindue pour ses enfans, c'est pour le moins que sa gloire nous soit recommandee par dessus toutes choses.

2 Comm. on Ps. 109:26, C.0.32:157. Quod diligenter notandum est, quia et si cupimus omnes Dei manu servari, tamen centesimus quisque scopum illustrandae Dei gloriae sibi proponit. Atqui eum pluris esse nobis decebat, quam propriam salutem: etsi ordine praecellit.

3 Comm. on Eph. 1:4, C.0.51:147. Gloria Dei summus est finis, cui nostra sanctificatio subordinatur.

4 Serm. on Deut. 9:15-21, C.0.26:683-4. Nous devons preferer la gloire de Dieu non seulement a tous biens corporels, mais au propre salut de nos ames...Moyse se contente d'estre ravi en ce zele, qu'il aime mieux que lui, et tout le monde perisse, que de voir le nom de Dieu estre mocqu. Cf. serm. on Luke 1:21-30. Il n'y a ni industrie, ni sagesse, ni vertu, ni rien qui soit, qui puisse respondre devant la gloire infinie de Dieu, et qu'il faut que tout soit englouti et aneanti.
but he must never forget that his personal salvation matters only because it is bound up with the glory of God, and it tends to that end. Nor must he ever forget that the cause of the glory of God is at stake while his neighbour remains unredeemed and unresponsive to God's grace. A Christian must love his neighbour, but even to love our neighbour is not to be regarded as an end in itself. Such love must find its impulse in zeal for the glory of God. Indeed, any indifference towards the salvation of our neighbour is to be regarded as indifference to God's glory for our neighbour is His property and possession by right. Thus if we have any zeal for God's honour we will see to it that His possessions are kept intact.

(1) Serm. on Gal.5:11-14, C.0.51:13. Et puis quand il conjoint tellement sa gloire avec nostre salut, que nous ne pouvons procurer l'un sans l'autre, et même nous n'apporterons ni profit ni dommage à Dieu, quand nous serons les plus grands zelateurs qu'il est possible pour maintenir sa querelle: il n'a mille nécessité de nous: il ne faut pas qu'il emprunte nostre aide: mais il nous constitue ses procureurs. Et à quelle fin? A ce que chacun de nous cerche son profit non point de ce monde, ni des choses corruptibles: mais pour le salut éternel de nos âmes.

(2) Serm. on Deut.22:1-4, C.0.28:8-9. Cf. p.29. Or maintenant ie verray un ouvre homme qui s'egare, ainsi comme s'il estoit une beste perdue, et que Dieu fust frustre de son droit, que sa possession diminuast d'autant. Il est vray que nous ne le pouvons pas enrichir: mais tant y a qu'il a monstre combien nous luy sont chers, quand il nous a rachetez par le sang de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ. Je voy donc la possession de Dieu qui s'en va ruiner, et ie m'entien conte: cela est perdu quant à luy par ma faute; quelle excuse y aura - il?...Il faut bien que nous taschions de procurer que Dieu demeure en son estat entier, et que ce qui est de sa maison ne s'appetisse point; c'est à dire, de son Eglise: mais que le tout/soit conservé.
It must be emphasised again here that this wholehearted response in priestly self-offering is possible only by the power of the Holy Spirit and, indeed is the work of the Holy Spirit within us. It is by the Spirit that the blood of Christ the High Priest which was poured out in His self-consecration on the Cross is applied to cleanse His people, and that thus our sense of guilt is removed and access opened up for us into the presence of God. The Spirit thus "consecrates us to God". It is by the Holy Spirit that God unites our heart in integrity, gathering it to Himself, and holding it together in steadfast obedience. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that our minds and hearts are drawn towards Christ, and we are "formed" (formare) and made ready to yield ourselves to God. "No one is fit to offer sacrifices to God, or to do any other service (cultum) but he who has been moulded (formatus) by the hidden operation of the Spirit. Willingly indeed we offer ourselves and our all to God, and build His Temple: but whence this voluntary action, except that the Lord subdues us and thus renders us teachable and obedient".

(2) Comm. on Ps.51:9, C.O.31:516.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:2, C.O. 49:308.
The pattern of sanctification in the death and resurrection of Christ

The life of Jesus Christ as the pattern to which we must conform

The cross and resurrection as the main features in this pattern

Our conformity to the pattern depends on union rather than on imitation

The pattern of dying with Christ to be worked out both inwardly and outwardly
In his introductory remarks to the section on the Christian Life in the *Institutes*, giving the scriptural exhortations thereto and showing their superiority to any that the schools of philosophy could bring forth, Calvin writes, "Scripture... after showing us that we have degenerated from our true origin, viz, the law of our Creator, adds, that Christ, through whom we have returned to favour with God, is set before us as a model, the image of which our lives should express." Throughout his *Sermons* he frequently refers to Christ as the "patron" after which the children of God must be modelled (configuous) or to which they must be conformed (conformez). It is true that this word *patron* can in some contexts be used to signify "patron saint" or "champion" but its frequent use along with such words as "miroir" and "image" and "exemple" shows that Calvin more often means by the use of it to uphold Jesus Christ in His human life as the pattern of true Christian living.

(1) Inst. 3.6.3... *Christum... nobis propositum esse exemplar, cuius formam in vita nostras extrapolamus.*

(2) Cf. Latin *patronus* - a technical term for the name of the Roman under which a freed slave is adopted into citizenship.

The purpose of Christ in making us His disciples is that He might conform us to the imitation of Himself. For Calvin, the likeness of Christ to ourselves is the "main support of our faith". The struggle with temptation and evil in which the Son of God was involved through the incarnation was not of a unique character but was the same struggle in which each of us is involved by reason of our humanity. The circumstances of His human life were shaped to make His life so like our own that His example might be relevant for all our practical problems. Therefore we can confidently look to the example of the historic Jesus for guidance in the details of such problems. We can "follow His footsteps" knowing that He is our "leader and instructor" in the midst of the dangers and temptations that He had in common with us, and that His victory is the pledge to us

(1) Comm. on Matt. 11:29, C.O. 45:322 Potius enim...nos ad imitationem sui format.
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor. 13:4, C.O. 50:150 Quod si facimus humanam Christi naturam ita nostrae dissimilem, eversum est praecipuum fidei nostrae funementum.
(4) Comm. on Heb. 12:3, C.O. 55:172. Una enim haec cogitatio ad vincendas omnes tentationes sufficere debet, quum intelligimus nos filii Dei esse comites; et eum qui supra nos aede eminebat, voluisse ad conditionem nostram descendere, ut suo nos exemplo animaret.
that those who trust in God as He did will never fail.

Calvin fully realises the dangers of this doctrine of the imitatio Christi and is constantly trying to guard against them. There are many things which Christ did in which we should not attempt to imitate Him. "We ought therefore to exercise in this respect a right judgment." We must remember that we have to conform to Christ not in those actions that are the outcome of His majesty and the expression of His divine nature, such as His fasting forty days, or His cleansing of the temple, or His miracles, but rather in faith and patience and obedience the qualities that are connected with self-denial and cross-bearing. Moreover we must remember that we are to be "imitators not apes", and true imitation will consist rather in acting according to the spirit that moved Jesus to action rather than in an exact


(4) Ibid. "Christ's patience is what we have to imitate". Cf. Serm. on Matt. 4:2-4, C.O. 46:607-8. Or ce n'est point sans cause aussi qu'il dit qu'il nous faut estre configurez à son image, non point en tout et par tout, mais en ce qui appartient au service de Dieu, à la foy et patience, et à l'obéissance que nous devons à Dieu. En tout cela, ci-je, il nous faut bien estre configurez à nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ. Mais en ce qui est de sa maisté (comme le iusne dont il est fait yci mention) ce n'est pas à dire qu'il nous fale en cela conformer à lui: car autrement il nous faudroit ressusciter les mors, guerir les malades, donner clarte aux aveugles, faire marcher
les boiteux: brief, il nous faudroit changer les hommes, et muer l'eau en vin. Et où en viendrions-nous? Mais d'autant que le Fils de Dieu nous est proposé pour exemple, et miroir de foi, d'obeissance, de patience, et de choses semblables, voyna en quoy il nous faut observer qu'il a montré le chemin à tous fideles, afin que nous puissions marcher par les traces qu'il nous a monstrees.

reduplication of the details of His outward life. His washing of
the disciples feet should inspire us not to institute an annual
ecclesiastical ceremony of feet-washing, but to be ready always
to serve our neighbour. His cleansing of the Temple should
inspire us to an inward groaning zeal for the reform of the
Church and to a vocal demand for it to the right authority, but
should never make us go so far as to forget our place and take
action into our own hands. In seeking to imitate Christ we must
always remember the difference between Himself and us in calling,
station, and historical circumstances.

The main feature in the pattern of the life of Christ to
which we are to be conformed in our own Christian life is the
Cross. The life of Jesus from His infancy was marked by cross-
bearing, and involved Him in a straining towards His cross. It
is primarily in the pattern which He worked out in submitting to
His death and resurrection that Christ's sanctification is meant
to be the outward pattern of our sanctification. Indeed, Calvin
can say that in submitting to His cross Jesus submitted to what

(1) Ibid. p.310.
(2) Comm. on Matt. 21:12, C.O. 45:580; cf. serm. on Gal. 5:11-14,
le commencement nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ pour estre
Redempteur du monde, fust subiet à toutes povretez, et mesme
à l'opprobre du monde. Car il n'a point falu qu'il fust
seulement crucifie une fois, mais qu'il commençast dés son
enfance, et voyla pourquoi il a este transporté en Egypt.
was simply God's ordinary way of dealing with His people in this matter of sanctification. It is therefore principally in His bearing the cross and patient submission to His suffering that Christ as our Head is to us a "mirror of sanctity" and the example we are to imitate for God has predestined all whom He adopts as His children to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ especially in this matter of bearing the cross as Christ bore His.

Since we are destined to be conformed to Christ, we must expect to have to bear the cross as He did. What Jesus Christ suffered must be fulfilled in all His members. It is only right that the course which God has begun with Christ the first-born He should continue with all His children. If we expect ultimately to share in heavenly glory with Christ we must

(3) Cf Rom. 8:28-9 and Calvin's comm. in loc., C.O. 49:160.
(4) Serm. on 2 Tim. 1:8-9, C.O. 54:44.
(5) Inst. 3:3:1.
not be surprised if He allots us the same hard way of entering into glory as He Himself took. If our Lord's obedience had to be tested and proved in suffering, we should expect our own obedience to be so tested. Even though we need not all expect to die as martyrs nevertheless there is a conformity to the image of Christ in a sharing of suffering and danger that is common to all the Church through which disciples become "configured to their Master." Therefore since we are members of Christ, the course of our sanctification in living the Christian life must be the same "sort of perpetual death" that marked out the career of Jesus Christ our Head, a career in which we must never forget that in our case as in His what is sown in death will be gained in life.


(2) Serm. on Deut. 8:1-4, C.O. 26:590.


The pattern of our sanctification in Christ to which we are to be conformed is not one of unrelieved suffering and cross-bearing. The whole process of our conformity to Christ in His Cross moves towards the final goal of our being "sanctified with Christ in glory" and of being made conformable to His immortality and glory. Christ did not rise for His own sake but for ours and therefore in His resurrection The Head will not be separated from His members. He did not ascend to heaven in a private capacity to dwell there alone but rather that it might be the common inheritance of all the godly, and that in this way the Head might be united to His members. Nor will He come again to keep His glory to Himself, but in order to pour it out over all the members of His Body. There is a sense in which we even now share in the pattern of Christ's glory, for Calvin at times can speak of the new life which the regenerated man lives on this earth as a life conformable to Christ's heavenly life. But more frequently he reminds us that we are conformed to Christ's glory only in a very preliminary and hidden way.

(2) Inst. 3:25:3.
(3) Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:8, C.O. 52:363.
(7) See pp. 124 ff.
for it is only at the second coming and final resurrection that "instead of being pitifully full of infirmities as we are at present, we will have to be conformed to the heavenly life of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, then, we are to see unveiled the pattern of the glory which He will share with those who are united to Him. For He took our nature upon Himself in order that in it He might reveal our true destiny. The Holy Spirit who raised Jesus and thus exalted Him to glory retains always His power to do the same thing for our equally frail and perishing humanity. Therefore "in the person of Christ was exhibited a specimen of the power which belongs to the whole body of the Church". Christ in His resurrection is the pledge (rígnum) or example (exemplum) or living image (imago viva) of the resurrection in which His people will finally participate.

Calvin uses various terms in describing the conformity of Christ's life to the pattern of the cross and resurrection, and

(1) Serm. on 2 Thess. 6-10, C.O. 52:234.
(4) Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:8, C.O. 52:363.
(5) Inst. 3:25:3.
of our life to the pattern of His cross and resurrection. He
speaks most often of the conformity of the Head and the members,
but he can also speak in various ways of the "analogy" or
"proportion" or "symmetry" between the Head and members. It is
possible that his use of the word "proportion" in this context
Calvin means to emphasise that we are conformed to Christ on our
own level as He is conformed to us on His level. We are not made
equal to Christ in being conformed to Him, but what is begun in
the Head must be fulfilled in the members "according to the degree
and order of each". Here while there is similarity and even, in
a sense, identity, there nevertheless remains clear distinction
even in form and even distance.

When Calvin speaks of our conformity to the pattern of
Jesus Christ, it is usually in the context of union between the
Head and members of the body. It is within the relationship of
union with Christ that we are exhorted to imitate Christ as our
example. The conformity to Christ at which we are to aim is not

(1) Cf. comm. on Heb. 2:10, C. O. 55:27; Conformatio capitis cum
membrit; on John 15:10, Conformitas capitis et
memborum.

(2) Comm. on 2 Cor. 6:2, C. 0. 50:75. Verum scimus, quae sit
analagia capitis ad membra. (French edn. has Quelle
similitude et proportion ou conuenance). Comm. on Col.
1:24, C. 0. 52:94. Deinde non recusandum esse conditionem
quem ecclesiae suae ordinavit Deus, ut membra Christi
congruentem cum suo capite symmetriam habeant; also comm.
on Acts 13:36, C. 0. 48:303; Notanda est inter membra et
caput proportio.

(3) Inst. 3:39:3... secundum cuiusque gradum et ordinem. Nam ei
per omnia aequari ne rectum quidem assset. Cf. comm. on Acts
13:36, C. 0. 48:303. In the fulfilment of Old Testament
prophecies which apply to both Christ and the Church what
is fulfilled perfectly in Christ the Head alone takes
place in the members iuxta cuiusque modum et ordinem.

serm. on Isa. 53:7-8, C. 0. 35:639.
a mere "conformity of example", Christ being viewed "at a distance" from us and we painfully seeking by ourselves and in our own strength to shape our lives after His pattern. It is a conformity that is to be sought within a close union with Him who is the pattern, and that can result only from such union. "This conformity between the Head and the members ought to be always placed before our eyes, not only that believers may form themselves after the example of Christ, but that they may entertain a confident hope that His Spirit will every day form them anew to be better and better, that they may walk in newness of life".

It is because Christ lives and is powerful within us that we become conformed to His image. He is for us not only the example of righteousness but the cause of righteousness.

Calvin further teaches that our lives become conformed to the pattern of Christ's life not only as a result of the inward working of Christ in the heart, but also as a result of the providential ordering by God of the outward circumstances of our lives - especially of the afflictions and sufferings which are

(1) Comm. on Rom. 6:5, C.O. 49:106. Insitio. non exempli tantum conformitatem designat, sed arcanam conjunctionem.
(2) Inst. 3:1:3.
(6) Comm. on Rom. 5:12, C.O. 49:95.
our lot. The members of the body of Christ in union with Christ are subjected to a special providence which shapes their historical career and their ultimate destiny into a pattern similar to the pattern of death and resurrection worked out in the life of Christ. In this way, as well as through the influence of Christ in the heart, their lives become conformed to the likeness of Christ. Calvin can speak of a "twofold likeness to the death of Christ" as recommended in Scripture. We are to be conformed to Christ "in reproaches and troubles" as well as through inward renewal. God has predestined that all whom He adopts as His children should be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ especially in the matter of bearing the cross as Christ bore His. What Jesus Christ suffered in His person must be fulfilled in all His members. To this end God "trains His people in a peculiar manner that they may be conformed to the image of His Son". In every age the Church of Christ enjoying its close and mystical union with Christ has had its history shaped into a pattern of death and resurrection. "The Church of Christ has been from the beginning so constituted that the cross has been the way to victory and death a passage to life".

(2) Cf. serm on Job 2:7-10, C.O.33:121. Car voila à quelle condition (i.e. the bearing of the cross) Dieu nous a entez au corps de son Fils, ainsi qu'il est le patron general de tous fideles, comme S.Paul en traitte au huictieme des Romains. Cf. also serm on Deut.8:10-14, C.O.26:611; on 2 Tim.2:8-13, C.O.54:132.
(3) Serm. on 2 Tim. 1:8-9, C.O.54:44.
(5) Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:11, C.O. 55:217. This is a very special kind of providential ordering confined entirely to the sphere of the Church. Cela ne peut entrer aux coeurs des hommes, qu'il faille mourir pour vivre, qu'il faille par opprobre parvenir à la gloire de Dieu; car ce sont choses contre nature. Or tant y a que c'est la condition de l'Eglise. Serm. on 2 Tim. 2:8-13, C.O. 54:131.
In living the Christian life the Christian man must undergo in union with Christ a process of mortification of which the death of Christ is a type and example. The pattern of dying with Christ has to be worked out in our Christian life both inwardly and outwardly. There is an inward process of mortification --- a dying to self --- of which Jesus in His perfect surrender to God's will and His complete self control is the perfect example. But Christ not only mortified His self-will, He laid down His life on the Cross and bore excruciating physical and outward suffering in body and estate and reputation. There is therefore also for the Christian an outward process of mortification to be undergone in union with Jesus Christ. Calvin notes that though there are many parts of the New Testament such as Romans 6 and Colossians 3:5, where our mortification is clearly spoken of as though it were equivalent simply to the

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:1, C.O. 55:271...mors eius typus sit modo ac exemplar mortificationis nostrae
(2) See pp. 91-2.
(3) Cf. comm. in loc.
inward process of self-denial and renouncing the works of the flesh, nevertheless there are other passages such as Romans 8:29, 1 Corinthians 4:10, Philippians 3:10, and 2 Timothy 2:11, where Paul speaks of the Christian as undergoing not simply an inward conformity to Christ in His death but also a conformity in outward condition of life brought about through the concrete experience of suffering and consisting of such suffering. There are passages where to die with Christ means being actually brought down on the way to physical death, and to be conformed to Christ means actually to be made like Him in outward form before the eyes of the world in suffering and shame.

Our dying with Christ is therefore always twofold. Calvin emphasises this in different ways. He speaks of a "twofold mortification" (duplex mortificatio) one aspect of which relates to those things which are around us", the other aspect being inward --- a mortification of the understanding and will. He speaks also of a twofold likeness of the death of Christ (duplex mortis Christi similitudo) and the necessity of our being conformed to Him outwardly in reproaches and troubles, as well as

(1) Cf. comm. in loc.
inwardly in the dying of the old man and the renewal of spiritual life. He speaks also of a "Twofold fellowship and communication of the death of Christ" (duplex est societas et communicatio mortis Christi), the inward being the mortification of the flesh or the crucifixión of the old man of which Paul treats in Romans 6, the outward being the endurance of the Cross of which Paul treats in Romans 8. It is important for Calvin that we should not confuse the mortification of the old man referred to in Romans 6:6 and Colossians 3:5 with the mortification of the outward man referred to in 2 Corinthians 4:16. This mortification of the outward man takes place through loss of health, estate, honours and friendships and the blessings of the present life; the mortification of the old man being the inward mortification of the self-will and the flesh. Both forms of our mortification serve the same end. They make us conformed to Christ. Inward mortification, however, accomplishes this in a direct manner. Outward mortification is our indirect means to such conformity.

(2) Comm. on Phil. 3:10, C. O. 52:50.
(3) Comm. on 2 Cor. 4:16, C. O. 50:58.
In the words of Jesus, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me," Calvin finds a call to his twofold conformity with the death of Christ and twofold participation in the death of Christ. Self-denial is the inward or direct aspect of this twofold conformity and participation, bearing the cross is the outward or indirect aspect. Since Jesus Christ the Head has been made to trace out the way of self-denial and cross-bearing through which alone His members can enter glory, it now becomes part of the members to seek to conform themselves to the example of Jesus especially in these two particular respects. In this call to discipleship Jesus presents Himself to men as an "example of self-denial and patience," and excludes from discipleship any who are not "true imitators" (veri imitatores) of Himself. "He lays down a brief rule for our imitation, in order to make us acquainted with the chief points in which He wishes us to resemble Him. It consists of two parts, self-denial and a voluntary bearing of the cross."  

(1) Matt. 16:24
(3) Ibid. Porro brevem imitationis regulam praebibit, ut sciamus, cuæ praecipue in re valit sibi nos esse similes: ea vero duobus modis constat, abnegatione nostri, et voluntaria crucis tolerantia.
PART II  
CHAPTER 1

Self-denial

Concupiscence as the inward law of sin affecting all man's faculties

Self-denial as the mortification of concupiscence

The Christian life involves the denial of "our own nature"

It involves constant inward tension

Our own reason affection and will have to be renounced

The substitution of self-hatred for self-love

Jesus Christ, our example in self-denial

Our power to deny ourselves is the fruit of Christ's death

Self-denial, the work of the Holy Spirit
It is only if we first understand Calvin's teaching about the concupiscence of the human mind and heart that we can fully appreciate the place which he gives to self-denial in living the Christian life.

The human heart, as a result of Adam's sin, has become not only completely disordered in all its affections and purposes and faculties, and destitute of all rectitude, but it has also become possessed by an active principle or law of sin called concupiscence or perversity which makes it, in its natural state a positive and most productive source of evil, from which sin continually wells out even unprovoked as water from a fountain, or as flames and sparks are thrown up from a fiery and never dying furnace. It is this disease of concupiscence in the heart of man which perpetually sends forth desires and affections, each of which is an enemy of God within us. These stimulate and allure man to sin, prompt and incite him to lust, avarice, ambition and other vices, and throw his whole life into "violent and lawless

(1) Inst. 2:1:8, Non enim natura nostra boni tantum inops et vacua est; sed malorum omnium adeo fertilis et ferax, ut otiosa esse non possit. Qui dixerunt esse concupiscentiam, non nimis alieno vero usi sunt.
(3) Comm. on John 12:27, C.O. 41:292
(4) Inst. 3:3:10 Fatentur etiam, sanctos illo concupiscendi morbo adhuc ita implicitos teneri, ut obstare nequeant quin subinde vel ad libidinem, vel ad avaritiam, vel ad ambitionem, vel ad alia vita titellentur et incitentur.
movements which war with the order of God". Because of this "natural viciousness" of heart, man cannot keep himself from making a wrong and corrupted use of all the good and beautiful created things with which God has filled this world. He draws his material for pride from the gifts which ought to lead him to piety. Even that which is good in man's environment can now only incite him to an evil response and is bound to become a means of temptation, and even those ample tokens of God's reality and

(1) Inst. 3:3:12
(2) Inst. 3:3:11
(3) Comm. on Ezek. 16:15, C.O. 40:348
(4) Serm. on Job 31:1-4, C.O. 34:027-8. Si le mal n'habitait en nous ... il est certain que nous aurions nostre veuë pure et chaste beaucoup plus qu'elle n'est; et tous nos sens, comme l'ouye, le parler, les attouchemens, tout cela seroit comme pur et net, il n'y auroit nulle infection.... Or est-il ainsi que nous ne saurions pas maintenant ouvrir les yeux, que ce ne soit pour concevoir quelque mauvais appetit: nous ne saurions dire, Cela est beau, cela est bon, qu'incontinent nous n'offensions nostre Dieu; ne voila pas une grande perversité? Ainsi donc cognoissons... que nostre nature est tellement corrompue, que nous ne saurions regarder une chose que nous puissions nommer belle et bonne que nous n'offensions Dieu, au lieu que nous devrions estre sollicitez à l'aimer, et lui rendre louange de sa bonté.... Au lieu donc de glorifier Dieu, et d'este incitez à l'aimer et le servir, nous ne saurions dire, cela est beau, cela est bon, que nous ne soyons chatouillez, voire poussez ou à l'avarice, ou à paillardise, ou à autres voluptez. ref, tout ce qui est bon... cela nous destourne de nostre Dieu, là où il nous devroit conduire à lui.
goodness which have been left even since the fall in the noble theatre of this earth which should serve to bring man to the knowledge of the true God and of himself for the fulfilment of his eternal destiny, man can now use only as the basis of idol-worship.

When we seek to study the working of concupiscence in the heart, and to define it in psychological terms, we find that concupiscence works in the springs of man's being which lie deeper than the moral philosopher or the psychologist can probe and which are only revealed through the Word. Concupiscence must not be identified with mere lust or evil desire or appetite. Concupiscence is what brings forth evil desire itself. Calvin, approving of St. James use of the simile of bringing sin to birth in describing the working of concupiscence, finds three stages in the conception of sin. The first stage is an airy phantasy fluttering through the mind which may or may not be stimulated by an outside object. The next stage is a feeling of being drawn by desire towards the sin suggested by this. The third stage is when the will yields to the first desire through consent. Finally sin is

(1) Cf. R.S. Wallace "Calvin's doctrine of the Word and Sacrament", pp. 9-10
It will be seen that concupiscence for Calvin is something deeper than an evil will, something more fugitive and unformed than an evil desire, and though it is as closely related to the activity of the mind as to the will and the emotions it cannot be defined in terms of the working of the mind either.

Speaking of the extent to which man's life is vitiated by original sin, Calvin says: "Everything which is in man, from the intellect to the will, from the soul even to the flesh, is defiled and pervaded with this concupiscence, or to express it more briefly, that the whole man is in himself nothing else than concupiscence".

(1) Serm. on Job 31:1-4, C.O. 34:623. Or ie di, encore qu'il n'y ait point acte exterier, qu'il y a trois degrez en un vice. Le premier est une imagination volage qu'un homme conçoit quand il regarde quelquechose: il luy viendra en phantasie decay cu cela: ou bien encore qu'il ne voye rien, si est-ce que son esprit est tant agile au mal, qu'il sera transporté ça et là, et luy viendra beaucoup de phantasie au cerveau.... Il y a le second degre maintenant, c'est qu'apres avoir conceu une phantasie, nous sommes aucunement chatouillez, et sentons que nostre volonté tire là: et encore qu'il n'y ait point de consentement ne d'accord, tant y a qu'il y a là dedans quelque pointure pour nous solliciter.... Il y a puis apres le consentement, quand nous avons une volonté arrestée, et qu'il ne tiendroit pas à nous que le mal ne se fist si l'occasion s'y adonnoit. Cf. also Inst. 3:3:10.


(3) Ibid. Tenenda interim est illa distinctio inter pravas libidines, quae ad consensum usque pervenient, et concupisceniam, quae sic corda titillat et afficit, ut in medio impulsu subsistat.

Calvin emphasises that concupiscence should not be thought of as having a closer connection with the "inferior appetites" which induce man to sensuality than with the natural reason and will of man. Calvin admits that concupiscence can be spoken of as having its residing place particularly in the "flesh". "Flesh" in the Bible means everything which is natural to man or whatever man is born with. Not only the gross bodily activities which man has in common with the animals but also all the "higher" activities of affection and mind by which nature guides and directs man's life are "of the flesh", and are thus completely perverted by concupiscence. Calvin enters controversy on this matter with the doctors of the Papacy who tended to identify the works of the flesh with sensuality, and to have some confidence in at least the partial freedom of human reason from the blight of concupiscence, and he reminds them that Paul lists "ambition" amongst the works of the flesh, and looks on false doctrine as being due to carnality.


Concupiscence can work within the heart of man independently of his environment. The human heart does not need to be incited by any external temptation before the power of concupiscence stimulates it into sinful activity of thought, passion, and will. Concupiscence is an innate corruption which each man is born with by a hereditary law. Calvin did not fail in preaching to his own day to point to the fact that even young infants can sometimes show themselves to be "little serpents full of venom and malice and disdain," as an indication that the theological reasons for presupposing original sin in newly born infants are sound.

The natural tendency of human nature is, therefore, always to fight against God. So active even in the regenerate man does the "flesh" remain with its concupiscence that he must never allow his natural tendencies to have any serious part in the decisions.

(1) Serm. on Deut. 4:32-5, De nature nous sommes enclins à errer car encore que nous n'eussions pas les occasions devant nos yeux: chacun de soy-mesme se deçoit et se trompe: et puis le diable ne cesse de nous presenter beaucoup d'illusions. Cf. comm. on Heb. 3:8, C.O. 55:39. Quod tamen respuimus Dei vocem, id fit spontanea contumacia, non extraneo impulso.

(2) Inst. 2:1:6-7 & 11. Cf. Serm. on Matt. 26:36-9, C.O. 46:843. Les petits enfants venans au monde, combien que la malice n'apparaisse point, ne laissent pas toutesfois d'estre des petits serpens pleins de venin, et de malice et de desdain. Voyla ce que nous cognoissons estre en nostre nature, voire dès le commencement. Et comme nous sommes venus en sage, qu'est-ce donc de nous?

(3) Inst. 3:3:10, and Serm. on Job. 31:1-4, C.O. 34:028. Il est vrai que les fideles ne seront pas tellement pervertis, et n'auront pas leur sens tant decravez, de tousjours tirer à mal: mais tant y a qu'ils auront toiusours quelque relica de ceste infection qui est du ventre de la mere, c'est qu'ils auront des pointes au dedans pour estre induits à mal, voire combien qu'ils les hayssent, et les repoussent du premier coup.
which he has to make in shaping his way of life. Nothing could be more fatal for a Christian man than to give loose rein to any of his natural desires or thoughts or impulses. To follow nature is to go clean against God. To try to satisfy our natural cravings is to proceed to drown ourselves in an insatiable gulf. Man's natural tendency of mind and heart and will is to bind himself down in affection to this earth and thus to make it impossible for him to rise upwards to his true destiny in the Kingdom of God. The way dictated by nature is the way to death and destruction.

(1) Serm. on Job 10:16-17. Les affections de nostre chair sont autant d'inimitiez contre Dieu. Suivons-nous donc nostre naturel? Nous allons tout au rebours de la volonté de Dieu, nous n'avons point une seule pensee qui ne soit meschante et a condamner.


(3) Comm. on Rom. 13:14, C.O. 49:256

(4) Serm. on 1 Tim. 6:12-14, C.O. 53:595-6. Il n'y a rien plus contraire á nostre nature que de quitter ces choses terrestres et n'y estre point addonnez.... Il faut que l'homme fidele s'eleve par dessus soy, quand il est question de penser au royaume de Dieu, et á la vie eternelle.

To live the Christian life, therefore, involves self-denial. Self-denial for Calvin means the mortification of our natural concupiscence, and the denial of all the motions and impulses that arise from the "flesh". Through concupiscence the heart of man always tends by the bent of its own nature to shut itself up in self-love and to exclude the claims and fellowship of God and of the neighbour. The self therefore constitutes the first and most continuous and most baffling problem that every Christian has to face. The more zeal we have to bring our life under the domination of God, the more inner rebellion and contradiction to the will of God will be aroused within us by concupiscence. Our own nature affords us so much vexation and disappointment and such a wide and difficult sphere of conquest that we never have any need to

(1) Serm. on Matt. 3:1-3, C.O. 46:491-2 Venons à nous. Combien que nous ayons quelque zele de nous assubietir à Dieu, et que nous monstrions aussi cela par effect, neantmoins si est ce que nous sentons encore tant de cupiditez qui nous poussent et incitent à estre rebelles: il y a tant de contradictions, tant d'empeschemens qui sont cause que le Royaume de Dian'est point paisible en nous, que nous avons besoin de faire tous les leurs ceste requeste, que son Royaume advienne: c'est à dire que Dieu commence par nous-mesmes, qu'il abate ces affections meschantes qui contreviennent à sa iustice, et puis qu'il range les meschans, soit qu'il les reforme, soit qu'il les confonde et abysme du tout.
seek any other sphere of moral exercise. Our own hearts are the battlefield where by far the most fierce conflicts with evil are to be waged and if we can succeed in overcoming Satan in this sphere we will find no difficulty in overcoming him in any other sphere of life where we may encounter him.

The fact that the self-life is so closely identified with the principle of concupiscence which is natural to our "flesh" makes Calvin, especially in his preaching, describe the Christian life as a constant battle not simply with "self" but with "our own nature" whose affections and impulses tend always to lead us astray. To follow nature as we have it within us is therefore to displease God. We must mortify, struggle against, seek to

(1) Serm. on Job 4:7-11, Car quand Dieu nous envoie des afflictions grandes, nous concevons incontinent ce qui est ici dit à lou: il ne faut point qu'un Eliphas vienne pour nous tourmenter et pour nous faire accroire que nous sommes desesperes; il n'y a celui qui n'aie en soi comme une semence de despit pour se fascher et tourmenter en ses afflictions, voire pour s'etre en desespoir: nostre nature porte cela.

(2) Comm. on Ezek. 13:10-11, C.O. 40:283 Haec igitur unica est ratio pacificandi Del. ubi nobis ibsi sumus hostes, ubi pugnamus strenue cum pravis et vitiosis carnis nostrae cupiditatibus. Serm. on Job 14:15-12, C.O. 33:679 Or le principal combat que nous ayons à faire c'est contre nous-memes, et contre nos vices.

(3) Comm. on Ps. 42:6, C.O. 31:429 Quanquam autem bellum cum Satana et mundo gerit non tamen recte vel aperte cum illis confligit, sed se ipsum potius deligit antagonistam. Et certe haec optima est vincendi Satanæ ratio, non egredi extra nos, sed cum propriis affectibus suscipere intrinsecum certamen.

(4) Serm. on Deut. 10:15-17, C.O. 27:53. Or par cela nous sommes admonestez que cependant que les hommes demeureront en leur naturel, que de nature ils sont rebelles à Dieu, ils ne feront que le despiter, qu'ils tireront tout au rebours de sa justice, brief, ils seront ennemis de tout bien. Et qu'ainsi soit: Dieu ne demande sinon que nous plions le col sous lui, et que nous portions son ioug paisiblement: voila toute la perfection de notre vie, c'est la plus grande sainteté que Dieu commande: c'est que les hommes mortifient toutes leurs mauvaises affections; comme il a esté dit: Qu'il faut qu'ils soyon circconclis pour obeir à Dieu; c'est à dire que Dieu purge tout ce qui est de leur propre, s'il en veut iour.
abolish whatever is "of our own nature" if we wish to be con-
firmed to God in our sanctification and to love our neighbour. Only by doing such violence to our nature and forcing ourselves and allowing ourselves to be forced against all our natural inclinations can we attain to the true simplicity and uprightness which is the mark of the true follower of Christ.

The process of self-denial involves us in deliberate and continuous conscious effort to subdue and discipline the unruly thoughts and passions that arise in our hearts and minds when the Word of God lays claim upon our minds and the Spirit of God seeks to control our hearts. We must not imagine that progress

(1) Serm. on Deut. 5:12-14, C.O. 26:283. Il nous faut mortifier ce qui est de nostre nature, si nous voulons estre conformes à nostre Dieu.
Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:31-11:1, C.O. 49:707. Brief, il nous faut oublier ce qui est nostre, si nous voulons rendre à nos prochains ce qui leur est deu. Et voyla pourquoi il est dit que la charité ne cherche point ce qui luy est propre. Cela est difficile, ie le confesse; mais il faut batailler contre nostre nature, si nous en voulons venir au bout.
Serm. on Deut. 5:12-14, C.O. 26:284 Ainsi donc nous voyons bien que nous ne pouvons estre sanctifiez à nostre Dieu, c'est à dire, nous ne pouvons pas le servir en pureté, qu'est-ans seperez des pollutions qui sont contraires; que ce qui est de nostre nature ne soit aboli.

(2) Serm. on Tim. 1:5-7, C.O. 53:35 Car nous voyons comme les hommes ne sont point attirez à droiture et simplicité que par force; cela est tant contraire à leur nature, qu'il faut bien qu'ils se captivent, et qu'ils facent violence à toutes leurs affectons, devant qu'estre rangez a une pure simplicité?

(3) Serm. on Matt. 2:9-11, C.O. 46:351. Voila donc comme nous avons a faire hommage au Fils de Dieu pour declarer que nous sommes membres de son Eglise, c'est asgavor de renoncer a toute nostre raison et prudence pour nous laisser gouverner par la parole de Dieu, d'abatre et mettre sous les pieds toutes nos affectons et tous nos appetits, afin que son Esprit domine en nous.
Cf. serm. on Deut. 4:19-24, C.O. 26:160.
in the Christian life is attained through a quiet and passive yielding to the influence of the Spirit as He quietly moulds our whole being into a blessed and harmonious unity with His will and purposes. God's grace and our own nature never come together in such harmony, they are always as antagonistic one to another as fire and water. The truth is rather that the more God obtains the control of our lives the more inward opposition to His rule is aroused within us and therefore the more we have to deny the perverse and rebellious natural inclinations which rise up at the presence of God. Only through such self-denial can we be said to be allies of God.

An essential part of self-denial is to renounce our own judgement and our natural reason. Calvin calls our natural way of thinking "carnal reason", and insists that unless this is dethroned there can be no admittance for the wisdom of God. A sure test as to whether a man has denied himself is whether he has renounced


(2) Inst. 3:7:2

(3) Inst. 3:7:1 Comm. on 1 Cor. 3:3, C.O. 49:348. Quamdiu caro, hoc est, naturalis vitiositas, in homine dominatur, sic occupat ipsius hominis ingenium, ut non sit ingenius sapientiae Dei. Serm. on Deut. 4:19-24, C.O. 26:160 Nous avons ceste folle persuasion d'estre sages. Or Dieu au contraire veut que nous soyons despouillez de tout nostre sens et raison, afin que nous permettions a son Esprit le regime dessus nous.
his own views and indeed his own doubts, and has accepted in their place the wisdom of God revealed in the Gospel. Ignorance of God is therefore due to a refusal to renounce the self-life and self-love. This is involved in Calvin's interpretation of Jesus' word, "If any man will to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine". To cherish doubt is therefore to defy God, and if the mind is closed against God the heart must also be closed. Therefore an examination of the life of the man who prefers to hold on to his doubt rather than to study the truth will reveal consistent moral rebellion against God. Moreover the Christian life involves a constant refusal to allow the mind to go out of the bounds of the Word of God into speculation over useless questions. The Christian must continually examine and restrain the natural activity of his mind and bring it into subjection to Christ. This is no easy thing to do for the carnal reason always seeks to take control even of the children of God, and it can be overcome only by constant dependance on God's grace, and by stern discipline.

Self-denial involves a like discipline over the passions and affections of the heart. These must be yielded to God in order that

(1) Comm. on John 7:17, cf. comm. in loc. C.0.47:170-171. Denique omnes isti sceptici, qui dubitationis velum obtendunt in rebus hodie controversis, manifestum Dei contemptum in rebus minime obscuris produnt.... Caeterum in his Christi verbis continentur vera pietatis definitio, quum scilicet ad sequendam Dei voluntatem ex animo parati sumus, quod facere nemo potest nisi qui se proprio sensu abdicaverit.

(2) Serm. on Acts 1:6-8, C.O. 48:613-4. Et par cela nous pouvons reprendre ces curieux qui font des questions, et leur pouvons dire, Mon ami, puis que tu fais de telles questions sans propos, tu n'a pas encore appris que c'est de ton Baptesme: car tu cegnoistrois qu'il faut que tu renonces à toy-mesme.
He may subdue them. They must be resisted, condemned, despised, fought against, trampled underfoot, kept within proper bounds.

A Christian man thus holds himself captive, according to Calvin. To do this is to tread the narrow way that leads to life. The inward act of surrendering up to God all our worldly ambition and our longing for earthly riches and favour is part of self-denial.

Self-denial also implies that we yield up to God in our hearts all our actual riches and possessions. God may not will to take these earthly possessions from us but we can continue to hold them only as we constantly deny them to ourselves and hold them for the Lord. A Christian must indeed thus forsake everything he possessed in order to follow Jesus Christ.

(1) Inst. 3:7:8.
(2) Serm. on Job 2:7-10, C.O. 33:119. Nous voyons comme il faut que Job combatte contre toutes ses affections, qu'il en soit despouillé, qu'il se tienne là comme captif: ou autrement il se lettera hors des gonds, il s'aslera à l'encontre de Dieu, ou pour le moins il sera despité, en sorte qu'il ne fera que se tempester là dedans, que Dieu n'aura ni crédit, ni superiority en luy. Apprenons donc à l'exemple de Job de resister à toutes nos affections, et de les mettre bas, si nous voulons servir à Dieu.
(3) Cf. ibid. and serm. on Deut. 4:19-24, C.O. 26:160. Or nos affections sont vicieuses: et Dieu veut qu'apres les avoir condamnees, nous les reastreignions, que nous soyons là captifs, que nous facions resistance et force à tout ce qui nous transporte à mal.
(5) Inst. 3:7:2.
To deny ourselves means that we substitute within ourselves self-hatred in place of self-love. Concupiscence makes us "blindly rush in the direction of self-love". It is the principle of self-love within us that makes it impossible for us to love our fellow men. It "leads us to despise and neglect others - produces cruelty, covetousness, violence, deceit, and all the kindred vices and arms us with the desire of revenge". It is as opposed to self-denial as fire is to water. Therefore in becoming Christians we must begin to hate ourselves. We must transfer the hatred which we naturally feel for God and our fellow man back on ourselves, and redirect our self-love outwards towards God and man.

(1) Inst. 3:7:4
(2) Comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O. 50:251-2

Serm. on Job. 2:7-10, C.O. 33:125-6. Sur tout quand nous sommes troublez par les phantasies mauvaises de nostre chair, il faut que nous ensuyvions Iob... et au lieu que nous avons accoustums de nous despiter contre ceux qui nous auront picquez... que nous regardions, Or ça i'ay un tel vice: quand l'auray bien tout regarde, ie me courrouce contre mes ennemis... et quand i'ay fait bonne consideration, ie ne trouve point de pire ennemi de mon salut que moy-mesme...: il faut donc que ie me courrouce en moy-mesme, puis que c'est de là que procedent mes plus grands ennemis.
For Calvin, then, there is an exceedingly close connection between love for our fellow-man and self-denial. Self-denial has respect to man as well as to God. It can mean not only a dethroning of self in face of the claims of God but also a dethroning of self in face of the claims of our fellow men. It is when we are faced with the demands of love that we are challenged most pointedly to do violence to our own nature, for nothing is more against our nature than to become subject to others in fulfilment of the demands of love. When self is on the throne we cannot love. Calvin points out that one of the best ways in which to practice such inward self-denial as is required for the Christian life is to force ourselves to perform the duties of charity.

It is obvious that the phrase "self-denial" as it is used in modern speech is inadequate to describe the radical nature of the negative aspect of the Christian life which Calvin uses it to cover. As we have seen Calvin means that the self should be really slain, done to death in violence as Christ was done to death.


(3) Inst. 3:7:7. Haece ergo mortificatio turn demum habebit in nobis locum, si caritatis numeros ampliamus.
This means that self-denial is not for Calvin a mere hard negative discipline but has a glorious positive aspect in relation to the self-offering of Christ in the Cross. It is through such radical self-denial in union with Jesus Christ that we are able to offer our lives as a true, sacrifice slain and done to death through the Word of God and the mortifying power of the death of Christ.¹

Even in the practice of self-denial Jesus is our example. He had to bring the will of His human nature into subjection to the will of God. Certainly, the experience which Jesus had of temptation was different from our own. Our own experience of temptation is always corrupted by concupiscence. The desires of our corrupted nature are always so aroused in answer to the tempting outward circumstances that we have no power to keep ourselves within the limits of obedience to God. Jesus, however, did not experience

(1) see pp. 44-6
(2) Serm. on Matt. 4:1 etc., C.O. 46:598. Toutesfois et quantes que nous sommes tentez, il est certain qu'il y a du vice grand. Cf. serm. on Matt. 4:8-11 etc., C.O. 46:634. Quand donc nous verrons... belles possessions (etc) ... il est donc impossible que l'homme...ne soit touche de convoitise mauvaise, d'autant que sa nature est desia infectee du peche originel.
this concupiscence. His conflict in His temptation was with the pure "weakness of nature", but not with the "vicious weakness" which is the result of the fall of man. "His will, it is true, was weak, as is human; but it was not vicious as in those who are corrupted in Adam". Nevertheless His facing of the Cross meant for Jesus a real and agonising effort to do not His own will but that of God. Even though He could be "troubled" and "vehemently agitated" in His heart nevertheless His affections were all the true orderly and obedient, submissive to reason and He kept Himself in subjection to the will of the Father.


(3) Comm. on John 11:33, C.O. 47:266. It should be noted that while the ordinary human experience of temptation is always sinful, according to Calvin, Jesus could be tempted and yet remain sinless.

Cf. Serm. on Matt. 4:1f, C.O. 46:600 Nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ... pouvoit estre tente sans aucune macule. In our temptation we cannot overcome without being wounded, but Jesus could do so. (Comm. on John 12:27, C.O. 47:292) Though the human weakness of Jesus was real weakness and He was involved in real and terrible conflict with Satan He could not have been conquered (Serm. on Matt. 4:1, C.O. 46:598) It was impossible for Jesus to sin. In this He was different from Adam in his "intermediate condition... to whom it was only granted that it was possible for him not to sin" (Comm. on Matt. 4:1, C.O. 45:130-1)
We can best understand what self-denial means in Calvin's theology when we consider the relation of the whole process of self-denial to the death of Christ. Self-denial is always to be thought of as the human accompaniment of a very real and powerful process of dying with Christ which takes place within the Christian through living communion with the death of Christ. The death of Christ is efficacious in the life of the Christian man today not only because through it we receive by faith the forgiveness of sins but also because through it we participate by faith in the mortification of the flesh or the crucifying of the old man. The death of Christ is efficacious in the life of mankind today not only as a mere historic spectacle through the remembrance and contemplation of which the evil passions of the human heart are subdued and thus mortified; it is, rather, a living force which men can encounter as a present powerful concrete factor in the shaping of their character and destiny. Calvin can thus speak


in terms of a living communication with the death of Christ which can, by an action more direct than it is possible for any distantly contemplated event to exert, bear fruit in the life of a believer and in the life of the Church. The Christian can thus "derive a secret energy" from the death of Christ as the twig of a tree does from the root in which it grows. The secret of true self-denial is thus to partake as we ought of the efficacy of the death of Christ which is thus communicated to us.

It is because of this close relation between self-denial and the death of Christ, that Calvin describes self-denial in terms that obviously go far beyond anything we can imagine if we think of it merely as strong self-control. It is a completely radical and major operation in which the old nature of man is not merely brought with subjection but is given a real death blow in order that an entirely new creation may take its place. Only by an operation of such a nature can a real cure be given for the concupiscence of the human heart. This concupiscence is not a mere


(3) Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:1, C.O. 55:270. Ideo dicit armamini, signifcans, vere et efficaciter nos invictis armis instru ab subjigandam carnem, si vim mortis Christi percipimus ut decet.

wound or temporary disease in our nature which can be cured by wise and gentle treatment. It is, rather, a corruption that so pervades the whole of the old nature that not even its best part can be saved and used. All must be annihilated. God cannot work within us by taking hold of the corrupt affections of our hearts and modifying and transforming these according to His new purposes. His work in the heart is to subdue such corrupt affections, to annihilate them, and while holding our nature thus down in death, He gives us at the same time new affections and new powers which are His new creation within us. But in order to give the new nature scope, the old must be held down in death. Such is the place and such is the force of the process of mortification in the Christian life, of which self-denial is the human sign and accompaniment. Self-denial, then, must not be thought of merely as a process of imitating Christ in the example He sets of self-sacrifice. It is rather the fulfilment in inward efficacy of

(1) Serm. on Deut. 6:20-25, C.O. 26:488. Il faut donc que nous entrions comme en une mort, et en un sepulchre pour estre renouvellez, et que nostre Seigneur nous donne un nouveau sens, un nouveau coeur, qu'il nous reforme en sorte que nous ne soyons plus ceux que nous estions auparavant: mais que nous soyons comme refondues, et nouvelles creatures, ainsi que l'Escriture use de ce langage.

Inst. 2:1:9 Unde sequitur, partem illam, in qua maxime re fulget animae praestantia et nobilitas, non modo vulneratam esse, sed ita corruptam, ut non modo sanari, sed novam propo induere opus habeat.

Serm. on Deut. 5:12-14, C.O. 26:284. Nous ne pouvons pas le servir en purete, qu'estans separez des pollutions qui sont contraires: que ce qui est de nostre nature ne soit aboli.

Comm. on Col. 3:8, C.O. 52:120. Nam haec mortificationis vis ac natura est, ut in nobis exstinguantur omnes corrupti affectus, ne posthac solitos fructus in nobis peccatum gignat.

(2) Serm. on Rom. 6:7, C.O. 49:108.
what is outwardly figured and indeed inwardly effected in and through Baptism, when, in union with Christ, the participant in His grace is immersed in the water as a sign that here the old man is destroyed in order that the new man may arise to newness of life.

It is through the work of the Holy Spirit that the death of Christ is made so efficacious to us that it can be spoken of as a vital factor and force in our present day world. The Holy Spirit conveys to us the benefits of the death of Christ and makes us partakers of them. "The blood of Christ is the material cause (materia) of our cleansing" says Calvin. But this cleansing is of no avail unless we are made partakers of it by the Spirit. It is the Spirit who sprinkles our souls with the blood of Christ as in the Old Testament dispensation the Priest sprinkled the blood on that which had to be cleansed by the sacrifice. "If the shedding of the sacred blood is not to be in vain, our souls must be washed in it by the secret cleansing of the Holy Spirit". Calvin, in

(1) Inst. (1536 Edn.) C.O. 1:111. Siquidem, ut ait Apostolus (Rom. 6), in mortem eius baptisati sumus, consepti ipsi in mortem, ut in novitate vitae ambulemur. Quibus verbis non ad imitationem eius nos solum exhortatur, ac si diceret: admoneri nos per baptismum, ut quodam mortis Christi exemplo concupiscentiis nostris moriamur et exemplo resurrectionis, ut in iustitiam suscitemur; sed rem longe altius repetit, nempe quod per baptismum Christus nos mortis suae fecerit participes, ut in eam inseramur. Et quemadmodum surculus substantiam alimentumque ducit a radice cui insitus est, ita qui baptismum ea qua debent fide accipient, vere efficaciam mortis Christi sentiunt in mortificatione carnis suae; simul etiam resurrectionis, in vivificatione spiritus.
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 5:11, C.O. 49:395.
(4) Inst. 3:1:1, Quibus verbis admonet, ne irrita sit sacri illius sanguinis effusio, arcana spiritus irradiatione animas nostras co purgari.
preaching, can speak of our being plunged into the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Writing in more theological terms he expresses the same thing when he speaks of our being "inserted into the death of Christ" by the Spirit. These phrases all show how closely connected in his thought are the death of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit not only makes the death of Christ efficacious for our cleansing from the guilt of sin but also for the mortification or crucifying of our flesh and self-will. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus denied Himself, and that power was especially manifest in His death. To participate in the death of Christ by virtue of the Holy Spirit means to participate in the power of the Holy Spirit to subdue and conquer the will of the flesh. In such an effect of the Spirit, the death of Christ is producing its fruit within us. Because of the connection which the Holy Spirit has with the death and self-denial of Christ Calvin frequently speaks of the office of the Spirit in His work in the human heart as that of restraining natural desires, subduing unruly passions, enabling men to deny themselves and the world in conformity with the death of Christ.

(1) Serm. on Isa. 53:9-10, C.O. 35:655. Et puis son sang nous est purgation, quand nous sommes plongez la dedans, et que nous en sommes arrousez par le saint Esprit.


(3) Serm. on Luke 2:50-52, C.O. 46:477. Mais notons que nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ ne laisse pas encore aujourd'hui de be-songner tellement par la vertu de son saint Esprit, que la mort qu'il a enduree pour un coup, produit son fruit et son effect en nous: sa resurrection nous profite a vie, nous sommes maintenus et garentis sous sa protection.

(4) See next page
(4) Serm. on Deut. 5:12-14, C.Q. 26:284-5. Il faut que tout cela meure (i.e. what we inherit from Adam). Et comment cela se fait-il? Ce n'est point par nostre industrie: mais nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ mourant pour nous, et pour effacer noz peches, à ce qu'ils ne nous soient plus imputez, nous a aussi bien acquis ce droit-la, que par la vertu de son sainct Esprit, nous pouvons renoncer au monde, et à nous-mesmes, tellement que nos affections charnelles ne dominent plus. Et combien que nous soyons pleins de rebellion: toutes-fois l'Esprit de Dieu dominera par dessus pour les reprimer, et les tenir en bride. Cf. comm. on Ps 109:5, C.Q. 32:148.
Bearing the Cross

The Church conformed to Christ's death by outward affliction under the cross.

Patience and faith necessary for cross-bearing.

The cross brings the Church into a sacramental relation to Christ and His death.

Cross-bearing a powerful aid to self-denial and a test of obedience.
God wills that our whole life should be conformed to the death of Christ. This means that we must become conformed to Christ in outward circumstances as well as in inward attitude of heart. Therefore to live the Christian life involves us not only in the necessity of inward self-denial but also in many troubles and afflictions from outside ourselves. The members of the body of Christ who are sanctified in union with Christ are subjected to a special providence which shapes their historical career into a pattern similar to the pattern of death and resurrection worked out in the sanctification of Jesus Christ Himself. The afflictions which are ordered by God for this purpose, Calvin calls The Cross.

The ordinary sufferings of life are, for the Christian, to be regarded as part of the Cross, for God can sanctify such suffering in the life of His people and, as we shall see, can give it a relationship to the suffering of Jesus Christ.

But those who are destined to be thus conformed to Christ are called to bear in addition to the ordinary afflictions which are the common lot of mankind also a special chastisement from the hand.

(1) Comm. on Phil.3:10, C.O.52:50; on Rom.6:11, C.O. 49:110.
(2) Inst. 3:8:1.
of God which we must suffer as the representatives of His son on earth. To be a member of the Church, for Calvin, means to enter a sphere in which because of being devoted to God we are devoted also to suffering. To be one of the elect of God means to be appointed to slaughter. The elect are more subject than the rest of mankind to "many and various kinds of evils". It is as members of the Church and not simply as individuals that we share in those "common persecutions" which have been the lot of the people of God in every generation not only since Christ came but in the times of the old Testament. Whatever suffering comes to an individual on behalf of Christ comes to him as a result of his incorporation in the body of Christ, and is merely part of that conformity that all members of the body must have with the Head to whom they are united, and in

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:17, C.0.55:281. Nam haec, inquit, necessitas totam Dei ecclesiam manet, ut non tantum communibus hominum miseriis subiecerat, sed peculiariter et praecipue Dei menu castigetur: tanto igitur securiore animo ferenda sunt pro Christo persecutiones. Misi enim expungi e numero fideli velimus, Dei ferulis nos tergum aptare convenit. Suave autem istud condimentum est, quod non ut in alios passim Deus sua in nos indidic exercet, sed filii sui personam nobis imponit, ut non nisi eius causa et nomine laboremus. Cf. on 1 Pet. 3:18, C.0.55:264.

(2) Comm. on Ps. 45:23, C.0.31:447. Cuia tamen sumus Christi membra, ad societatem crucis peratos esse nos optaret. Ergo ne crucis acerbitas nos terreruit: semper haec ecclesiae conditio nobis versetur ante oculos, quatenus adoptati sumus in Christo, addicito esse mactationi... Ergo ne tedium vel horror crucis a pietate nos avellat, sit haec continua nostra meditatio, bibendum esse calicem quem nobis porrigit Deus, nec posse Christianum esse, nisi cui se in sacrificium Deo offert.

(3) Inst. 3:8:1.

whom they are united to each other.  

Undoubtedly a large part of the common suffering of the Church in which all Christians must share consists of suffering persecution from the enemies of Christ as a result of our defence of the Gospel, or indeed as a result of the defence of righteousness in any form. It also consists of the suffering of shame and indignity as a result of such a stand and such persecution. Calvin urges us to regard it as a special honour when we are called upon to suffer in this way, and he makes the suggestion that though all the elect are appointed to bear the cross and to be thus conformed to the death of Christ in His death, nevertheless, to endure persecution for the sake of the Gospel is a "special mark" which distinguishes some in the Church from other.

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(1) Cf. e.g. comm. on John 12:24, C.C. 47:288.
(1a) Inst. 3:8:6, Comm. on Phil. 1:28, C.C. 52:21.
(2) Inst. 3:8:7.
(3) Inst. 3:8:8.
(4) Comm. on Phil. 1:7, C.C. 52:10. At si vere aestimamus, honor est non vulgaris quo nos Deus dignatur, quum pro eius veritate persecutionem patimur...Meminerimus ergo etiam societatem crucis Christi, tanaquam singularem Dei gratiam, prompto gratoque animo amplexandum nobis esse.
(5) Comm. on Matt. 24:9, C.C. 45:653. Sed proprie hic Christus de afflictionibus dissersit, cuas pro evangelio subituri erant discipuli. Etsi enim verum est illud Pauli (Rom. 8:29), quos Deus elegit, eos quoque destinasse ad ferendam crucem, ut sive sancte sint imaginii filii sui; non tamen hoc singulare nota omnes insignit, ut ab evangeli hostibus persecutionem sustineant.

Cf. serm. on Gal. 3:3-5, C.C. 50:474. Car de faict ce que nous endurons pour l'Evangile nous doit servir de marque, comme si Dieu nous constituoit en office honorable.
We must bear the cross in an attitude of patience (see later discussion on the attitude of the Christian to suffering p.p.), fortifying ourselves with the conviction that through the bearing of such a cross the process of our sanctification is being furthered and we are being conformed to Christ. "We must not refuse the condition which God has ordained for His Church that the members of Christ may have congruence and symmetry with their Head". We must remember that the affliction which Jesus Christ bore is the same kind of affliction which He calls on His people to bear in every age. In His sufferings He is meant to be the example and pattern of all the children of God.

(1) Serm. on Job 42:9-17, C.O.35:509-10. En cela (ie. Sufferings) ils ont meilleure confirmation de la doctrine entant que nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ estant l'image vive de tous fideles et enfans de Dieu, ils sont conformez à lui: comme S. Paul/ttraitte au 8 chapit. des Rom. (v.23) cu'en toutes nos misères nous sommes configurez à nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ.


In the process of being conformed to Christ by bearing their cross, the faithful are thereby brought into a special relation to Christ and His death. Calvin can speak in such a way of this communion with Christ and His Death which is given through the cross as to imply that the suffering of the cross for the Christian has the value of a sacrament. "In bearing the cross we are the companions of Christ". The sufferings of the Church under the cross have so close a relation to the death of Christ, and to His suffering that in partaking of these sufferings both the Church and the individual within the Church may be said to "hold fellowship with the sufferings of Christ", or to experience a "communication of the death of Christ", or to participate in the "fellowship of the death of Christ".

The fact that the cross brings him into this close relationship to Christ in His death and resurrection should above all other considerations encourage the Christian to bear it with cheerfulness. "How powerfully should it soften the bitterness of the cross, to think that the more we are afflicted with adversity, the surer we are made of our fellowship with Christ, by communion with whom our sufferings are not only blessed, but tend greatly to the furtherance of our salvation!"

(1) Comm. on Matt.10:38, 45:294...nos in ferenda cruce Christi esse socios.
(2) Inst.3:3:1, Unde etiam insignis consolatione ad nos redit, in rebus duris atque asperis, quae adversae malaecue existimantur, nos Christi passionibus communicare.
(5) Inst. 3:3:1.
The Christian under persecution for the sake of the Gospel, then, must be ready to "embrace the fellowship of the Cross of Christ as a special favour from God". He must be so minded as "not to decline to undertake the cross in common with Christ" knowing that Christ regards such sufferings as His own. When he is made weak, as Paul was in his suffering, he is made weak in Christ" and this means that he is a "partaker of Christ's weakness".

Such a "sacramental" effect, however, is given to our sufferings only when God blesses them. Calvin is emphatic in teaching that viewed in itself the natural effect of suffering on the human soul is not ennobling. The natural reaction of the human heart to suffering is to harden itself against God like an anvil under the blows of a hammer, and to become more and more embittered, obstinate and incorrigible after the example of Pharaoh. After surveying the teaching of James and Peter and Paul as to what suffering can do to the human soul in producing character and patience, Calvin points out that such an effect can never be regarded as the result of a general rule of life but only as the result of the supernatural inward working of the providence of God.

(1) Comm. on Phil.1:7, C.0.52:10. Meminerimus ergo etiam societatem crucis Christi, tamen singularem Dei gratiam, prompto gratoque animo amplexandam nobis esse.
(2) Comm. on Heb.11:26, C.0.55:161. Omnes ita comparatos esse decet ut crucis societatem cum Christo subire non recusent.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Comm. on 2 Cor.13:4, C.0.50:150. Infirmum esse in Christo hic significat socium esse infirmitatis Christi.
(5) Serm. on Job 5:17-18, C.0.33:260-261.
"The minds of men are not so formed by nature that affliction of itself produces patience in them. But Paul and Peter regard not so much the nature of men, as the providence of God, through which it comes that the faithful learn patience from troubles, for the ungodly are thereby more and more provoked to madness as the example of Pharaoh proves." In order therefore for affliction to be effective in conforming us to Christ and giving us fellowship with Christ, it is not enough for God to strike us with His hand unless at the same time He touches us inwardly by His Holy Spirit. Only "when the favour of God breathes upon us" can afflictions which are evil in themselves such as exile, contempt, imprisonment, ignominy, and even death itself, turn out to our happiness. But when God does so work within us, blessing and sanctifying our sufferings, then, no matter how grievous or accursed in their own nature are our afflictions, they are nevertheless bound to make their contribution towards the furtherance of our salvation and towards conforming us to the image of Jesus Christ.


(2) Serm. on Job 5:17-18, C.O.33:260. Ces chastiments-là ne profitent pas à tous, et aussi il ne fait point à tous la grace de returner à luy. Car ce n'est point assez que Dieu frappe de sa main, sinon qu'il nous touche là decans par son sainct Esprit.

(3) Inst. 3:3:7.

(4) Serm. on Gal.2:20-21. C.O.50:447. Puis qu'ainsi est donc, apprenons de vivre par la foy de Jesus Christ, c'est à dire combien que nous soyons miserebles en ce monde, combien qu'il nous fail souffrir tant de fascheries, tant d'ennuis et d'angoisses, tant de troubles et difficultez, toutefois que nous persistions en ceste constance, pour sentir qu'il ny a que toute felicité en nos miseres, d'autant que Dieu les
Suffering can be said to have this close and living relationship to the death and passion of Christ, in the case of those who are united to Christ and who suffer as members of Christ through being incorporated into His Church. "In all our miseries we are partakers of Christ's cross if we are His members," says Calvin. The wicked and unbelieving cannot draw any benefit or consolation from such sufferings as may come upon them, because they themselves have no connection with Christ and His death. The elect participate with the Son of God in the afflictions of life, but not the wicked. The consolation that it gives to know that in bearing the cross we are the companions of Christ is for the faithful and not for the reprobates to whom the bearing of their cross can only be accursed and harmful. Indeed Calvin/even in the case of believers it is only when they endure affliction for the

(contd) benit et les sanctifie au nom de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, et que tout cela nous est converti en aide à salut, comme il en est parle au 8. chap. des Rom. e.27.
Cf. comm. on 2 Cor.4:10, C.0.50:55.
(1) Comm. on Phil.3:10, C.0.52:50. In omnibus miseriis sumus socii crucis Christi, si sumus eius membra.
Cf. serm. on Gal.6:12-13, C.0.51:117. Et ainsi apprenons qu'estans appelez à nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, il nost fuit estre participans de sa croix tant cu'il luy plaira: Mais cependant si faut -il que les passions qu'il a souffert en premier lieu s'accomplissent en nous qui sommes ses membres.
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor.4:10, C.0.50:55. Porro Christi mortificatio nonnisi in solis fidelibus vocatur: cuia impii, praesentis vitae aerumnas perferendo, cum Adam communicant; electi autem participationem habent cum filio Dei.
(3) Comm. on Matt.10:38, C.0.45:294. Interesa subeat etiam mentem haec consolatio, nos in ferenda cruce Christi esse socios: ita fiet ut facile mitescat omnis acerbitas. Cruc suae non minus affixi sunt reprobi, nec eam, quantumvis luctentur, excutere cœuent, sed quot extra Christum crux maledicta est, manet eos infelix exitus. Cf. on 2 Cor. 1:5, C.0.50:11. Miseriae cuidem et aerumnas vitae praesentis malis perinde ac bonis communes sunt. Sed cuum impie accident, maledictionis divinae sunt signa.
sake of the Gospel, and not as a result of the chastisement of their sins, that they have fellowship with the passion of Christ in their sufferings. Strictly speaking, then, only true disciples of Jesus Christ can be said to "bear the cross", although all men, even in sharing the common miseries of mankind, are faced therein with a cross that they can bear. The Cross can be borne only by faith, and the benefits of bearing the cross are given only to those who have faith.

While speaking of our sharing the sufferings of Christ, Calvin is careful to emphasise that Christ’s own sufferings in His passion were and are complete in that He once suffered all that is needful for our salvation, and indeed He once suffered fully and forever that which He now calls on His Church to share with Himself.

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor.1:5, C.0.50:11. *Non tamen proprio dicuntur socii esse passionum Christi, nisi dum eius nomine patiuntur.*

(2) Comm. on Matt.16:24, C.0.45:482.

(3) Serm. on Gal.6:12-13, C.0.51:117. *Mais cependant si faut-il que les passions qu’il a souffertes en premier lieu s’accomplissent en nous qui sommes ses membres. Il est vray qu’il a souffert ce qui estoit besoin pour nostre salut: mais il faut que nous soyons conformez à son image.* Cf. comm. on Eph.1:23, C.0.51:160. *Quod ergo vult impleri et perfectus quodammodo esse in nobis, id non accidit ex defectu vel inopia.* Cf. serm. on Eph.1:23, C.0.51:346.

(4) Comm. on Ps.109:3, C.0.32:147. *Iam sicut in Christo fuit impletum quod adumbratum fuerat in Davide: ita meminerimus impleiri quotidie in fidelibus in Christo passum, illos sibi consortes ac socios accersit.*
Therefore when the Apostle speaks of himself as daily filling up that which is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, he does not mean that the sufferings of Christ require to be supplemented by the sufferings of the Church, but that the sufferings of the Church are rather the unfolding and fulfilment of what Christ has already suffered. As the Church through its members yields itself to bearing the sufferings to which it is pre-ordained in the divine purpose, it is thus brought more and more to perfection in becoming conformed to its Head. It is thus a gracious ordinance of Christ that the afflictions of the pious should have the effect of bringing to perfection the body of the Church, and should promote the welfare of the whole Church in conforming the Church to Christ, but this must be thought of as the sharing and unfolding of a perfection which the Church already has in its fullness in the person of Christ.

(1) Comm. on Col.1:24, C.0,52:93. Quemadmodum ergo semel passus est in se Christus, ita quotidie patitur in membris suis: atque hoc modo implentur passiones, quas Pater illius corpori suo decreto destinavit.

(2) Comm. on Col.1:24, C.0,52:94. Nemo autem non videt Paulum ita loqui, quia oporteat per afflictiones piorum adduci corpus ecclesiae ad suam perfectionem, dum membra capiti suo configurantur. This way of thinking is in keeping with Calvin's teaching on the relation between Christ and His Church. Christ, who fills all in all, would have all fullness in Himself even if He were separated from His Church. He no more requires to be completed by His Church than the Father requires to be completed by His creation. Therefore we cannot marvel enough at the fact that He bestows on us such honour that until He is united to us, He "reckons Himself in some measure imperfect". Comm. on Eph.1:23, C.0,51:159. Cf. sermon on Eph.1:23, C.0,51:346. Or en ce mot d'accomplissement, il signifie que nostre Seigneur Iesus, et mesmes Dieu son Pere se tient comme imparfait, sinon que nous soyons conquis en luy. Car voila un tesmoignage de la bonte infinit de Dieu, et de laquelle on ne se peut contri-
To bear the cross with patience and faith is a powerful help to us in our efforts to deny our self-will. The process of self-denial, from the human side, is not sufficiently accomplished if it is left to our own power of inward self-discipline. Man requires also to be afflicted in order to spur him on to greater efforts of self-denial than he would otherwise make, and in order to effect a more thorough subjugation of the affections of the heart

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assez esmerveiller. He does not wish to regard Himself, or to be regarded, as complete apart from His members in the Church which can therefore be spoken of as His completion. (Comm. on 1 Cor.12:12, C.0.49:501. Hoc enim honore nos dignatur Christus, ut nolit tantum in se, sed etiam in membris suis censeri et recognosci. Ideo alibi dicit idem apostolus (Eph.1,23) ecclesiam esse illius complementum, ac si divisus a suis membris, quoadammodo mutilus foret. He who has no need of us speaks and acts as if He found His own being imperfect and incomplete until He finds His fulfilment in us. In this sense the Church is the fullness of God and of Christ. (Serm. on Eph 1:23, C.0.51:347. Voilà comme Dieu parle, qu'il ne se trouve point accompli et parfait, sinon d'autant qu'il nous receuille a soy, et que nous sommes unis ensemble; il prend tout son plaisir en nous, et veut que sa gloire y reluise...et combien que toute gloire soit en luy, neant moins cu'on voye qu'il veut que nous en ayons nostre part et portion. Voila donc en somme ce que S. paul a voulu dire, appelant l'Eglise l'accomplissement de Dieu et de Iesus Christ.
and the thoughts of the mind to the will of God. The "ferocity" of the flesh is such that it requires the most stern treatment if it is to be subdued. Calvin frequently likens our natural disposition to a refractory horse in its wildness, to a mule or an ass in its stubbornness, and when he wants to use stronger language he likens it to untameable wild beasts or to madmen in a frenzy. Therefore God, in sending affliction to us, acts like "a rough rider to a rough horse." Indeed, Calvin can go so far as to liken God's part in this ministry of affliction to that of the man with the "beetle" in his hand administering corrective blows. Thus it is that God has to "reduce us to Himself", and "soften our natural hardness by the hammer."}

(1) Comm. on Ps. 119:67, C.0.32:244. Deo nuncquam obsequium nisi ferulis coacti...Nam quum principium obedientiae sit carnis mortificatione, quam naturaliter omnes refugiunt, non mirum est si variis afflictionibus Deus in ordinem nos cogat. Comm. on Ps. 35:6, C.0.31:787. Nam quia subinde relabilur caro nostra ad lasciviam, variis correctionibus penitus subigi necesse est.

(2) Cf. comm. on Ps 25:9, C.0.31:255. Carnis ferocia. on Ps. 32:4, C.0.31:312, and Inst. 3:8:5.

(3) Inst. 3:8:5. Comm. on John 5:14, C.0.47:109. Neque enim solum refractorii equis et mulis sumus similis, sed plus quam indomita bellulae. Serm. on 2 Sam. 4:1, 7, 4 p89. Car non seulement nous sommes lasches comme des asnes, mais nous sommes comme phrenetiques et gens insensés, transportez en nos passions pour resister a Dieu.

(4) Cf. serm. on Job 42:8-17, C.0.35:504. A rude asne rude asnier.

(5) Ibid. Cf. serm. on Deut. 2:1-7, C.0.26:5. Sans que Dieu nous reduist a soy par correction il seroit impossible que nous luy fusissions tels qu'il appartient pour escouter sa voix, et pour suyvre la ou il nous commande. Il faut donc que nous soyons preparez a coups de verges.

(6) Comm. on Ps 119:71, C.0.32:245. Calvin recognises the moral and theological difficulties of speaking in such a way. God only adopts such a course after the gentle chastisement which would be administered by the kindest Father has failed and in adopting this course He "is constrained to assume a new character which is not natural to Him." Cf. comm. on John 5:14, C.0.47:109. Novum personam et quasi alienam induere cogitatur.
Such is the perversity of our human nature that any milder course of treatment could serve only to corrupt and spoil us.

In his chapter on Bearing the Cross in the Institutes, discussing the discipline imposed upon us by the cross, Calvin gives several closely connected reasons why it should be necessary for the people of God to be constantly afflicted by the cross. The experience of affliction under the cross enables us to mortify the flesh and destroys self-confidence and self-love. No matter how much a man has learned to trust not in himself but in God alone, nevertheless when fortune smiles too much upon him he tends (like even David), to indulge himself in his prosperity and to develop a sense of carnal security which depends more upon his inward feelings and his outward condition than on the Word of God. Under such circumstances, a man seeing that his condition is better than that of many others is apt to persuade himself that his life is "privileged above the common lot of the world." Thus he indulges in pride and forms an "overweening opinion of his own virtue". Moreover "sateity breeds violence" says Calvin, quoting a popular proverb which aptly fits into his comment on the verse "When

(2) Comm. on Ps. 30:7, C.O. 31:295-7. Fideles...in ea militia ad quam se norunt destinatos, excusso torpore se exercent; t redemption se conferunt in fidem Dei, nec se alibi tutos fore confidunt, quem sub eius manu, Aliter David, cui prosperi status illecebris captus, aeternam sibi quistem ex proprio sensu magis quam ex Dei verbo pollicitus est. Cf. Inst. 3:8:2.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Inst. 3:8:3.
Jeshurun waxed fat he kicked." To indulge in pride is, according to Calvin, to indulge in self-love which is the very opposite of self-denial. It is the experience of the cross which destroys this "depraved confidence in the flesh". Suffering gives us as it were "an ocular demonstration of our weakness, and by humbling us tames the fierceness of our pride and destroys our self-love. In the experience of humiliation, learning to distrust ourselves, we also learn to transfer our confidence and love to His grace.

But the human heart is not only purged of self-confidence through the affliction of the cross, it is also tested to see whether it possesses obedience. For it is obvious that unless God crosses our own desires by sending to us some form of affliction, it is impossible to know whether we are ready to yield to God in obedience or not. For Calvin the first step in obedience is to mortify the flesh under the affliction of the cross. Therefore as the fire of the furnace serves not only to purify but also to bring out the true character of the gold which it


(2) Inst. 3:8:3.
(3) Inst. 3:8:2 & 3.
(4) Serm. on Job 2:7-10, C.O. 33:119. Si Dieu en ce cu’il nous envoie se conformoit à nostre volonté, on ne pourroit pas bien discerner que c’est d’estre obeissans: mais quand il nous traitte tout au rebours de nos appetis, et que nous luy sommes alors subiets, que nous tenons sous sa bride toutes nos affections, afin de nous renger à lui...En cela monstrons nous que nous luy sommes obeissans. Cf. Inst. 3:8:4.

refines, so also the suffering of the cross not only purges us from self-will but brings out the light the true quality of our obedience and of the graces which God has conferred upon us "lest they should remain within unseen and unemployed".

(1) Inst. 3:8:4. Serm. on Job 1:9-12, C.C.32:69-70. Et voila pourcuoy tant souvent l'Escriture nous monstre que Dieu esprouve les siens, il les examine par afflictions, il les met comme un or en la fournaise, non seulement pour estre purzez, mais aussi pour estre cognus; car les afflictions servent à ces deux usages: c'est que Dieu mortifie les vices qui sont en nous, quand il nous afflige, nous sommes domés, il nous commande de nous retirer de ce monde, de n'estre plus adonnez à noz voluptez et delices charnelles. Mais il y a plus: c'est que tout ainsi qu'en la fournaise l'or est esprouve, pour savoir s'il y a de l'escume, aussi Dieu monstre quels nous sommes, quand il nous afflige; car les hommes mesmes ne se cognissent point devant qu'avoir est ainsi esprouvez.
Participation in the resurrection and glory of Christ

Participation in the death of Christ never separated from participation in His resurrection.

The Kingdom of God within us is the fruit both of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We can even now be said to possess fully the fruit of Christ's resurrection.

Yet the experience of the cross is visibly predominant over the resurrection.

We must be content to share here and now in the pattern of Christ's death rather than in the pattern of His glory—enjoying a foretaste rather than the fullness of what we possess in Him.
Participation in the death of Christ is never experienced apart from participation in His resurrection. For the consolation of those suffering under the cross, Calvin says, "we must always bear in mind this transition from the cross to the resurrection". Only when our minds are "directed to the power of His resurrection" can the cross of Christ triumph over evil in the hearts and lives of those who believe. It is as important that Christians should clearly understand what they owe to and derive from the resurrection of Christ as from His death. Even though there are passages in Holy Scripture which seem to lay exclusive emphasis on the importance of the death of Christ, nevertheless even in such texts "His resurrection is included in His death".

We find the commencement (initium) of our salvation in the death of Christ, and the "consummation" (complementum) in the resurrection. Calvin indicates that the more positive aspect of our Christian experience is derived from communion with the resurrection of Christ. By the death of Christ "sin was abolished and death annihilated", by His resurrection "righteousness was restored and life revived". Correspondingly /

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:13, C.0.55:279.
(2) Inst. 3:9:6.
(4) Ibid.
Correspondingly in our Christian life, it is by communion with His death, as we have seen, that evil is subdued and abolished within us, and it is by communion with His resurrection that we experience within us the new life of regeneration. Regeneration is, for Calvin, a sign that, even though we have to wait till the final consummation of the Kingdom for our full share in the resurrection of Christ, nevertheless this resurrection life has already begun to exert its power within us, and here and now we participate in it. Regeneration is "the actualisation in the believer of the risen life of Christ", and "an anticipation in conditions of time of the final resurrection". Calvin can actually speak of the new regenerated life which we live on earth as being already "conformed" to the celestial life of Christ and a figure of it. When the New Testament speaks of our mortal bodies as being "quickened" by Christ it refers not simply to the last resurrection but to the "continual operation of the Spirit by which the heavenly life is gradually renewed within us while the remains of the flesh are mortified".

(1) T.F. Torrance, "Kingdom and Church" p. 100. I am indebted to this work for one or two citations in these paragraphs.
(2) Comm. on Rom. 6:10, C.0.49:109.
(3) Comm. on Rom. 8:11, C.0.49:146.
Therefore to die with Christ is always "the cause of a better life". Our experience of mortification in union with the death of Christ is always accompanied by "a corresponding effect (fructum) derived from His resurrection". To be "crucified with Christ" is not a "mortal death" such as was imposed under the Law, but is the "vivifying death" which we have under The Gospel --- a death which leads us to life.

When Calvin speaks about the Kingdom of God, his teaching about the inseparable relationship between our dying and rising with Christ becomes more clear. Those who think of the Kingdom of God merely as something future, to be waited for by hope as we wait for the final resurrection, are taking an extremely superficial view of what the Kingdom is. The Kingdom is rather to be thought of as the "spiritual government", or "reformation" which

(3) Serm. on Gal.2:17-18, C.O.50:439. Ainsi donc en la Loy il faut qu'il y ait une mort mortelle:...mais en l'Evangile, la mort est vivifiante...Mais ce crucifiement-là qu'emporte-il?
Il est vrai que c'est une espèce de mort:mais tant y a que ceste mort là nous amene à la vie.
(4) Serm. on Acts 1:1-4, C.O.48:588. Mais il faut scavoir que c'est que S. Luc entendra par le Royaume de Dieu. Il n'entend pas par ce Royaume de Dieu la vie eternelle, comme on le prend communément et comme on le pourroit y prendre de prime face, pour dire, le Royaume de Dieu est celui que nous attendons par esperance. Mais S. Luc le prend pour le gouvernement spirituel par lequel Iesus Christ nous tient en son obeissance, iucues à ce qu'il nous ait eu tout reformez à son image, et que, nous ayans depouillez de ce corps mortel, il nous mette au ciel...Mais pour en avoir declaration plus facile, prenons le contraire du Royaume de Dieu: c'est la vie des hommes qui sont adonnée à leur nature corrompue...Car le Royaume de Dieu presuppose une reformation.
which began on earth when the Gospel began with the coming of Christ, and which manifests itself within us by the "inward and spiritual renewal of the soul", making constant progress towards the entire renovation of the individual and of the whole world which will take place at the last coming of Christ when the Kingdom will be revealed in all its glory and majesty. All this will be the "accomplishment (complementum) of those things which began to take place after the resurrection of Christ".

(1) Cf. Introd. Argument to Comm. on Evangelists C.0.45:2. It should be noticed that Calvin insists that under the Old Covenant the people had not only a foreshadowing but a real experience of the effect and power of the Kingdom of God in their midst. Such events as their deliverance from Egypt and Babylon were "preludes" (praedium) to what happened in Christ, and were the actual beginning of what was deferred till His coming, and made manifest at His coming. Cf. comm. on Hosea 11:1, C.0.42:433; on Isa.43:19, C.0.37:34-5; 43:8; C.0.37:86; on Ezek.17:22, C.0.40:417. See R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Word and Sacrament pp 43-6.

(2) Comm. on Luke 17:20, C.0.45:425. Notandum tamen est, Christum de primordiis tantum regni Dei locui, quia nunc spiritu reformari incipimus ad imaginem Dei, ut suo deinde tempore integra sequatur et nostri et totius mundi revocatio.


In living our Christian life the "reformation" or "spiritual
government" brought about by the hidden growth of the Kingdom of God
within us is, for Calvin, the fruit both of the death and the
resurrection of Christ and is equally related to both. Though
Calvin often emphasises the fact that the Kingdom of God within us
means sharing now inwardly in the process of regeneration which
began with the resurrection of Christ, he can also stress the fact
that to share in the Kingdom means to share in the process of
mortification to the flesh which is the fruit of Christ's death on
the Cross. In his exposition of the clause "Thy Kingdom come" in
the Lord's Prayer, almost exclusive stress is laid on the Kingdom as
involving us in denying self, subduing depraved lusts, the humbling
of our pride, and contempt for this world. "This prayer, therefore
ought to withdraw us from all the corruptions of this world which
separate us from God, and prevent His Kingdom from flourishing
within us; secondly it ought to influence us with an ardent desire
for the mortification of the flesh; and, lastly, it ought to train
us to the endurance of the cross; since this is the way in which God
would have His Kingdom to be advanced". Yet Calvin is careful to
add that such a negative effect of communion with the death of Christ
in the Kingdom of God takes place always along with the more positive
effect of communion with His resurrection. "It ought not to grieve us
that the outward man decays; provided the inner man is renewed".

(1) Cf. comm. on Acts 4:3, C.0.48:4.
(2) Cf. comm. on Matt. 6:10, C.0.45:197. Hinc colligimus,
initium regni Dei in nobis esse vetenis hominis interitum et
nostri abnegationem, ut renovemur in aliam vitam.
(3) Inst. 3:20:42.
(4) Ibid.
It should be noted that our present participation in Christ's resurrection is not confined merely to an inward experience of regeneration. God makes His people partakers of His Kingdom and glory when by confounding the power and cunning of their enemies, He protects and guides them through every danger and enables them to persevere to the end. Thus in those miraculous providential experiences of deliverance from outward evils which are at times given to us in this life and which seem to us like resurrection from death, we are not only conformed to the resurrection of Christ but we are actually here and now given a real participation in it.

Discussing the meaning of Isaiah 26:19, "Thy dead men shall live", Calvin makes the text refer not simply to the final death and resurrection of the faithful at the last day, but to the constant condition of their life on earth and to the "whole reign of Christ". The life of the faithful, as of all men, is one of such affliction that it can be described as "nothing else but mortality", the forerunner of death or the beginning of death. But whereas in the reprobate this dying condition is unrelieved because "they do not taste God's fatherly kindness", the same condition in the people of God is constantly alleviated by the providential care of God which is the fruit of their union with Christ in His resurrection.

"Because, through the kindness of Christ, the curse of God is abolished equally in the beginning of death as in its end, all who

(1) Inst. 3:20:42.
(2) see pp.66-7
are ingrafted into Christ are rightly said to live in dying. For whatever evils come to them must work for their good. Hence it follows that they always emerge as conquerors from the abyss of death until they are wholly united to their Head".  

(1) Comm. on Isa. 26:19, C.0.36:441-2.
In spite of all the limitations which we may experience to our enjoyment of the fruits of Christ's resurrection there is a sense in which we may be said to possess these fully here and now by faith, through communion with Christ. Calvin notes that Paul in Rom. 8:30 uses the present tense and describes the present state of the justified as being also now a state of glorification. "The same are glorified who are now pressed with the cross so that their miseries and reproaches do not damage them at all. Although glorification is not yet exhibited but in our head, yet because we do in a manner see in Him now the inheritance of eternal life, His glory brings such an assurance of our glory that our hope is worthily matched or compared to present possession." This pattern of glory in the life of the Christian, though it is deformed and obscure when viewed from the side of this world is nevertheless already seen in its perfection when viewed as it appears before God and the angels.

The basic principle in Calvin's thinking on this matter is that what has already happened to Christ the Head can be regarded and legitimately spoken of as having already happened to those who are the members of His body by virtue of the union effected by


(3) Ibid.
faith. What is possessed by Christ is also already the possession of those who are in Christ. Certainly Calvin admits that it does not look as if the children of God were already passed from death to life (1 Pet.1:23), already sit in heavenly glory with Christ (Col.3:3), have the Kingdom already established within them (Luke 17:21). But though all this is hidden, "they do not on that account cease to possess it by faith". Calvin while still remembering the tension and suspense of faith and hope under which the Christian life is lived, gives full emphasis to the passages of scripture which describe the Christian's life and salvation as already fulfilled and perfected in Christ. For example, in his comment on Eph.2:6, "And hath raised us up together", he writes: "The resurrection and sitting in heaven, which are here mentioned, are not yet seen by mortal eyes. Yet as if those blessings were in our present possession, he states that we have received them...and certainly although with respect to ourselves our salvation is at present hidden in hope, yet in Christ we already possess a blessed immortality and glory: and therefore he adds 'in Christ Jesus'. Hitherto it does not appear in the members but only in the Head; yet in consequence of the secret union, it belongs to the members."

(1) Comm. on John 5:24, C.0.47:116. Nam quod abscondita est eorum vita, non ideo fide eam possidere desinunt.
(2) Comm. on Eph.2:6, C.0.51:164.
Nevertheless, as long as we live in the flesh, our participation in the resurrection of Christ is severely limited. Here we must observe God's appointed order of things which is, that we should die before we live. There are "two things in which renovation consists, the destruction of the flesh and the vivification of the Spirit. The course of good living is thus to begin with the former, but we are to advance to the latter". Calvin regards it as important that if we are to make progress in the Gospel it can be made only "in a right and orderly manner". The order for such progress is to start with death before resurrection. Since it was only by His ascension to Heaven that Christ's reign had its true inauguration, the case cannot be otherwise with us. Moreover, the order that God has appointed is that we must wait till the coming of Christ at the last day before we can fully enjoy our inheritance of resurrection life in Him. It must be remembered, too, that no matter how much progress we make in this life, we can never progress beyond the cross.

Participation in the resurrection of Christ is never experienced apart from participation in His death. "The resurrection of Christ leads us not an inch away from the Cross", says Calvin. Even though the faithful have already "passed from death to life" in that the incorruptible seed of the Word resides in them and the Kingdom is already established within them, yet "they are in life in such a manner that they always carry about with them the cause of death."

In this connection the distinction, which has already been referred to, between the inward man and the outward man is of importance. The outward state of the Christian man, as far as he appears to the view of the world, is that of one who is marked out for death, subject to corruption. He is normally so ordinary and mundane in his outward behaviour that there is very little to distinguish him from the unbeliever. In contrast to the frail and

(1) Comm. on Gal. 6:14, C.O. 50:265.
(2) Comm. on John 5:24, C.O. 47:116. *Transitum autem a morte iem esse factum non inepte dicit, quia et incorruptibile est in fillius Dei vitae semen, ex quo vocati sunt et iem in coelesti gloria per sperm in Christo considerat, et regnum Dei intra se habent certo constitutum (Luc 17:21; Coloss. 3:3).*
(3) *Interea meminerimus fideles ita esse nunc in vita, ut mortis semper materiam circumferant.*
(4) Serm. on Gal. 2:20-1, C.O. 50:444. *Car comment distinguera on entre les fideles et les incredules? ils boivent et mangeant l'un comme l'autre. Il est vray que les uns boivent et mangent en sobriete: mais on verra des incredules assez temperans, qui ne seront point addormee a yvrongnerie ni a excess. Or quoy qu'il en soit, de prime face on iugerait que ceste vie est commune a tous. Mais encore les fideles traient souvent les ailes et ne font que languir en ce monde, et puis la mort est commune et egale a tous: il n'y a donc nulle diversite si on s'amuse a ce qui appaorist: bref on dira que c'est peine perdue que de croire en Iesus Christ.*

and perishing condition of the outward man, the inward man who is hidden from the world nevertheless participates now in a real and powerful way in the renewal of creation, the promise of which is given in the resurrection.

Calvin therefore, in view of the fact that it is the Cross rather than the resurrection that predominates in our Christian experience here and now, often refers to the Christian life in terms of Colossians 3:3, "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God". It is not only from the eyes of the world that our new life in Christ is hidden, but also from our own eyes and senses. Even by ourselves the reality of our risen life in Christ can be apprehended and grasped only by faith. In addition to his constant reference to Co.3:3, Calvin never forgets that at the height of Paul's exultant description in Romans, chapter 8, of the victory he at present enjoys through the resurrection of Christ, he adds that we nevertheless are being "killed all the day long", and are like sheep destined for slaughter.


(2) Cf. serm. on Job 14:5-12, C.O.33:675. Car si on regarde les enfants de Dieu, on trouvera qu'ils sont affliges, qu'il semble qu'ils doivent estre retranchez du genre humain, comme s'ils n'estoient pas dignes d'estre dessus la terre. Voila donc comme Dieu permet que les siens soient traites. Que faut-il donc? Que nous revonions a ce que dit saint Paul aux Colossiens (Col.3:3), c'est assavoir, que nous sommes morts, mais nostre vie est cachee en nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, et Dieu la manifestera quand il sera temps. And serm. on Gal.2:20-1, C.O.50:447. In comm. on Rom.8:19, C.O. 49:152, Calvin describes the new life as lying hid sub deformi habitu.


(4) Rom.3:36, Cf e.g. comm. on John 6:39, C.O.47:147.
We must be content, then, in this present life to share visibly rather in the pattern of Christ's death than in the pattern of His glory. Indeed, our state at present, viewed outwardly, is more analogous to being buried with Christ than to having risen with Christ, and Calvin sometimes uses the analogy of burial to describe the extent of the hiddenness of our risen life in Christ. The difference between Christ in His burial and ourselves is, however, that the time for His remaining buried was limited by God to last until the third day. We, however, must be willing to submit patiently to our state of burial lasting not only for a few days, but until the end of our life. We have to live in this world "like poor lost people" until the proper time assigned by God for the manifestation of our true life.

The nature of our redemption, then, is such that we have to be content to see it fulfilled for us in Jesus Christ, to reckon it as ours because it is there for us in Jesus Christ, and to wait for

(3) Or S. Paul nous exhorte à estre conformez à Iesus Christ, non seulement quant à sa mort mais aussi quant à sa sepulture. Car il y en a d'aucuns qui seroient contens de mourir avec nostre Seigneur Iesus pour une minute de temps, mais à la longue ils s'ennuyent. Et pour ceste cause il ay dit qu'il ne nous faut point seulement mourir pour un coup, mais il nous faut souffrir patiemment d'estre ensevelis iusques à la fin.
for the full enjoyment and effect of it at the second coming of
Christ. We must learn to look away from our present analysable
subjective experience to Jesus Christ, and find our life in Him.
We must not forget that faith really possesses everything that it
finds in Christ, and we are right to rejoice in what we now
completely possess in this way.

Yet faith lives not merely by looking towards what is in
Christ but by real present participation in Him. Faith not only
looks to Christ, it also feeds on Christ. Therefore Calvin can
speak of the fullness of life which at present resides only in
Christ the Head as flowing to the members though merely in drops
or small portions. Indeed he suggests even that if we had
sufficient faith such a trickle might become even a river.

(1) Serm. on Eph. 1:13-14, C.O. 51:308. Il est vrai que nous sommes
rachetés par nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ: et il nous a esté
donné pour Redemption ...... mais cependant l'effet et la
joissance n'en est pas encore. Il y a donc double redemption:
il y a celle qui a esté accomplie en la personne de nostre
Seigneur Iesus Christ: et l'autre est celle que nous attendons,
et qui se déclarera en nous à sa venue.

d'autant plus que les fideles se voyent decliner, ils sont
advertis et sollicité de regarder en haut.

(3) Comm. on Ps. 16:10, C.O. 31:157. Unde secuitur, vitae
plenitudam cuae in capite solo residet, guttatim solum vel
per partes ad membra defluere.

At any rate we really now taste the first fruits of what will be ours at the final resurrection. Such first fruits are a mere foretaste (gustus). But they are such a foretaste as to "allure us to the desire of heavenly benefits that in them we may find satisfaction, and to be a sufficient pledge of the reality and certainty of that for which we wait."

(1) Ibid. In his commentary on 1 Cor. 15:29, C.O.49:546, Calvin suggests the same thought.
Meditation on the future or heavenly life

Our Christian life finds its focus and inspiration in the ascended Christ

Our Christian life strains towards the future life

Our participation both in the death and resurrection of Christ should stir us up to meditatio futurae vitae

Meditatio involves meditating, aspiration and faith
Our Christian life should find its focus and inspiration not only in the death and resurrection of Christ but also in His ascension. Calvin insists that we can even now in actual practice not only rise with Christ from the death of sin into a new life, but also ascend with Christ above this world. Christ ascended in order that we might ascend with Him, not only at the last day, but even now. Indeed, says Calvin, we must ascend now with Christ if we do not wish to be separated from Him, for He has entered His heavenly life in order that He might "draw believers after Him". Calvin can utter a warning against a devotion that stops short with the risen Christ and does not ascend to heaven with Him to seek happiness there. "Ascension follows resurrection: hence if we are the members of Christ we must ascend into heaven, because He, on being raised up from the dead was received up into heaven that He might draw us with Him". When we ask how such an ascent of the mind and heart above this world to the ascended Christ is possible here and now, we find ourselves forced to examine what Calvin means by meditatio coelestis vitae, for it is by such meditatio that we commune with the ascended Christ, and the focal point of such

such meditatio is the ascended Christ.

Our Christian life must, besides this focus on what is "above", also have a constant emphasis on what is held out for it in the future. Meditatio coelestis vitae is for Calvin the same thing as Meditatio futurae vitae. The Christian life is a life that strains towards a completion and fulfilment that belong to it only beyond death. It finds the present full of meaning and purpose only because it knows that the future has meaning and certainty. It is a constant and bold forward march through the darkness of this world to the day of resurrection.

This means that when we speak of "salvation", we must think of it as a process embracing the whole course of our present life and completed only in the glory of the life to come. Regeneration is thus merely the beginning of salvation. Whatever gift God gives us here and now can be truly appreciated only if we see it as part of this complete plan, and as a token and pledge of an eternal glory which cannot yet be perceived or measured.

(3) Serm. on Job 14:13-15, C.O.33:690-1. Il a mis maintenant sa grâce en nous; à quel propos Dieu nous aurait-il donné courage de le servir et honorer, aussi nous aurait donne l'esprit d'adoption, sinon pour estre certifiez de l'esperance que nous avons de la gloire immortelle? tout cela seroit inutile. Ainsi donc, ce changement que nous appercevons autourd'hui en nous, est un testomigne infallible de ceste gloire celeste que nous ne voyons point encore, et laquelle nous est cachee: mais Dieu nous en donnera une bonne arre, comme il est dit que le S. Esprit en est l'arre et le gage. Cf. comm. on John 6:27, C.O.47:139. Ideo spiritus dona recipere nos convenit, ut tesserae sint ac pignora vitae aeternae.
The fact of our present participation in the resurrection of Christ should stir us up to such meditation on the heavenly life. It has already been pointed out that we are to regard our present experience of regeneration as a foretaste that should make us long for a more full and perfect participation in Christ hereafter. We must regard the gift of "life" which we now increasingly enjoy in Christ as but a pledge of ultimate "fullness of life". In the midst of the growing measure of freedom which we at present experience we must groan and long after the complete freedom of the life to come. We must regard our present experiences of deliverance by the power of Christ from sin and misery as "a sort of preparation for the last resurrection". It is thus that the first fruits which we now taste should stir us up to press forward to the full reality of which they are the pledges.

Our present participation in the death of Christ should also stir us up to meditation on the future life. We are daily exercised under the cross by God that we may seek our true rest elsewhere.

(1) see p. 116
(5) Cf. above PR 462-3
elsewhere than in this world. "As the condition of the godly during the whole course of their life is very miserable, Christ properly calls them to the hope of the heavenly life". It is indeed "the principal use of the cross" that it has this effect of detaching us from this present life and of making us aspire towards the future life. Our faith could not possibly stand firm in the midst of all the afflictions with which the faithful are oppressed in this present life in which the tokens of our resurrection life are few and obscure, unless we "keep out of our view the condition of the present life, and apply our minds and our senses to the last day". The cross therefore should always be regarded as a ladder by which the minds and hearts of man might ascend to heaven. Calvin insists that just as we should never become so absorbed in contemplating the death of Christ without at the same time bringing to mind the glory of His resurrection, so in our experience of the cross we ought to remember with joy and gladness that our participation in the sufferings of Christ is bound to be accompanied at length in a full


(2) Comm. on Matt.5:10, C.O.45:164.

(3) Inst. 3:9: (Summary of Chapter)


full participation in the glory of His resurrection. "We must always bear in mind this transition from the cross to the resurrection". Only when the cross thus directs our eyes to the power of His resurrection can the cross be said to triumph in our hearts, unless our experience of the cross achieves this end of raising our minds to heaven, then indeed our situation would be deplorable indeed.

All our sufferings, therefore, should be regarded by us as a stage in the complete process of death and resurrection in Christ which is to lead to the consummation of the final glorification of both body and soul in Christ. The life of Christ on earth, (which in the Gospels is viewed as the suffering of Christ and is closely related to His death) is, for Calvin, a prelude to His death. The Christian should also regard his own suffering as a prelude to death "for the whole course of our life leads to the destruction of the external man". The people of God, therefore, throughout their earthly life continually "lie under the shadow of death on account of the various afflictions which they must continually endure".

(2) Inst. 3:9:6.
(3) Ibid.
The life of a Christian viewed from its outward aspect "differs nothing from death"; and the Christian can be described suitably as a dead man.

Meditatio futurae vitae involves thinking about the nature and reality and glory of the life that is beyond and above. To concentrate our minds on such a subject is all the more necessary since the signs of corruption and decay and death in this present world tend to crowd in upon our mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts. It involves "intensity of aim" and concentration of the whole mind and intellect. It is "true and holy thinking" (cogitatio) which "bears us up to heaven" that there we may adore Christ. Our model for such concentration and application should be the unjust steward (of the Parable) who typifies the industry and skill of the men of this world in conducting their business. Such meditation should be our unceasing care and business on this earth. We must struggle to discipline ourselves against opposing temptations to become mentally obsessed in the cares and pleasures of this life. When Jesus calls on His disciples to "Watch", He is

(1) Comm. on Col.3:3, C.O.52:118.
(3) Comm. on 2 Cor.4:17, C.O.50:53. Verum cuia visibilis est corruptio, renovatio autem invisibilis: Paulus, ut carnaem praesentis vitae affectum nobis excutiat, miserias praesentes cum futura felicitate componit.
(6) Comm. on 1 Pet.1:9, C.O.55:214. Vita haec et quaecunque ad corpus pertinent, magne sunt impedimenta, ne animus nostrar
calling us precisely to this "uninterrupted attention which keeps
our minds in full activity, and makes us pass through the world
like pilgrims".

An important element in the mental activity of meditating
on the future life is to compare soberly the worth and glory and
stability of the heavenly life with the comparative poverty and
miseries and uncertainty of this present world. Calvin is
confident that if we soberly and fairly make this comparison it is
bound to engender within us a proper hatred and contempt for this
fading life, true patience to bear its miseries and true moderation
in indulging in its pleasures. "If heaven is our country, what
can earth be but a place of exile? If departure from the world is
entrance into life, what is the world but a sepulchre, and what is
residence in it but immersion in death?....Thus when the earthly is
compared with the heavenly life, it may undoubtedly be despised and
trampled underfoot". Such meditatio should mean the end of all
the exaggerated fancies about the length of life on this earth by
which men drug themselves into a false sense of security.

(1) ad futurae et spiritualis vitae cogitationem se applicet.
Hanc ergo nobis toto studio meditandam proponit Apostolus.
vigilantiae: nomine continua illa notatur attentio, qua facit ut erectis sursum mentibus in terra peregrinemur.
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor.4:17, C.C.50:58. Haec autem sola comparatio
(4) Comm. on Ps.90:13-6, C.C.31:835. Nam imaginatio longi
temporis somori similis est, in quo torpemus omnes, donec
coelestis vitae meditatio inane hoc terreni status
figmentum absorbret.
It is obvious that for Calvin meditatio implies also a strong element of desire and aspiration after the heavenly life. We must meditate on the future life not as those who are neutrally disposed observers, but "with our whole heart". Meditatio is the opposite of contemptio, and as contemptio indicates a revulsion from this world so meditatio equally implies movement of desire towards the life to come. To meditate on the kingdom of God is, for Calvin, the same as seeking with the Spirit that realm which is invisible to the flesh. It is to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven instead of entangling ourselves in the snares of this world. What we set before our minds in this meditation on the heavenly life is the supreme good and final goal of human life. The ascended Christ in whom we find our perfect happiness is there in Heaven where our mind is raised by meditatio. It is but natural that we should desire what constitutes for us the supreme good and our highest happiness.

There is an extremely close connection between faith and meditatio futurae vitae, for faith itself, according to Calvin, has the power to raise the hearts of men up to communion with the

1 Inst. 3:9:1, Sic enim habendum est, muncquam serio ad futurae vitae desiderium ac meditationem erigi animum, nisi praesens contemtj ante imbutus fuerit.
2 Inst. 3:9:2. Toto pectore
3 Inst. 3:9:1.
5 Comm. on Matt. 6:20, C.0.45:205.
6 Comm. on Matt. 6:21, C.0.45:205.
7 Comm. on Matt. 6:21, C.0.45:205.
8 See p. 31-2
the ascended Christ, and to enable men to grasp now what is their future in Christ. Thus through meditatio there is the real ascent of the mind or soul or heart to the ascended Christ. We thereby raise our minds to heaven. It is a "true and holy thinking about Christ, which forthwith bears us up to heaven, that we may there adore Him, and that our minds may dwell with Him". Those who meditate upon the heavenly life are "those whose minds have been raised above the world by a taste of the heavenly life". It must be remembered, too, that such movement up to heaven with the mind and heart cannot take place through the unaided efforts of man's own mind, but only by means of participation in the sacramental worship of the Church which is, for Calvin, the ladder by which the faithful mount up to heaven there to participate in Christ or the hand of God stretched down to us in order to lift us to Himself.

(1) Inst. 3:9:6. Deploratissimi ergo essent, nisi in caelum mente eracta, superarent quicquid in mundo est. Cf. sermon. on Job 14:1-4, C.O.33:653. Ce n'est point assez d'avoir cognu la brefvete de nostre vie....Pourant nous avons å faire comparaison de la vie celeste, å laquelle Dieu nous appelle tous les iours: et en ce faisons, nouspourrons mepriser les choses basses et corruptibles de ce monde...et puis nous pourrons estre eslevez en haut, pour prendre la tout nostre contentement et repos.


(3) Comm. on Ps. 30:6, C.O.31:235. ...qui coelestis vitae gustu supra mundum feruntur....

(4) Comm. on Ps. 34:2, C.O.31:780. Unde colligimus nimium esse stupidos qui ordinem a Deo mandatum, quasi possent proprio marte in coelum conscendere, secure negligunt.

(5) Cf. Ibid. quia scalis sibi sciebat esse opus per quas in coelum conscenderet, visibile vero sanctuarium vice scalarum esse....Frustra nos ad se vocaret (Deus), nisi etiam descendere ad nos vicissim: vel saltum interpositis mediis, manus quod-ammodo ad nos sursum tollendos extenderest.
PART II
CHAPTER 5

Repentance as dying and rising with Christ

The whole process of dying and rising with Christ is repentance.

Repentance also involves a change of heart.

Repentance and faith are inseparable, though each relates, to an extent, to a different aspect of the Gospel.

The outward signs accompanying repentance.

Repentance is characterised by self-denial and by newness of life.
The whole process of our dying and rising with Christ is, for Calvin, repentance or sanctification. The word "sanctification" possibly refers more properly to the process when it is viewed as a whole - in its inward and outward aspects. The word "repentance" refers chiefly to the change of heart involved, and to the effect which such a change has spontaneously on the outward behaviour. Repentance is our response to Christ. Sanctification is our whole participation in Christ. The word "repentance" is used by Calvin as almost interchangeable with "conversion" or "regeneration". Calvin describes repentance as a process of "conversion to God", and he defines this conversion of the life to consist in "the mortification of the flesh and of the old man, and the quickening of the Spirit." Involved in the doctrine of repentance Calvin finds a "rule for holy living". This rule consists of three continuous exercises: self denial, the mortification of the flesh, and meditating upon the heavenly life.

Repentance is therefore not to be thought of as merely a certain kind of feeling, or as one stage in the religious life which might lead to some higher form of Christian life no longer deserving of the name "repentance". Nor is repentance to be thought of as merely an attitude. It is true that the response of man to the Gospel arises from an attitude which might be called an attitude of repentance, but strictly speaking the term "repentance" should be used to cover the whole response of the man of faith.

(2) Inst. 3:3:5.
to the Gospel in outward life, in mind, attitude and will.

Yet repentance is a "conversion of life" which involves a "transformation not only in external works, but in the soul itself". The whole habit of the soul has to be changed before "fruits worthy of repentance" can be brought forth in the outward life.

Since the Roman Church divorced the outward aspect of repentance from the inward renewal of the heart and mind, looking on repentance as an external discipline, Calvin at times emphasised the inward aspect of repentance at the expense of its external aspect. He can define repentance as exclusively an affair of the heart, an inward and hidden renewal of the man. He refers to the outward amendment of life which accompanies this inward change as the "fruits of inward repentance." Indeed he can say that "when the name repentance is applied to the external profession it is used improperly". Yet inappropriate ways of speaking are often the best way of expressing the truth, therefore he can also speak as if the cleansing of the heart were but the initial stage of true

(1) Inst. 3:3:6. Since repentance is the turning of the whole heart, repentance as well as faith unites the heart in integrity if it is sincere and serious repentance. Cf. comm. on Joel 2:12-13, C.0.42:542. Ideo propheta diserte hic denuntiat simulationem hanc Deo non placere, et nihil profecturos esse qui tantum poenitentiam aliquam obtendunt externis signis, sed opus esse serio et sincero cordis affectu. Hoc intelligit per totum cor, non quod possit inventiri perfecta poenitentia in hominibus, sed cor totum vel integrum opponitur dimidio.

(2) Inst. 3:4:1 Cf. comm. on Matt. 3:8, C.0.45:118.

(3) Serm. on Matt. 3:9-10, C.0.46:547. La repentance, comme nous avons touché, est une chose cachée; elle ha son siege au coeur de l'homme, mais les fruits se declairent en toute la vie.

Comm. on Matt. 3:8, C.0.45:118. Notandum est, quod bona opera fructus vocantur poenitentiae; est enim poenitentia res interior, quae sedem in corde et anima habet, sed fructus deinde suos profert in vitae mutatione.

repentance which also includes in itself the resultant reformation in outward behaviour. The outward change of life, however, is simply the visible aspect and proof of the inward grace of repentance, and the one cannot possibly take place without the accompaniment of the other.

Repentance and faith, no less than sanctification and justification, are constantly linked together in the scriptures. The one cannot exist without the other and they cannot be separated. Yet even though they cannot be separated, they must be distinguished, "for repentance is a turning to God, as when we frame ourselves and all our life to obey Him, but faith is a receiving of the grace offered us in Christ". Calvin indulges in some rather subtle thinking when he faces the question of which grace should be thought of as first, with respect to time, in the heart. He says emphatically that "repentance not only always follows faith, but is produced by it", and he strongly condemns the error of "those who think that repentance precedes faith instead of flowing from or being produced by it, as the fruit by the tree". It is obvious that such an error could easily give rise to a doctrine of justification by works. Nevertheless

(1) Comm. on James 4:8, C.0.55:418. Unde colligimus, quae vera sit poenitentiae ratio ac natura: ubi scilicet non tantum corrigitur vita exterior, sed initium fit ab animi repurgatione.
(3) Inst. 3:3:5.
(4) Ibid.
(6) Inst. 3:3:5.
(8) Inst. 3:3:1 But there is no "period of time" in which faith gives birth to repentance. 3:3:2.
Calvin can include faith as part of the work of turning to God which is repentance, and when he comes to passages in the scripture where repentance seems to be made prior to faith, he can argue that since faith is a work of the Holy Spirit, it can only be begotten within us after the work of renewal has begun. Thus faith must flow from regeneration. But this preliminary regeneration which precedes faith is a very secret and obscure work of the Spirit. As far as human sense can investigate, faith always precedes repentance or regeneration. Arguing along another line he can make the cautious and careful statement that "the beginning of repentance is a preparation for faith". He obviously wants us to think of faith and repentance as being largely simultaneous.

As a general rule, Calvin relates faith and repentance to different aspects of the Word of God. Faith is the response of the Word of God in its gracious aspect. "Faith has respect to the promises of grace". Faith is the response of love and confidence to God's fatherhood as it is reflected in the promises of the Word. Faith is man arising to lay hold of what is offered in Christ for his possession and salvation. Calvin finds that the response of repentance, however, arises out of the sterner aspect of the revelation of God given in the Gospel. Repentance proceeds from a "sincere and serious fear of God", rather than out of the confident

(1) Inst. 3:3:5. Equidem nec me latet, sub poenitentiae nomine totam ad Deum conversionem comprehendi, cuius pars non postrema fides est. Cf. comm. on John 1:13, C.0.47:13. Ergo secundum diversos respectus fides regenerationis pars est.
(2) Cf. comm. on John 1:13, C.0.47:13.
(3) Comm. on Acts 20:21, C.0.48:463. Poenitentiam non ideo priore loco nominat, quod tota praececat fidel, quum pars eius ex fide emanet, eiusque sit effectus: sed quia poenitentiae initium praeparatio sit ad fidel. Initium voco nostri displicentiam, quae metu irae Dei serio tactos ad quae remedium nos impellit.
(4) Inst. 3:2:7
(5) Inst. 3:3:5.
apprehension of God's fatherhood out of which faith springs and is nourished. Repentance takes its rise out of the grief occasioned by the apprehension of sin in the light of God's judgment upon it and by the consideration of God's wrath. The thought that inspires repentance is "that God will one day ascend His tribunal to take an account of all words and actions". It must not be thought, however, that in Calvin faith is exclusively thought of as the response of grace and repentance exclusively attached to God's wrath and judgment. Calvin can say that "fear and faith are mutually connected". He can also say that "repentance has its origin in the grace of God". After all we are here dealing with a realm of personal encounter and personal response where the action of God and the response of man cannot possibly be systematically analysed and neatly summarised, and Calvin is too great a thinker to attempt such exact systematisation.

The grief or sorrow towards God which gives rise to repentance is accompanied by other "signs and accompaniments" of repentance. Calvin

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:10, C.0.50:89 Hanc tristitiam Paulus causam facit et origem poenitentiae: quod est diligenter observandum. Nisi enim sibi disillicet peccator, vitam suam oderit, ac serio dolet agitatione peccati: nunquam ad Dominum convertetur. Rursus fieri nequit ut talis in homine sit tristitia, quin novum animum pariat. Ergo a dolore incipit poenitentia. Cf. sermon. on Job 42:6-8, C.0.35:489. Car jamais les hommes ne detesteront et leurs oeuvres et leurs propos, s'ils ne sentent Dieu pour leur Iuge. Cf. also sermon on Job 42:9-17. C.0. 35:502. Car combien que Dieu se monstre benin et volontaire envers nous: toutes fois nous avons besoin qu'en partie il se monstre difficile. Voire, mais c'est pour nous induire à une meilleure desplaisance de nos pechez: car il nous semble souvent qu'il nous suffist d'avoir eu un bon soupir, comme on parle en commun langage, et nous ioons quasi avec Dieu. La repentance nous doit rendre du tout confus, elle nous doit saisir de frayeur quand nous cognoissons l'ire de Dieu qui est pour nous accabler du tout. Cf. sermon. on Matt. 3:1-2 etc. C.0.46:497
(2) Inst. 3:1:7. 
(3) Inst. 3:2:23, Cf. sermon. on Luke 1:26-30, C.0.46:70 Voyla donc la crainte, qui est comme un vray preparatif de la foy.
(5) Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:11, C.0.50:90.
finds a good summary of the "affections conjoined with repentance" and of the attitude of the true penitent, in St. Paul's catalogue in 2 Cor. 7:10. He enumerates these as "carefulness, excuse, indignation, fear, desire, zeal, revenge", and in the Institutes he gives a simple exposition of the meaning of these terms as a sufficient description of repentance. In his preaching his language is perhaps stronger and he uses terms to convey the impression that true repentance should at times be accompanied by feelings of utter dismay, terror, anguish of soul and despair. There are times too when repentance should be accompanied by outward signs that men can see, (in accordance with the ancient custom of repenting in dust and ashes) betokening the sorrow and anguish that is felt in the heart. But such extreme emotions, and such public manifestation of repentance, are normally to be reserved for times of "special repentance", when a man has been involved in a particularly grievous fall from grace, or in cases when public scandal needs to be put right by public signs of penitence.

The necessity for such special exercise of repentance at particular times must not, however, obscure the fact that we are so constantly beset

(1) Inst. 3:3:15
(2) Cf. serm. on Matt. 3:1-3 etc., C.0.46:498. Or comment est-ce que L'Escriture sainte parle de penitence? C'est que nous soyons tellement aneantis, qu'il n'y ait que frayeur en nous et desespoir, coignissant que devant Dieu nous sommes damnez, et qu'il n'y a nul remede. Cf. serm. on Job 42:6-8, C.0.35:491. Il faut sur tout que le coeur soit navre, qu'ayans horreur d'avoir provoque l'ire de nostre Dieu contre nous, nous concevions une angoisse pour nous condamner, et que nous soyons du tout confus en nous-mesmes.
(4) Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:11, C.0.50:92. Verum interest, clam coram Deo quis peccaverit, an palam coram mundo. Cuius arcanum est peccatum, satis est si coram Deo ita sit affectus. Ubi autem manifestum est peccatum, requiritur etiam manifesta poenitentiae approbatio. Cf. serm. on Job 42:6-8, C.0.35:490-491, and comm. on Matt. 11:21, C.0.45:312.
by sin as to require to cultivate what Calvin calls "ordinary repentance" all the days of our life.¹ Such repentance need not be accompanied by outward signs or violent emotions. Indeed, such repentance must be the daily exercise of all Christians.² For Calvin, the Christian life is simply the constant practice of repentance.³ "If we would stand in Christ we must aim at repentance, cultivate it during our whole lives, and continue it to the last."⁴

Repentance is characterised by self-denial. The repentant man hates himself. He knows that his whole life and being is worthy of nothing more than total condemnation before the judgment of God. Therefore in the process of repentance he condemns himself, taking revenge upon himself for his own sins with intense self-hatred.⁵ This means renouncing

(1) Inst. 3:3:18. Specialis ergo poenitentia...ordinaria non tollit, cui per totum vitae curriculum operam dare nos cogit naturae corruptio.
(2) Serm. on Job 42:6-8, C.0.35:490. D'avantage, que ce signe n'est pas tousious requis, mais que c'estoit pour faire une protestation publique d'un crime exorbitant. Il faut que tous fideles tout le temps de leur vie avisent à se repentir et desplaire: car nous ne passons jamais un jour qu'il y ait beaucoup de povretiez en nous: sans que nous pensions, nous ferons des fautes infinies.... Ainsi nous avons occasion de gémir: et toutes fois nous ne ferons point de protestation manifeste devant les hommes. La penitence donc pourra bien estre sans avoir les signes exterieurs conjoincts.
(3) Inst. 3:3:1, 3:3:2, Comm. on Matt. 11:21, C.0.45:312. Scimus, non exigi poenitentiam a fidelibus tantum ad paucos dies, sed ut se in ea meditanda assidue usque ad mortem exerceant.
(4) Inst. 3:3:20. Cf. serm. on Matt. 3:1-3, etc., C.0.46:500. La penitence n'est pas que nous commencions seulement à croire en Iesus Christ:... il faut que journellement la penitence se renouvelle, par manière de dire, c'est à dire que c'est exercice soit continuel, et que ce soit nostre estude pour toute nostre vie.
(5) Serm. on Gal. 5:14-18, C.0.51:29. Que nous apprenions à nous hayr nous-mesmes, et à estre fachez contre nous, à nous venger de nostre malice (comme saint Paul aussi en parle), car la penitence emporte cela que les hommes se condamment, qu'ils se haissent, qu'ils se vengent d'eux mesmes quand ils voyent qu'ils sont corrompus en toute leur vie. Cf. comm. on 2 Cor: 7:11, C.0.50:91.
completely our old nature.\(^1\) This should also involve self-punishment, for in repentance we are meant to "anticipate by repentance the judgment of God."\(^2\) But it must not be thought that such repentant self-condemnation could ever appease the anger of God or obtain His pardon.\(^3\) Repentance is response to God's grace and judgment, but never a means of obtaining grace or averting judgment. The penitent man, seeing that God has forgiven his faults, refuses to flatter and nourish the self-centred will and wisdom whose vicious nature and fearful potentiality are so clearly revealed in the event of forgiveness. Therefore the forgiven man becomes his own judge and punisher, and God establishes his righteousness more effectively and radically than through overt and catastrophic visitations of judgment on the earth.\(^4\)

\(^1\) Serm. on Job 42:6-8, C.O.35:439. Notons bien donc que la vraye penitence emporte la haine du peché, voire iusques au bout; tellement que l'homme se reprouve, et se haysse d'autant qu'il ne se trouve pas tel qu'il devroit; et qu'aimant la justice de Dieu il condamne tout ce qui est en lui, et ne cherche sinon d'estre despouillé de ceste vieille peau dont il est enveloppe. Cf. comm. on Eph, 4:22, C.O.51:207. Requirit in homine christiano poenitentiam aut renovationem vitae. Eam constituit in abnegatione nostri, et spiritus sancti regeneratione. A priori itaque in parte incipit, iubens deponere aut exuere hominem veteran....Qui exuere vult hominem veteran, naturae suae renuntiet.


\(^3\) cf. ibid.

\(^4\) Serm. on Job 34:10-15, C.O.35:147. Dieu donc a bien ceste liberté d'abolir nos offenses sans les punir; et cependant cela ne derogue en rien à sa justice. Et pourquoi? Car quand Dieu nous veut pardonner nos fautes, comment en use-il? Ce n'est pas pour nourrir le mal qui est en nous; mais il nous en touche, et nous le remonstre, il nous fait sentir combien nous l'avons offensé, et puis il nous donne ceste affection de nous esplaire en nos pêchés, et d'y gemir. Quand nous sommes touchez ainsi de repentance, nous sommes iuges de nos fautes, et les condamnons: et par ce moyen voila Dieu qui a exercé son office.
Repentance is characterised equally by newness of life. Where there is true repentant self-denial inspired by the Spirit of God, then renovation inevitably follows and this renovation is manifested in a new life of justice, judgment, and mercy.¹ With the same zeal with which we take revenge upon ourselves, we are bound also to throw ourselves into the service of righteousness. The very force of our self-condemnation becomes the impulse which makes us henceforth "range ourselves" on the side of the Lord.²

Expressed in the simple and homely terms of the prophets: if we depart from evil we are bound to do good, if we cleanse ourselves from the evil of our doings before God, it must follow that we cease to do evil, and learn to do well.³ All this is bound to lead to that meditation on the heavenly life for which man was made in the image of God, which image will be finally restored when that heavenly life is finally attained after death. Therefore though through repentance we are annihilated and brought down to the dust before the judgment of God, nevertheless through the same repentance we are also raised up to heaven.⁴

¹ Inst. 3:3:8. Primus ad obedientiam Legis eius ingressus est illa naturae nostrae abnegatio. Postea renovationem designant a fructibus, qui inde consequuntur, iustitia, iudicio et misericordia.

² Serm. on Matt. 3:1-2 etc., C.0.46:499. Voyla par ou la penitence commence: et puis, que non seulement nous hayspons le pêche et le mal qui est en nous: mais voyans que nous sommes ennemis de Dieu, que nous ayons en detestation nostre malice... Or sommes-nous ainsi hays et despitez contre nostre meschante nature? il faut que nous desirions de nous ranger à Dieu, et de nous y ranger en telle sorte, que toutes nos affections soyent conformes à ses saintes commandemens.


⁴ Inst. 3:3:9. Uno ergo verbo poenitentiam interpretor regenerationem, cuius non alius est scopus nisi ut imago Dei... in nobis reformetur. etc.
PART III  CHAPTER 1

The true order of man's life in the restored image of God

The original pattern of man's life a pattern of order

The life of faith and meditatio futurae vitae a part of the original order of nature

The imago dei reflected in living such an ordered life in integrity and righteousness

The fall has thrown man's heart and environment into complete disorder

The purpose of redemption is the restitution of the original order and imago

This true order and imago seen in the revelation of God in the Gospel and in the humanity of Jesus Christ

The Christian life is therefore a life of order

This new ordering of life and affairs on earth has profound eschatological significance
The pattern of life which men was meant to fulfill had he not fallen from God, was a pattern of order. In the magnificent theatre of this world which was made to provide the setting of man's life, what should chiefly strike our admiration is the fair and beautiful order and arrangement of the universe - the "regular order of things" in the laws and decrees by which the universe is governed. This order gives a stability to Man's environment which cannot be shaken by the most violent upheavals. In this orderly environment man was placed so that he could live a life that reflected a planned order that would also be a witness to the beauty and glory of his Creator. This order was meant to be seen not only in the "organic parts" but more especially in the harmonious co-operation of his understanding mind and will whereby all his senses were governed in


(2) Comm. on Jer.31:35-6. C.O.38:698-99. Dicit in persona Dei, Ego sum qui sol em creavi, lunam et stellas: non cessavit continuus ordo a creatione mundi, quin sol peragat suum cursum: deinde et in luna... Ergo in coelis consideramus ordinem ita compositum et temperat um, ut nihil illic vel in hanc vel in illam partem declinit... Quam certa erit salus ecclesiae... Non est igitur metuendum, ne unquam excidat, salus ecclesiae, quia nuncgiam cessabunt naturae leges vel decreta.
in a right order. "There was an attempering (temperatura) in the several parts of the soul, which correspond with their various offices. In the mind perfect intelligence flourished and reigned, uprightness attended as its companion, and all the senses were prepared and moulded for due obedience to reason; and in the body there was a suitable correspondence with this internal order". This order of nature in the pattern of which man was created, and which he was meant to observe, includes an ordered social life between man and man. This finds its best pattern in the marriage relationship between man and woman. The main feature in Calvin's picture of the life of man in paradise which must strike the observer is that everything is arranged and moves in perfect order.

Part of this planned order for man's life was, that, he should live thankfully by the grace of God in the midst of the magnificence of his earthly environment, so full of "glorious specimens of the works of God". Yet while using to the full his


(2) Comm. on Gen.1:26, C.0.23:26-7. Erat enim in singulis animae partibus temperatura quae suis numeris constabat: in mente lux rectae inelligentiae vigebat ac regnabat, hic comes aderat mentis rectitudo, sensus omnes ad moderatum rationis obsequium prompti et formati: in corpore secabilis quaedam ad illum ordinem proptior.

(3) Comm. on Gen. 2:18, C.0.23:46-7.

his own many splendid endowments he was nevertheless not meant to find the true and full meaning of his creation in this present life which even for him had "no firm and settled constancy". He was meant rather to use this life with its opportunities and its glory for meditation on the better and heavenly life which was to be his final destiny. He was endowed with reason and was distinguished from the brute creation, for this very purpose. The glory of this earth was meant to enable him, helped by God's Word and by God's sacramental gift in the tree of life, to raise his mind to the greater glory of his heavenly inheritance. Thus the meditatio futurae vitae, and the life of faith in dependance on the grace of God, are, for Calvin, part of the original order of nature or of creation which man was made to observe.

It was through his living such an ordered and rightly proportioned life in the will of God that man's life reflected the image of God, and it is from this point of view that man is to be understood as made in the image of God. For man to have been made in the image of God does not mean for Calvin that he had some static impress on his soul, or some inherent faculty or endowment


(3) Ibid., Cf. T.F. Torrance "Calvin's Doctrine of Man" pp 32-4.
endowment which can be neatly defined. Man possessed the image of God by living continually by the Word of God and by constantly responding to the grace of God for which he was created. Calvin relates the image of God in man to his superiority over the rest of creation, to the divine righteousness which man reflects as a mirror, to the healthy condition of every part of man's life, to the response of meditatio futurae vitae to the grace of God, and to the ordered social and political relationships which he bears to other men and women. Calvin's basic thought on this matter is that "the leading feature in the renovation of the divine image must also have held the highest place in its creation". It is by contemplating what happens in our regeneration that we see what the image of God must originally have been like. It is on this basis that Calvin finds that for Adam to have been made in the image of God meant that he should live in an ordered integrity and righteousness, in

(1) Inst. 2:12:6; 1:15:3.
in dependance on the grace of his Creator, rising ever in communion with God through the Word of God which his mind was made to reflect and through the glory of created things, meditating on the heavenly life, and living in a truly ordered relation to his fellow creatures and his environment.

Through the fall of Adam man has not only been brought under the power of concupiscence but in this very event has had his life thrown into complete disorder and confusion so that no clear or unambiguous trace of the original order of creation in which his life reflected the image of God has been left. This fall of man into disorder is reflected in the universe around him and in his relations with his environment where the original order of nature has been corrupted. Man is no longer truly lord of his environment. It no longer serves him in an orderly fashion and it reflects in its corruption and decay the distortion of all man's original relations. Moreover man no longer uses his environment as

(1) Inst. 1:15:14 Dei imago... quae refulsit in Adam ante defectionem, postea sic vitiata et prope delete, ut nihil ex ruina nisi confusum, mutilum, labecue infectum supersit.

(Ia) Cf. serm. on Acts 1:6-8, C.0.48:609. Or il nous a déclaré les choses qui sont selon l'ordre de nature et comme il doit faire froid en hyèr et chaud en esté, que si quelquesfois nous voyons de grands froids en esté, cogoissons cue cela vient de nos pechez qui pervertissent l'ordre de nature, et cue pour l'enormité d'iceux nous meritons bien cue tout soit perverti. And Inst. 3:25:2.

(2) Comm. on Ps. 3:7, C.0.31:94. Certe si cuido adversum est hominibus in coelo vel in terra, iam collapsa est illa ordinis integritas, unde sequitur humanum genus, postquam defactioe Adae dissipatum est, non modo hac tam praecella et honorifica sorte privatum esse, ac priori domino non potiri: sed captivum teneri sub deformi pudendae servitute.

Cf. comm. on Ps. 104:21-2. C.0.32:92-3.
as a means whereby he can rise to communion with His Maker or a witness to his heavenly destiny. He uses it only for the gross ends of his immediate existence here on earth. It is, however, in man's own heart and mind and in man's relations with his fellow men that the disorder. Man employs himself otherwise than in seeking God's glory. In his heart there appears a "perpetual disorder and excess" in which there is no moderation, and in which "all affections with turbulent impetuosity exceed their due bounds".

So liable to this "excess" has man become that even those affections which might be regarded as good and noble in man can never be kept in their proper degree, and become corrupted by being out of proportion to the other aspects of man's life.

The purpose of our redemption is the restoration of the

(1) Serm. on Job 33:29-34:3, C.0.35:126. Ceux qui ne daignent prester l'oreille à Dieu et à sa vérité pour estre enseignez, et quand ils on désia esté instruite, ne cherchent d'estre confermez de plus en plus, pervertissent l'ordre de nature, mesmes qu'ils sont comme monstres et pires que les bestes brutes. Et pourquoy? Car une beste suivra son naturel.

(2) Comm. on Rom.11:36, C.0.49:232.

(3) Inst.3:3;12. iam vero quum ob naturae pravitatem omnes facultates adeo vitiatae sint ac corruptae, ut in omnibus actionibus eminat perpetua & tempora et intemperes: quia ab eiusmodi incontinentia separari nequeunt appetitiones, ideo vitiosas esse contendimus.

(4) Inst. 2:16:12. Moderiorio in naturae nostrae degradazione conspici non potest, ubi omnes affectus turbido impetu modum excedunt. Cf. comm. on 1 Cor.7:6, C.0.49:405. Respondeo ad prius: quum in omnibus humanis affectibus inordinatum excessum esse confitear, me non negare quin sit etiam in hac parte, quum vitiosam esse concedo; et prope bellinum. And on Ps.23:5, C.0.31:241. Plus satis ad luxuriam proni (sumus) natura. And on Phil.2:27, C.0.52:41.

(5) Serm. on Matt. 26:36-9, C.0.46:833-840.
the original order of man's life.

"It is the glory of our faith" says Calvin, "that God, the Creator of the world, in no way disregards the order which He Himself at first established". The work of Jesus Christ is to restore to man the image of God which was lost in Adam. "Adam was first created after the image of God, and reflected as in a mirror the divine righteousness; but that image, having been defaced by sin must now be restored in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed...nothing else than the formation anew of the image of God in them...The design contemplated by regeneration is to recall us from our wanderings to that end for which we were created". The work of the Spirit in our hearts is to "begin to reform us to the image of God" with a view to the complete restoration of that image both in ourselves and in the whole world.

That our lives should be conformed to the image of God is therefore a most important aspect of Calvin's conception of the Christian life and of his ethics. This image to which we are to be reformed has been set before us in Jesus Christ who is the "living image of God His Father".

(1) Comm. on Ps. 11:4, C.O.31:123.
(4) Serm. on Job 1:6-8, C.O.33:59.
This means a real effort to conform our own lives to the example of the forgiving, gentle, and generous love of God our Father as we see Him reflected in Jesus Christ, remembering that to be the children of God involves real likeness in behaviour and attitude to the Heavenly Father. We must never forget that there is nothing in which we more truly resemble God than in doing good to others and in this respect we are to seek to reproduce in ourselves the Father's disposition (ingenium). "What God is in heaven, such He bids us to be in this world" says Calvin. This is a very far-reaching command. It means making our Christian love reflect God's free grace towards the helpless, His providential care for the poor, His giving of light in this world's darkness, His ready defence of the widows and orphans. It also means remembering at the same time that God's gentleness is the gentleness of One who hates iniquity.

To live a life conformed to the image of God, also means for

(1) Serm. on Gal.6:1-2, C.0.51:63. Il nous faut estre conformez à Dieu, puis qu'il a bien daigne nous choisir pour ses enfans, comme aussi nostre Seigneur Jesus le remonstre. Soyez semblables à vostre pere celeste (dit-il) qui a pitie mesme de ceux qui n'en sont pas dignes... Regardons à la nature de luy qui nos appelle pour estre conformes à son exemple: c'est que nous soyons humains.

(2) Comm. on Ps.30:5, C.0.31:234.

(3) Comm. on 1 John 4:17, C.0.55:357.

(4) Serm. on Matt.3:9-10, C.0.46:548. Car il veut que nous-nous employons principalement envers ceux qui n'en peuvent plus: comme c'est son office de repaistre les povres affamez, d'illuminer ceux qui sont en tenebres, et d'aider à ceux qui n'ont nul secours; et d'autant qu'il est le protecteur des vefves et des orphelins, et que brief il maintient ceux qui n'ont de quoy estre supportez selon le monde, il veut aussi que nous employons toutes nos facultez en cest endroict.

(5) Serm. on Gal.6:1-2, C.0.51:63.
for Calvin, however, to live an ordered life, for the pattern of the restored *imago Dei* is a pattern of order. *Imago Dei* consists more in a reformation or restoration of order rather than in an "influx of substance". The end of regeneration is "that we may be made like God and that His glory may shine in us", but this "glory" and likeness to God are evidenced at present primarily not by some vague radiant splendour added to our natural personalities but rather in the "rectitude and integrity of the whole soul". "Christ...is called the second Adam because He restores us to true and substantial integrity".

It is to be noted that Calvin lays great stress on the fact that in the humanity of Jesus we see the banishment of all excess or , and a perfect pattern of order of true moderation and harmony. It is in this respect that Jesus Christ is quite different from all other human beings. "For the reason why our feelings are sinful is that they rush on without restraint, and suffer no limit; but in Christ the feelings were adjusted (compositi) and regulated

(1) Inst. 1:15:5. *Atque ubi de imaginis instauracione disserit Paulus* (2 Cor. 3,18), *ex eis verbis elicere promptum est, non substantiae influxu, sed Spiritus gratia et virtute hominem fuisse Deo conformem.*

(2) Comm. on Col.3:10. C.O.52:121. *Hinc etiam discimus, tum cuius finis sit regenerationis nostrae, hoc est, ut Deo reddemur similis, ac in nobis reluceat eius gloria : tum quae sit Dei imago, cuius mentio fit apud Mosem, nempe totius animae rectitudo et integritas: ita ut homo sapientiam Dei, instilium et bonitatem quasi speculum repraesentet.*

regulated (moderati) in obedience to God and were altogether free from sin". The surest sign of the universal corruption of human nature is that in all men the inward affections are constantly turbulent and uncontrollable, unbalanced, continually liable to be directed to unlawful ends and to be aroused to excess by the merest trifles. But "Christ...had no passion or affection...that ever went beyond proper bounds or was not founded on reason and sound judgment". This perfect moderation of all the passions so that they never became sinful through excess is shown by Jesus not only through a "sobriety (temperantia) truly divine" in His use and enjoyment of the ordinary things of life, but also in His self-restraint from over-violent emotion even in the midst of perplexity or fear or grief. As a result of this perfect self-restraint, Calvin, using a figure from music, can describe even the tension between the two wills that marked the inner life of our Lord as a tension that produces complete unity and harmony. "As musical sounds, though various and differing from each other, are so far from being discordant that they produce sweet melody and fine harmony; so in Christ there was a remarkable example of adaptation
adaptation between the two wills, the will of God and the will of man, so that they differed from each other without any conflict or opposition.

Therefore in living our Christian lives "we must wisely observe order" says Calvin. He points out that the word "religion" means gathering up a thing within bonds and thus true religion implies an orderliness which is lacking under superstition.

The overcoming of disorder in this world is therefore for Calvin a fact of profound *eschatological* significance. Calvin interprets our Lord's words in John 13:31, "Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him" as meaning that in the Cross the whole of creation has been already restored to its original glory and order. "In the Cross of Christ as in a most splendid theatre, the incomparable goodness of God has been displayed before the whole world. Indeed, in all creatures both high and low the glory of God shines, but nowhere has it shone more illustriously than in the Cross in which there has taken place a wonderful change (*conversio*) of things, the condemnation of all men has been made manifest, sin has been abolished, salvation has been given back to men, and in short the whole world has been renewed and all things restored to order!" But the fulfilment of this renewal and

(1) Comm. on Matt, 26:39, C.0.45:723.
(3) Inst 1:12:1.
and restoration of order through the Cross is something that has to be manifested in the life of society as the influence of the Cross is experienced from day to day. Throughout the present world where the devil and the flesh hold sway there is confusion and deformity. Yet the reformation is constantly taking place for Satan is being cast out of his dominion and the power of evil is being subdued. All this is "the remarkable effect of that death of Christ which is daily being manifested".

Calvin approves the interpretation of the word krisis in the text "Now is the judgment of this word, now shall the prince of this world be cast out, as referring not so much to the condemnation of this world but as to the reformation of this world and its restoration to proper order. The death of Christ is therefore the commencement of a well-regulated condition which will find its full climax in the renovation of the world.

Therefore Calvin sees signs of the re-establishment of the Kingdom of God whenever in the life of the regenerate man there is true self-denial and mortification of concupiscence, effected

(1) Comm. on John 12:31-2, C.0.47:293-4.
(2) Ibid. Nam vox hebraica mishpat, quae per iudicum redditur, rectam constitutionem significat. Scimus autem extra Christum Christum nihil in mundo nisi confusum esse. Etsi autem iam regnum Dei erigere coeperat Christus, mors tamen eius verum demum status rite compositi exordium et plena mundi instauratio fuit. Notandum tamen simul, quod haec in mundo rectitudo constituat nequeat, quin regnum Satanae prius aboleatur, quin redigatur in nihilum caro et quidquid Dei iustitiae adversum est. Denique necessum est, ut mundi novitatem mortification praecedat.
effected through communion with the death of Christ, and resulting in the **restoration** of order where there has been *disorder* and confusion. In the new ordered existence and upright living manifested by the regenerate man, he sees true signs that the image of God is here being restored. It is true that these signs only faintly reflect the image which has been lost. For the final restoration of true order both in man's heart and in the universe we have to wait for the second coming of Christ to restore all things, nevertheless the whole new attitude and behaviour of the regenerate man in obedience to the word of God is indicative of the original pattern of man's life as he was created in Adam.

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1. Regno Dei oppositum omnis et confusio; nec enim quidquid ordinatum est in mundo, nisi quum moderatur ipse manu sua consilia et affect-us. Hinc colligimus, initium regni Dei in nobis esse veteris hominis interitum et nostri abnegationem, ut renovemur in aliam vitam.

2. Dei imago...nunc alicuam ex parte conspicitur in electis, quatenus spiritu regeniti sunt. Cf. comm. on 2 Cor.3:15, C.O.50:47.


4. It should be noted, however, that the image restored in Christ is far superior to that originally in Adam Cf. Inst. 2:12:6, 1:15:4, comm. on Eph.4:24 on 1 Cot.15:45.
PART III

CHAPTER 2

The true order of man's life reflected in the Law

The image of God in the Law

Consecration to God as the true meaning of the Law

Integrity and self-denial as the true meaning of the Law

The Holy Spirit and the Law

The Law as the perfect rule of righteousness
For Calvin the image of God which begins to be renewed in man throughout the course of his life on this earth consists in righteousness and true holiness. The effacing of the heavenly image in man through the fall meant the withdrawal of "wisdom, virtue, justice, truth and holiness". The renovation of man in the heavenly image is "manifested by the fruits produced by it, viz., justice, judgment and mercy". But this life of righteousness and holiness is simply life lived according to the law of God as summed up in the two tables of the ten commandments which sum up the fruits of repentance and outline what the image of God consists in. Therefore to live a life ordered according to the image of God is to live according to the law of God.

God "as He is in Himself" is for man in his present condition unapproachable and incomprehensible, in His majesty and glory and justice. There is in God a hidden justice or righteousness which it

(1) Inst. 3:3:9.
(2) Inst. 2:1:5.
(3) Inst. 3:3:8.
it is beyond us to conceive and which must remain concealed from us in our sinful state, or the sight of it would annihilate us. Nevertheless this rightousness is an aspect of the true image of God which we ourselves must reflect in our own lives, and even now in this life we must begin making progress towards this. God, therefore, knowing our weakness, and seeking to supply our need, accommodates Himself to our capacity and give us in the Law an image of His incomprehensible and hidden justice, so that by following the law we can reflect His image. Calvin sees in the Law, especially as we have it in the ten commandments, a pattern and image which truly reflects the perfect and yet hidden justice of God. "For therein God has delineated His own character that anyone exhibiting in action what is commanded would in some measure express in life the image of God".

Expressing the matter concisely Calvin asserts that there is a "double justice" in God, - there is the justice which is manifested in the Law, and the hidden justice in the eternal being of

(1) Serm. on Job 9:29-35, C.O.33:459. Mais tant y a quil y a encore une justice plus haute en Dieu. C'est à dire une perfection, à laquelle nous ne pouvons pas atteindre, et de laquelle nous ne pouvons pas approcher, jusques à ce que nous soyons faits semblables à lui, et que nous avons contemplé ceste gloire, qui maintenant nous est cachée, et que nous ne voyons sinon comme en un miroir et par obscurité.

(2) Serm. on Job 9:29-35, C.O.33:458-9. Il est vray que Dieu nous a bien baille en sa Loy un patron et une image de sa justice, mais c'a esté selon nostre capacité. Or savons-nous que nostre entendement est si rude, quil ne peut monter si haut, que de concevoir ce qui est en Dieu en perfection, Ainsi Conc la justice mesme qui est contenue en la Loy de Dieu, est une justice qui est compasse à la mesure des hommes.

Cf. also serm. on Job 15:11-16, C.O.33:718-730, and on Job 10:16-17, C.O.33:496.

(3) Inst. 2:8:51.
of God which exceeds all the capacities of men. In another passage he distinguishes between the *justice parfaite* in the being of God and the *justice moyenne* through which God presents Himself to man. The latter is a dim reflection, as in a mirror, of the former. But though the justice of the Law reflects only dimly the glory of the higher justice in the being of God which must remain hidden as long as men remain in the flesh, it nevertheless is a true revelation of the righteousness that dwells ineffably in the being of God. Even the sinless Angels, according to Calvin, in their service and adoration of God, regulate themselves not according to the ineffable justice which is too high even for them, but according to the expression of that righteousness in the Law. Moreover when God's people give themselves to keeping by faith the Law of God they are accounted as just by God, not through any merit or dignity that they thereby acquire but because God sees in their obedience to the Law a reflection of the image of His own righteousness and thus God "contents Himself" with it. Though, compared with the intrinsic

1 Serm on Job 10:16-17, C.O.33:496. Nous voyons donc maintenant comme il y a double justice en Dieu, l'une c'est celle qui nous est manifestée en la Loy, de laquelle Dieu se contente, pour ce qu'il luy plaist ainsi; il y a une autre justice cachée qui surmonte tous sens et apprehensions des creatures.

2 Serm. on Job 15:11-16, C.O.33:727. Mais encore n'allons point à ceste justice si parfaite; venons seulement à ceste justice moyenne que Dieu nous a declarée.


intrinsic righteousness of God and the final glory to which man has
to be ultimately conformed, the justice of the Law is a faint and
distorted thing, it can nevertheless, in relation to our present
creaturally condition, be called, as is done in Scripture, a perfect
righteousness.

In Calvin's references to the Law as the rule of the Christian life,
he appeals for an ordered and balanced observation of it which gives
due weight to both tables. "There are these two chief things in our
life - to serve God purely, and then to deal with our fellow men with
all integrity, and uprightness, rendering to each what is his due".
Since the duties of life can be so summarised the Law is divided into
two tables, the first table teaching us "how to cultivate piety and
the proper duties of religion in which the worship of God consists",
the second table showing how "in the fear of His name, we are to
conduct ourselves towards our fellow men". Our Lord Himself divided
the duties of life into two such heads when He commanded us to love
the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with
all our strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. The true
Christian therefore is concerned to live towards both God and man

(1) See all above passages from sermons on Job. Even if we
perfectly kept the Law of God, we would thereby attain a true
righteousness which could stand before the face of God in the
presence of His perfect righteousness. Cf. serm. on Job 9:23-
35, C.O.33:460. Job donc entend en ce passage, que quand il
n'y aurait que toute pureté en lui: ie di mesmes selon la
justice de la Loy:il n'y aurait qu'ordure et infection quand
il se viendroit se presenter devant Dieu.

(2) Serm. on Deut.5:16, C.O.26:309. Cf. serm. on Deut 5:22, C.O.
26:392. D'autant qu'il y a deux points principaux en nostre réte,
Seigneur a divisé sa Loy en deux tables: c'est assavoir, que
nous sachions comment il nous faut gouverner envers lui, et
man rather than towards himself. A life that would reflect on earth the image of God's righteousness given in the Law, must have both a relationship of faith and worship towards God and at the same time a relationship of love and right dealing with respect to fellow men. In a well-ordered life this twofold relation will be kept in due proportion.

While we must neglect neither our devotion to God nor our duty to man, our devotion to God must come first. Calvin in his preaching is never weary of insisting that it is vain for us to live the most upright and honest life before men, to pride ourselves that we do not steal from or do harm to our neighbours, if at the same time we do not render to God the worship and faith and devotion due to His person. For it is a far more terrible thing to rob God of His

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Notes re. p. 168

contd:

et puis comment nous avons à converser avec nos prochains.

Inst. 2:8:11

(1) Serm. on Job 1:1, C.0.33:30-31; and on 2 Sam.3:28f. pp76-77.

(2) Calvin can thus sum up the Christian life under two headings variously described as holiness (piety or godliness) and righteousness, (justice) or as faith and love. Cf. comm. on Luke 1:75, C.0.45:50; serm. on Eph.4:23-6, C.0.51:621; comm. on Luke 2:25, C.0.45:89. Pietas et justitia referuntur ad duas legis tabulas: itaque duabus his partibus constat integritas vitae. When Calvin refers to the combination of sobriety, righteousness and godliness in Titus 2:12, and faith, love and patience in Titus 2:2, he seems to make Christian duty consist of "three branches". Cf. Inst.3:7:3 and Serm on Gal.5:19-32, C.0.51:33-4. But in these threefold combinations he regards patience and sobriety as not distinct from each other and as a mere seasoning for the other two distinct virtues. Cf. comm. on Titus 2:2 & 12, C.0.52:419 & 423.
His honour, and to sin against His majesty than to injure our fellow
man. Indeed to neglect our duty of worship towards God is to seek
to annihilate His majesty, and that is a far worse crime than all
robbery, murder, sexual licence, poisonings and lying and such like
things. Therefore though we must neglect neither of the two
principal aspects of our duty set forth in the Law, we must make it
our first concern to pay what we owe to God, and then after this is
done to fulfil the duties that have regard to our fellow men. "We
must...give preference to the command, the worship, and the service
of God; after which, as far as we are able, we must give to men what
is their due....When we have obeyed God, then is the proper time to
think of our parents and wife and children; as Christ attends to His
mother, but it is after He is on the cross to which He has been
called by His Father's decree". The service of God must therefore
be the foundation of our whole life and the inspiration of our
service to our neighbour, since man's chief end is to glorify His
Maker.

It must be emphasised however, at the same time, that love of
God must find its expression in love towards our fellow men, and

(1) Serm. on Deut. 7:22-6, C.0.26:576-7.
(2) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.0.35:134-5. Cf Inst 2:3:11.
(3) Comm. on John 19:26, C.0.37:417. Cf. serm. on Deut. 5:16,
C.0.26:309.
(4) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.0.35:135. Dieu a distigué sa Loy
en deux tables, pour monstrer que son service et l'honneur
cue nous luy devons, va devant : et puis, qu'il y a le
devoir cue nous avons envers nos freres. Il faut donc que le
service de Dieu soit comme le fondement de toute nostre vie:
cue nous le glorifions, sachans cue c'est à cela qu'il nous
a crez.
and that love to God cannot exist without this expression. Love towards man is therefore the only real proof that we can give of the reality of the love that we profess towards God. Our neighbour takes the place of God in order that he might be the object of the love we bear to God. Since it is towards our neighbour, rather than directly towards God, that we can most clearly express the love and devotion of our hearts, Christ in His teaching emphasises the second table of the Law rather than the first, and the Apostle "makes the whole perfection of the saints consist in charity".

Outward zeal for religious worship is no true test of the real love to God. A man can make a false profession of love towards God by being hypocritically zealous in the outward profession of godliness. But the presence of real love to man is an infallible proof that the heart is right with God. This was why John the Baptist called on his hearers to prove their repentance towards God by fulfilling the practical duties of the second table of the Law. In stating all this, however, Calvin still reminds us that it must not be thought that love to man is something higher than love to God. It is seen

(1) Serm. on Deut.5:16, C.O.26:309. Il veut esprouver nostre obeissance, et l'amour que nous luy portons, quand il nous commande de cheminer avec nos prochains en toute droiture et equité....Voila (di-i-e) une espreuve que Dieu a mise pour cognoistre si nous l'adorons de coeur.
Cf. sermon on 1 Cor.10:15-18, C.O.49:668. La charité...est une approbation que nous aimons Dieu.


(3) Inst. 2:8:52.
(4) Inst. 2:8:53.
seen rather in its true perspective when it is looked on as the outward sign of the love of the heart for God.

The law demands of us in its first table the consecration of our whole self to God our Creator. The sanctity which it teaches involves in the first place the offering of our whole life to God as a living sacrifice. But this sanctity, as we have seen, must pervade and modify everything we do towards our fellow men in fulfilment of the second table of the Law. This means that all the virtues we show in our relation to our fellow men should spring from devotion and obedience to God Himself and should in their exercise be consecrated to God — indeed should themselves be offered to God as a sacrifice.

In this respect the law is superior to all the


(2) Serm. on Deut.6:1-4, C.O.26:422. Il faut donc commencer par ce bout, si nous voulons observer la Loy deument...c'est que nous luy portions reverence...et que nous demandions de luy faire hommage comme à nostre souverain Roy, que nous demandions de nous dedier à luy comme à nostre creator, que nous demandions de l'honorer comme nostre Pere...C'est le commencement de toute la Loy, et de toute justice.

(3) Serm. on Eph.4:23-6, C.O.51:621. Il faut que la sainteté soit conjointe avec la justice: car les deux tables de la Loy sont inseparables. Et sous ce mot de sainteté, saint Paul a compris tout ce qui appartient au service de Dieu...C'est que nous cheminions purement devant Dieu...que nous soyons separez des pollutions de ce monde pour luy estre offerts en sacrifice.

(4) Serm. on Gal.5:4-6, C.O.50:681. Et pourtant regardons de servir à Dieu comme il le demande. Or en quoy est-ce quil nous veut exercer?...C'est que nous cheminions en créature et ecuite avec nos prochains;qu'un chacun selon sa faculté aide à ceux où il y aura pitié:que nul ne soit addonné à sov-mesmes:que nous soyons fideles...quand nous en verrons quelques uns despourvues et qui seront besoin de nostre secours, que l'on nous offriions comme une sacrefice à Dieu, scachant qu'il nous appelle pour montrer l'amour que nous luy portons: Ainsi dome apprenons pour bien servir à Dieu...c'est de cheminer en telle rondeur et humanité.
the systems of morality taught by the ancient philosophers. Heathen writers, and unbelievers in general, all speak a great deal about virtue and seek to acquire virtue, but they do not relate their lives and their virtues to God. Calvin, admits that amongst the Heathen there have been many men who have excelled in virtue yet such virtue was vitiated and spoiled by pride and ambition because it was not related to God. "There have often appeared in renewed men remarkable instances of gentleness, integrity, temperance, and generosity, but it is certain that all were but specious disguises. Curius and Fabricius were distinguished for courage, Cato for temperance, Scipio for kindness and generosity, Fabius for patience; but it was only in the sight of men and as members of civil society that they were so distinguished. In the sight of God nothing is pure but what proceeds from the fountain of all purity".

Through the Law God is seeking a response towards Himself not only in outward behaviour but also in heart. Since God is the God who searches the heart, His law applies "equally to our minds and our hands". Our response must be "not merely in outward honesty but in inward spiritual righteousness". Certainly "outward honesty is

(1) Comm. on Ps.49:2, C.O.31:482. Serm. on Gal.5:19-23, C.O.51:41
(3) Comm. on Gal.5:22, C.O.50:255. Equally vain is the virtue that has no relation to the love of fellow men. Calvin criticises the "profane historians" applause of Crates the Theban who threw all his wealth into the sea in order to save his soul. No matter how virtuous the act, or how much good it did to his own character "he who deprives others along with himself of the use of money deserves no praise". Calvin points out that our Lord in contrast not only enjoins the rich man to sell but likewise to give to the poor. Comm. on Matt. 10:20, C.O.45:540.
is demanded in the law but the outward behaviour must be a true expression of the heart. "There can be no true keeping of the law but what springs from free and spontaneous love". Calvin, in this connection quotes Paul: "the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned". Therefore it is not merely outward order that God seeks from man in the giving of the law, but inward spiritual order, and true integrity of heart. In the Law God is seeking to possess us entirely in the integration of body, soul and spirit.

True righteousness, then, is to respond with the whole heart to the outward commandments. To respond thus is to have purity of heart which reflects the image of God. A perfect example of the true righteousness and integrity which comes in response to the law, Calvin finds in Zacharias and Elizabeth. "They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and blameless", where the emphasis is both on the inward walk before God and on the


(2) 1 Tim. 1:5. Cf. Inst. 2:8:51. Calvin is always ready to point out that the scripture requires on our part not only deeds of love but a genuine feeling of sympathy with others in their evils "as though they were our own". "No act of kindness except accompanied with sympathy is pleasing to God", (Comm. on 1 John 3:17, C.O.55:341) To wear ourselves out in helping others is no great matter "if we have not the heart to be as they be and to join ourselves with them as though we felt their grief in our own persons". If a man in adversity suspects a lack of real compassion on the part of those who are helping him, our help doubles his grief instead of being a relief. "So then when we want to fulfill our duty towards those who are in adversity: let us begin at this point; i.e., to pity their miseries and to feel part of them ourselves as closely as we can. For this is the true test of love". (Serm. on Job 2:11-13, C.O.33:123-4.)
the outward conduct before men. Therefore the law must be interpreted not according to the letter but as spiritual, the true interpreter of the law in this sense being Christ Himself in the Sermon on the Mount, where He declares that "an immodest look is adultery, and that hatred of a brother is murder". Calvin's own interpretation of the meaning of the commandments always follows the principle that "there is always more in the requirements and prohibition of the law than is expressed in words", and that under each commandment there is set forth "by way of example, whatever is foulest and most iniquitous in each species of transgression", and moreover that the commandments must be interpreted positively as not only condemning certain vices but as requiring "opposite duties and positive acts".

(1) Serm. on Luke 1:5-9, C.0.46:17. Il monstre en premier lieu quelle est la vraye justice, c'est asçavoir oü il n'y a point de feintise: et pourtant, que nous ne cherchions point seule-
ment de vivre saintement, et d'estre irreprehensibles devant
les hommes, mais que sur tout nous ayons les yeux, et les sens
eslevez à Dieu, pour luy complaire, et pour conformer nostre
vie à sa volonté. Si donc il n'y a point d'intégrité de cour
nous pourrons estre louez des hommes...mais il n'y aura que fumee...Apprenons donc, pour bien regler nostre vie...que nous
ayons une affection droite et pure de nous addonner a
l'obeissance de nostre Dieu.

(2) Inst.2:3:6-7. Cf. sem. on l Tim.1:5-7, C.0.53:30. Dieu en
publiant sa Loy, a regarde a une fin et à un but certain,
aucel aussi il nous faut tascher; et quand nous en ferons
ainsi, nous aurons la vraye ame de la Loy, ce ne sera pas une
lettre morte.

(3) Inst.2:3:8-10. Cf. e.g. Calvin's exposition of the 8th
commandment. It "requires every man to exert himself honestly
in preserving his own." It forbids misuse of God's blessings
(Calvin regards all unbelievers as thieves since they have no
filial right to the blessings they daily take from God's
hands - Cf. ). It forbids "all the acts by which
we obtain possession of the goods and money of our neighbour"
even though these may have a "semblance of justice" in the
eyes of the law (Inst.2:3:45. Cf. sem. on Deut.5:19, C.0.26:
349). "Il y a beaucoup d'espèces de larrain, car les uns
usent de fraude cachée, quand ils attirent par moyens subtils,
et par pratiques la substance d'autrui à eux...il semblera
qu'ils n'y touchent...ils sont larrons devant Dieu". (Serm.
For Calvin, love to God and our neighbour can arise only in a heart that has first been purged by self-denial from self-love and opened up towards God and man in true agape. Love towards God and man is inseparable from the humility before God and man that is the fruit of self-denial and cross-bearing. Calvin therefore finds at the heart of the Law a stern call to self-denial and cross-bearing.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus and professed to have kept all the commandments from his youth up, Jesus reminded him that "one thing" which the Law taught and which he had lacked in keeping the Law was to deny himself (in his case by selling all) and to follow Jesus taking the cross on his shoulders. To do this was merely an essential part of the keeping of the Law. Jesus thus brought the young man face to face with the true meaning of the commandments, for the design of the law is in expressly condemning concupiscence is "to bring men to self-denial", and it is the law truly interpreted

1. on Deut. 5:19, C.O. 26:347) The commandment on the contrary involves us in helping our neighbour to retain his property (Inst. 2:8:45) It forbids withholding the help we could give him in his need - we are thieves if we do not help him (Serm. on Deut. 22:1-4, C.O. 28:10) It forbids declining any duty we owe him as our neighbour, It involves faithfully performing whatever duties or honour we owe to each other as rulers, subjects, ministers of the Gospel, elders, congregation, parents, children. It forbids all excessive eagerness to obtain wealth in order to satisfy our avarice or prodigality. (Inst. 2:8:46.)


3. Serm. on Deut. 5:16, C.O. 26:313. Dieu déclare qu'il n'est point honoré de nous, sinon que nous lui faisons hommage en la personne de ceux qu'il a constitués en son lieu, et ausquels il a imprimé son image. En somme nous voyons que la charité commence par ce bout, que nous soyons humble, et modestes, et que nul ne s'esclave en fierté et présomption, que nul se prise par trop: mais que nous soyons prêts de nous humilier, pour nous ranger à tout ce qu'il plaera à Dieu.

interpreted that "teaches us to bear the Cross". In the law, therefore, God teaches us the same reversal of self-love by self-denial which we see perfectly embodied in the pattern of Christ's own self-denial and cross-bearing. There is not a syllable of the law that panders in any way to the "carnal nature" of man. Its first demand upon us is that we should put our minds and hearts under coercion. The humility and distrust in our own ability to which we are led by the stern demands of the law can also help to bring us to such self-despair and self-denial.

Since the law according to its true meaning teaches a full consecration of body and soul to God, self-denial, and a way of life that is nothing short of the full Christian life it would be hopeless even to attempt to fulfill it apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. The office of the Spirit in uniting us to Christ is not only to mortify the flesh, to consecrate us wholly to God, but also to write the law of God on our hearts. "It would be in vain for the feet and hands and eyes to be controlled to observe the law unless obedience begins at the heart. It is the Holy Spirit's own particular office

(1) Comm. in loc C.0.45:539.
(2) Inst. 2:8:54,
(3) Inst. 2:8:6. Quia animis nostris lata est Lex coelestis, eorum coercitio ad iustam eius observationem imprimis necessaria est.
(4) Inst. 2:8:3.
to engrave the law of God on our hearts".

The effect of the work of the Spirit in writing the law on our hearts is that instead of being inclined to sin we begin cordially to seek after a righteousness to which we were previously altogether averse, for the phrase to "write the Law in the heart" means that the Law should rule in the heart and that there should be "no feeling of the heart not conformable to and not consenting to its doctrine". The love of the law thus created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is a sure sign of our regeneration and adoption.

Everything we need for our sanctification, and indeed for the full perfection of our Christian life, is contained within the Law if we will give it its true meaning and seek to fulfil it in the power of the Spirit. When Christ said to the rich young ruler, who had affirmed that he had kept the law from his youth up, "one thing thou

(1) Comm. on Ps.40:8, C.O.31:412. Cf. sermon on 1 Tim.1:8-11, C.O. 55:55. Mais quand Dieu nous instruit ainsi par son saint Esprit, il forme quant et quant nos coeurs en son obeissance, comme il est écrit aux Prophetes, tant en Ieremie qu'en Ezechiel, où nostre Seigneur dit, que Dieu engraverá sa Loy en nos entrailles, qu'elle ne sera pas seulement écrite devant nos yeux, mais nous l'aurons là dedans, en sorte que nostre vie s'y conformera, sans qu'on nous pousse.

(2) Comm. on Ps. 40:8, C.O.31:412.

(3) Comm. on Jer.31:33, C.O.38:692. Et scribere in cordibus tantundem valet atque corda ipsa sic formare, ut lex illic dominetur, et nullus sit affectus cordis, qui non eius doctrinae subscribat atque consentiat.

thou lackest...If thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor". He did not mean one thing "beyond the law" but "in the very keeping of the law", for the law is the "rule of perfect righteousness". "It is a mistake to suppose that merely the rudiments and first principles of righteousness are delivered in the Law". If we understand it properly and interpret it properly it can lead us in the way of "complete perfection".

It should be noted again that the effect of a perfect fulfilment of the law would be the restoration of true order in the life of man - a true harmony between the outward life and the feelings of the heart, and a true relationship between the fulfilment of our duty towards God and our duty towards man - between the first table and the second table, between holiness and justice. To respond to the law with such wholeheartedness is to show that true integrity of heart which can be called perfection, and is to walk in love which is the fulfilling of the law. Perfection, for Calvin, consists not in attaining to this and that virtue in the highest possible

(2) Comm. on loc. C.0.45:539. Ergo Christus non unum praeter legis observationem iuveni deesse intelligit, sed in ipsa legis observatione.
(3) Inst. 2:8:5 perfectae iustitiae regula
(4) Cf. Inst. 2:8:51 and serm. on Eph.4:23-6, C.0.51:622. Or il est certain que la Loy de Dieu ne nous a point enseigne á deme de ce que nous avons á faire : mais Dieu nous a la monstré une droite reigle, á laquelle on ne peut adicuster ne diminuer.
(5) Serm. on Eph.4:23-6, C.0.51:621-2.
possible degree, but in wholeheartedness, integrity and sincerity. He sometimes mentions symetrie along with rondeur as the goal to be attained in all our striving towards the ideal Christian life, and no doubt he has the idea of wishing to set before men the ideal of a truly balanced and ordered life, rather than of a life with certain outstanding features. He frequently quotes the text Love is the bond of perfection in such a way as to suggest that it is only where love reigns that order and balance are possible amongst the other virtues a man may have, and in contexts where he wishes to correct some one-sided and unbalanced cultivation of virtue.


(2) Serm. on 2 Sam.2:22-3, p46. Et au reste qu'entre toutes autres vertus la rondeur et symetrie nous doit estre recommandee. Cf. Calvin's comments on Eph.4:12 (C.O.51:138-9.) where Calvin identifies the "perfection" of the Church with its symmetry, balance and order. The symmetry of the Church is destroyed when opposes the head.

(3) Comm. on Col.3:14, C.O.52:123. Vinculum perfectionis: quo significat, virtutum omnium chorum sub ea contineri. Nam haec vere regula est totius vitae et omnium actionum, ad quam quidquid non exigitur, vitiosum est, qualemunque aliqui splendorum habeat. Haec causa est cur vocetur hic vinculum perfectionis, quia nihil est in vita nostra bene compositum quod non ad ipsam dirigatur.

The Christian attitude to this present world

(a) Detachment from this world

Concupiscence has enslaved man with an improper love of this present world

Our regeneration and sanctification restores the original order of nature in *meditatio futurae vitae*

By God's blessings in this life we are meant to be exercised in hope of life-to-come

This means temperance and frugality

All our earthly activity must be related to our destiny beyond the world

We must "despise" this life even though we recognise it as a sacred gift from God

(b) The use and enjoyment of this world

Our dominion over this world has been restored in Christ

Those who are united to Christ and within His Kingdom enjoy here and now a new relationship to their environment

We must therefore use and enjoy all the benefits of this present life with thanksgiving and faith

We must appreciate and profit from all the virtues God bestows on our fellow men
When Adam was set in the garden of Eden to fulfil the meaning of his being created in the image of God he was meant not to find the end of his existence in the enjoyment of the immediately surrounding environment, but rather to find in created things tokens of the grace of their creator, and to use them as helps to himself to meditate upon and aspire to the better life for which he had been created. Therefore though he was meant to rejoice in the present life, and to use every gift of God thankfully, he was also meant to be to some extent detached from this present world.

As a result of the fall the natural man has become completely deprived of the power to rise in heart and mind above this world and to meditate upon a future life. Concupiscence manifests itself by producing in man's heart improper and intemperate love for this present world, which brings him such bondage to this world as prevents him from even seeking God truly. "We are inclined by nature to a slavish love of this world". If man truly considered the brevity and vanity of this life he would realise that it is but a shadow which must pass away soon, and his desires for the things of this life would lessen. But the concern of man's mind is continually directed to earthly objects and the affection of the heart follows

(2) Inst. 3:9:7 In belluinum mundi buius amorem (sumus) natura inclinati.
follows the mind. His heart is an insatiable gulf which it is impossible to fill to contentment with the things of this earth. Yet he goes on vainly seeking satisfaction in this earth. Men bury all aspiration after the heavenly life under earthly cares so that "while living in this world, they die to God". Man deceives himself by imagining that this world is his rest forever, and that he is secure in the frail nest he has built here for himself. Calvin approves of the comparison made by the Apostle James of such immoderate love of this world to adultery, for it is a violation of the marriage which God seeks to make with us when He seeks to espouse us to Himself as a chaste virgin, and a transference to a baser object of the affection which we owe to God.

Calvin constantly emphasises that it is impossibly hard for a man by his own strength to rid himself of this love for the present world that can so hold down his soul in evil bondage. It was to this difficulty that Jesus referred when he spoke of how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Our minds are naturally so set on this earth and so much given up to its pleasures

(1) Serm. on Job 14:1-4, C.0,33:657. C'est un abysme et un gouffre insatiable que l'homme, tellement qu'il n'est question de se contenter de toutes choses de la terre, il n'y a ne fin ne mesure en lui. Et qui en est cause? Or si nous pensions à la brefvete de nostre vie, il est certain que nos cupiditez seroyent atrempees, que nos appetis ne seroit point ainsi bouillans:...Nous cependant nous sommes si aspres pour amasser des biens, et ceci et cela, que nous ne pensons à autre chose. Et qui en est cause? Nous pensons toujours ici bas.

(2) Comm. on Ps.119:144, C.0,32:280. Quando itaque terrenis curis obruitur coelestis vitae meditatio, nihil aliud quam se in sepulcrum demergunt homines, ut mundo viventes, Deo moriantur.

(3) Comm. on Ps.90:4, C.0,31:835.

(4) Comm. on Jas. 4:4, C.0,55:415-6.

pleasures and cares that it is impossible for us even to taste the pleasures of eternity, the experience of which alone can deliver us from bondage to this earth. Unless some radical conversion of attitude can take place within us by the grace of God, it is as vain to expect us to respond when called away from a vain love of this world, as it would be to expect a ball to collect the water poured over it.

It is the effect of regeneration and sanctification in Christ to restore a truly detached relationship between man and this present world, by which man becomes again able, through His participation by faith in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, to meditate on the future life. Indeed true detachment from this present world is restored to man in the gift of faith, in the acceptance of which his heart is raised above created things to the ascended Christ who is beyond this world. The whole process of meditatio futurae vitae in the Christian life must be thought of as the restoration of the true order of nature.

All this has a very important practical bearing on Calvin's preaching and teaching about the attitude of the Christian to this present life with its riches and enjoyments. He appeals to his hearers and readers to work out in practice the implications of this

(1) Comm. on Ps.119:132; C.0.32:274; and on Ps.90:4, C.0.31:335.
(2) Comm. on 1 John 2:15, C.0.55:318.
(3) Cf. pp. 133-4
(4) Cf. p. 31.
this attitude of detachment from this world, not simply from motives of pure asceticism, nor merely as a necessary and regrettable condition imposed upon man through his fall into concupiscence and through the prevalence of evil in his surroundings, but mainly because such an attitude is truly natural, to adopt it is to become truly human and to find the true meaning of this present life.

The part that our sufferings in fellowship with the death of Christ play in detaching us from a vain love of this present world should again be noted. It is in order to train us to despise the present world and to aspire to the future life that tribulation is sent to us by God. Such tribulations have the effect of making us sensible to the vanity of the present life, and to help to break the power of its fascination by which it enslaves us.

But we would not require such affliction if we would respond in a true way by faith and thanking to God's grace and goodness. In all the earthly gifts which He bestows upon His children in this world God's purpose is to avouch His fatherly love so that we will be drawn to Himself. Calvin can speak of God as drawing us to Himself by sweetness when He puts us at our ease in this world and gives us not only food and clothing but protection from the troubles

(1) Though this does enter largely into Calvin's teaching see pp 345-7
(2) Cf also pp. 134-5
(3) Inst. 3:9:1. Quocunque autem tribulationis genere premamur, respiciendus semper est hic finis, ut assestescamus ad prae sentis vitae contemtum, indeque ad futuree meditationem excitemur....Huic malo ut occurrat Dominus, assiduis miserierum documentis suos de praesentis vitae manitate edocet.
(4) Inst. 3:9:2.
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim. 4:1-5, C.0.53:362-3, on 1 Cor. 10:25-30, C.0.49:692, on Deut. 8:3-9, C.0.26:602.
troubles which visit others. Moreover in the provision and care which He bestows upon our bodies God's purpose is to give us a sign of the care which in His redeeming love He bestows upon our souls which He feeds not simply with bread and wine but with the much more precious spiritual food. Furthermore all the good things which God gives us in this life are to be regarded as preliminary tokens of the heavenly heritage which the same bountiful love has destined for us, and thus by God's blessing in this life we are to be exercised in the hope of this life to come. Thus the earthly gifts of God become to us ladders by which our minds and hearts are raised up to heaven. All the tokens of God's earthly providence towards us, the rising and going down of the sun, the fruitfulness of the earth, the changes of the skies, can be the beams of light illuminating our heavenward path when otherwise we would have to walk entirely by faith in the midst of darkness. These can be as the hand of God stretched forth to prove that God is not far away from us and seeks ever to draw us to Himself in anticipation of the great day when we shall come to fullness of joy and happiness in union with Him for ever.

Calvin frequently exhorts us to temperance and frugality in

(1) Serm. on Deut.6:10-13, C.0.26:450.
(2) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:25;30, C.0.49:692. Le principal est quand nous buvons et mangeons que nous sachions que cela nous procede de la main de Dieu, et qu'en cela il nous declare que nous sommes ses enfans, et qu'il fait desia office de Pere, et que s'il ha le soin de nos corps, par plus forte raison nos ames luy sont recommandees. And serm. on Deut.3:3-9, C.0.26:602. Il faut monter plus haut: et cognoistre que nos ames ne sont point repues ne de pain, ne de vin, qu'elles ont une autre viande plus precieuse.
(3) Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C.0.33:143-4.
(4) Serm. on Matt.5:11-12, C.0.46:822; on Job 1:2-5, C.0.33:41.
(5) Serm. on Cant. Ezech. v9-12, C.0.35:535.
in the use even of those earthly commodities and pleasures which God may have put at our disposal in abundance, by reminding us that whatever God puts in our hands here, He merely lends to us. At the same time as He gives it to us He keeps it in His own hands. Therefore we must use it with sobriety and share it with those in need, remembering that at any time God pleases we may have to part with everything. The man of faith who happens to be rich in worldly wealth today will also recognise that tomorrow he may be poor, and therefore he will not become too much attached to the wealth that he might have to renounce so soon. "The mind of a Christian ought not to be taken up with earthly things, or to repose in them; for we ought to live as if we were every moment about to depart from this life".

We must be constantly watchful, especially against becoming involved in a vain and excessive love of this earth. The danger which besets us in the use of this world is that instead of its being a ladder to enable our hearts and minds to rise upwards to God, it should become rather a sepulchre in which our souls become buried on

(1) Serm. on Deut. 7:1-4, C.O. 26:503-4. Et de là nous sommes admonnastes, qu'en tout ce que Dieu nous a mis entre nos mains, il nous faut regarder de ne point prendre trop grand liberté, pour user des biens qu'il nous fait, à nostre poste... Quand Dieu aura donné abondance des biens de ce monde à quelcon... s'il veut dire: Ceci est mien, i'en ferey ce que bon me semblera: c'est frauder Dieu du droit qu'il s'est reservé. Il est vray que nous appellerons bien nostre ce qu'il aura donné: main c'est à cette condition, que toujours cela demeure en sa main, et... que nous en usions en toute sobriété et modestie. Cf. comm. on Luke 16:12, C.O. 45:405.

(2) Comm. on Phil. 4:12, C.O. 52:64.
(4) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:29, C.O. 49:420.
on this earth. Our earthly possessions instead of becoming blessings which lead us to God can become like cords which strangle us. Our Lordship of this world must be true Lordship, and only those master this world who can refuse to be brought into bondage to anything, and who use all things with such sobriety and frugality that their progress towards the heavenly goal is not hindered.

We must not then, permit ourselves to enjoy "without restraint" the vain and perishable things of this world, and we should find our joy in the Gospel rather than in the delights and sensualities of this age. In the 23rd Psalm the fact that the Lord provided a furnished table full of good things for the Psalmist in the presence of his enemies made him lift up his heart, in the final verse, to his eternal inheritance. "He valued all the comforts of the flesh only in proportion as they served to enable him to live to God....It is therefore certain that the mind of David, by the aid of the temporal prosperity which he enjoyed, was elevated to the hope of the everlasting inheritance". Such is the true detachment from this world which man ought to have.

This means that the light, or the shadow, of the life that is

(1) Serm. on Matt.5:11-12, C.O.46:822.
(1a) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:13-24, C.O.49:682.
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:12, C.O.49:336.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:31, C.O.49:421.
(4) Serm. on John 1:1-5, C.O.47:468. Quand donc nous prononcerons ce mot Evangile qui est à dire Bonne nouvelle, que nous apprenions de ne nous point resioir outre mesure ces choses de ce monde, qui sont caduques et vaines. Ne nous reioissions point en delices, en voluptez, ni en rien qui soit; mais esioissions nous en ce que Jesus Christ nous a este envoyé.
is to come must fall on everything we do in this life, and we must relate all our earthly activity to our eternal destiny beyond this world, and thus find true purpose and meaning in our daily work. Calvin quotes with approval the proverb "We ought not to live in order to eat and drink; but we must eat and drink in order to be led towards the life to come". It is not only ministers of the Gospel who sow to the Spirit in order to reap eternal life. All men no matter what is their daily work, whether they be labourers or mechanics or merchants must relate all their activity to the higher life that is to come. If our heart is thus set on the life that is to come all our earthly toil even for mere food will be a sowing which will bring its eternal harvest. To care for the needs of the present life without any regard at the same time for the future life is to "sow to the flesh" that of the flesh we may reap corruption.

Calvin, of course, uses the Biblical analogy of our being "pilgrims and strangers" in this earth to describe what should be

(1) Serm. on Gal. 6:6-8, C.0.51:95.
(2) Cf. Ibid p. 91 & 5. Les ministres donc ont bien cela de special: mais tous en commun nous devons semer à la vie éternelle, c'est à dire passans par ce monde comme estrangers, ayans nos sens eslevez à cest heritage où doit estre nostre repos, et la aussi où il faut appliquer toutes nos estudes. Et mesmes quand nous travaillons pour la nourriture de nos corps, que ce soit tousjours tendant à ce but-là....Puis ainsi est donc, quand un homme mesme s'appliquera pour gagner sa vie, soit en labeur, soit d'un art mechanicque, soit un marchant, guy qu'il en soit, quand nous aurons le soin et de nos personnes et de nos familles, que nous tendions plus haut. Car de fait c'est une chose mauvaise si un homme s'amuse seulement à gagner sa vie, et qu'il ne regarde point de servir à Dieu. Cf. comm. on Gal.6:7-8, C.0.50:261-2.
be our attitude towards it. To live as such a sojourner on earth is
a sign that a man is a child of God and an heir of heaven. Calvin
also likens the life of the children of God in this world to that of
the bird flitting from branch to branch in this world but never
resting long in any nest. But these analogies do not include the
element of hatred and contempt for this world which is bound,
according to Calvin, to enter the Christian attitude to some extent.
Indeed Calvin does not hesitate to define the true attitude which we
should take towards this world as contemptio mundi, the term
contemptio being used in contrast to the meditatio and desiderium
that define our attitude to the future life. Calvin insists that it
is only when we contrast the earthly with the heavenly life that we
are able to despise and trample the former underfoot. It is
especially because an improper love of this present world tends to
involve us in compromise or allegiance with the evil powers that tend
to dominate this present world, that we must learn to hate this

(2) Serm. on Deut. 9:20-4, C. C. 26:703. Il y a premiersment ce
pelerinage terrestre auquel Dieu nous a tous assuettis en ce
monde: combien qu'il nos donne repos, qu'e plusieurs ne bougent
de leur maison, et de leur nic: tant y a que nous serons bien
mal advisez si nous ne passons par ce monde comme oiseaux sur
la branche, et qu'e nous ny soyons estrangers. Car autrement
Dieu nous desavoue, et renonçe.
(3) Inst. 3:9:1. Sic enim habendum est, nuncuam serio ad futurae
vitae desiderium ac meditationem erigi animum, nisi praesentis
contemptu ante imbutus fuerit.
(5) Cf. pp. 295-6
this world. We must remember that what separates the godly from the wicked is their opposite attitudes to this present world and to that beyond. Moreover, if our love for this present world makes us indulge in self-love and to give way to the power of concupiscence in our heart, we are bound in learning to hate and deny ourselves also to reflect the same attitude to whatever object in the world tends to bring us under bondage. Therefore Calvin looks on contempt for this world as a correlative of self-denial.

Our hatred or contempt for this life must not, however, be unqualified. We must always remember that this life is the gift of God. It is "among the divine blessings not to be despised". Therefore our hatred and contempt must not be directed against this life in itself, which God made good, but only against life in so far as it keeps us subject to sin. We may legitimately long for the termination of our earthly existence, but we must nevertheless be kept from murmuring or impatience by the realisation that if it is God's will that we should remain on this earth we must thankfully and obediently accept all the implications of our earthly existence.

(1) Serm. on Deut. 9:20-4, C.0.26:708. Ainsi ceux qui ont honte de se nommer estrangers en ce monde, qu'ils s'en aillent chercher leur heritage avec le diable: car ils n'ont ne part ne portion avec Dieu.

(2) Comm. on Ps. 119:132, C.0.32:274.


(4) Inst. 3:9:2.

(5) Inst. 3:9:4. Odio certe habenda nunquam est, nisi quatenus nos peccato tenet obnoxios: quanquam ne illud quidem odium propri in ipsam convertendum est. Utcunque sit, nos tamen ita eius vel teædio vel odio affici decet, ut finem eius desiderantes, parati quoque simul ad arbitrium Domini in ea manere, quo
existence. The conditions, then, for a right use of this world are to pass through it as pilgrims should who have their minds fixed on another country to which they are travelling, to offer all that we possess and enjoy here in our open hands as a sacrifice to God to take from us whenever it pleases Him, to make such tokens of the divine love as we enjoy in the midst of this present creation whether our appetites for the fuller glory that is yet to be - in other words to use this world thankfully as a preparation for that which is to come. Under such circumstances it is right for us to indulge in a real and thankful love of this life. We thus have the paradoxical truth that we are able to love this life truly only when we have truly learned first to despise this life.

scilicet taedium nostrum sit procul ab omni murmur et impatienps.

(1) Comm. on John 12:25, C.0.47:289. In summa, vitam hanc amare non per se malum est, modo in ea tantum peregrinemur semper ad scopum nostrum intenti. Nam hic legitimus est amandae vitae modus, si in ea manemus quamdiu Domino visum fuerit... si eam quasi manibus gestantes offerimus Deo in sacrificium. Cf. Inst.3:9:3. Deinde altera, quod variis beneficiis divinae benignitatis suavitatem delibare in ea incipimus: quo spes ac desiderium nostrum acuaturn ad plenam eius revelationem expetendum.
Man was made to have dominion and Lordship in the midst of this created world. It was made originally for man to possess and enjoy in all its goodness and fruitfulness, and Adam, before he fell, was given the power to use and enjoy with a free conscience and in gratitude to God, all the good things which God placed before his eyes. He was created to be master of all other creatures and of all his circumstances. "The whole of the world is arranged and established for the purpose of conducing to the comfort and happiness of men".

One of the main effects of the fall however, has been that man, in rejecting his call to live according to the image of God and in the true order of creation, has lost his right and place as possessor and Lord of the world around him. "The dominion of the world was taken away from us in Adam" says Calvin. It is true that fallen man has to use this world, and to live by the produce of this world, but he has no right to do so, for it is God's world made for God's children, and he has renounced God and the status of a child of

(1) Comm. on Ps. 8:7, C.O.31:94.
(2) Comm. on 1 Tim. 4:5, C.O.52:297.
of God. Therefore he can only live as a thief in a world to which he has no right.

As a token that all this is so, man's very environment has, as it were, turned against him in a refusal to submit to one who has no right to dominate within this world. "As soon, then, as Adam alienated himself from God through sin, he was justly deprived of the good things which he had received; not that he was denied the use of them, but that he could have no right to them after he had forsaken God. And in the very use of them God intended that there should be some tokens of this loss of right such as these - the wild beasts ferociously attack us, those who ought to be awed by our presence are dreaded by us, some never obey us, others can hardly be trained to submit, and they do us harm in various ways. The earth answers not our expectations in cultivating it; the sky the air the sea and other things are often adverse to us. But were all creatures to continue in subjection, yet whatsoever the sons of Adam possessed would be deemed as robbery; for what can they call their own when they themselves are not God's?"

The true order in man's relationship to this world has,

(1) Serm. on Titus 1:15-16, C.O.54:434. Nous ne pourrions pas toucher une seule viande que nous ne fussions larrons; car nous sommes privez et bannis de tous les biens que Dieu a creez. A cause du peche d'Aden, iusques a tant que nous en ayons la possession en nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ.

(2) Mans daily work, according to Calvin, as he experiences it in this life, is not according to the order of nature. It is true that God originally made man to work, giving him hands and feet and putting him in the garden to cultivate it, but work as man knows it today is, generally speaking, a curse and punishment for sin. Cf. serm. on Deut.5:13-15, C.O.26:296, Comm. on Gen.3:19, C.O.23:74-5. Cf. also pp.223-50

has, however, been restored in Jesus Christ. To His Son Jesus God has given the possession of the earth in fulfilment of the promise of the eighth psalm which describes the original plan of creation and the true status of man in this universe. Through being ingrafted into Christ and readmitted into the family of God by being adopted as His children, we too are readmitted into the inheritance of the children of God in this world and thus to our right to share in the goodness of this creation. "God...by ingrafting us into His Son, constitutes us anew to be Lords of the world, that we may lawfully use as our own all the wealth with which He supplies us". 

Herein, then, lies the difference between the position of the unbeliever in his ordinary life in this world and the believer. An unbeliever in his ordinary life in this world even in eating and drinking to sustain his life has no right to what he is taking from God. He is therefore robbing God and robbing the children of God, and is continually breaking the eighth commandment.

The restoration of true order through Jesus Christ means that

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-5, C.O.53:360. Voilà aussi pourquoi il est dit, que ce qui est contenu au Psaume huitième, est accompli en la personne de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, c'est à savoir que Dieu luy a donné en possession la terre, les bestes des chemps, les oiseaux du ciel, les poissons des eaux. Et pourquoi? Car par le pech nous sommes privez de tout bien, nous ne sommes pas dignes de toucher un morceau de pain, ni une goutte d'eau: mais nous sommes restituez par le moyen et par la grace de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ en ceste possession.


(2) Comm. on Heb.2:5, C.O.55:24 Hoc est quod haec initio huius epistolae, Christum a patre ordinatum esse haereditatem universorum. Certa totam uni haereditatem vendicando, relictos omnes excludit tanquam alienos. Et merito...Quae ergo suis domestici alimentsa destinavit, ad nos repere fas non est. At Christus per quem in famillam cooptamur, simul in societatem Iuris sui nos admittit, ut toto mundo cum Dei benedictione fruamur.

References (3) and (4) on next page
that those who are united to Christ and within His Kingdom enjoy even here and now during their life on this earth a new relationship to their environment. God acts towards them providentially in a special way, and throughout their life in this present world they are specially protected from evil, specially provided for and specially blessed. Even though God loves all men, and maintains all men in His love, nevertheless His main business upon which He exercises His counsel and His will is now the salvation of those who are united to Jesus Christ, and their preservation in the midst of all their temptations and trials, and the assaults of Satan. "As a provident man will regulate his liberality towards all men in such a manner as not to defraud his children or family nor impoverish his own house by spending his substance prodigally on others, so God in like manner in exercising His beneficence to aliens from His family, knows well how to reserve for His own children that which belongs to them as it were by hereditary right". Calvin gives due weight to the assertion of Paul that godliness has promise not only of the life
life that is to come but "of the life that now is". Therefore the children of God are not only destined for a heavenly inheritance and blessed here and now in spiritual things but also "as to their condition in the present life". Calvin also seeks to give due weight to the many Old Testament promises that the godly shall have earthly prosperity as well as everlasting blessedness, and though at the present day earthly benefits are given" in a more sparing manner" than under the older dispensation, such promises still hold and the goodness which God performs towards those who trust in Him upon this earth is sufficient to be an open and clear testimony even to the wicked men who are onlookers if they care to open their eyes to see it.

That the Christian man should enjoy such tokens of the restoration of the true order of creation in the providential ordering of his life by God is a sign that the Kingdom of God has already begun to be restored in this present world. When God apparently treats men harshly under His providence, depriving them of

(1) 1 Tim.4:8. Cf. serm. on Deut.7:11-15, C.O.26:542. Et voila pourquoi saint Paul dit: Que la crainte de Dieu n'a point seulement les promesses de la vie immortelle, mais aussi de ceste vie terrienne. Que si nous cheminons en la crainte de Dieu, non seulement nous serons assurez qu'il nous a appresté son heritage là haut; mais cependant que nous aurons à vivre en ce monde, qu'il nous conduira, que nous serons sous sa protection, qu'il ne permettra point que rien nous deffaille, entant qu'il cognoist qu'il nous fait besoin.
Cf. also comm. on Ps.128:3, C.O.32:328.
(2) Comm. on Ps.25:13, C.O.31:228. Summa est, veros Dei cultores non spiritualiter modo beatos esse, sed ab eo quoque benefici quod ad praesentis vitae statum.
(3) Cf. comm. on Ps. 128:3, C.O.32:328.
of tokens of His fatherly love, this is a sign that the true order of creation, which was meant to bear witness to His fatherhood, has been upset. But the beginning of the renovation of the world has already taken place, and whatever a Christian enjoys of the special care and providence of the Father in this life is a privilege which derives from the fact that what was lost in Adam is now already restored in Christ, even though the full manifestation and accomplishment of His Kingdome must be awaited for "in our final redemption". Using other terms Calvin can say that in the provision God makes for their sustenance and happiness in this life, the faithful "receive already some fruit of their integrity".

Calvin, however, has to admit that the possession of the earth is at present realised for the Christian only in a very limited way. For it is God's will that His people should not be too much at home upon this earth or allow their thoughts and affections to be so engrossed in it that they forget the hope of the life to come. Therefore God, indeed justly, allows the same

(1) Serm. on Job 5:17-18, C.O.33:259. Il est vray que Dieu signifie bien qu'il deteste le peche; et de fait l'ordre qu'il avoit institue en la creation du monde est troublé, quand nous ne sommes point traitte de luy paternellement.


(3) Comm. on Ps.128:3, C.O.32:328.


same afflictions as visit the ungodly also to fall on His own people, and instead of an overflowing abundance gives them only a taste of His fatherly love. A Christian will not complain "if the earthly felicity described in this Psalm (i.e. Ps.128) is not always the lot of the godly, but it sometimes happens that their wife is a termagant, or proud, or of depraved morals, or that their children are dissolute or vagabonds, and even bring disgrace upon their father's house, let them know that their being deprived of God's blessing is owing to their having repulsed it by their own fault. And surely if each duly considers his own vices he will acknowledge that God's earthly benefits have been justly withheld from him."

Though such afflictions come upon God's children, and their enjoyment of this present life is thus limited, yet it must not be imagined that it is a "mere fiction or imaginary thing" to say that the people of God are the heirs of this earth. For their lot in this world is always infinitely better than that of the godless. "They are truly happy because, even in their extreme poverty they are so persuaded that God is present with them, and being sustained by the strength of this consolation they rest assured". In the midst of all affliction God furnished His children with such actual experimental

(3) Comm. on Ps.128:3, C.O.32:328.
experimental evidence of His grace, that "they most certainly know that they are the rightful heirs of this world".

In all his use and enjoyment of this present world the believing man must have an attitude of faith. "The use of earthly blessings is connected with the pure feelings of faith (cum puro fidei sensu), in the exercise of which we can alone enjoy them rightly and lawfully to our own welfare". We must receive what we use and enjoy of this earth's goodness as something that comes to us "not otherwise than from the hand of God". We must really feel that whatever we enjoy from the hand of God is indeed our rightful heritage, not because we are worthy of it, but because God has elected us to such enjoyment. What we eat and drink must be to us a token of the fatherly love and care of God.

It is this attitude of faith which sanctifies our hearts in our use and enjoyment of this world and enables us to partake of


(3) Comm. on Ps.36:9, C.O.31:363.

(4) Comm. on 1 Cor.10:26, C.O.49:469. Cf. on Tit.1:15, C.O.52:418 Nihil pure usurpant homines, nisi cuod e manu Dei fide suscipiunt.

(5) Serm. on Deut.4:19-24, C.O.26:164. Mais cependant aussi, que nous meditions ceste doctrine...c'est de sentir quand nous ioyssons des creatures de Dieu, que nous les lenons comme nostre heritage: non pas que nous en soyons dignes...mais d'autant que nostre Dieu nous a eleus.

(6) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:25-30, C.O.49:686. Tout est licite aux fideles, pour ce qu'ils sont restablis par le moyen et par la grace de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, a ce qu'ils puissent boire et manger pour leur nourriture, connoissans qu'en cela Dieu se monstre leur Pere. Cf. comm. on Ps.36:9, C.O.31:363.
of God's earthly blessing without polluting them with an impure conscience as the unbelievers are bound to do. In sanctifying our hearts this faith also sanctifies the gifts themselves so that they become pure, and makes the use of them contribute to our salvation.

Calvin asserts that the conscience of man as he uses the benefits and enjoyments of this present world cannot be purified, nor can the use of created things be sanctified to him apart from the Word of God. For it is the Word of God that alone can teach us what is the true use of the benefits of this life. It teaches us to recognise God's favours as tokens of fatherly love. It testifies to our consciences that we are indeed heirs of this world and that therefore what we enjoy of its goodness is lawfully ours. "And which of us would venture to claim for himself a single grain of wheat if he were not taught by the Word of God that he is the heir of this world?"

It follows from all this that the true use and acceptance

\(1\) Serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-5, C.0.53:359. Il est dit au 15 des Actes que c'est la foi qui purifie nos coeurs: ceste pureté-là s'estend plus avant, c'est que quand un homme ha son coeur pur, s'il reçoit les biens que Dieu luy distribue pour son usage, qu'il ne pollue rien. Puycucy? Car il est net. Cf. Tit.1:15.

\(2\) Comm. on Tit.1:15, C.0.52:417. Quia enim nulla est coram Deo quem fidei puritas, secutur infideles omnes esse immunos... Quia, quum impuri sint ipsi, nihil sibi in mundo purum reperient. Cf. comm. on 1 Tim.4:3, C.0.52:296, on Heb.2:5, C.0.55:24. Serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-5, C.0.53:359. Quand j'auray bien lave mes mains, ie peux manier les choses qui sont pures, et ie ne les noirciray pas; mais si ie manie un linge le plus blanc du monde, et que j'aye les mains souillées, voila pour tout infecter.

\(3\) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:15-18, C.0.49:664. Les viandes nous sont sanctifiees quand nous connaissons qu'elles nous procedent de la bonté de Dieu, et que là dessus nous recourons à lui, et luy demandons nostre pain quotidien, et qu'il nous gouverne.... Comm. on Luke17:19, C.0.45:494. Sola igitur fidелés dona Dei nobis sanctificat, ut pura sint, et cum legitime usu conjuncta in salutem nobis cedant. Serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-5, C.0.53:359. L'usage des bonnes creatures ne peut appartenir contd:-
acceptance in faith of the earthly gifts which God gives us will be
accompanied by prayer and especially thanksgiving. Calvin can
speak of God's gifts as being sanctified by prayer and he refers to
the cure which was given to the nine lepers who did not return to
give thanks as "debased and contaminated by their ingratitude".

It is the duty of the Christian to accept this present life and its blessings, and to rejoice in the liberty to use them which is the right of the Children of God. Calvin admits that to the believer there are many considerations that make death better and more desirable than life on this earth, for the life that is to come is vastly superior to this present life. But that does not mean that the Christian has any right to despise this life or regard it as
as anything but a wonderful gift of God. Nor has a Christian any
right to curse the day of his birth. The celebration of our
birthday, with solemn and heartfelt thanksgiving to God for the
gift of this life, is a Christian duty and a sign of a true
Christian attitude towards this life. Therefore, though there is
a place for fasting in the Christian life, for men to fast out of
some ascetic principle or man made law is not a sign of true
devotion but rather base infidelity and ingratitude. We must not
reject the good gifts of food and drink which God puts in our
hands. Calvin notes with approval that the Jews in Babylon ate
their food during the captivity for "it would have been an evidence
of having fallen into sinful despair had they starved themselves
to death".

In our acceptance of this present life we must remember
that it is given to us not only to use but also to enjoy. When we
look round at the flowers and fruits and the beautiful fabrics and
metals which God has put at our disposal we find that the earth is
full of beautiful and delightful things with qualities which can

Cf. Test. 3:10-1.

(1) Cf. comm. on Phil. 2:27, C. O. 52:40.
(2) Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C. O. 33:145.
(5) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:31 - 11:1, C. O. 49:698. Cependant Dieu nous permet de nous estoir en ce monde: car il veut non seule-
ment que nous ayons ce qui est de nécessité, mais que nous
ayons de superabondant et en nostre boire, et en nostre
menger, et en tout le reste.
can bring a richness and exhilaration to our earthly life far beyond the dictates of pure necessity. It is obviously the natural order of things that we should indulge in taking pleasure from thosethings which God has given us liberally to enjoy. Calvin (as is shown clearly elsewhere), is always calling for moderation and sobriety in language which would satisfy those with the strictest standards of temperance yet even while using such language he can insist that it is lawful to use wine "not only in cases of necessity, but also to make us merry". "Have done, then, with that inhuman philosophy which, in allowing no use of the creatures but of necessity, not only maliciously deprives us of the lawful fruit of the divine beneficence, but cannot be realised without depriving man of all his senses, and reducing him to a block".

God is therefore not angry when men enjoy themselves in a holy manner and without giving offence to others. Calvin points out that when the prophets condemned those who dwelt at their ease in great sumptuousity, and who brought in tambourines and instruments of music to their banquets, it was simply the excessive indulgence in such things that they condemned but not the practices in themselves. It is a fallacy to imagine that intense spirituality must necessarily be accompanied by a narrow and impoverished cultural

(1) Inst. 3:10:2. Cf. comm. on 1 Tim. 6:17, C.0.52:334.
(2) Comm. on Ps. 104, 15, C.0.32:91. Colligimus ex eius verbis, vino licere uti, non modo ad necessitatem, sed ad laetitiam, sed haec laetita sobrie temperanda est.
(3) Inst. 3:10:3.
(4) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:31 - 11:1, C.0.49:697-8.
cultural outlook. Calvin condemns the fanatics of a former generation and the Anabaptists of his own day who despised all learning and liberal sciences and who had "no other pretext for boasting of their being spiritual persons but that they were grossly ignorant of all science". When a Christian looks out on the world, even though he sees clearly its evanescent character and the corruption which marks all things, he must also acknowledge the steadfastness which in many respects marks the framework of the world since it has its foundation in the Word of God.

A Christian is also bound to appreciate and acknowledge the presence of human virtues and graces in others as gifts of God, even in men who otherwise are wicked and who are our enemies. Calvin is eloquent in commending for our example the generous appreciation of the greatness of Saul in David's glorious lament over his bitter enemy; for if God endows men with great qualities, even though they themselves try to bury such we must admire and utter praise. Therefore the Christian will render honour wherever honour is due and in whatever sphere of life true greatness

(1) Comm. on Ps.71:15, C.O.31:659.
(2) Comm. on Ps.119:90, C.O.32:253-4. Haec igitur duo inter se optime conveniunt, verbi Dei constantiam ex statu terreno minime aestimendum esse, quia subinde fluctuat, et instar umbrae effluit; rursum tamen ingratos esse homines, nisi hanc eandem sententiam ex parte agnoscant in mundi opificio; quia terra, quae alioqui momento uno non staret, firma tamen manet, quia fundata est verbo Dei.
(3) Serm. on 2 Sam.1:17ff. p15-16. Car l'iniure ne se fait pas a vne creature mortelle, quand les graces de Dieu sont mises sous le pied, et qu'on n'en tient plus compte, ceste ingratitude la s'adresse a Dieu. Et au reste que nous sachions que ceux qui effacent ainsi la memoire des vertus qui sont en leurs ennemys se font grand tort. Et pourquoi? Dieu nous donne occasion de le louer et priser, quand il met ainsi ses graces aux hommes.
greatness shines. "God is despised in His gifts except we honour those on whom He has conferred any excellency". We must recognise that God in withdrawing the true knowledge of Himself from man since the fall, has not however, left him destitute of all praiseworthy gifts. Though in "heavenly things" such as the knowledge of the Kingdom of God and true spiritual discernment we are "blinder than moles", yet in "earthly things" which "have some connection with the present life" such as politics and economy and the mechanical and liberal arts, we are bound to acknowledge that men in general show an understanding of civil order and honesty, and a degree of aptitude and acuteness in the manual and liberal arts which is a "special gift of God". "Therefore in reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to Him, not to reject or contemn truth whenever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver.... Shall we deem anything to be noble and praiseworthy without tracing it to the

(2) Inst. 2:2:13.
(3) Inst. 2:2:13.
(4) Inst. 2:2:14.
the hand of God?"

A Christian will therefore use and accept thankfully human help and assistance of every kind if such can apply to his need, recognising that such help can come to him as from the hand of God and as the "lawful instrument of God's providence". Though the Holy Spirit does not dwell in the ungodly in the same way as in believers, He nevertheless communicates even to ungodly men many kinds of natural gifts for the common benefit of mankind. "If the Lord has been pleased to assist us by the work and ministry of the ungodly in physics, dialectics, mathematics, and other similar sciences, let us avail ourselves of it, lest by neglecting the gifts of God spontaneously offered to us, we be justly punished for our sloth".

(1) Inst.2:2:16.
(2) Inst.1:17:9.
(3) Inst.2:2:16.
(4) Inst.2:2:16.
PART III  CHAPTER 4

The Order of nature and the Christian life

The correspondence between the second table of the Law and the order of nature

The order of nature as an element in the Gospel

The Christian life as the truly natural and human life

Christian duty illustrated from the natural world

The working of the grace of God foreshadowed in the natural world
Calvin teaches that in matters relating to the first table of the law, fallen man by nature has no significant knowledge of what is true and right. Nevertheless in matters which come under the second table of the law i.e. "the method of properly regulating conduct", the knowledge of which even the natural man can derive from his own conscience and tradition and environment is of real significance. Indeed "nothing is more common than for a man to be sufficiently instructed in a right course of conduct by natural law". Between this "natural law" or "order of nature" and the law of God given through divine revelation there is a real correspondence. "There is a conformity (conformite) between the law of God and the order of

(1) Cf. Inst. 2:2:24 and 22. Certainly he knows that there is a God who is to be worshipped and prayed to. (Comm. on Rom.2:15; C.0.49:32; Cf on Jonah 1:5 & 6, C.0.43:213 & 6; serm. on Deut. 5:16, C.0.26:3:2-3), but he has no idea of how such worship should be given (Inst.2:2:24; 2:8:1). Moreover the perversity of his heart forces him to turn the truth he has into a lie by turning his conception of God into an idol. Cf R.S. Wallace Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament p 69-70.

(2) Inst.2:2:22. Lex naturalis is the phrase Calvin uses here. In his comm. on Rom.2:14-15...a passage to which he gives great weight...he says that the Gentiles have nonnullam iustitiae regulam, and are illuminated by iustitiae fulgorem which takes the place of the law of the Jews. He speaks also here of naturalis quaedam legis intelligentia. Cf C.0.43:37-8. He speaks in his sermons most frequently of this as the ordre de nature. Calvin finds the basis of all good lawmaking by the civil magistrates in what he calls "equity" as well as "justice". The judicial law of the Jews (the third branch of the law after the moral and ceremonial) delivered to them "as a kind of polity certain forms of equity and justice", Inst.4:20:15. (Lex) iudiciae, politiae loco illis data, certae æquitatis et iustitiae formulas tradebat). But this principle of equity which is expressed in the merciful provisions of the Jewish law is "common to all nations and ages" (Comm. on Ps.15 5, C.0.31:148), being a natural principle finding different legal expression under different circumstances (Inst.4:20:16). Cf. serm. on Job 1:6-8, C.0.33:66 where Calvin defines æquita
of nature which is engraven in all men”. When we are faced, as Christians, with the commandments of the second table of the Law of God, we are faced with something which "adds the authority of God to what we ought already to have known beforehand". Therefore the written law can be said to "remove the obscurity of the law of nature", and to enforce with the authority of God what is already acknowledged by all nations. Indeed Calvin can go the length of saying "The law of God which we call moral, is nothing else than the testimony of natural law, and of that conscience which God has engraven on the minds of men".

We must not exaggerate the extent or

equité as doing to others as you would have them do to you. (Matt. 7:12). These words of Christ seem for Calvin to sum up the common rule of equity (commuins equitatis regula) and at the same time to be the foundation of the law and the prophets. (Comm. on Exod. 22:25, C.0.24:681).

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 5:4-5, C.0.53:456-7.
(2) Serm. on Deut. 5:17, C.0.26:324.
(3) Inst. 2:8:1. Cf. comm. on Exod. 22:25, C.0.24:679, where Calvin points out that profane writers teach what the law teaches but "not clearly enough".

(4) Comm. on Eph. 6:1, C.0.51:228 Praeter naturae legem, quae recepta est inter omnes gentes, Dei quocue auctoritate sancitam docet filiorum obedientiam.

(5) Inst. 4:20:16 He continues: "the whole of that equity of which we now speak is prescribed in it" Cf note p. 209 supra.
or the importance of this natural law. Calvin's phrase "not absolutely blind" may be taken to describe the degree of moral light which it gives to the natural man. Moreover his knowledge implies no power to observe or even the will to observe that which he knows. Yet it does mean, for example, the power to distinguish "between what is proper and what is unjust, between what is honest and what is base." It means that the man has a "natural instinct to cherish and preserve society", and to give sympathy and care to the weak, a natural abhorrence of cruelty and brutality and bloodshedding and a horror and trembling before death such as was manifested by the sailors who, against their natural instincts, threw Jonah overboard. It means that heathen men of all nations understand many aspects of good behaviour which are reinforced by the precepts of Scripture such as the evil effects of bad company and evil communications, the need for integrity of the heart as well as of behaviour, and the duties of children towards parents.

Calvin appeals to the "order of nature" in many different

(1) Inst.2:2:22.
(2) Comm. on Rom.2:15, C.0.49:38.
(3) Ibid. Interc aequum et iniquum, honestum et turpe.
(5) Comm. on Ps.15:5, C.0.31:148.
(6) Comm. on Jonah 1:14, C.0.43:227-8.
(7) Cf. serm. on Eph.4:29-30, C.0.51:643. Comme aussi les Pauvres mesmes diront, Il fait bon à la compagnie d'un tel homm. Et pourquoy? On y oit tousiours quelque bon mot, et jamais on ne se depart d'avec luy ou'on n'en rapporte quelque bien.
(8) Cf. serm. on 2 Sam.3:12ff, p 64. Ainsi donc, puisque les pauvres ont bien eu cela imprime de nature et cue leur sens a la conduitz, par plus forte raison d'autant que l'Ecriture nous exhorte tante de fois a simplicité et rondeur et nous declare qu'il nous faut cheminer comme devant Dieu.....
(9) Comm. on Eph. 6:1, C.0.51:228.
different ways. He, of course, admits that God never binds Himself or us to act entirely according to the law of nature. But he frequently points out that God's dealings with men through the Gospel conforms to the natural order of things, and calls on men to respond to the grace of God with a like regard for the order of nature. Some examples of this may now be given: for instance, for the Church to have been separated, and to remain separate, from the world is of the order of nature. This separation is parallel to, and perhaps foreshadowed by, the separation of light from darkness in the creation. It is, moreover, natural for us to separate what is clean from what is filthy. For God's people to refuse to maintain such separation is to "subvert, as it were, the whole order of nature". It is like mixing up heaven and earth and introducing horrible confusion into the whole creation. A further example of what is natural in the realm of faith is that the Christian should learn to trust in God alone, for to trust in two objects is to confound the order of nature and to mix up heaven and earth. Calvin, indeed, sees

(1) Cf. e.g. serm. on Matt. 3:9-10, C.0.46:541. Dieu en maintenant son Eglise, n'est pas sujet à aucun ordre naturel, mais...il y besongne d'une façon estrange. Cf also comm. on John 21:18, C.0.47:454.
(2) Comm. on Gen. 17:7, C.0.23:237.
(4) Serm. on Deut. 7:5-8, C.0.26:515. Il y en a bien peu qui pensent à ceci. Car nous aurions autre horreur de nous polluer parmi les infections de la pâraute, si cette doctrine nous estoit bien imprimee, que Dieu nous ait separé, et que nous allions faire un meslinge nouveau; c'est autant comme si nous assemblions le ciel et la terre, voulans renverser tout ordre de nature, et que tout soit dissipe, qu'il y ait confusion horrible; car il est certain qu'il y doit avoir plus de distance entre les enfans de Dieu, et les incredules, qu'entre le ciel et la terre.
(5) Comm. on Jer. 17:5, C.0.38:265.
sees in the prominent place given to the preaching and hearing of the Word of God within the Church a restoration of the true order of nature, for we were given the power to communicate one with another "not simply to buy boots and shoes and bonnets and bread and wine" but to use our mouths and ears to lead each other to the faith which rises heavenward to the contemplation of God Himself. Calvin can go the length of implying that the true service of God is what is natural, this being an argument against inventing quite unnatural ceremonies for men such as abstaining from meat on Friday. Therefore the Christian must take with the utmost seriousness the duties which "natural sense dictates". Frequently he will find that the law of God commands him simply to be human and natural. Submission to the natural order of things is not for Calvin a secondary or alien aspect.

(1) Serm. on Job 33:29-33, C.0.35:127. In serm. on 1 Tim.2:12-14, C.0.53:219, he ranks the preaching of the word along with the institution of marriage and government as part of the natural order.

(2) Cf. serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-3, C.0.53:352. His phrase is le vraye service de Dieu et naturel. It is to be noted that in the next sentence he asserts that to deny ourselves (i.e. the evil nature within us) is a service raisonnable.

(3) Comm. on Exod.20:12, C.0.24:605. Principibus esse obedientium sensus ipse naturae dictat. It was the same naturae sensus which "impelled" the pagan sailors to cry to God in the storm (Comm. on Jonah 1:6, C.0.43:216) Such invocation came non aliunde quam ab arcano quodam instinctu et cuidem duce et magistra natura (Ibid.1:5, C.0.43:213) Such natural impulse is clearly different from the "natural" impulse of the "flesh" which is always contrary to God. cf p

(4) Cf e.g. Serm. on Eph.5:28-30, C.0.51:759. Quand l'Escriture sainte nous exhorte a estre humains, debonnaires et patiens les uns envers les autres, et qu'elle nous propose l'exemple de Dieu...Il faut bien que nous avons les coeurs plus durs qu'acier, s'ils ne sont amollis. Or tant y a encore que toutes ces exhortations ne nous peuvent suffire pour nostre malice et corruption. Pour cette cause Dieu a fin de nous faire plus grand'honte, nous renvoye a l'ordre naturel.
aspect of our duty which must be performed merely as a supplement or addition to the truly Christian part of the life of the believer, but it is an essential part of Christian piety and an integral element in his new life in Christ. It is an expression of the restored \textit{Imago Dei} in man. There is, for Calvin, as we have already seen, the closest connection between the order of nature, the order revealed in the law of God, and the true order of man's life which we see revealed and established in Jesus Christ, in which the Christian man already shares by faith. The Christian life is the expression of such order in the daily life of this world.

Therefore Calvin himself, as we shall see, does not hesitate to appeal to his hearers and readers to live according to the order of nature and the natural law, as well as according to the Gospel. In making such an appeal to the natural order he is not turning from Jesus Christ and the Scripture to some supposedly possible second and different source of guidance and inspiration. He is rather using the natural realm to illustrate and to fill out the details of the meaning of the Law of God for the Christian man. In appealing, as he does, to men to become truly natural and human, it can never be far from his mind that only in Christ do we have it revealed what is truly natural and human, and only since He has died and risen again does nature and humanity have real significance. For the Christian, then, the law of nature is not to be separated from the law of God, nor is the law of God to be separated from the law of nature. He should be inclined to follow both.

It will be noticed that the "order of nature" to which Calvin

Calvin appeals in illustrating our Christian duty is not only the natural law engraven on the heart of man but includes the whole arrangement and ordering by which God governs the physical and natural world. The realm of nature reflects an order given to it through its response to the creative Word of God. "Experience clearly shows, that the voice of God is heard even by dumb creatures, and that the order of nature (naturae ordo) is nothing else than the obedience which is rendered to Him by every part of the world, so that everywhere His supreme authority (imperium) shines forth. For at His bidding the elements observe the law prescribed for them, and heaven and earth discharge their office. The earth produces her fruits, the sea does not flow beyond her settled bounds, the sun, moon and stars go through their circuits; the heavens too revolve at stated periods — all with wonderful accuracy, though they are devoid of reason and intelligence. Throughout the whole natural creation, then, amongst "the oxen, asses, dogs even the stones and the trees" Calvin finds a "natural inclination to obey God" which can be an example to us in living the Christian life. It is especially in the animal kingdom that we find that the realm of

(1) Comm. on Iss. 1:2, C.O. 36:29.
(2) Serm. on Deut. 10:12-14, C.O. 27:34 Cf. Serm. on Job 27:5-8, C.O. 34:467. Qui pis est, il faudra que les bestes brutes nous condamment; car combien qu'un boeuf ne sache pourquoi il est creé, si est-ce qu'encore il suit quelque ordre naturel. Pourquoi est-ce qu'il baissse les cornes, et qu'il plie le col pour porter le ious, sinon d'autant que nostre Seigneur lui donne quelque instruction sans vouloir, sans sentiment, telle-ment que les povres bestes ont une inclination a faire ce qui est de leur office.
of nature is to us a painting (peinture) or a mirror (miroir) "in which God shows us our duty". As we watch the care of the mother bird for its young God is saying to us "Train yourselves in this way to be human and to do no act of cruelty". It is true that Calvin recognises the distortion and chaos that has entered the natural world as a result of the fall. But in spite of this "the beasts frequently observe the order of nature more correctly and display more humanity than men themselves". For example they obey their masters, they are not cruel to their own species for they recognise their own likeness (similitudo) in each other, in meat and drink they "do not gorge themselves and utterly ruin their constitutions". In all this they can be our examples.

Besides finding in the order of nature a "mirror of duty" we

(1) Serm. on Deut. 22:5-8, C.O. 28:24-5.
(2) Ibid. C.O. 28:22.
(5) Ibid. Calvin suggests that it is because of such example in the animal world that even the heathen know the ways of kindness. Cf Serm. on Eph. 5:28-30, C.O. 51:759. Comme les Païens ont bien sceu montrer cela: n'ayant nulle foi en Dieu, n'ayant nulle piété, si est-ce qu'ils ont bien sceu dire que les bestes sauvages ne se font point la guerre. Car un loup ne mangera point les autres; les ours et les lions qui sont parmi les forêts, ont ie ne sceu qui les tient en bride, en sorte qu'ils ne se nuisent point les uns aux autres...il y a comme un mouvement naturel qui les poussent à cela, qu'ils s'entr'aident, en sorte que chacun se nourrit avec son compagnon.
we are also meant to see in it indications of "the spiritual grace of God". For instance, in the germination into new life of the seed thrown into the ground as if to die Calvin sees not simply an otherwise unrelated superficial illustration of the resurrection of the body but a real analogy based on an exceedingly close similarity in God's purpose between the ordering of nature and His new order in Jesus Christ. The steadfastness of the order of nature is moreover a sign to us of the steadfastness of the promises which have to do with our salvation. The sending of the rain and the sun to nourish the earth and make it fruitful is likewise a sign to us of God's fatherly care and of the fact that as God provides for our earthly life He will also provide for our spiritual life.

(1) Cf. comm. on Isa. 6:13, C.0.36:142. Nam quum cernimus gratiam Dei spiritualem in ipso naturae ordine, non parum confirmamus.
(2) Cf. comm. on 1 Cor. 15:36, C.0.50:556. Serm. on Job 18:1-11, C.0.34:62-3. Toutes fois et quantes qu'on nous parlera de Dieu, que ses oeuvres...nous conduisent toujours plus haut à lui. Exemple....3'il fait que la semence cui sera jetée en terre, germe apres qu'elle sera pourrie, et cu'elle apporte fruit de nouveau: si nous allons en corruption, Dieu ne nous pourra-il pas restablir en une meilleure vie, veu qu'il monstre une telle vertu en l'ordre de nature?
(3) Serm. on Job 18:1-11, C.0.34:62-3.
(4) Ibid and Serm. on Deut. 28:9-14, C.0.38:375. Calvin's idea that bread and wine in themselves have no power of nourishing or refreshing men, but that by the order of nature God can use them, and normally does use them, to convey strength and nourishment to our bodies as we partake of them, (cf e.g. serm on Deut. 8:1-2, C.0.26:595-6) seems to suggest that the mystery of the Lord's Supper too has its parallel in the natural world, but Calvin can insist that the sacrament has no such natural counterpart. Cf serm. on Luke 1:36-8, C.0.46:97-8, where Calvin scorns the suggestion that in the doctrine of the Supper nous voulons nous gouverner selon l'ordre de nature. Comparing the influence of the sun on the earth with that of the ascended Christ on His people, he says, Le soleil fait son office selon l'ordre de nature; mais Iesus Christ fait miracle.
Mutual communication and subjection within the order of nature

(a) Mutual communication

Mutual communication in love is a duty dictated by nature and arising from the common bond of humanity

This duty based on the restored *imago dei* in Christ

Christian love is true humanity

The true order of nature in this matter should especially be seen within the Church

The welfare of each member of society depends on the fulfilment within society of this law of mutual communication through speech, money, goods etc

This means that each must be faithful to his calling

It means that each must take his share in hard work - usury is condemned for this reason

(b) Mutual subjection

Our common humanity involves us in mutual subjection and servitude

The closer the bond between members of society, the stricter the obligation to mutual subjection

Though the fall has made the form of such subjection more humiliating and severe, it has not cancelled the obligation to submit

Though the original relationships of mutual subjection have been vitiated, yet even in their present form their order is an expression of the image of God and they reflect divine blessing

In the marriage relationship the *imago dei* specially shines forth becoming a true analogy of the relation of Christ to His Church

Authority within mutual subjection involves humility, companionship, understanding and subjection

We must, however, render obedience to those over us in spite of their personal unworthiness

Yet we must be careful not to disobey God

All distinctions of rank in society are transitory and will be abolished in the Kingdom of Heaven

Yet we cannot now effect this revolution ourselves
It is when Calvin expounds the meaning of loving our neighbour that he, in his teaching and preaching, most frequently appeals to the order of nature as he sees it revealed and restored in Jesus Christ. For instance, in his comment on Matt. 5:43, Calvin asserts that there is a "sacred fellowship" (societas sancta) between all men, including the whole human race in a "common nature" in which every man is my neighbour. This is part of the order of nature which not even man's depravity has violated. This should express itself in a "mutual communication" (mutua communicatio) in brotherly love between man and man "which nature itself dictates". All this is based on the recognition that I share the same human nature as my brother. "Whenever I see a man I must of necessity behold myself as in a mirror".

In all this Calvin seems to base the duty of loving our neighbour on an entirely natural foundation. But from other passages it is clear that our whole duty towards our neighbour is really based on one fact that we can know only in Christ - that all men are made in the image of God. The sailors, who, taught by nature, shrank with

with such humanity from killing Jonah did not know this truth and therefore here we must "go far beyond them". Even though, through the fall, the image of God has become so horribly distorted as to be unrecognisable, nevertheless a Christian must regard all men as being created in and indeed as possessing the image of God. This consideration is basic in determining the attitude of the Christian to his fellow men in general. "We are not to look at what men deserve in themselves, but to attend to the image of God which exists in all, and to which we owe honour and love". Since man is in the image of God, any sin against our fellow man is bound to be regarded as at the same time an act calculated to injure God. The reason behind the commandments that forbid us injuring human life is that since man is in the image of God, God Himself, looking on men as formed in His own image, regards them with such love and honour that He Himself feels wounded and outraged in the persons of those who are the victims of human cruelty and wickedness. In this way the Gospel gives us what seems to be a natural basis for the commandment that men should love one another and it is from this start that Calvin works out further "natural" principles.

Seeing the image of God in all men carries along with it a

(2) Inst. 3:7:6. 2:14-17
(3) Serm. on 2 Sam. /p42. S'ils font ung jeu de tuer, que nous considerions tout aious que c'est vn chose detestable que de ruiner et effacer l'image de Dieu qui reluyt en ses creatures, d'autant que tous hommes sont creez a son image. Cf ibid p49.
(4) Serm. on Deut.4:39:43, C.O.26:227. Voila donc Dieu qui nous porte une telle amour, qu'il se sent bleste et outrage en nos personnes, d'autant qu'il nous a creez a son image.
a realisation that we are all created with one common nature. When
God wants to incite us to love and help one another He reminds us
that we are "of one flesh and one nature". Therefore we must not
despise our own flesh. No matter what divides us from any other
human being, we must remember that he is of the same origin and is
made in the same likeness as ourselves. Calvin, in his teaching on
the duty of man to man gives full weight to his belief that all man-
kind issue from a common human parentage, therefore all men form one
body. He frequently quotes the appeal of Isaiah to the people of
his time not to hide themselves "from their own flesh". Therefore
the very fact that we are human creatures means that "we cannot but
behold as in a mirror, our own face in those who are poor and
despised, who have come to an end of their own power to help them-
selves, and who groan under their burden, even though they are utter
strangers to us. Even in dealing with a Moor or a Barbarian from the
very fact of his being a man he carries about with him a looking
glass in which we can see that he is our brother and our neighbour.

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:1-2, C.0.53:128. Et pour cette cause il nous
a criez d'une nature. Quand ie regarde un homme il faut que
ie contemple la mon image, et que ie me regarde en sa personne
et que ie m'y coynisse.

(2) Serm. on Eph. 5:28-30, C.0.51:760. Cf. serm. on Gal. 6:9-11,
C.0.51:105. Et d'autant qu'il a imprime son image en nous, et
que nous avons une nature commune, que cela nous doit inciter
à subvenir les uns les autres. Cf. serm. on Deut. 5:19, C.0.
26:361.

(3) Serm. on Job 31:9-15, C.0.54:655.

(4) Serm. on Deut. 4:39-43, C.0.52:229.

(5) Cf. e.g. serm. on Deut. 22:1-4, C.0.23:16, on Gal. 6:9-11, C.0.
Eph. 5:28-30, C.0.51:760.

(6) Serm. on Gal. 6:9-11, C.0.51:105.
This recognition that we possess a common humanity, which has its basis in our recognition of the image of God in all men, itself forms the basis of the command in the Law and in the teaching of Jesus to love our neighbour as ourselves. In this world, all men, whoever they may be, are neighbours. Indeed in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' purpose was to teach "that the word neighbour extends indiscriminately to every man, because the whole human race is united by a sacred bond of fellowship".  

These two basic facts - that all men are created in the image of God, and that all share in a common human nature - are the foundation of all Calvin's teaching about human relationships. They themselves define the "order of nature" according to which a Christian, as well as any other man, must live. Time and again, Calvin, refers to this order in defining what Christian love means. The order of nature is that God has united all men together and has set them in this world so that each can help the other, unless we live in peace and concord one with another we pervert the order of nature. But no matter how wicked other men are, and no matter how little they deserve to be reckoned as our brothers and neighbours, nevertheless nothing that they do can alter this order that God has decreed and which we are bound to observe. The wicked man or the man who hates

(2) Serm. on Gal. 6:9-11, C.0.51:100.
(3) Serm. on Deut. 2:1-7, C.0.26:9.
hates us and harms us must still be regarded by us as in the image of
God.

On this basis to act with love towards our fellow man simply
means to show ourselves as human towards him. To love another is to
act with humanity in recognition of our common humanity. All the
cruelty and pride which spoil human life arises from the fact that
men forget or despise the common humanity which they share with all
men and the possession of which should "teach us with what humility
and justice we ought to conduct ourselves towards each other". This
is what a master must remember in dealing with the servants and maids
in his house. Though he has a certain superiority of rank over them
and should not defer to them to the extent of letting them sit above
him at table or giving them his own bed to sleep in, nevertheless he
must always remember that they are the children of Adam of his bone
and of his flesh made in the image of God and that therefore we owe it
to them to behave with humanity towards each other and not like
savage beasts. Calvin insists that those who deny to their/fellow
men the pity and charity which is their due from the fact of their
belonging to the human brotherhood dehumanise themselves. If we show
no love towards them we break the bond that binds us to humanity and

(1) Serm. on Gal. 5:14-18, C.O. 51:19. Cf. comm. on Gal. 5:14, C.O.
(2) Cf. e.g. sern. on 1 Tim. 4:1-3, C.O. 53:346 Brief, quae nous
soyons humains et pitoyables, et qu'il y ait equité/et droiture,
Comm. on Ps. 10:2, C.O. 31:109. Saevitiam vero non parum ampli-
ficat haec circumstantia, quod humanitatis oblit, pauperibus
et afflictis contumeliose insultent. Superba quidem semper est
cruelitas, imo super Serbia omnium injuriarum mater est.
and automatically rank ourselves outside the human race and place ourselves among the animals. In this way we disfigure ourselves by exempting ourselves from giving relief to our neighbours. We renounce the image of God and make ourselves into an ox or a lion or a bear.

The same order of nature must also decide our relationship within the fellowship of the Church. Calvin, it is true, can remind us that even though we are bound so closely to our fellow man by the order of nature, there is nevertheless a closer bond between us and our fellow Christian in the Church however poor he may be. Yet the image of God "shines more brightly in those that have been regenerated" than in others around us and therefore the bonds that bind the disciples of Christ one to another should be regarded as closer and more sacred within the Church than outside. If to injure our fellow man is to pervert the order of nature, to injure our fellow Christian is to "tear Jesus Christ in pieces".

In defining more closely what it means to fulfil the order of nature on the basis of our sharing with all men a common nature,

(1) Serm. on Deut. 5:19, C.0.26:351.
(2) Serm. on Gal.6:9-11, C.0.51:105. Car il faut que celuy qui se voudra exempter de subvenir à ses prochains se deffigure, et qu'il declare qu'il ne veut plus estre homme.
(3) Serm. on Job 31:9-15, C.0.34:655. Et puis il y a une conioinction plus prochaine de nous avec les pource fideles qui sont espars ca et la.
(4) Serm. on 2 Sam.16:6. Et puis il y a une conioinction plus prochaine de nous avec les pource fideles qui sont espars ca et la.
(5) Comm. on John 13:34, C.0.47:313. In regeneratis clarius elucet Dei imago.
(6) Serm. on Deut. 2:1-7, C.0.26:9.
nature, Calvin speaks of our obligation to "mutual communication" with all who need what we can give so that the whole common life may be enriched. Such mutual communication is the obvious outcome both of the fact that God in creation did not make an infinite number of private worlds one for each individual but gave us a common habitation in one world, and also of the fact that we are all "bound and united in one body". It was in order to assist such mutual communication in the order of nature that the ability to communicate by the speech was given to men and the tongue was created by which we can meet, through giving encouragement and teaching and consolation, the needs of each other. Therefore all abuse of speech or language is a perversion of the order of nature. It was also in order to enable us to communicate one with another that the use of money was

(1) Serm. on 1 Cor.11:11-16, C.O.49:739. Il est impossible que nul se passe de l'aide et secours de ses prochains: mais il faut qu'il y ait communication mutuelle, et qu'un chacun serve de son costé et que le tout se rapporte aussi à la vie commune.

(2) Serm. on 1 Tim.2:1-2, C.O.53:128. Car nostre Seigneur n'a point créé de mondes infinis, afin qu'un chacun demeure à l'escart vivant à soi et à son profit privé; mais il nous a mis les uns avec les autres. Voulant donc que l'habitation fust commune, il nous a aussi obligéz, afin qu'un chacun pense qu'il doit communiquer avec ses prochains. Et pour ceste cause il nous a cress d'une nature.

(3) Serm. on Job 1:6-8, C.O.33:66. Et ceste droiture tend la, qu'un chacun ne se retire point à part, pour chercher son profit, mais que nous communiquions ensemble, comme Dieu nous a liez et unis en un corps, qu'un chacun regarde à servir à ses prochains, qu'il y ait ceste communauté fraternelle.

(4) Serm. on Eph.4:29-30, C.O.61:44.5. Nostre Seigneur nous a donné langue pour communiquer les uns avec les autres... Nous ne pourrons point marcher un pas, que nous ne voyons que l'un a besoin d'estre picoué, l'autre repris, l'autre consolé, l'autre enseigné. Quand nostre langue se tient quoye en tout cela, et que nous n'avons souci ni des corps ni des ames de ceux qui sont compints avec nous, et auxquels nous devons estre unis comme deux doigts de la main: quand donc nous abastardissons ainsi l'usage naturel de nostre langue, n'est-ce point comme despiter Dieu manifestement?... quand donc nous profanons... nos langues, n'est ce point pervertir tout l'ordre de nature?
was instituted by God as part of the order of nature, a wrong use
of, or attitude towards money being a corruption of the order of
nature. We must in our use of all the "commodities of the present
life" not only magnify the goodness of God towards us but also have
regard to our neighbours and to the "communaute" which our Lord
commands. "Since God has united men amongst themselves by a certain
bond of fellowship, hence they must mutually communicate with each
other by good offices. Here then it is required that the rich succour
the poor and offer bread to the hungry".

It is when he speaks about the duties of Christian love that
Calvin refers frequently to this mutual communication to which we are
each obliged in fulfilling our office within the order which God has
established amongst us. He refers to the bond which binds us one to
another in this way as the "common bond of love". Yet such
"communication of offices" on the part of the rich towards the poor
is merely a payment of what is "due by the law of nature". It is to
be regarded as merely the expression of a natural feeling of humanity

(1) Serm. on I Tim.6:9-11, C.0.53:582. Car voici Dieu qui a
regardé aux necessitez des hommes, il ne leur a voulu
defaillir en rien: et comme il a cree le ble, le vin, et
autres choses...il a adjoisit l'argent, afin que les hommes
peussent communiquer les uns avec les autres.
(3) Serm. on Deut.20:2-9, C.0.27:609 Communaute here doubtless
means common sharing of goods.
(4) Comm. on Ezek.18:7, C.0.40:429 Sed quia Deus homines quodam
societatis vinculo inter se conjuxit, ideo necesse est
communicari inter se ipsos officia...
(5) Cf serm. on Eph.2:22-6, C.0.51:735-6.
(6) Serm. on Eph.5:18-21, C.0.51:732. Dieu...veut que nous soyons
serviables les uns aux autres et que nous ne cerchions point
tellement chacun son profit, que nous ne regardions que nous
sommes mitia conjoints d'un lien mutuel de charite.
humanity that all men should have towards each other. A Christian will take no special pride in discharging such a duty. Even heathen writers teach that all are born for the sake of mankind and that the life of society can be properly cultivated only by the interchange of such good offices among men. God has so ordered human life that no one can be self-sufficient. It is common sense that no matter how clever or resourceful an individual may be, each has need of his neighbours for the provision of even the most mundane requirements of human life. The labourer in the fields by his own hard work can produce food and drink for himself, but he requires the skill and work of others to give him a candle to see by at night, and decent shoes for his feet and clothes for his back if he wants to be better clad than in the skin of one of his sheep or oxen. The law of nature is that each must give and each must receive. Even the rich, who might be tempted to feel self-sufficient and who may be held in honour, must remember that the important parts of the human body are the more delicate parts like the eye, and being most delicate they have all the more need of the help and protection of the rest of the body.

Such mutual communication between those who fulfil different functions in the body of human society means that each must fulfil the occupation or calling to which he has been appointed in an orderly manner so that thus the order of nature for society might be fulfilled. Calvin does not go the length of teaching that if a man

(1) Inst.3:7:7;
(3) Serm. on 1 Cor.11:11-16, C.0.49:739.
man is born in one station and calling in life he cannot possibly seek to change it. "It would be a very hard thing if a tailor were not at liberty to learn another trade, or if a merchant were not at liberty to betake himself to farming." Nevertheless each individual in society must realise that he is called by God to fulfil some useful function in the life of the social body to which he belongs. It is therefore his duty to "keep within the limits" or "bounds" of his lawful calling, the husbandman in the fields, each tradesman at his special task. Only so can confusion and disorder be avoided. This ordinance that each must "mind his own business" does not, however, mean that men must in any way live apart from each other. There is a common life in society in which men must care for each other and share with each other, and isolated specialisation is naturally not a good thing.

Participation in the social life of man involves taking a share in the burden of hard toil which was imposed upon mankind as a result of the fall of Adam. This burden of labour is not imposed equally on all. Some have to bear more of it, some less. It must not be imagined that a life of labour is dishonourable. Those who teach the superiority of a "contemplative life" to a life of toil teach falsely. Though in the form in which we experience it labour is often excessively hard and unrewarding nevertheless we must

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:20, C.0.49:415.
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:20, C.0.49:415.
(3) Comm. on 1 Thess. 4:11, C.0.52:163. Haec itur optimae tranquilli vitae ratio, dum unusquisque vocationis suae officiis intentus, exsequitur quae sibi Domino mandata sunt, et in iis se occupat: dum agricola se in operibus rusticis exercet, optex artem suam tractat: atque ita singuli intra proprios fines se continent. Simulatque hinc deflectunt homines, omnia incomposita sunt ac turbulenta.
(4) Ibid.
(5) Comm. on Gen. 3:19, C.0.23:75.
(7) Cf p. '94 n.
must remember that we were created by God for the purpose of being strenuously employed in a form of labour while on this earth. Therefore to labour is to fulfil the gracious order of nature which is planned according to the image of God. Moreover in our earthly toil not only does the call of God reach us so that toil becomes a divine vocation directed by Him, but also the hand of God is stretched out to us assuring us that our labour will bear fruit. We must not believe the lie of the Devil who seeks to persuade that labouring and housework are secular affairs that do not concern God. We must not separate the present mundane life from the service of the Lord. God accepts honest upright work as a service agreeable to Himself.

If the chambermaid and the manservant go about their domestic tasks offering themselves in their work as a sacrifice to God, then what they do is accepted by God as a holy and pure sacrifice pleasing in His sight. One of Calvin's objections against the practice of usury


(2) Comm. on 1 Tim.6:12, C.0.45:329.

(3) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:31-11.1, C.0.49:695. Le diable a tellement aveuglé les hommes qu'il leur a persuadé et fait à croire, qu'en choses petites il ne falloit point estimer que Dieu fust honore né servi: et ce sous ombre que cela estoit du monde. Comme quand un homme travaille en son labeur pour gaigner sa vie, cu'une femme fait son mesnage, qu'un serviteur aussi s'acquitte de son devoir, on pense que Dieu n'a point esgard à tout cela, et dit on que ce sont affaires seculiers. Or il est vray que tout cela est propre pour ce qui concerne ceste vie presente et caduque: mais cependant ce n'est pas à dire qu'il nous fale separer cela du service de Dieu.

(4) Ibid p. 696 Si une chambriere balle la maison, si un serviteur va à l'eau, et bien, cela ne sera rien prise. Et toutesfois quand ils le font en s'offrant à Dieu, pour ce qu'il lui plaist en s'offrant à Dieu, pour ce qu'il lui plaist les appliquer a cela, un tel lebeur est accept de lui comme une oblation sainte et pure. Cf. comm. on Luke 10:38, C.0.45:382. ...nec uilla sacrificia magis placere Deo, quam dum in suam quisque vocationem intentus utiliter in commune bonum vivere studet.
usury was that it created in society a class of people who drew to themselves the benefits of other people's labour in society without contributing by their own labour and skill to the benefit of society. Cato of old justly placed the practice of usury and the killing of men in the same rank of criminality, for the object of this class of people is to suck the blood of the other men. It is also a very strange and shameful thing, that while other men obtain their means of subsistence with much toil, while husbandmen fatigue themselves by their daily occupations, and artisans serve the community by the sweat of their brow, and merchants not only emply themselves in labours, but also expose themselves to many inconveniences and dangers - that moneymongers should sit at ease without doing anything and receive tribute from the labours of all other people.

(1) Comm. on Ps.15:5, C.0.31:148. Calvin discusses usury at some length in his commentaries, (on Ps.15:5, C.0.31:147-8; on Ezek 18:8, C.0.40:430-2; on Exod.22:25, C.0.24:680-3), though he feels that there is much more that could be said (40:432). He does not agree with Aristotle that all usury is contrary to nature, since it is unnatural that money alone should beget money (24:682), but he does regard it as significant that even amongst the heathen usury is universally detested. He frequently quotes with approval Cato's judgment that usury was almost the same as murder (24:681; 31:147-8; 40:431.) It is, however, the pursuit of usury as a trade or profession that is to be condemned thus outrightly, and not the occasional lending of money (24:683; 40:431) Calvin's personal view is that the professional usurer ought to be "expelled from intercourse with his fellowman", and certainly he ought not to be allowed in the Church. (40:431). The very word usury in Hebrew means "to bite" (40:429-30). Professional usury invariably leads to extortion and oppression of the poor (31:147-8; 40:432) But God's law does not condemn all usury, e.g. it allowed Jews to lend money to Gentiles. We must not try to be more strict, lest if we condemn all usury without distinction men will plunge in despair into the worst type of usury without discrimination (31:147). We can lend money to the rich and take interest. Otherwise why should the rich borrower reap all the advantage? (24:682) We must remember that apart from usury men cannot transact their business (40:432). In many cases usury is no worse than purchase. "Usury is not now unlawful except in so far as it contravenes equity and brotherly union" (24:683). But we should not exact interest from the poor and
All communication one with another in love within society involves subjection one to another. Indeed, Calvin can sum up the whole duty of one man towards another in the order of nature as the duty of "mutual subjection". There is among men a "universal bond of subjection" (universale subiectionis vinculum) the yoke of which no man must try to avoid. Calvin often goes further and speaks of such subjection as involving also "servitude". "God has bound us so closely one to another that no one ought to exempt himself from subjection and wherever love reigns there is mutual servitude".

Calvin recognises that within society there are certain

and we must always beware of practising this vice under specious names (31:147). "The common fellowship of the human race (communis generis humani societas) demands that we should not grow rich by the loss of others" (24:680) Cf. sermon on Deut. 23:18-20, C.O. 28:117. La somme est telle que nous ne devons point grever nos prochains, prenant aucun profit d'eux: voire l'enten profit qui leur soit à dommage. 58? Ce n'est pas le tout aussi que la police nous excuse. Car voilà la Loy qui sera de cinq pour cent... est-ce à dire qu'il soit tousjours licite de prendre cinq pour cent? Nenni. (p.12)

(1) Serm. on Eph. 5:22-26, C.O. 51:735. Nous avons veu ci dessus, comme chacun de nous est subiet à ses prochains, et ne pouvons autrement converser les uns avec les autres qu'en rendant quelque devoir comme de subietion.
(4) Comm. on Eph. 5:21, C.O. 51:221... Ac ubicunque regnat caritas, illic mutua est servitas. Cf. sermon, on Eph. 5:18-21, C.O. 51:733... que chacun support son prochain. Et n'est-ce pas subietion que cela? Nous ne pouvons pas vivre ensemble sans ce support. Or est-il ainsi que tout support emporte servitude. Cf also p734.
certain bonds, binding individuals and groups one to another, that are closer and more exacting than the universal bond of humanity. The "yoke" of marriage between husband and wife is the most sacred and close of all human relationships. Then there is the close bond between parents and children, and thirdly the "yoke which connects masters and servants". Since these bonds are closer than the bond of common humanity they involve men in a particular or special form of subjection which must be submitted to in the same spirit of love as inspires submission to the obligations to humanity in general.

If love dictates mutual subjection as our duty to men in general, it much more strongly dictates to us subjection to those with whom we hold one of these specially close relationships.

The subjection of the inferior to the superior in the

(1) Comm. on Ps.55:13, C.O.31:540. Interea sciamus damnari a spirito sancto eos omnes qui sacra naturae foedera violant quibus erant inter se devincti. Quedam est totius humani generis societas: sed quo quisque propius ad nos accedit, eo sanctiore vinculo nobis est conjunctus. Nam principium, quod profanis hominibus incognitum fuit, nobis tenendum est, non fortuito; sed Dei providentia fieri, ut vicinitas, cognatio, vocatio communis, homines ipsos inter se consociet. Sacratissimum autem est pietatis foedus. Cf. comm. on Eph.5:22, C.O.51:222

(2) Serm. on Eph.5:28-30, C.O.51:761. Or le lien le plus sacré que Dieu ait mis entre nous, est du mari avec la femme.


(4) Serm. on Eph.5:22-6, C.O.51:735. Combien qu'en general il y ait ceste regle...neantmoins il y a aussi en particulier subjection plus grande du fils au pere et de la femme au mari, des subjets a leurs superieurs, qu'il n'y a pas indifferentement entre tous les hommes...et puis il y a aussi subjection speciale.

(5) Serm. on Eph.5:28-30, C.O.51:760. Or si cest argument -la doit valoir en general, par plus forte raison quand les hommes sont conoiants ensemble d'un lien plus estroit.
the relationship of ruler to people, master to servant, husband to wife, child to parent is part of an inviolable order established by God the Father. Unless such order is observed and those in authority maintain their proper position and those under authority submit to those over them then human society cannot be maintained. Such order in society has been established by God as the only possible way in which a full and healthy human life can be lived by all men.

Calvin does not always simply accept such order as being in its entirety an order of nature or creation. He asserts that certain forms of the subjection of servants to master which have prevailed in the world are "contrary to the whole order of nature", it being due only to the fall of man that one on whom God has impressed His mark should be brought into such humiliation and servitude. He can

(1) Serm. on Gal.3:26-9, C.0.50:567-8. Or cependant saint Paul n'a pas voulu dire, quant à la police de ce monde, qu'il y ait des degrés divers: car nous sc savons qu'il y a des serviteurs et maîtres: il y a des magistrats, et peuples sujets: il y a au message l'homme qui est le chef, et la femme qui luy doit estre suijet: nous sc savons donc que ceste ordre là est inviolable et nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ n'est pas venu au monde pour faire une telle confusion, que ce qu'est establi de Dieu son Pere soit aboli. Calvin calls such subjection subjectio politica. Comm. on 1 Pet.2:18, C.0.55:247.

(2) Comm. on Exod.20:12, C.0.24:602-3. Imo non aliter foveri et integra manere potest humana societas, quam si filii parentibus se modeste sujiciant, ac reverenter etiam colantur cuicumque aliis divinitus sunt praefecti.

(3) Serm. on Deut.5:16, C.0.26:310. D'avantage puis qu'ainsi est que toute preeminence vient de Dieu, et que c'est un ordre establi par luy, sans lequel mesme le monde ne peut subsister: que seroit-ce, si Dieu n'avoit tenu conte de cela, quand il nous a donne une certaine forme de bien vivre et sainte?

(4) Serm. on Eph.6:5-9, C.0.51:798. Or si nous regardons quel estoit le droit des maîtres, nous dirons tousjours que ç'a est une chose contraire à tout ordre de nature. Car nous sommes tous formez à l'image de Dieu; et qu'une creature raisonnable en laquelle Dieu a imprime sa marque, soit mise en telle contumelle, cela est par trop exorbitant. Mais ce sont les fruits de la desobeissance et du peche de nostre père Adam.
can speak also of the subjection of the woman to the man as having a severity that did not belong to the original order, this being in part a punishment for the woman's part in the fall. He speaks at times as if the purpose of the establishment of such order was to subdue the pride and haughtiness of fallen man expressing itself in the insatiable desire of each individual to dominate and rule, and to avoid the confusion in society that would result from such unchecked pride. Since the command to submit to human authority is so "repugnant to perversity" God in order to make it easier for us to "soften and bend our minds to habits of submission" starts training us in humiliation by giving us childhood and youth the "amiable" yoke of obedience to father and mother. Even nature itself teaches clearly that it is abhorrent to refuse such a yoke and such a yoke is often pleasant to have to bear. "From that subjection" says Calvin, "the Lord gradually accustoms us to every kind of legitimate subject-

(1) Comm. on 1 Tim. 2:14, C.O. 52:277. Et deinde proter peccatum accidentalis serviendi esse coeperit, ut iam minus liberalis sit subiectio quam prius fuisset.
(2) Ibid. and serm. on 1 Tim. 2:12-14, C.O. 53:209.
(3) "Everyone has within him the soul of a king" is a proverb in which Calvin finds perfectly expressed the attitude which can alone be curbed by such "political" subjection. Comm. on 1 Pet. 5:5, C.O. 55:287, and serm. on 1 Tim. 2:1-2, C.O. 53:133.
subjection, the same principle regulating all".

Yet on the whole Calvin looks not to the fall of man but to the order of nature for the origin and basis of all offices involving superiority and subordination. Such order is necessary not merely to avoid confusion but to enable society and man to express that true integrity and humanity are part of the image of God in which man was originally made. It is, especially, however, in the relation of woman to man that we have a subordination truly grounded on creation. Apart from the conditions brought about by man's sin, the true order of nature is that "man is created to be the head of the woman and the woman is a part of and, as it were, accessory to the man (une partie, et comme un accessoire). Even in our fallen state though the woman in marriage suffers much as a punishment for the fall, and the original relation between man and woman is distorted nevertheless.

(1) Inst. 2:8:35. Cf. comm. on Exod.20:12, C.0.24:606 Si generaliter dixisset obedientium esse omnibus praefectis, ut omnibus ingenita est superbia, non facile fuisset maiorem hominum partem ad paucorum obsequium flectere. Imo ut naturaliter odiosa est subiectio, multi refragati essent. Speciem ergo subjectionis proponit Deus, quam recusare immanis esset barbariae; ita ut paulatim subacta ferocia, homines assuefactist ad ferendum iugum.

(2) Cf. Inst.4:20:22 where he denies that the magistrate is merely a "necessary evil".

(3) Cf. sermon on 1 Tim.2:12-14, C.0.53:218-20; comm. on 1 Pet. 5:5, C.0.55:287. Ubi solum qui vel iure vel naturae ordine preasse debent, nulla est autoritas, statim proterve omnes lasciviant.

(4) Comm. on Exod.20:12, C.0.24:602-3, Inst.4:20:3, Serm. on 1 Tim 2:1-2, C.0.53:133.


(6) Serm. on 1 Tim.2:13-15, C.0.53:224, in sermon. On 1 Tim.2:12-14, C.0.53:209 the woman is given to the man pour aide inferieur. Calvin will not admit equality of degree between man and the woman even though he insists that she is his companion. Serm. on 1 Cor.11:4-10 C.0.49:723, and 724-5.
nevertheless "some remains of the divine blessing" are to be found in the ruins, and man has not been deprived of his original authority. Just as, after the fall, God gave a sign of the original subjection of the beasts to man in allowing Adam to clothe himself in their skins, so in the continued subjection of woman to man there is some residue of the natural order. "Therefore amidst the many inconveniences of marriage which are the fruits of a degenerate nature, some residue of the divine good remains; as in the fire apparently smothered some sparks still glitter". Calvin is emphatic that women should according to the order of nature neither rule nor teach and that by nature she is "born to obey". "Wherever natural propriety has been maintained women have in all ages been excluded from the public management of affairs". But God Himself is not bound to observe this common order and is at liberty to work by miracle making extraordinary exceptions as in the case of Deborah to despite and humiliate men.

The establishment within human society of the relationships

(2) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:12-14, C.O.53:209.
(3) Comm. on Gen.2:18, C.O.23:47.
(4) Comm. on 1 Tim.2:12, C.O.52:276.
(5) Comm. on 1 Cor.14:34, C.O.49:533.
relationships which involve superiority on the one hand and subject-ion on the other is for Calvin much more than a mere means to maintain order among men. It is a means whereby the image of God can be reflected within human life. Calvin sees the glory of God reflected in all human preminence. He can quote with approval poetical phrases exalting the earthly magistrate as "the father of his country, the pastor of the people, the guardian of peace, the president of justice, the vindicator of innocence", and he implies that the true function of the ruler is to reflect the appearance of the image of God. God lends the reflection of His own nature to the status of earthly parenthood, and to the dignity of earthly Lordship He lends the use of His own name and communicates His own authority. "The titles of Father, God and Lord, all meet in Him alone, and hence whenever any one of them is mentioned our mind should be impressed with the same feeling of reverence. Those therefore to whom He imparts such titles He distinguishes by some small spark of His refulgence so as to entitle them to honour, each in his own place. In this way we must consider that our earthly father possesses something of a divine nature in him, because there is some reason for his bearing a divine title, and that he who is our prince and ruler is admitted to some communion of honour with God. Calvin can indeed

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor.11:7, C.0.49:476 In hoc superiore dignitatis gradu conspicitur Dei gloria, sicuti relucet in omni princi-patu.
(2) Inst. 4:20:24.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Inst.2:8:35. Cf. serm. on Deut 5:16, C.0.26:312 Il est dit que nous n'avons qu'un pere au ciel, à parler proprement: et cela n'est pas seulement entendu quant aux anes, mais aussi quant aux corps. Cest honneur donc est propre à Dieu seul, d'estre nommé pere, et ne peut convenir aux hommes, sinon entant qu'il luy plaist de leur communiquer. Or maintenant puis que ce titre de pere est comme une marque que Dieu a imprimee aux
indeed suggest that our experience under subjection here and now, of the blessings of earthly rule is not only a sign of God's paternal care for us, but is a foretaste of the final glory of the Kingdom of God.

But it is especially in the relationship of marriage and in "the distinction which God has conferred upon the man so as to have superiority over the woman" that the glory of God shines forth. Marriage is "the bond which God has preferred to all others". In the story of the creation of the woman from the side of the man there is an analogy to the atoning work of Christ, who became weak that His Church, united to Him, might become strong though His own life and strength. It is God's purpose that in the fulfilment of the true ideal of marriage there should be illustrated what it means to be truly human to one another and to love one another with a reflection of His own love towards man. It is true marriage that can teach us how much humanity was meant to be one body with one common nature.

In true marriage there is a similitude of the relationship

(1) Serm. on Gal. 3:26-9, C.0.50:569-70. Et que de nostre costé nous cheminions paisiblement en leur obeissance et sujection: que nous sentions là comme des premières du Royaume celeste: que nous cognoissions que nostre Seigneur par un tel signe monstre desia qu'il a le soin de nous, et qu'il preside ici, et qu'il veille sur nous, iusques à ce que nous sentions cela en perfection quand il nous aura recueillis à soy.

(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:4&7, C.0.49:475 & 6.

(3) Comm. on Gen. 2:24, C.0.23:50.

(4) Inst. 4:19:35; Comm. on Gen. 2:21, C.0.23:49.

(5) Serm. on 2 Sam.1:21-7, p26. Ce sera une nation brutale et cruelle qui ne scauront que c'est de l'amour des femmes, ou du debuoir du mariage. Car nostre Seigneur a voulu que l'humanité se monstret principalement en cest endroit, c'est ascاور en la benuiolence que se doiuent le marvy et la femme. Car c'est aussi la source du mariage qu'il nous faut aymer les vns les autres. Car comme Dieu a aymé les siens depuis le plus grand...
relationship and union between Christ and His Church. Christ's love for the Church is the true example for human marriage.

Calvin frequently appeals for humility and recognition of a common humanity in the exercise of all forms of earthly authority. There must be nothing harsh or domineering. Rulers must remember that the reason why God instituted kingdoms and principalities is not to elevate a handful of men above the rest of society but to provide for the welfare of the weak. They must look on their revenues as "almost the blood of the people" which it were the harshest inhumanity not to spare. Magistrates even in inflicting punishment must not "burn with implacable severity" but "even pity a common nature in him in whom they punish an individual fault".

jusques au plus petit, il veut que nous soyons membres d'un corps. Il y a un privilège que Dieu fait aux hommes en ce qu'il y a une nature commune, mais si nous regardons, comment la nature s'entretient, c'est par le mariage. The love which God has instilled between sexes is for Calvin closely analogous to the love which men ought to bear generally in fulfilling the duties of humanity. Calvin notes that the phrase "love of woman" is used in Scripture as comprehending all human duty. Cf. comm. Dan. 11:33-39, C.0.41:273. And serm. on loc. C.0.42:33 The love of husband for wife shows in the highest degree what all love should be.

(1) Inst. 4:19:34.  
(2) Inst. 4:19:35. Though marriage is not a sacrament, Cf. Inst. 4:19:33 "It is a good and holy ordinance of God. And agriculture, shoemaking and sharing are lawful ordinances of God. But they are not sacraments."
(3) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:12-14, C.0.53:220.  
(4) Inst. 4:20:13.  
(5) Inst 4:20:2 quoting Augustine.
Speaking of the treatment of servants by masters he points out that it is often the sheer ingratitude of employers that unsettles those under them and spoils all goodwill and possibility of mutual trust. If even Pagans, taught by their ideas of equity, have suggested that slaves should receive pay for their work surely under Christianity, where there is brotherhood between great and small, masters ought to be the companions of their servants in so far as both have the same hope of eternal life.

It is especially when he speaks about the relationship between husband and wife in marriage that Calvin stresses the fact that there must be companionship within mutual subjection. The woman was made to be the "companion and associate to the man to assist him to live well". Therefore man must not tyrannise or domineer or trample underfoot one who was made to be his companion for this purpose. In the woman he is meant to find his counterpart, one who responds to him as nothing else in his environment can possibly do. The image of God is printed alike in both man and woman. As well as

(1) Serm. on Eph. 5:5-9, C.0.51:300.
(2) Serm. on Eph. 6:5-9, C.0.51:308.
(3) Comm. on Gen. 2:18, C.0.23:47.
(4) Serm. on 1 Cor. 11:11-16, C.0.49:737; on 1 Tim. 2:12-14, C.0.53:217-218; on Job 3:1-10, C.0.33:148.
(5) Comm. on Gen. 2:18, C.0.23:47 Dicitur enim mulier e regione viri esse, quia illi respondeat.
(6) Comm. on Gen. 2:19, C.0.23:43. Adam could not choose a companion out of any other species because there was no aequabilis proportio elsewhere.
(7) Serm. on Job 3:10, C.0.33:146-7.
as being his counterpart she is also part of him as the story of her origin bears witness. If the man is over the woman it is as the head over the body, and if these be separated both are like mutilated members of a mangled body.

Since all this is so any authority on the part of the man must be exercised "with moderation and not insult over the woman who has been given him as a partner. Calvin tells the men of his time that they would find married life taking on a new meaning, if as well as toiling at their work for the family they would support their wives at home and give them courage and as much help as

(1) Comm. on Gen.2:21, C.O.23:43; see on 1 Cor.11:4-10, C.O.49:729. Il est vray que Dieu a fait cela, afin de nous recommander l'union que nous devons avoir ensemble: car il pouvait bien creer Eve de la terre comme Adam; mais il a voulu prendre un costume de l'homme, afin que l'homme ne pensast point avoir rien separe d'avec la femme; mais qu'on connoist qu'il nous a unis comme en un corps.

(2) Comm. on 1 Cor.11:11, C.O.49:477. In discussing divorce, it is this aspect of the indissoluble union grounded on creation that Calvin stresses. "Whoever divorces his wife tears himself in pieces because such is the force of holy marriage that the husband and wife become one man." (Comm. on Matt.19:5, C.O.45:529). Divorce is evil primarily because it is unnatural. "He tears from him, as it were, half of himself. But nature does not allow any man to tear in pieces his own body". (Comm. on Matt.19:4, C.O.45:528; on Deut.24:1, C.O.24:658; cf. on Exod.21:1, C.O.24:701 where divorce is likened to the barbarity of a man disembowelling himself). Calvin's other main argument against divorce is that if it is unnatural for anything to break the link between parent and child it is even much more contrary to nature and natural law to separate husband and wife where the bond of union is even more close and sacred. (Comm. on Deut.24:1, C.O.24:657; on 1 Cor.7:10, C.O.49:410; on Gen.2:24, C.O.23:50; on Matt.19:5, C.O.45:523). Calvin notes, too, that in the making of the marriage contract God presides and therefore the bond created is a covenant "superior to all human contracts" which no action from the human side alone can annul. (Comm. on Mal.2:14, C.O.44:452; on 1 Cor.7:11, C.O.49:410) But though no amount of other human sin or hardship or infirmity can possibly justify divorce, marriage is nevertheless automatically dissolved by adultery; for the adulterous party becomes a rotten member which (naturally) would be cut off (comm. on Matt.19:9, C.O.45:630-2). Therefore the freed partner can remarry. The case in 1 Cor.7 (of an unbelieving partner rejecting a Christian husband or wife) Calvin regards as exceptional. Here the divorce has been made between the unbelieving partner and God. The Christian is therefore free. Calvin doubts if this could be paralleled even in his day with those married to papists, though he seems to have regarded Coracciolus as an exception. Comm. on 1 Cor.7:11 &15, C.O.49:417

(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:12, C.O. 49:478
as possible in their burden of care for the infants, even when they are wakened up at nights, knowing that to bear all this is as acceptable a sacrifice to God as their daily task. This relationship of "mutual benevolence" between the sexes ought to prevail not only between married partners but throughout social life.

Calvin sometimes sums up the duties of those who have superiority by referring to the law of mutual subjection which demands that the superior must be subject to the inferior as well as

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:13-15, C.O. 53:229. Il faut aussi que les hommes de leur costé recueillent ici instruction. Car si les femmes sont sauvées quand elles allaiteront leurs enfants de leurs mammelles, quand elles les tâcheront et nettoyeront, quand elles auront esté fachees à les porter: aussi les hommes quand ils prendront peine à nourrir leur messag... et s'il y a des ées fascheries pour le message... qu'ils supportent leurs femmes, et qu'ils leur donnent courage, qu'ils les aident tant qu'il leur sera possible, comme Dieu les a conjoignis d'un lien inseparable: quand ils seront resveillez pour leurs enfants, qu'ils en auront des soucis, moyennant qu'ils portent cela patiemment, qu'ils se resioissent, voyans que Dieu les benit en leur labeur, ce luy sont autant de sacrifices... Si ceci estoit bien impris au coeur, il est certain qu'on verroit reluire un autre ordre en mariage qu'on ne fait pas.

(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:11-12, C.O. 49:477-8 Calvin is continually warning men against despising woman in general. Man has no ground to boast on apart from woman for he cannot exist without her (Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C.O. 33:148) He owes his life to his mother. In rejecting woman he therefore rejects himself. In the person of his mother he owes honour to all womanhood. (Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:12-14, C.O. 53:217) Though God is glorified more in the birth of a boy than of a girl we must not be too desirous of having male children and in no way reject girls. Boys can scratch our eyes out and like seagulls swallow up our living! (Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C.O. 33:147) A man should not despise the whole sex by remaining unmarried even though he might find this convenient (Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:11, C.O. 49:477) He must not despise the wonderful gift of marriage even though he dislikes being bound to another permanently. If, through the fall, the sweetness of marriage has been mixed with bitterness this is accidental, and it still can be regarded as a "heavenly calling". (Comm. on Matt. 19:10ff, C.O. 45:533-4. Cf. Inst. 2:8:43 Serm. on 2 Sam. 3:2-5 p55) Only a few men have the calling and ability to remain single Inst. 2:8:42.
as vice-versa. It is true that it has to be a more voluntary subjection on the part of the superior member but it must be a voluntary subjection if the law of love is to be fulfilled. Calvin finds that Aristotle enunciated the truth on this matter in his law of analogical or distributive right, in his appeal to Masters to render to their servants "that which is just and equal", and he suggests that Paul employs the Greek word ἰδιότητα in Col.3:1 (and also in 2 Cor.8:13) in order to refer to this law. Therefore Kings and Governors and masters must never seek to avoid the subjection of love towards those under them. Fathers if they are to govern their children in such a way as to deserve the high honour of the name of Father, must remember that in ruling the house they will be involved

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet.5:5, C.0.55:237  Neque enim quum senibus defertur autoritas, ius vel licentia illis datur excutiendi fraeni; sed ipsi quoque in ordinem coguntur, ut mutua sit subjectio.

(2) Serm. on Eph.5:18-21, C.0.51:733  Que ceux qui sont eslevez en haut, regardent bien que si Dieu les a honorëz ainsi, c'est à fin qu'ils se rendent plus volontairement sujets pour soustenir les peines et charges qui sont de leur office.

(3) Comm. on Col.4:1, C.0.52:127  Non dubito quin Paulus ἰδιότητα hic posuerit pro iure analogo aut distributivo: quemadmodum ad Ephesios T ὑπὸ τὰ ἄντρα. Neque enim sic habent domini obnoxios sibi servos, quin vicissim aliquid ipsis debeant; quemadmodum ius analogum valere debet inter omnes ordines. Cf. comm. on 2 Cor. 8:13, C.0.50:101. and on Eph.6:9, C.0.51:231 Bodem nunc τὸ ὑπὸ τὰ ἄντρα posuit. Quorsum autem illud, nisi ut servetur ius analogum quod vocant? Non est quidem secularis domini et servi conditio; sed est tamen aliquod ius mutuum inter eos, quod sicuti servum domini obnoxium reddit, ita vicissim proportione habita dominum obstringit alicuius tenens servo. Calvin adds that this law of analogy will be misunderstood unless it is interpreted as part of the law of love which is the only true rule.

(4) Comm. on Eph.5:21, C.0.51:221; and on serm. Eph.5:18-21, C.0.51:732. Cf inst. 4:20;29.
involved in subjection to their children. And he reminds husbands that to support their wives in their very frailty involves subjection to her and a prudent use of any authority in order that she may be his companion in sickness and health and that he too may receive his share in the blessings of this mutual relationship.

The duty to render obedience to those who are over us cannot be renounced even in extreme circumstances. We must give honour and veneration to those who are over us, corresponding to the dignity which ought to be reflected by their office. We must value the institution of government "so highly as to honour even tyrants when in power" for if we weigh up the alternatives putting on one side of the balance the evils of having a tyrant as ruler, and on the other the evils of having a people without a ruling head, we will find the latter the greater evil. Rulers and parents and husbands should be obeyed and honoured even though they themselves may be of bad character and may abuse their authority for their wickedness does not cancel their divine status. We must learn not to consider the

(1) Serm. on Eph. 5:18-21, C.0.51:732-3 In sermon on Eph.6:5-9, C.0.51:803 Calvin asserts that Fathers will receive subjection from their children if they treat them gently.
(2) Ibid. Autaut en est-il du mari envers la femme. Car n'est ce pas subjection, que le mari supporte la fragilité de la femme, qu'il ait ceste prudence de ne point user de rigueur envers elle, mais qu'il la tienne comme sa compagne et qui'en santé et en maladie il receve une partie des charges sur soy? Ne voilà point une subjection?
(3) Inst. 4:20:22.
(4) Comm. on 1 Pet. 2:14, C.0.55:245.
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:1-2; C.0.53:131.
to consider the individuals themselves, but hold it to be enough that by the will of God they sustain a character on which He has impressed and engraven inviolable majesty. Just as it is the providence of God which binds us up with our neighbour, whoever he may be, in mutual obligation so it is the same providence which binds us in closer and even more significant ties with father, mother, master, and those in authority. Therefore it is sacrilege for a child to despise his father. Even if as an individual a father may be unworthy of the honour, nevertheless "the perpetual law of nature is not subverted by the sins of men; and therefore, however unworthy of honour a father may be... he still retains inasmuch as he is a father, a right over his children." Even nature can teach us to honour parents even when they treat us harshly.

But Calvin does not fail to quote: "we ought to obey God rather than men". No matter how much honour we owe to the office of

(1) Inst. 4:20:29, Cf serm. on 1 Tim.2:1-2, C.0.53:130 Il il faut point que nous regardions aux personnes si elles s'acquittent aujourd'hui de leur devoir ou non; mais que plus tost nous regardions à l'ordre que Dieu a establi, lequel ne peut estre jamais violé par la malice des hommes, ou bien ne peut estre efface du tout, qu'il n'en demeure quelque residu.

(2) Serm. on Deut. 22:1-4, C.0.28:13 Car quand il a institué proximité entre nous, ça est à ceste condition, qu'encore cu'un homme s'en rende indigne, nous ne laissions pas de luy faire tout le bien qu'il sera possible. Et ainsi le lien de parentage qui a esté ordonné de Dieu, ne peut estre violé en façon que ce soit.

Serm. on Deut. 5:16, C.0.26:314 Quand un enfant aura son pere et sa mere, il ne faut point qu'il dis: 'Voila mon pere n'est pas tel du tout qu'il devroit, il'y trouve à redire. Or si est-il ton pere. Il faut que ce mot-la te contente, voire si tu ne veux... abolir l'ordre de nature...Celuy qui t'a commandé d'honorer ton pere et ta mere, il t'a donné un tel pere que tu l'as. Autant en est-il des maistres, des princes et superieurs; car ils ne viennent point à l'aventure, c'est Dieu qui les envoye.

(3) Comm. on Exod. 20:12, C.0.24:603.

(4) Comm. on Heb. 12:9, C.0.55:175.
of those who are over us in our temporal estate there is a limit
beyond which they must not go in exacting obedience from us. We owe
them not blind obedience but obedience in the Lord. Daniel is our
example in his refusal to obey his King when the latter exceeded his
limits, (Dan.6:22). The Israelites who blindly and uncritically
submitted to Jeroboam when he commanded unfaithfulness to the Lord
are condemned as examples to be shunned (1 Kings 12:28, Hosea 5:11).

"We are redeemed by Christ at the great price which our redemption
cost Him, in order that we might not yield a slavish obedience to the
depraved wishes of men, far less do homage to their impiety. Parents
likewise govern their children only under the supreme authority of
God. When Paul exhorts children to obey their parents "in the Lord"
he "indicates that if a father enjoins anything unrighteous,
obedience is freely to be denied him. Immoderate strictness, morose-
ness, and even cruelty must be borne, so long as mortal man, by

(1) Inst.4:20:32. This is the last sentence of the Institutes.
Calvin does not say that it can become right to rebel actively
against a wicked ruler. We have no command on this matter but
to obey and suffer. He approves of the fact that at times in
history popular and powerful magistrates have overthrown their
rulers, and he would no doubt approve of a development in a
state where powerful political parties were able to overthrow
a tyrannical order. But we ourselves must not be too ready
to imagine that the duty of overthrowing a tyrant has been
laid on our shoulders.
by wickedly demanding what is not lawful, does not rob God of His right."

None of the distinctions between the superior and inferior which are so important for the maintenance of human society have any validity within the Kingdom of God. They are political and civil but not spiritual. "As regards spiritual connection in the sight of God and inwardly in the conscience, Christ is the head of the man and the woman without any distinction". Even when he is under slavery a man's spiritual freedom remains untouched. God is no respecter of persons.

Moreover all such civil distinctions are transitory and temporal. Calvin refers to this fact the promise that at the resurrection Christ is going to abolish all rule (1 Cor. 15:24). "Hence as the world will have an end, so also will government and magistracy and laws and distinctions of ranks, and different orders of dignities, and everything of that nature. There will be no more any distinction between servant and master, between king and peasant, between magistrate and private citizen. Nay more, there will then be an end put to angelic principalities in heaven, and to ministries and superiorities in the Church, that God may exercise His power and dominion by Himself alone, and not by the hands of men or angels.

(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:3, C.O. 49:474.
This fact should prevent the exalted from giving way to pride or presumption and should be a consolation to all oppressed womanhood and should embolden those who are tempted to defer too much to the apparent power of those who are great in this world.

Yet the fact that the Kingdom of God has already come in Jesus Christ does not mean that the present order of this world is overturned. Calvin denounces, as a Satanic attempt to discredit the Gospel, the heresy of those who say that since we are spiritual we must no longer acknowledge any distinctions between superior and inferior within the order of society. With this in mind he appeals "that we should show our humility towards God by bearing easily and with a ready will the yoke of men which He has imposed upon us with His own hands".

(1) Serm. on Eph. 6:5-9, C.0.51:803.
(2) Serm. on 1 Cor. 11:4-10, C.0.49:727-28.
(3) Serm. on Isa. 53:1-4, C.0.35:615. Il est vrai que selon l'etat present, ils auront une telle majeste qu'il semblera que tout doyve trembler sous eux; mais si nous pouvons eslever nos sens a Dieu, et eter la nostre veau, il est certain que toutes ces fanfares du monde ne nous seront rien, non plus qu'un festu.
(4) Serm. on Eph. 6:5-9, C.0.51:798 L'Evangile n'est pas pour changer les polices du monde, et pour faire des loix qui appartiennen à l'estat temporel. Cf. serm. on Gal. 3:26-9, C.0.50:568.
(5) Serm. on Eph. 6:5-9, C.0.51:802-3. Calvin passes over almost in silence the phrase "There is neither male nor female" in Christ (Gal. 3:28) Cf comm. and serm. in loc. C.0.50:223 & 568. His stress is on the fact that woman must render obedience. Cf comm. on 1 Cor. 11:10-12, C.0.49:476-8.
(6) Serm. on Eph. 5:5-9, C.0.51:800. A passage from the same sermon shows that the Genevan tradesman were not so docile as we might imagine. Et voila pourquoi il met la simplicite. Car nous sommes par trop subtils a chercher nostre avantage; il n'y a celiuy qui me soit grand docteur quand il est question de son proufit... Qu'on prenne les gens mechaniques, qui jamais n'ont veu un mot de lettres, s'il est question de les avoir a journee et d'avoir affaire en chose que ce soit avec eux, ils seauront si bien disputer leur cause cu'on dirait que tous sont advocats. 51:799.
Christian Moderation

Moderation and restraint an essential element in the ordered Christian life for excess contaminates all human life.

Various forms of excess that mar human society and individual life.

Moderation expresses itself in modesty as a basic Christian virtue involving avoidance of display and contentment with our lot.

It expresses itself in patience - the moderation of our feelings and reactions under suffering.

Yet patience is not Stoical indifference.

Moderation expresses itself in prudence - the Christian must avoid excessive zeal.

Reforming zeal must be moderated by wisdom - yet not to the extent of encouraging sin.

Christian prudence is a gift of the Spirit, to be distinguished from natural prudence.
An essential element in the ordered Christian life is the moderation of all passion, appetite, and zeal, no matter how good and well-directed such zeal, and the passion which accompanies it, might be. Calvin finds in Holy Scripture a "rule of temperance", and he can state categorically that all intemperance of the flesh is evil. In his view the Christian man is one who can so moderate all his passions and desires and ambitions that sobriety, meekness and prudence mark his behaviour. One of the main differences between the ungodly and the people of God is to be seen in the way in which the latter can restrain immoderate and irregular desires for worldly comforts and pleasures, whereas the former rush into excess in many varied ways. The ideal which the Christian must seek to attain is seen in the perfect moderation in all things shown by Jesus Christ in his human nature. Our Lord Himself is a "remarkable example of temperance". It is true that at times Jesus allowed Himself to be lavishly entertained by the rich, but even on such occasions He would never have endured wasteful and extravagant luxuries and would no doubt exhort even his generous hosts to frugality and moderation.

It is noticeable that Calvin frequently interprets the

(2) Serm. on Deut.5:3, C.O.26:342 Toute intemperance de la chair est vice.
(3) Comm. on Ps.36:5, C.O.31:361; and on Ps.4:7-8, C.O.31:63-4.
(4) Cf p.159.
(6) Ibid.
the teaching of Jesus as calling for moderation of passion and avoidance of excess. For instance, the words "He who loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me", are a call for moderation and order in all the mutual love that exists between men, for in the sphere of family affection "there is never rule or moderation such as is required". In his discussion of the command in the Sermon on the Mount to "turn the other cheek", Calvin approves of the interpretation of Augustine that Jesus does not here lay down a rule for outward action but is seeking "to train the minds of believers to moderation and justice, that they might not, after one or two injuries, fail or grow weary". He reads the words, "when they persecute you in one city, flee ye to another" (again following Augustine) as teaching a lesson in moderation, that a man should be neither too cowardly in facing danger, nor yet over-bold in exposing himself to it.

It is obvious that in order to achieve such moderation, the Christian must seek in every way to check and restrain his desires and passions. Since it is the constant tendency of the flesh to break through all bounds, the ordered Christian life cannot be lived

(4) Comm. on Ps. 78:15, C.O. 31:729.
lived unless the flesh is constantly mortified.

Yet such restraint is rare. A tendency to excess marks the life of most of us, and tends to pollute even the good we seek to do. In all our human relationships and pleasures, no matter how innocent in themselves, there is always some disorder caused by a measure of immoderate excess. At banquets and social gatherings most people eat far more than is necessary and thus, even though they do not indulge in gluttony, they sin through this disorder. Most men are hardly conscious of such sin. Yet such disorder and excess contaminates our otherwise innocent pursuits as a mere grain of salt or a drop of vinegar can contaminate all the good wine. Thus things that are in themselves good can be spoiled by immoderate passion.

A Christian, then, must order his life so as to seek to avoid excess. He must specially regard as dubious any undertaking or engagement which forces him or other men to violence of feeling or uncontrolled passion. It is for this reason, mainly, that Calvin expresses doubt whether it is possible for a Christian to engage either in a lawsuit or in war without becoming deeply involved in sin and guilt, for though going to law or to war may be justifiable on

(1) Inst. 3:10:3 Sed non minus diligenter altera ex parte occurrencum est carnis libidini: quae nisi in ordinem cogitur, sine modo exundat.
(2) Serm. on Job 1:2-5, C.O.33:39-40 Exemple, quand un mari aime sa femme, qu'un père aime ses enfants, ce sont choses bonnes et saintes et louables: et neantmoins on ne trouvera point un homme au monde qui aime sa femme en telle mesure, qu'il n'y ait que redire, qui aime ses enfants d'une amour pure et entière. Ainsi est-il de ce que les hommes ne se peuvent tenir en mesure, qu'ils n'auront point leurs affections si bien réglées, qu'il n'y ait à redire... Si on s'assemble, il y aura de la superfluïté quelques fois aux viandes, et ceux qui seront assemblés par compagnie mangeront et boiront outre leur portion ordinaire... Vray est qu'ils ne seront point gourmands pour se farcir le ventre, et pour se saouler comme des porceaux, tant moins encore seront-ils yvronnes pour avoir leur esprit abruti: non mais tant y a qu'ils peuvent bien exceder mesure.
(3) Ibid. cf. comm. on Ps.104:15, C.O.32:90.
on many grounds, and may be the lesser of two evils, nevertheless if such a course involves us in giving loose rein to tumultuous and unruly passions the grounds for its justification become less tenable.

In discussing whether it is justifiable for a Christian to engage in a lawsuit, for example, Calvin insists that it is right for a Christian to resort to the civil magistrate in order to have wrongs put right, "as if a good man were not permitted to recover what is his own when a just way of doing so is divinely offered to him!" Yet love must moderate his conduct in this matter, as in all matters. This means that he must pursue his enemy at law with "entire friendship", without any desire for personal or private revenge whatsoever, and "in a calm and sound mood". We must always be patient and prepared to endure wrongs, waiting for and not

(1) Inst. 4:20:20.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:7; C.O. 49:332 Huius rei caritas optima erit moderatrix.
(4) Inst. 4:20:20.
(5) Calvin is very emphatic that a Christian man is absolutely prohibited from indulging in revenge or in any desire for revenge. Inst. 4:20:19, Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:7, C.O. 49:391. Fateor ergo, Christiano homini prohibitam esse, omnem ultionem, ne vel per se, vel per magistratum eam exerceseat, imo ne appetat guidem. He utters very solemn warnings against prayers or appeals to God's justice which proceed from private desire for revenge rather than from the "pure zeal of the Spirit". To indulge in such is to"seek to make God execute the wishes of our depraved cupidity". Such conduct is inexcusable. Comm. on Rom. 12:19, C.O. 49:247; Inst. 4:20:19.
(6) Comm. on Matt. 5:40; C.O. 45:185.
not seeking to anticipate the vengeance of the heavenly judge.  
Such a perfect attitude is extremely rare and difficult to achieve, yet unless it is achieved and kept the whole proceedings can but be wrong. "When minds are filled with malevolence, corrupted by envy, burning with anger, or in fire so inflamed by the heat of the contest that they in some measure lay aside charity, the whole pleading even of the justest cause cannot but be impious".  

With regard to war, Calvin asserts that God constitutes Kings and magistrates as the "instruments of His vengeance". Their duty is to maintain law and order not only against the violence that can be inflicted by criminal elements within a population but against the devastation that can be wrought by those who seek to plunge a whole country into disorder. It is but "natural equity" that they should be armed to "defend the subjects committed to their guardianship". But in this matter, as with all use of legal force, it is not enough merely to be sure of your cause and then to take ruthless action. Every war must be properly conducted. By this,

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2 Inst. 4:20:18.
3 Inst. 4:20:11. Ultionum suarum ministros
4 Cf. Inst. 4:20:11. In serm. on 2 Sam. 2:14 ff p 42. Calvin says we must avoid shedding blood "sinon pour maintenir la querelle de Dieu".
5 Inst. 4:20:11.
6 Serm. on Deut. 20:10-13, C.O. 27:622 Car ce n'est point assez que nostre cause soit bonne; mais il faut aussi qu'elle soit bien demenee.
this, Calvin means that those engaged in war must neither give way to nor encourage anger, hatred, or passion. Even the individual who kills another in self-defence may be justified in doing so according to law, but if in the course of such self-defence he loses control of himself in anger and excess of passion he is inexusable before God. God allows the use of force only with modest restraint, and all excessive cruelty must be avoided. "Unless such moderation accompanies the performance of their duty, it is in vain for Kings to boast that they are commissioned by God to execute vengeance". No war can ever be justified that leads to widespread and extreme confusion. Calvin laments that modern war, as he knew it in his day was little better than brigandage, marked by such inhumanity that all order was overthrown and men became no better than furious beasts. Yet even if a war were properly conducted it would be marked by the tragedy that men made in the image of God are done to death. Calvin's

(1) Inst. 4:20:12.
(3) Serm. on 2 Sam. 2:17 ff, p.44.
(5) Serm. on Deut. 20:16-20, C.O. 27:636 Notons donc que les guerres ne sont pas tellement lícites, qu'on puisse tout pervertir, et qu'il y ait une confusion extrême.
(6) Serm. on Deut. 2:1-7, C.O.26:14 Ainsi voyons-nous, en somme, qu'aujourd'hui ce ne sont que brigandages de toutes les guerres qui se mêlent : qu'il y a des cruautés et inhumanitées si exorbitantes, que c'est une confusion extrême, qu'il semble qu'on voueille oublier toute équité, et qu'une guerre ne se puisse faire, qu'on n'oublie toute droiture ; qu'il n'y ait plus de loi, que les hommes deviennent comme bestes furieuses.
Calvin's language about war in his sermons make it doubtful if he could have been anything except a pacifist in face of the possibility of modern nuclear war.

Vitiated sex relationship is another important aspect of human life by which terrible disorder can enter the life of society and the individual can lose control of himself in fearful excess. It is in the face of this temptation that men need the fear of God which alone can hold them in check, and need to pray that God "will so control us that our evil affections may be subdued, and that this accursed lust may neither reign nor have any place nor access within us". It was in order that men might be on guard against such temptation that Calvin expressed his strong disapproval both of the loose talk and songs of society in his day and of dancing. A text he obviously has often in mind in this connection is 1 Cor. 15:33, "Evil communications corrupt good manners". If we receive such

(1) Cf. serm. on Job 31:9-15, C.O. 34:652-3 Il n'est point dit seulement, C'est une lacherie... mais c'est un feu qui consume tout, qui va iusques a la racine, c'est une perdition extreme, il n'y demeurera nulle substance que tout ne soit raclé... Il faudra que le feu s'allume par toute la ville et par tout le pays.

(2) Ibid. C.O. 34:649 It is important to note, however, that for Calvin a sin such as fornication is of special gravity, according to the New Testament (especially 1 Cor. 6:18) not simply because of the disorder and excess it introduces into human life but because it is committed on the body and it leaves a trace or mark impressed on the body as other sins do not (serm. on Deut. 5:18, C.O. 26:339 Il y demeure quelque trace imprimee au corps) "My hand it is true, is defiled by theft or murder, my tongue by evil speaking or perjury, and the whole body by drunkenness; but fornication leaves a stain impressed upon the body such as is not impressed upon it by other sins" (Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:18, C.O. 49:18) Because of this Calvin appeals to his hearers never to imagine that such a sin can be treated lightly by God (Cf. Eph. 5:6), is especially since the body of a Christian is "in a real sense a member of Christ and the temple of the Holy Ghost (Serm. on Job 31:9-15 C.O. 34:651)."
such dissolute communications they, unconsciously to ourselves, sink deep into our hearts and take control of us. Moreover when our own tongues are themselves infected by such talk that is also a sign of deep-rooted evil. Calvin could go the length of warning his congregation that to teach a young girl to sing suggestive love songs was to make a prostitute of her before she had any knowledge of sexual vice or choice on the matter of chastity. But dancing was also for Calvin a method of "evil communication". Even though it was obviously argued against him that there was no harm at all in dancing as it was conducted in Geneva in his day, Calvin asserted that such dancing was a preamble to sexual vice, and opened the door for the entrance of Satan to create disorder in human life.

Within the marriage bond itself there is need for the constant

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Refs. from previous page contd:-

(3) Serm. on Deut. 22:5-8, C.O. 28:20 Dieu non seulement veut nous tenir purs et nets de toute paillardise : mais il veut que nous prevenions les dangers.
(2) Serm. on Deut. 26:34-31, C.O. 26:340-41
(3) Serm. on Eph. 4:29-30, C.O. 51:646.
(4) Serm. on Deut. 5:18, C.O. 26:340-41 Et par cela voit-on combien les subterfuges sont frivoles et pueriles, quand on se veut excuser que ce n'est point mal-fait de ceci, ne de cela, moyennant que l'intention n'y soit point. Comme ceux qui voucouroyent avoir et danses et dissolutions: Oh moyennant qu'il n'y ait point de paillardise, cela est-il si mauvais? C'est comme s'ils se vouloyent moquer pleinement de Dieu, et lui boucher les yeux pour le souffleter, et cependant qu'il devine s'il y a du mal. Or on sait bien que les danses ne peuvent estres sinon des preambleles a paillardise, qu'elles sont pour ouvrir la porte notamment a Satan, et pour crier qu'il vienne, et qu'il entre hardiment. Voila qu'emporteront tousjours les danses.
constant avoidance of excessive intemperance. Conjugal intercourse is a thing pure honourable and holy because it is the pure institution of God. A sense of shame is inseparable from such intercourse. This shame is due to the fact that everything which proceeds from man since the fall is corrupted, and that intemperance and excess is bound to accompany such intercourse. Marriage is, however, a veil by which the fault of such intemperance in marriage is covered over and what is shameful in it is cleansed so that neither before God or the angels has it any unworthiness. Yet marriage is such a remedy for incontinency only if it is used as such temperately.

Sinful intemperance finds its expression in indulgence in luxury. One of Calvin's maxims is: "Nature is content with a little and all that goes beyond the natural use is superfluous". Yet men

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:6, C.0.49:406. Cf on Gen. 2:22, C.0.23:22.
(2) Serm. on Matt. 2:9-11, C.0.46:357 La generation de soy, d'autant qu'elle procede de Dieu, ne peut et ne doit etre repute pour souillure : mesmes quand les bestes precrent ligne, en cela il n'y a nulle pollution. Pourquo? c'est l'ordre de Dieu. Or quand les hommes et les femmes engendrent et concouvent, c'est une chose detestable devant Dieu. Et dont procede ceste diversite...? C'est bien pour nous monstrer que c'est des hommes et de toute la race d'Adam depuis le peche. D'autant done cu'il ne peut rien proceder de l'homme, apres cu'il s'est corrompu par sa chuite, sinon toute malediction, voyla pourquoi il a falu que les femmes se purgeassent. Mesmes il nous faut aussi noter, que le mariage, encore cu'il y sit de l'intemperance et de l'exces aux hommes et aux femmes, neantmoins par son honnestete couvre tout cela. Voire, mais cependent si ne peut il effacer encore ceste malediction.
(3) Serm. on Deut. 6:18, C.0.26:422-3 Ceste intemperance de la chair donc estant vicieuse en soy, estant damnable, ne nous sera point imputee devant Dieu, quand ceste couverture de Mariage y sera... Mais quand un homme vivra honnestement avec sa femme en la creante de Dieu: combien que la compagnie du licte soit honteuse, si est-ce toutesfois que devant Dieu elle n'a point d'opprobre, ne devant ses Anges. Et pourquo? La couverture du Mariage est pour sanctifier ceci qui est pollu et prophan. Cf comm. on 1 Cor. 7:6, C.0.49:405-6.
(4) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:29, C.0.49:420 Coniugium remedium in opibus...
men are never content in this respect to be natural. The more bountiful God is the more men abuse his benefits by giving way to excess. According to Calvin, a Christian, even though he means to do otherwise, should live in a "sober and frugal manner". Even though we have liberty to use this world freely our aim must be "to indulge as little as possible" curbing luxury and cutting out all show of superfluous abundance. Yet, as it was right for David to live in his palace surrounded by delicacies, so it is right for a rich man to live on a higher standard than the poor and to enjoy something of the abundance which God has given. But the rich man may indulge in luxury only to a moderate extent. "If we do not wish to pollute God's blessings, we must use them frugally".

It is thus a dangerous thing to be rich for there is no end to our desires once we begin to indulge them. The rich man is always being tested searchingly as to whether he can truly moderate his heart

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incontinentiae: verum est si quis temperenter utatur Cf. comm. on Gen.2:22, C.0.23:22 Deinde obviam eundum est carnis lasciviae, ut pudice cum uxoribus habent mariti.

(5) Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:8, C.0.52:326.
(1) Comm. on Ps. 104:15, C.0.32:90. Cf. serm. on 1 Cor. 10:8-6, C.0.49:604 C'est a dire que nous ayons tousjours une telle attremance en nous que si Dieu nous donne plus qu'il ne nous faut, nous ne facions des chevaux eschappez : comme on en verra a qui il semble que tout soit perdu, sinon qu'ils engourfrent tant qu'il leur sera possible, quand ils auront de quoy. Ils ne regarderont point, que me faut-il pour ma reflexion? mais ceci sera perdu pour moy, si je ne moy encore ce verre, et un autre.

(2) Comm. on Mark 10:21, C.0.45:540 Modo parce et frugaliter.
(3) Inst. 3:10:4.
(4) Comm. on Ps. 23:5, C.0.31:241; on 1 Tim. 6:8, C.0.52:326.
(4a) Comm. on Zech. 9:15, C.0.44:280.
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim. 6:3-7, C.0.53:575. S'est cu'un chacun oublie ce qu'il luy faut, nous ne regardons point a nostre necessitie, ni à l'usage legitime des biens de Dieu, mais nous vouldons estre confits en toutes nos delices....Mais cependant si nous laeschons la bride à nos cupiditez, il n'y a nulle fin, nous sommes du tout perdu et abysmez.
heart and life - and he should be conscious that he is being tested. He has to learn to "use his abundance by preferring abstinence in the midst of plenty". It is true that the poor man is also being tested as to whether he can be patient in the midst of his poverty. "We must learn to be no less placid and patient in enduring penury, than moderate in enjoying abundance". Nevertheless to make comparison, the poor man is as if navigating a tiny craft on a small river where there is certainly the danger of overturning or striking against some tree on the bank, but where such danger is nothing to that of navigating a small boat in the wide ocean where the waves and the winds are furious. So much more dangerous, then, it is to be rich than to be poor.

Calvin can utter a special warning against intemperance in drinking wine, for this is the source of other forms of profligacy and the enemy of all moderation. "Where wine reigns, profligacy naturally follows, and consequently all who have any regard to moderation and decency ought to abhor and avoid drunkenness. The children of this world are accustomed to indulge in deep drinking as an excitement to mirth. Such carnal excitement is contrasted with that holy joy of which

(1) Serm. on 2 Sam. 1:21-7 (p. 24-5) Et après quand vng homme est riche, qu'il advise de se bien regler et imposer loy. Car il est certain que Dieu nous esprouve, quand il nous donne ainsi les biens comme en superfluïté, que c'est pour nous examiner, si nous serons sobres, et si nous aurons une vraie modestie. Cf. comm. on Zech. 9:15, C.O. 44:280 Imo affluentia bonorum probatio est frugalitatis, also comm. on Ps. 104:15, C.O. 32:90.


(2) Inst. 3:10:4. Cf. serm. on 1 Tim. 6:3-7, C.O. 53:576 C'est donc une science grande et forte difficile à pratiquer, de savoir entre riche, c'est à dire d'user sobrement des richesses, mais il faut aussi que nous sachions que c'est d'estre povres, et ceste science n'est pas moindre que l'autre.

(3) Serm. on Job 1:2-5, C.O. 33:35-6.
which the spirit of God is the author". In his sermons he can powerfully describe the effect of drunkenness as it turns man into an uncontrolled beast without feeling of shame, destroys the image of God, and perverts all order and decency. Calvin appeals to the man whose head and brain is too weak to carry drink to admit his weakness frankly to himself and either to abstain or to be extremely moderate in his indulgence.

Ambition is another aspect of man's life in which our tendency to sinful excess expresses itself. To have high rank, according to Calvin, involves us in as many and as fearful temptations as to have many possessions. The honour they receive and the rivalry of others makes it a most difficult task for those who rule to "contain themselves in modesty". Rulers themselves are corrupted by envy.

"Ambition almost always rules them, which is the most slavish of all dispositions". Calvin indeed names ambition as the mother of all the evils that exist in society at large "and especially in the Church". Therefore the man who holds high position "will look with suspicion on his rank" and will pray for the gift of moderation and gentleness. Calvin in this connection quotes Augustine: "As a tree must strike deep

(1) Comm. on Eph. 5:13, C.0. 51:220.
(2) Serm. on Eph. 5:15-18, C.0. 51:713-9.
(3) Serm. on Luke 1:11-15, C.0. 46:36. Et ceux qui ne peuvent soutenir le vin, seroyent bien sages, quand ils en prendroient par mesure: ce leur seroit une belle vertu de connoistre, I'ay ce vice en moy de me charger de vin: I'ay le teste et le cerveau trop debile pour le porter: ainsi il faut que ie m'en abstienne, ou que ie le moderle tellement que cela ne me nuise point.
(4) Serm. on 2 Sam. 3:26-7, (p.72)
(5) Comm. on John 12:42, C.0. 47:300
(6) Comm. on Gal. 5:26, C.0. 50:266-7 Multorum malorum quum in tota hominum societate, tum praesertim in ecclesia, mater est ambitio.
(7) Comm. on John 12:42, C.0. 47:299.
(8) Serm. on 2 Sam. 3:26-7 (p.72) Ceux qui sont ainsi esleuez en honneur et dignite, ont occasion de prier Dieu qu'il leur face
deep roots downwards, that it may grow upwards, so everyone who has not
his soul deep fixed in humility exalts himself to his own ruin. 1

We have noted some of the ways in which men indulge in sinful excess. The practice of moderation in the Christian life will find expression not only in the deliberate avoidance of all such excess but in the more positive exercise, by such moderation, of what are sometimes called Christian "virtues". Though Calvin himself never attempted to classify "virtues" or to set the cultivation of virtues as the aim of Christian living, it is obvious from his teaching that, modesty, patience and prudence can all be discussed together as different aspects of Christian moderation.

When Calvin refers to the expression of our moderation in relation to our fellow men he speaks of it often as "modesty". It may be noted, however, that Calvin does not use the word "modesty" with the limited application which it has in modern English usage. Indeed he often uses it synonymously with the word "moderation" itself. Calvin sometimes speaks as if such modesty or moderation was the chief, and

face la grace de se moderer en telle sorte, que chacun connoisse
qu'ils ont un esprit de mansuetude.
(1) Comm. on James 4:10, C.0.55:419.
(2) Though cf. note(3) on p.169.
and indeed the only Christian virtue, for it is the power to moderate all our anti social passions and our proud self-will and to submit to others that is the basis of all the humility and love that make up true Christian conduct. "Modesty by which each gives honour to the other is the best nurse of love" he says in one place, while in another passage he can call humility the "mother of moderation, the effect of which is that yielding up our own right we give preference to others, and are not easily thrown into agitation". In Calvin's thinking the basis of all love is the real inward ammihilation of ourselves, the inward mortification of the heart through the grace of God. This produces an unfeigned humility in the inward heart, which is accompanied by an "outward and civil modesty in behaviour". It is of significance to Calvin that in the ten commandments God teaches care and love for the neighbour through the negative commandment "thou shalt not kill"; for the basis of real love must be for each man to examine his heart and deal decisively with all the natural thoughts and tendencies that would move us to seek harm to our neighbour. If we would begin to love we must mortify and moderate the heart.

Such modesty of heart will find its expression in a refusal

refusal to indulge in pomp and display before others. This will become especially apparent in the manner in which a Christian dresses. In this matter Calvin is always very ready to underline the New Testament appeals especially to women for a practical application of the "rule of moderation" for an avoidance of the little frills and tresses that women are apt to like, and of the sumptuous use of gold and jewels, "for excessive elegance and superfluous display, in short all excesses arise from a corrupted mind". If he seems hard on women who overdress he is much more severe on men who do so. He laments that in his day, more than ever before, there was appearing this type of man who clothed himself like a doll or a Frenchman so sumptuously that it seemed as if he wanted to change himself into a woman, who was always looking for some new fashion in which to disguise himself and to draw attention to himself, who would starve himself of food in order to buy new clothes with which to feed his vanity. Yet even in avoiding such extremes we must be careful to preserve moderation. "It would be immoderate strictness wholly to forbid neatness and elegance in clothing. If the material is said to be too sumptuous, the Lord has

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 6:9-11, C.O. 63:683 Et puis, cependant que Dieu leur fait la grace de jouir des richesses qu'ils possedent, que ce ne soit pas pour gourmander a eux, et pour affamer leurs prochains, pour en faire leurs pompes, et leurs bravetez. Cf. serm. on Deut. 8:14-20, C.O. 26:63175 Nous serons advertis...de ne point abuser de nostre largesse, comme font ceux...qui sont adonney a pompes, et...vanitez pour se montrer.

(2) Comm. on 1 Tim. 2:9, C.O. 52:275 Regula mediocritatis

(3) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:9-11, C.O. 53:197


(5) Calvin suggests that the most suitable punishment for such grands seigneurs would be to make them serve as ladies tailors---See vivid passage in serm. on Deut. 22:5-8, C.O. 23:20.
has created it, and we know that skill in art has proceeded from Him. Then Peter did not intend to condemn every sort of ornament, but the evil of vanity to which women are subject. In all this we must be careful to observe "order and proportion".

An important aspect of Christian modesty is contentment with our lot. Humility and modesty will constrain us to confine ourselves within the bounds of our own calling. Calvin points out that our Lord Himself "kept Himself, as His human nature might have led us to expect, within the limits of that calling which God had given Him. To be contented with what God gives us is a rule of life which can be rejected only by rejecting the order of God Himself, and apart from which man is bound

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet.3:3, C.0.55:254
(2) Serm. on Deut.22:5-3, CO. 23:20 à tenir ordre et mesure Calvin admits that dress is an "indifferent matter" (cf p.451) and that it is difficult to assign any definite limits yet pride and love of display are not indifferent matters and too often find expression in clothing (Cf comm. on 1 Tim.2:9, C.0.52:275 and on 1 Pet.3:3, 55:254) If we constantly remembered when we dressed ourselves that clothes are ordained simply in order that we may hide ourselves and our shame since the image of God in our bodies are become so disfigured, then we would not be given to superfluous pomp in clothing! (Serm. on Deut.22:5-3, C.0.28:20) The manner of our dress should be determined by necessity (that we should be protected both from cold and heat) and honesty (it is dishonest for anyone to "dress up" as if on a stage to play a part) Serm on 1 Tim.2:9-11, C.0.53:265; and on Deut 22:5-3, C.0.28:13) Besides honesty the clothes of a Christian woman should have "quelque marque de saincteté" (28:20) "qu'elles monstrent un accoustrement convenable à des femmes qui font profession de crainte de Dieu par bonnes œuvres" (53:137)

(3) Comm. on Ps.91:11, C.0.32:6, Cf Serm. on 1 Cor.10:10-11, C.0.49:635. Dieu nais a advertis d'etre paisibles, et qu'un chacun se contente de sa condition... que nous ayons ceste mansuetude de cheminer en nostre degre. Cf p.227ff.
(4) Comm. on Mark 7:24, C.0.45:456
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim.6:9-11, C.0.53:584.
bound to be driven hopelessly here and there by his own covetous ambition.

Contentment is however no easily acquired virtue. For the psalmist to hold to his own vocation in face of provocation by tyrannous rule was a "sign of remarkable modesty". Contentment is indeed a virtue so contrary to our natural tendency to break through the limits which God sets to us, that it can only be the fruit of a real and complete surrender of the will to God, after which we can accept even ill-health, poverty, and dishonour peaceably. It is important that we should remember that in placing us where we are in life God is testing our obedience which can be proved in reality only by such an attitude of submission and contentment. We must remember too that while we can never be sure of God's help as long as we are pursuing any course that He has not planned, His help will, neverthe less, never fail those who confine themselves contentedly within the bounds of God's calling.

(1) Serm. on Deut.5:19, C.0.26:351
(2) Comm. on Ps.119:161, C.0.32:288
(3) Serm. on Deut.8:1-4, C.0.26:590-1 Quand donc nous venons là, si nous pouvons nous retenir en la subjection de Dieu, pour dire, Seigneur, il est vrai que ceci m'est dur à porter, il m'est contraire, ma nature tend tout à l'opposite, mais cy qu'il en soit de renoncer à ma volonté, Je voudroie estre sain; mais puis qu'il te plaisit que je soye malade, ton Nom soit bend. Je voudroie estre riche, et avoir toutes mes commoditez et delices, et tu veux que je soye pauvre, et indigent; ie voudroie estre en honneur et en credit, et tu veux que je soye en opprobre, et en ignominie, et bien, Seigneur, que nous avons ceste humilité de nous assujettir, et ce qu'il te plaisit nous envoyer, et non point suivre ce que bon nous semble.
(4) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:10-11, C.0.49:637
(5) Serm. on Deut.8:1-4, C.0.26:531.
(6) Comm. on Ps.31:11, C.0.32:6.
(7) Comm. on Ps.18:21, C.0.31:180 Calvin can express the certainty that contentment will be given those who follow the Lord in the way He has appointed, and that He will always provide what is lacking. Indeed he says: On le voit aussi à l'oeil. Car ceux qui seront les mieux vestus, ne laissent point d'etre morfondus; voir et qu'il semble que les povres gens doyvent estre tremais, et que la glace les doit percer cent foiz. Dieu les eschauffe, voir qu'ils sont restaurez, s'il les fomentoit, comme s'il y avoit un medecin auprès d'eux qui leur administrast bons remèdes pour subvenir à la froideur. Serm. on Deut.8:2-3, C.0.26:604.
Our moderation will express itself not only in contentment with our vocation in life but also in patience under affliction. If it is rebellion against God to "budge" from our place in life, without His call, it is equally rebellion against Him, whether we stay or move, to allow our feelings and passions and desires under trial and affliction any loose scope or expression. Calvin therefore calls for the moderation of passion and grief in the face of adversity, insult, injury and every kind of care and anxiety, for it is fatally easy under such circumstances to indulge in our infirmity and allow ourselves to be carried away by our feelings and reactions beyond the bounds of all moderation. Indeed, the sorrows of life can carry us away into excess even more easily than the joys of life. We must "compose our mind to patience" by moderating even our grief.

In speaking of patience Calvin obviously has frequently in mind

(1) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:10-11, C.O. 49:637
(2) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:8-9, C.O. 49:628 Mais tant y a que toutesfois et quantes que nous ne pouvons souffrir que Dieu nous gouverne selon sa volonté, mais sommes bouillans en nos passions, que nous voulons prevenir, que nous voulons qu'il s'assubietisse à nos souhaits, nous le tentons, c'est à dire qu'avec une desfiance nous entrons contre luy comme luy voulons faire la guerre. Puis qu'ainsi est donc, apprenons de cheminer en plus grande humility et modestie dores en avant, et que ce passage de nous serve de bride, toutesfois et quantes que nos appetis seront trop soudains, et que mesmes il y aura de l'impatience.
(4) Comm. on Ps. 85:9, C.O. 31:788
(6) Comm. on Ps. 34:2, C.O. 31:396.
mind the expression of the Psalmists about his "silence" before God.

Since the tendency of our passion under affliction is to "raise an uproar against God", he can define patience as a "kind of silence by which the godly keep their minds in subjection to His authority". He notes that David in his afflictions advanced more and more in the cultivation of "silence" and was able at times to "mortify every carnal inclination and thoroughly subject himself to the will of God". In such an attitude we will let no ill feeling against God slip from us. We will refuse to pass judgment on His ways with us or others remembering that we cannot in any way measure the depths of His judgments by the standards of our own fantasy, and that it is in vain to confess that God is just unless in practice we humiliate ourselves thus before Him. We must, then, patiently await God's time, in faith that He will exercise true care over His Church and His Children. If a man has this faith, he will "cherish his hope in

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(1) Comm. on Ps.35:9, C.0.31:788 Ita patientia species est silentii, quo se sub eius imperio continent plag mentes. Cf on Ps.62:2, C.0.31:585 Statuit sibi tacendum esse: quo verbo intelligit patienter et sedato animo ferendam esse crucem.
(2) Comm. on Ps.62:6, C.0.31:587.
(3) Comm. on Ps.39:2-3, C.0.31:397.
(4) Serm. on Deut.7:16-19, C.0.26:545 Ce n'est pas à nous de mesurer les jugemens de Dieu à nostre fantasie: car il nous faut confesser qu'ils sont quelquefois des abysmes: mais cependent ils ne laissent pas d'estre iustes. Nous ne verrons point donc toujours la raison de ce que Dieu fait: mais si nous fuy-fait-il approuver sans contredit. Car c'est bien raison que toutes creatures s'humilient sous luy, et qu'il ne soit point tenu à rendre conte. Et ainsi, quand il nous semblera que ce que Dieu aura commandé soit estrange: retenons nos esprits en bride, et en subjection, et faisons cest honneur à Dieu, de confesser qu'il est iuste et equitable, encore que nous n'y voyons goutte...Et qui plus est, quand nous verrons qu'il deploye une rigueur qui nous semblera excessive, contre les autres, cogoisoins en cela sa bonte et misericorde envers nous: car il nous pourroit faire le semblable. Cf serm. on Job 34:10-15, C.0.35:143 Ce n'est point donc assez, cu' en un mot nous protestions que Dieu est iuste: mais le principal est quand ce vient à la pratique, que nous trouvions bon tout ce qu'il fait.
in silence and calling upon Him for help will lay a restraint upon his own passions. Moreover, such faith in having been taken under God's guardianship will make us commit our cause to Him rather than give way to any impatience that would drive us to retaliate against others for the injuries they have done us.

To be patient under affliction, however, means to moderate but not entirely to quench our feelings of grief or anxiety or anger. We are not meant to cultivate a completely stoical indifference to all feeling, nor to cast off our human nature and harden ourselves like stones. "Patience is never free from being afflicted, and the children of God cannot help feeling their misfortunes and being sad." They are bound to mourn when death comes to friends or dear ones. They are bound to find their faith assailed by real fears. They are bound to find themselves subject to worry - for though there is a wrong kind of worry that springs from distrust, nevertheless God does not mean men to become like wooden stumps without concern for their own welfare, nor does He mean that a father should have no anxious concern for his family. What matters is that we should moderate our mourning, keep our fear within proper bounds, and set a limit to our care, for it is the mark of the unbeliever to give loose reins to grief in the face of death, and though anxiety is not wrong in itself.

(1) Comm. on Ps. 38:14, C.O.31:292
(2) Comm. on Ps.97:10, C.O.32:46
(3) Comm. on 1 Thess.4:13, C.O.52:165
(4) Serm. on Job 1:20-2, C.O.33:96
(5) Comm. on 1 Thess.4:13, C.O.52:164
(6) Comm. on Matt.8:25, C.O.45:265
(7) Comm. on 1 Cor.7:33, C.O.49:422
(9) Comm. on 1 Thess.4:13, C.O.52:164
itself it becomes corrupted when it is allowed any undue excess. Calvin, though so human at times, is almost stoically severe in his criticism of David's lament over Saul in which amidst much to admire he nevertheless finds the expression of a grief disordered and without moderation.

In appealing for moderation in our behaviour Calvin often means no more than that we should be prudent in a truly Christian sense. He found that the life and witness of many good men tended to be spoiled by indiscreet zeal as much as any other fault. He found frequent examples in scripture of men moved by irreproachable motives and true zeal nevertheless allowing themselves to be carried into an excess of emotion or into some foolish course of action such as is bound to incur God's displeasure. He judged that David's grief over the death of Saul even though there is much to admire in it, and the lament it inspired, had such a fault. Job's friends, when they fell weeping over him, were undoubtedly moved by genuine affection, but the very fervour of their sympathy and grief rendered them useless

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(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:33, C. 1.49:422. *Dum scilicet curamus quae officii nostri est curare, sed propter innatam nobis intemperantiam nimium ardemus. Tales igitur per se necquam sunt malae, sed propter *admodum* hoc est, immoderatum excessum, pravae fiunt.

(2) Serm. on 2 Sam. 1:17-20, p.14. *Car nous voyons icy comme en vne miroir vne homme qui monstre vne douil desordonne, et n'a point eu moderation en luy. Or par la nous sommes enseigne, encore que noz dueilz et pleurs tendent a vne bonne fin, et qu'ils procedent d'une bonne source, neantmoins il y aura tousiours du mesalinge au milieu de nostre vertu, il y aura de brouillaires et vices, tellement que cela doit rabatre tout nostre orgueil, afin de ne nous point priser, mais que nous cognoissions que Dieu trouuera tousiours a redire en tout ce que nous ferons.*

(3) Cf p. 276.

useless and unable to render true practical help to their friend. Moses and Paul allowed their unbalanced zeal for the fulfilment of one aspect of God's purpose to push them so far as to utter wishes for their own personal damnation. This is a sign that a man imprudently allows himself even for a moment to take a partial view of God's purpose, he can become foolish and blind in his prayers and desires. Asahel when he killed Abner showed great boldness and the best of intention, but, comments Calvin, our boldness must be ruled by wisdom rather than inspired by rashness.

All such conduct is seriously at fault for our zeal and ardour in the service of God should be moderated and given wise direction by the gift of prudence. "Indiscreet ardour is no less an evil than inactivity and softness". We must not allow the fervour of our zeal to "exceed the bounds of reason and moderation". In many aspects of Christian behaviour and Church life Calvin pleads that zeal requires to be prudently moderated from the use of elaborate ceremony, to which the mind of man is too prone, to the reforming ardour of the zealot within the Church. For, "if we intend to

(1) Serm. on Job 2:11-13, C.0.33:136 Ce n'est pas donc le tout d'avoir quelque amour, et d'en montrer les signes, mais il faut que ceste amour-la soit bien reglee, afin que nous puissions servir les uns aux autres comme Dieu le commande.
(2) Serm. on Job 3:11-19, C.0.33:156-7
(3) Serm. on 2 Sam.2:22-3, P.26. Que nous apprenions d'estre hardiz par regle, et non par temerite.
(4) Comm. on Heb.12:13, C.0.55:177 Nihilo enim minus vitiosus est inconsideratus fervor quam inertia et mollities.
(5) Comm. on Matt.26:51, C.0.45:730
(6) Comm. on John 12:7, C.0.47:279.
to reform affairs which are in a state of disorder, we must always 
exert such prudence and moderation as will convince people that we 
do not oppose the eternal Word of God". Moreover we must remember 
that it is our Lord Himself who through His angels at the last day 
will "thoroughly" cleanse his thrashing floor, and if we ourselves 
try to be too thorough in our cleansing of the Church we are depriv-
ing the angels of their office and usurping it ourselves. Even 
David in spite of the ardour of his hatred of the wickedness that 
prevailed in the Church of his day "prudently moderates his zeal, 
and while separating himself from the ungodly, ceases not to 
frequent the temple".

It is noticeable, too, that Calvin appeals often for 
prudence even in Christian giving and in the exercise of charity 
towards the poor. He can appeal eloquently for people to be 
generous in their giving to others. One of the main reasons why we 
are given wealth is that we might employ ourselves in the service of 
God by helping others. Moreover, to give to others is the best way 
of checking our own tendency to use our wealth for ourselves 
intemperately. But here there is a need for discrimination. It is

(1) Comm. on Matt.5:17, C.O.45:171
(3) Comm. on Ps.26:5, C.O.31:266
(4) Serm. on 2 Sam.1:21-7, p. 24-5.
(5) Comm. on Ps.104:15, C.O. 32:90 Mutua etiam communicatio 
quam Deus praecipit, optimum est intemperantiae fraenum.
is the teaching of our Lord that His disciples should be "generous rather than prodigal" in their giving, though they must be unwearied in their prudent generosity. It is folly rather than generosity to give money without careful regard for the worthiness and the need of those to whom it is given. We must not be led astray by the fanatics "who think that you have done nothing unless you have stripped yourself of everything". Calvin approves of Paul's moderate language in his appeal to the Corinthians for Christian liberality (though he notes that most of us are in more danger of going to excess in nigardliness than in generosity). He seems to desire that even within the Church giving must be moderated according to a system of proportional right (derived evidently from Aristotle) balanced out according to the stations of individuals and other circumstances, and producing as "fitting symmetry" (αρμονία συμμετρίας).

In view of Calvin's reputation for severity in the case of

(1) Comm. on Matt. 5:42, C.0.45:186
(2) Comm. on Ps. 112:9, C.0.32:176
(3) Cf. comm. on 2 Cor. 8:13, C.0.50:100-1 As a result of his teaching on both spending and giving, it is obvious that Calvin has at times to recommend the saving of money. "To keep what God has put in our power, provided that, by maintaining ourselves and our family in a sober and frugal manner we bestow some portion on the poor, is a greater virtue than to squander all". Comm. on Mark 10:21, C.0.45:450 Calvin does not tackle the problem of immoderation in the mere amassing of wealth - of how to get rid of immoderate savings under his system of restricted giving and spending. But undoubtedly under modern conditions he would have been forced by his own logic to call for moderation in bank accounts and in investments - and even perhaps in business enterprise.
of Servetus, it is of special interest to note his frequent appeals for prudence in moderating our zeal within the Church to correct the errors and wickedness we see in others. Calvin laments that sometimes "those who set themselves boldly for the vindication of the glory of God provoke and exasperate the wicked to a higher pitch by opposing them contemptuously and without moderation". "We must beware of pouring oil upon a fire that is already burning too fiercely". In dealing with wickedness we should remember how David and Lot expressed their zeal for God in the midst of the wickedness they could not otherwise rebuke by grieving and fasting. Such mildness and humility are effective ways of tempering holy zeal. Even in our prayers for vengeance upon the enemies of God we must have the prudence to beware of the same intemperate zeal which made the disciples sin by calling fire from heaven upon the Samaritan village.

The same prudence must take control within the Church when it comes to reproving or disciplining an erring brother. We must remember that our aim in dealing with those who have done wrong is to bring them back to God and back into the fellowship as our brothers. Therefore though there may be strictness there must not be undue severity. Calvin found that the old canons of the Church on this matter were so strict that the restoration of the offender became too difficult. He found a "lack of wisdom on the part of the ancient bishops." He finds

(1) Comm. on Ps. 69:11, C.O.31:642-3
(2) Comm. on Ps. 28:4, C.O.31:223

Nous avons déclaré quant et quant pour garder une bonne mesure a reprendre ceux qui ont failli, qu'il est besoin qu'un chacun pense a soy.
finds Paul much more ready than they were to allow the offender to be restored to his place within the Church. Moreover he urges preachers to note Paul's mildness and paternal spirit and humility under the cross when he admonishes the Corinthians in his first Epistle. "Let teachers infer from this that in reproofs they must always use such moderation as not to wound men's minds with excessive severity, and that agreeably to the common proverb they must mix honey or oil with vinegar - that they must above all things take care not to appear to triumph over those whom they reprove, or to take delight in their disgrace....For what good will the minister do by mere bawling if he does not season the sharpness of his reproof with that moderation of which I have spoken. Hence if we are desirous to do any good in correcting men's faults we must distinctly give them to know that our reproofs proceed from a friendly disposition".

Yet even in showing mildness and moderation towards the wicked and fallen we must beware of going to such an extreme that we ignore and nourish the vice in our fellowmen instead of correcting it. To bear the burdens of our fellow Christians does not mean to look with a blind eye on their faults and thus deceive them and confirm them in evil. Such an attitude will indeed send them to perdition. We must beware of moral confusion or of pretending that a man who remains in his sin is justified and absolved. While we

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor. 2:6, C.O. 50:29
(4) Serm. on Deut. 7:1-4, C.O. 26:500 Et pourtant prattiquons ceste doctrine en telle sorte que nous ne soyons point misericordieux outre ce que Dieu a voulu, et que la regle qu'il nous donne le porte. Car il y en a qui voudroient qu'on usast de misericorde en meslant le blanc parmi le noir, en mettant toute confusion, en pretendant que le meschant fust justifie et absout.
we ourselves might forgive and overlook a fault in another in some personal injury nevertheless God might be much more strict and demanding in calling for true repentance and reformation if there is to be real forgiveness. Calvin notes that Christ in his teaching "prescribes a middle course which does not give too great offence to the weak and yet is adapted to cure their diseases....Christ enjoins his disciples to forgive one another, but to do so in such a manner as to correct their faults".

Calvin recognises that there is, of course, a kind of prudence which is a natural gift bestowed on men in general. This amounts simply to practical common sense. A Christian must use the helps to his well-being, the safeguards against danger, and the remedies for evils which God in His providence has provided for all men - and of which all sane men will avail themselves. Calvin has little patience with those who either by sloth or folly or fatalistic conviction neglect to use prudence in the management of their affairs, "The righteous man will carry out their business with care and discernment so that in their domestic affairs they will neither be too lavish nor mean. They must not be too niggardly but they will keep everything within bounds without giving way to luxury. And in all

(1) Serm. on Gal. 5:11-14, C.0.51:14. La charité donc sera d'homme à homme : quand quelqu'un m'aura fait inure, il faut que ie l'oublie....mais quand il est question de maintenir la querelle de Dieu, là il faut que les hommes soient estimez moins que rien.
(2) Comm. on Matt. 18:5, C.0.45:511-512
(3) Comm. on Matt. 11:25, C.0.45:318
(4) Cf. Inst. 1:17:4
all their transactions they will be guided always by the law of equity". But all this is the prudence "of the flesh" and, used from selfish motives, it can amount to nothing more than mere craftiness. There is another "true prudence" which "can grow out of no human brain" and which is the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who are the children of God.

To attain such true wisdom and prudence is beyond all human capability. There is "nothing more difficult" than to know when the limits of forbearance towards other men have been reached. In the practical issues of life requiring such prudence and discretion our own affections are not sufficient to guide us. Nor is it enough to have a general knowledge of what is good when we are faced with making a decision of how to act in a particular case. It is all beyond us. Nevertheless God Himself has the Spirit of prudence and discretion and by sharing in the Spirit we are given the wisdom to discern between good and evil, to know when to act and when to refrain, and when to speak and when to be silent. Calvin frequently emphasises this aspect of the Spirit's work, and refers to the Spirit

(1) Comm. on Ps.112:5, C.0.32:174 Hoc autem optime convenit, iustos sua negotia ratione et iudicio metiri, ut in re domestica neque prodigi sint, neque sordidi, vel nimium tenaces, sed sine luxuria modum teneant. Deinde ut contrahendo aequitatis regulam semper observent.

(2) Comm. on Ps.26:4, C.0.31:266 Sua quidem etiam filii Dei prudentia est, sed quae longe a carnis astutia differt.

(3) Serm. on 2 Sam.2:1 p28-9 Car d'ou vient la prudence, sinon que Dieu la donne par son Esprit?... Or cela ne croist point au cerveau des hommes.

(4) Comm. on Matt.18:18, C.0.45:512 

(5) Serm. on Gal.5:11-14, C.0.51:15 Voilà donc comme nous ne nous esgarions point, voire si nous regardons simplement à Dieu, et que nous ne laschersons point la bride à nos passions : mais que nous soyons gouvernez par cest esprit de droiture et de prudence, et que Dieu nous fera discerner où il nous faut batailler, et là où il nous faut resister. Serm. on 2 Sam.2:1f. p29 D'auvantage nous tomberions tous les
Spirit as the Spirit of wisdom and prudence. He insists that the
Spirit is not only the Spirit of power but also of "love and
soberness" by which the same powerful energy is moderated. "And
therefore unless our zeal be directed by the Spirit of God it will be
of no avail to plead on our behalf that we undertook nothing but from
proper zeal. But the Spirit Himself will guide us by wisdom and
prudence that we may do nothing contrary to our duty or beyond our
calling - nothing in short but what is prudent and opportune, and by
removing all the filth of the flesh He may impart to our minds proper
feelings that we may desire nothing but what God shall suggest".

Not only prudence but all such moderation as has been
described - modesty, contentment, patience - is the gift of the
Spirit of God. Moderation comes not simply through our own attempts
to discipline our outward behaviour but from the rule of God in the

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(1) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:15-18, C.0.49:662 Ce n'est point sans cause
que le saint Esprit ha ce titre de prudence et discretion,
mais c'est pour nous montrer que nous avons besoin d'estre
aidez et secourus, à cause du defaut qui est en nous.

(2) Comm. on 2 Tim.1:7, C.0.52:360-1.

the heart. But the rule of God within the heart is the hidden work of the Holy Spirit. Such moderation is brought about by the mortification or crucifixion of the "flesh" by the Spirit in applying the effect of the death of Christ to the hearts of His people. The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of continence" (continentiae spiritus) who so restrains the licentious desires of the flesh that men spontaneously bring their own lives into order. It should therefore be our constant prayer in face of all temptation to give way to excess, that "the Lord will moderate us by the unerring rule of His Spirit".

For Calvin, then, true meekness, contentment and patience are not virtues that can be cultivated by human resolution and discipline but the fruit of union with Christ in bearing the Cross, the effect of the grace of God and cheerful submission and surrender to His will. When a Christian shows patience in enduring the cross he is presenting to God "a sacrifice of obedience which is acceptable to Him". It is this fact which makes such a wide difference

(1) Comm. on Ps.106:14, C.0.32:121 Haec unica est moderationis ratio, si Deus affectus nostros gubernet
(2) Comm. on Ps.141:4, C.0.32:333 Porro David tam sermones suos quem affectus Deo regendos commendans fatetur non aliter quam arcana spiritus moderatione et mentem et linguam in officio teneri...qua et linguae modestia singularis est spiritus donum.
(3) Cf pp. 93 ff.
(4) Comm. on Ps.23:5, C.0.31:241
(5) Comm. on John 12:42, C.0.47:300...ut nos moderetur certa spiritus sui regula
(6) Comm. on Ps.116:15, C.0.32:200; on Ps.94:12, C.0.32:24 Et sane haec vera est patientiae ratio, non contumaciter resistere rebus adversis (sicuti praefratam duritiem Stoici pro virtute laudarunt) sed nos libenter subiicere Deo, quia in eius gratiam recumbimus. Serm. on Deut.8:1-4, C.0.26:590-1
(7) Comm. on Phil. 2:27, C.0.52:41
difference between Christian patience and "philosophical patience". Whereas the Christian obeys the divine will of grace, the stoic bows before blind necessity. Christian patience or endurance under the Cross is rooted in the humility that prostrates itself in the dust before God whereas the Stoic endurance is inseparable from pride and independence of heart. Stoic fortitude and "patience" is, indeed, mere stubbornness and obstinacy in the face of adversity rather than a yielding to what is good.

The most important difference between the attitude of the Christian in moderating his life and behaviour and that of the Stoic is that the Christian man allows suffering to enter his heart. He allows his feelings to be touched and moved to real response by his surroundings and circumstances even though he is to be watchful in moderating the extent to which, and direction in which, his feelings drive him. Stoicism, on the other hand is the "iron philosophy" that seeks to make men like stones, apathetic and impervious to what should move human nature. Christianity indeed makes men sensitive and keen in their emotional response. Stoicism blunts feeling.

Calvin strongly condemns all the "mad fellows" who were introducing

(1) Inst.3:8:11 and Ibid where Calvin distinguishes on the latter side further between contumacia philosophica and immani duritia Stoicorum
(2) Inst. 3:8:11
(3) Comm. on Ps.34:19, C.0.31:344 Unde etiam colligimus, verae tolerantiae nihil esse magis adversum, quam altitudinem illam de qua garriunt Stoici : quia non prius vere humiliati censemur, quam dum cordis afflictio coram Deo nos prosternit, ut iacentes erigat
(4) Comm. on Ps.94:12, C.0.32:24. Inst.3:8:11 A further difference between the Stoic and Christian attitude which Calvin points out is that the Stoic has to find his happiness and satisfaction in his own mental attitude which he himself creates, whereas Christ makes the Christian find his in hope of a future reward. Comm. on Matt.5:10, C.0.45:164-5
(5) Inst.3:8:9, Comm. on Phil.2:27, C.0.52:41
introducing such Stoic ideas and ideals into the preaching and teaching of the Church about the Christian life, for in his day there was "a new kind of Stoicism who holds it vicious not only to groan or weep but even to be sad and anxious". He insists that the affections which God has given to man's nature are, by themselves, no more corrupt than their own Author Himself", though it matters that they should be held in moderation. A Christian feels, though he does not indulge in, grief and sorrow. Calvin frequently points out how utterly human and natural, in contrast to Stoicism, were the men of the Bible in their feelings whether it be Paul anxious about Epaphroditus or the Psalmist in his mood of depression or our Lord Himself both in His teaching and His example.

Here again it is to be noted that the effect of the Spirit of God is to make man again truly natural, not only in the fact that they become truly human in their feelings but also truly moderate. For all excess is dehumanising and against the order of nature.

"Nature is content with little".

1 Inst.3:8:9, Comm. on Acts 8:2, C.0.48:175. These words of Calvin are striking in view of the constant modern tendency in some quarters to say in an unqualified way that worry is sinful
(2) Comm. on Acts 8:2, C.0.48:176
(3) Cf comm. on 1 Thess.5:16, C.0.52:174
(4) Comm. on Phil.2:27, C.0.52:41
(5) Comm. on Ps.30:12, C.0.31:299
(6) Inst 3:8:9
(7) Serm. on Eph.5:15-18, C.0.51:713; on 1 Tim.2:9-11, C.0.53:206
(8) Comm. on 1 Tim.6:8, C.0.52:326.
Sanctification and separation within the Church

The individual sanctified in the midst of the Church

Each must depend in humility on the gifts of others

Each must fulfil in humility his own proper function within the body

Being gathered within the visible Church implies our sanctification

Assurance of being thus elected is an important element in working out our sanctification

Sanctification within the Church involves separation from the world

Only within the life of the Church can the individual achieve a true relationship of separation from the world
It is obvious that for Calvin the sanctification of the individual, and the growth nurture and discipline of his Christian life, take place within the life of the Church, and the attitude and loyalty of the individual towards the Church is an extremely important factor in this matter. Nowhere, of course, does Calvin speak so clearly and memorably about this than in his section on the Church in the Institutes. "As it is now our purpose to discourse of the visible Church, let us learn, from her single title Mother, how useful, nay how necessary the knowledge of her is, since there is no other means of entering into life unless she conceive us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breasts, and in short keep us under her charge and government until divested of mortal flesh we become like the angels". It is, however, not only the maternal function that the Church fulfils towards the individual but also the function of the school. In the Christian life we are always learners progressing step by step under guidance and tutelage. The Church is the sphere of our gradual education towards full manhood in Christ. In it we are scholars all our life.

Our salvation within the Church is constantly furthered

(1) Inst.4:1:4 Cf also 4:1:1
(2) Serm. on Eph. 1:17-18, C.0.51:335.
(3) Inst. 4:1:5
(4) Inst.4:1:4
furthered by the mutual care which the members, gathered together in one body under the same Head, have for each other. "The saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that all the blessings which God bestows upon them are mutually communicated to each other". Such mutual participation in each other's gifts within the Church is a necessary condition for living a full Christian life, for "God does not bestow the Spirit on each apart, by himself". Jesus Christ was the only One who was given the Spirit "without measure" and who thus had no need to receive through other men. We ourselves, however, receive the gifts we need by participating in our own small measure in the receiving and sharing of each others gifts within the Church, and by cultivating our unity within the Church. Calvin puts the matter succinctly in his 1573 Catechism. "Christ in giving Himself to us exhorts us to give and spend ourselves for others. Christ in making Himself common to all, makes us also to be one in Him".

God then does not give us the gifts and strength we need to live the Christian life directly from His own hand. He bestows upon us what we need through the ministry of others within the life of the Church.

(1) Comm. on Ps. 20:10, C.O. 31:212 Deus (i.e. salutis) vero tunc demum futuri sumus participes, si omnes sub commun nostro capite in unum corpus collecti, mutuam alii pro alis curam geramus, non autem seorsum quisque sibi consulat.
(2) Inst. 4:1:3
(3) Comm. on 2 Cor. 13:13, C.O. 50:156 Deus non singulis seorsum largitur spiritum, sed pro gratiae mensura cuique distribuit, ut ecclesiae membra vicissim inter se communicando unitatem foveant.
(5) C.O. 22:70.
the Church. Therefore no matter how much our natural pride makes us desire to stand alone we are nevertheless "constrained to borrow from others". Within the Church we must "cleeve to each other in the mutual distribution of gifts". And we must acknowledge that our gifts have been given to us by the Head in order that we may communicate them to others. To neglect the saints when they stand in need of our help is "to defraud them of what is their due" and it is also to deform the body since only through such mutual communication of what each has can each maintain his respective place within the body. Thus the people of God "cannot but be united together in brotherly love and mutually impart their blessings to each other". Calvin, indeed, asserts that only as we are united among ourselves as members of one body can we be reconciled to God.

In placing us within the Church that we might share in the

(1) Comm. on Rom. 12:6, C.O. 49:238
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 12:12, C.O. 49:501. Nic vero fideles hortatur ut mutua donorum collatione inter se cohaerant.
(4) Comm. on 2 Cor. 9:1, C.O. 50:106
(6) Inst. 4:1:3
the mutual communication of spiritual gifts, God has assigned to each his station and function within the body. The unity which we must cherish within the Church is an ordered unity in which each member is assigned his place and part in the fulfilment of which the whole body will possess symmetry and proportion (symmetria et proportio) and will grow towards perfection - a symmetry which will be destroyed if the members refuse to fulfil their function.

Therefore it is important that we should observe not only the unity but also the order which God has appointed within the Church for our growth in grace. To try to grow spiritually apart from the Church is impossible. But to try to grow within the Church in superiority to the other members and without taking the humble place assigned to us in the body is to produce a monstrous growth which denies the true nature of the Church. This symmetry and proportion and order in growth within the Church is, of course, at least a sign of the restoration of the true order of nature among men in Jesus Christ, and of the image of God amongst humanity. Church order in this way reflects the true order of nature.

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 4:7, C.O. 49:367
(2) Comm. on Eph. 4:13, C.O. 51:138-9; Cf. comm. on Rom. 12:6, C.O. 49:238
(3) Comm. on Eph. 4:15, C.O. 51:202. Quid est igitur papatus, nisi deformatis gibbus, qui totam ecclesiae symmetriam confundit, dum unus homo capiti se opponens, e membrorum numero se exinit?
(4) Inst. 4:1:8
(5) Serm. on Eph. 4:15-16, C.O. 51:585. Car si nous croissions, et cependant que les espaules montassent un demi pied par dessus la teste, que seroit-ce? Ce croissement-là seroit-il désirable? Il voudroit mieux cu'un membre fust du tout amorti, que de desfigurer ainsi le corps. D'autant donc qu'il faut que le chef soit par dessus, saïent Paul notamment déclare que ce n'est pas assez de croistre, mais qu'il faut que nous tendions toujours à ceste subjection de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, et qu'il preside par dessus nous, et que grands et petits se rangent 15. Or nous voyons par experience que ceci n'a pas este dict sans cause.
(6) Cf. e.g. Inst. 2:12:6
Our sanctification is impossible apart from our election and incorporation into the membership of the Church. It has already been pointed out that God sanctifies His Church not simply by the inward influence of the Spirit in the heart but through the Cross which He lays upon it in the course of its earthly history. Calvin teaches that whereas in this world the wickedness of men is allowed to go on often unpunished (judgment being stored up for men in general at the last day) nevertheless within the Church such is not the case. Since the Church will not come under judgment at the last day, God is especially severe in judging its sin here and now. He therefore begins His judgment in the Church. He reforms it by chastening it severely, as it were completing His whole work of judgment. Therefore if we are members of the Church we must expect to be subject to a "more rigid discipline" under the providence of God then we would otherwise experience. To be elected means that

(1) Cf pp.38ff.
(2) Serm. on Job 42:6-8, C.O.492-3. Nous voyons tous les jours que la condition des fidèles est plus miserable que celle des contempleurs de Dieu...Or quand on voit ces choses, on y seroit trouble, sinon que nous eussions ceste doctrine, c'est assavoir que le jugement commence par la maison de Dieu: comme aussi il est dit au Prophet Isaie (10,12) Quand Dieu aura accompli tout son ouvrage sur la montagne de Sion alors il n'espargnera point les meschans. Or notamment le Prophete Isaie dit, qu'il faut que Dieu accomplisse toutes ses corrections en son Eglise: comme ce sont ceux qui lui sont plus recommandez que les siens. Il faut donc qu'il les visite en premier lieu, qu'il les purge de leurs fautes, qu'il les reforme pour les reduire à lui...qu'il accomplice toute son oeuvre. Et puis, il y a une vengeance horrible apprestee sur ceux qui ont abusé de sa patience.
(3) Serm. on Matt. 27:11-26, C.O. 47:890.
that God is at work upon us in this special way to change us. To be sanctified therefore means to be the objects of this special providence and leading of the Spirit by which separates His own people apart to Himself as sons. By virtue of election we are brought into a sphere of fellowship with God and providence under God's hand in which our afflictions being "consecrated on account of the Head" all serve to conform us to Christ.

Sanctification is therefore a work which God accomplishes in His providential dealings, with the Church, and in this respect also we participate in sanctification not as isolated individuals but especially within the fellowship of the Church and as members of the Church, for it is in such fellowship that our lives can be made outwardly conformable to the death and resurrection of Christ.

For Calvin, the whole purpose of our election is, indeed, our sanctification. The covenant which God makes with the elect is one which involves obligation to holiness. God has joined together election and sanctification, and that man must not separate what God has joined together. We must not separate holiness of life from the

(1) Serm. on Eph. 1:3-4, C.O.51:270. Il faut que Dieu besongne et qu'il nous change: car tout bien procede de son election.


(4) Comm. on Ps.15:1, C.O.31:143. Quamvis enim gratis adoptavit Abraham, stipulatus tamen est ut viveret integer: atque haec est generalis regulis foederei quod ab initio cum tota ecclesia pepigit.

the grace of election. The fact that we are "called to be saints" means that our holiness flows from election and that the aim of election is holiness. Therefore to be elected does not give us any excuse for licence and careless living. Calvin has no hesitation in warning the elect to walk in fear and not to imagine that God cannot cast them out of His house if they prove themselves unworthy of the grace given to them. To know ourselves elected will never make us complacent or careless in our way of life but will rather stir us up to cleave to the promises of God and to seek their fulfilment all our life. It is only those who have no real ground for assuming the title of the people of God who delude themselves with the idea that they are secure whatever they do. Election therefore is the root that is bound to produce the fruits of goodness. If we are not reprobate our sanctification is bound to follow from our election by God, "when having embraced by faith the doctrine of Christ we follow

(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:2, C.O.49:308. Potest autem bifariam accipi: vel ut Paulus causalitiam sanctificationis dicat esse vocationem Dei, propter Deum ipsos elegit.
(3) Serm. on Deut.7:7-10, C.O.26:524. Notez (dit-il) puisque Dieu a promis à vostre pere Abraham, qu'il sera le Dieu de sa semence apres luy, qu'il ne vous defaudra point. Mais advisez cependant de cheminer en crainte: car ceste alliance est faite avec condition que vous soyez entiers, que vous ayez le coeur droit. Ne pensez pas donc que vostre Dieu ne vous puisse dechasser de sa maison, et de son Eglise, quand il vous trouvera indignes du bien q'il vous a presente.... Il est vray que desia il s'allie avec nous... mais ce n'est pas à dire qu'il nous faille estre nonchallans:plustost il nous faut estre resveillez pour embrasser les promesses q'il nous envoie, pour nous y arrester du tout, et que nous soyons constans en cela toute nostre vie.
(4) Comm. on Ps.15:1, C.O.31:142. Nihil magis tritum est in mundo, quam falsa obtundere Dei nomen idque sibi magna pars hominum secure inculget.
(5) Serm. on Eph.1:4-6, C.O.51:270-1.
follow it during our life".

It is obvious that the assurance of our being elected to sanctification is a most important element in the actual accomplishment of our sanctification and in living the Christian life. We must have a sense of God's calling if our faith is to stand. Election means that God chooses men for His service within and through His Church "not because in themselves they are fit for it, nor because they spontaneously offer their service", but simply because He chooses them and inspires them. Indeed if we are brought near to God it is never because we anticipate His grace but only because He stretches His hand down to Hell to reach us. If we know ourselves as thus elected by God's sheer grace amongst His people then we will know that God is bound to fulfil in us and with us, the purpose which He has begun. Our salvation and sanctification "stand with the election of God" which "cannot change or fail and is united to the stability of Christ who will no more allow His faithful followers to be disjoined from Him than He would allow His members to be torn in pieces". Election is thus the fountain from which all other

(1) Comm. on John 13:18, C.O.47:311
(2) Serm. on Eph.1:3-4, C.O.51:265. Si nostre foy n'estoit fondee en l'élection eternelle de Dieu, il est certain qu'elle nous pourroit estre ravie de Satan chacunem minute.
(3) Comm. on Ps.105:26, C.O.32:110
(4) Comm. on Ps.65:5, C.O.31:605-6
(5) Inst. 4:1:3.
other blessings flow. Therefore in the knowledge that he is thus elected is bound to bring to the Christian a cheerfulness and certainty in doing his God-appointed task which will keep him from succumbing under failure and defeat.

But we cannot have such sanctifying assurance apart from membership of the Church. "The Lord has not promised His mercy save in the communion of saints". The promises that must uphold the elect in face of their temptations and trials are promises made to us not simply as isolated individuals but as members of the elect community, for, to be elected means to be elected with the Church. It is only "as long as we continue in the bosom of the Church" that we can be sure that the truth will remain with us and that the promises of God's faithfulness towards His people will apply to us. It is when we find ourselves gathered within the Church among the flock of God that we know ourselves as indeed elected and separated from the rest of the world as the objects of the free and unsearchable love of God; and it is thus that we become assured of all the benefits that flow from such election.

We can, then, constantly encourage and comfort ourselves in

1 Comm. on Ps. 28:8, C.0. 31:285 Quamquam praecipue tenendum est quod alibi attigimus, ex hoc fonte fluere quaeunque in nos Deus confert beneficia, quia gratis in Christo nos eligit.

2 Comm. on 1 Tim. 1:13, C.0. 52:263. Gud enim plus alacritatis addere nobis vel debit, vel potest, quam cuum scimus nos divinitus ordinatos ad agendum quod agimus? Haec arma sunt nostra, haec praesidia quibus muniti nunquam deficimus. Cf comm. on Ps. 18:1, C.0. 31:169.

3 Inst. 1:1:20

4 Inst. 1:1:3

5 Comm. on Ps. 44:4, C.0. 51:439 Et certe hic fons et origo est ecclesiae, nempe gratuitus Dei amor; et quia quibus beneficia prosequitur Deus suam ecclesiam, ex eodem fonte manat. Ideo quod collecti sumus in ecclesiam, cuod foemur ac protegimur Dei manu: causa non alibi quam in Deo quaerenda est. Nec vero hic de communi Dei benevolentia
in the fact that we belong to the Church, and are thus elected among the people of God. There can be no greater privilege, then
"than to be regarded as belonging to the flock and people of God, who will always prove the best of fathers to His own, and the faithful
guardian of their welfare". We must remember that the God of the
Bible is one whose purpose it is not simply to choose isolated
individuals here and there but to choose for His Son a people who
will be destined to life and therefore kept and defended by the Son
for the Father. If we know ourselves as numbered among this people
then we know that our individual welfare is assured. We must learn
to apply to ourselves the comfort that is held out for each of us in
the promises that cover the welfare of the Church. Calvin notes how
the Psalmist "to persuade true believers that God has a special care
for each of them in particular...brings forward the promise which
God made to the whole people and declares God to be the guardian of
the Church, that from this general principle as from a fountain, each
might convey streams to himself". The picture of Jerusalem surround-
ed securely by mountains - a symbol of how God defends His Church -
can be at the same time a sign to each of the faithful "that the
safety promised in common to all people belongs to him".

agitur, quae se extendit ad totum humanum genus, sed
distinguuitur electus populus a reliquo mundo, et discriminis
causa ad merum Dei beneplacitum referitur.

(1) Comm. on Ps.106, C.0.32:117
(2) Comm. on Heb.2:13, C.0.55:31; Cf on Matt.9:36, C.0.45:262
(3) Comm. on Ps.94:6, C.0.32:20
(4) Comm. on Ps.121:4, C.0.32:301. Tenemus nunc prophetae
consilium, nam ut singulis persuadeat Deum peculiarem eorum
curam gerere, in medium proferit quid toti populo sit pollicitus.
Deumque pronuntiat ecclesiae suae esse custodem, ut ex
hoc fonte singuli rivos ad se derivent. Cf on Ps.119:26, C.0.
32:247-8.
Our election to sanctification within the Church involves at the same time separation from the world. Calvin finds that throughout the scripture the "term sanctification denotes separation" as well as election. Calvin speaks frequently of our becoming separate, e.g. "from the world", "from the common herd of men", and "from all that is contrary to His service".

Such separation is an aspect of the Biblical idea of Holiness. This is seen in the vicarious sanctification of Jesus Christ which involved not only His identification with us in all our human limitation and conflict and need, but also His separation from us and His assumption of a place within our human nature quite unique and solitary. In order to be sanctified as Mediator, He had to be set apart from the common rank of men.

The members of the Church as well as the Head require to be

(2) Serm. on Eph.5:25-7, C.O.51:746; Comm. on Dan.7:25,C.O.41:77
(3) Prayer in comm. on Dan.15:7-8
(4) Serm. on Deut.5:12-14, C.O.26:284 Quand l'Ecriture nous parle d'etre sanctifiez a Dieu: c'est pour nous seperer de tout ce qui est contraire a son service.
(5) Cf comm. on Exod.15:11, C.O.24:159 Sanctitas pro gloria accipitur quae Deum a creaturis omnibus separat.
(6) Serm. on Mark 1:23-7, C.O.46:739 Quant a ce mot de Saint de Dieu, il emporte que nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, comme Mediateur, devoit estre separe du rang commun des hommes. Cf comm. on John 10:36, C.O.47:253 Calvin finds the solitary and separate place of Jesus in this respect amongst men foreshadowed in the Old Testament, especially in the stories of Joseph and Samson who are both referred to as Nazirates (A Nazirite being one who is separated for sanctification. Cf e.g. comm. on Zech.7:8, C.O.44:221. Calvin argues that even the similarity between the names Nazirite and Nazareth though superficial, is of divine significance). Joseph and Samson were able to save their people simply by reason of their separation from those they saved - Joseph being sold into Egypt, and Samson being consecrated a Nazirite from his birth (Cf serm. on Matt.2:23, C.O.46:451 ff. In this exposition Calvin admits his debt to Bucer - see comm. on Matt.2:23, C.O.45:103) In all this Calvin finds an
be separated from evil in order to be sanctified. The Church is indeed a consecrated and separated body of Christ separated from evil for the service of God. "We cannot be united into the one body of the Church under God, unless we break off all bonds with impiety, separate ourselves from idolaters, and keep ourselves pure and uncontaminated from all the pollutions which corrupt and vitiate the holy service of God". We can become devoted to God only as we become separated from unrighteousness. Since our fellowship with Christ in the Church thus consecrates us to God it is therefore to commit fearful sacrilege and to "profane a sanctified thing" if we do not separate ourselves from anything that might defile us. "I ask you - are there not incompatible and discordant things that Jesus Christ dwells in us and at the same time we are given to all villany and filth? Do we imagine that He wants to dwell in a pig-stye?" Therefore a Christian who is really consecrated to Christ and who lives by faith will detest and abhor whatever is incompatible with such a relationship to Christ.

This necessarily means separation from the world. By "the illustration of the fact that the sanctification of the people of God is to depend on one Head who is to be set apart likewise unique in his own sanctification (C.O.46:455 Dieu a voulu figurer desia sous la Loy que la saintete commune depend d'un chef, qui est seul: comme Joseph.... Samson. Cf for Joseph, Gen.49:26 and Deut.33:16. for Samson Judges 13:5.

(1) Comm. on Ps.16:4, C.O.31:151 Nique enim aliter in unum ecclesiae corpus coalescimus sub Deo, quam dum abrupimus omnes impios nexus, disjungimus nos ab idololatris, et ab omnibus incuinamentis, quae purum Dei cultum corrumpunt ac vitiament, integri sumus ac immunes.

(2) Comm. on Ps.97:10, C.O.32:46

(3) Comm. on Rom.12:1, C.O.49:234

(4) Serm. on 2 Thess. 1:6-10, C.O.52:236

(5) Cf e.g. comm. on Ps.139:21, C.O.32:385; on Ps.31:6, C.O.31:304
"the world" Calvin means the present life of this world as it is organised apart from and over against the Kingdom of God. "The World" for Calvin is the sphere of the "flesh", of self-life and Satanic power. He can speak of this world as having a corrupt mode of life which is "wholly at variance with God" and adverse to the Spirit of God. The "world" is organised to cater for the self-centred nature of the unregenerate man, therefore it is in the sphere of the "world" that self-will finds its true pleasure and is most easily exercised. Moreover the world so organised, is under the dominion of Satanic power, and it is through the fascination of the world that the Devil obtains tyrannical sway over the human heart. Therefore a Christian man, in seeking to separate himself from evil, must hold himself apart from the life of this world which seeks to involve him in the life of self-love and in the service of the flesh and the Devil. We can redeem our life and our time from the power of the Devil only by paying the price of withdrawal from the allurements and cares and

(1) Comm. on 1 John 2:15, C.0.55:318 Mundi nomine intellige quidquid ad praesentem vitam spectat, ubi separatur a regno Dei et spe vitae aeterna. Ita in se comprehendit omne genus corruptelas, et malorum omnium abyssum. In mundo sunt voluptates, delitiae, et illcecebrae omnes quibus homo capitur, ut se a Deo subducat. Cf. p.319 Quae propria sunt mundi, cum Deo prorsus dissident. Tenendum est quod iam dixi, hic notari profanum vitae institutum, quod nihil habet cum regno Dei commune. Cf. comm. on 1 John 5:4, C.0.55:363 Mundi nomen hic late patet: comprehendit enim quidquid adversum est Dei spiritui: ita naturae nostrae pravis pravitas pars mundi est, omnes concupiscientiae, omnes Satanae astus, quidquid denique nos a Deo abstrahit.

(2) Comm. on Gal.6:14, C.0.50:265-6 Quid autem mundus significat? opponitur procul dubio novae creaturae. Quidquid ergo contrarium est spirituali Christi regno, mundus est : quia ad veterem hominem pertinet. Vel, ut uno verbo dicam, mundus est quasi objectum et scopus veteris hominum.

(3) Comm. on Eph.5:16, C.0.51:220

(4) Comm. on 1 John 2:15, C.0.55:318
and pleasures of the world.

The fact that this present world is so much under the power of evil makes it the more serious sin when we neglect to aspire to the heavenly life for which we are created, for worldliness becomes not simply materialism or the denial of another world but an active alliance with the Devil. What separates the godly from the wicked is, for Calvin, their opposite attitudes both to this world and to that which is beyond.

It is only within the fellowship of the Church that we can find ourselves in the true relationship of separation from this world, for separation from the world is not something we can achieve for ourselves as isolated individuals. Separation like sanctification is a work which God accomplishes with His Church. It is, for Calvin, an important aspect of the sacrament of Baptism that it is a sign of division between the Church and the world separating those within


(2) Serm. on Deut. 9:20-24, C.O. 26:708. Nous serons bien mal advisez si nous ne passons par ce monde comme oiseaux sur la branche, et cue nous n'y soyons estrangers. Car autrement Dieu nous desadoué, et renonce. Puis qu'ainsi est, ceux qui se veulent tellement arrester au monde, qu'il semble qu'ils n'en doivent jamais partir, ils se bannissent du royaume de Dieu, ils declarent que l'héritage des cieux ne leur appartient point....Ainsi ceux qui ont monte de se nommer estrangers en ce monde, qu'ils s'en aillent chercher leur héritage avec le diable; car ils n'ont ne part ne portion avec Dieu.

within from those without, proclaiming that salvation cannot be hoped for except we be "separated from the world". Not only does Baptism proclaim that such a separation is necessary, it also itself constitutes the way by which also men can take the step which separates them from evil, and along with the other ordinances of the Church it actually effects that separation.

The Church, then, is the sphere in which men are "separated from the degrading pollutions of the world that they may be the holy and peculiar people of God". In the Church we become united in one body in order that we might become separated and thus sanctified. We become separated only as we find ourselves elected and adopted

(2) For Calvin the sacramental signs must be regarded by faith as accompanied by what they signify, Cf e.g. comm. on Isa. 6:1, C.O. 36:126; on Isa. 42:3, C.O. 37:61. This is why it is sacrilegious for a baptised person not to remain separate from evil Cf serm. on Eph. 2:13-15, C.O. 51:407-8 Et ainsi, tous ceux qui se renomment de l'Eglise, et cependant sont gens desbauchez et dissolus, sentiront quel sacrilege c'est d'avoir ainsi profane leur Baptisme que Dieu avoit dedie pour leur salut. Mais de nostre coste advisons de cheminer comme estans separez des pollutions de ce monde.
(3) Comm. on Ps. 16:3, C.O. 31:151
(4) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:19-24, C.O. 49:675 La religion emporte qu'ils soient comme un corps uni pour estre separe d'avec tous incredules.
adopted into the Church, united to Christ as we adhere to the fellowship of the Church.

(1) Prayer in comm. on Zeph. 3:5.
(2) Serm. on Eph. 5:25-7, C.0.51:746... que nous soyons separez du monde, a fin d'estre conions au Fils de Dieu.
(3) Serm. on 1 Tim. 3:14-15, C.0.63:314 Dieu nous a tellement unis a nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, qu'il ne veut point que nous soyons separez en façon que ce soit d'avec luy, ni distraits. Quand donc nous avons cela, n'est-il point question d'estre ravis en cest honneur inestimable, et que nous apprenions de plus en plus de nous retirer des corruptions de ce monde.
The Church sanctified by the Word and Sacraments

The Word plays a decisive part in the birth growth and discipline of the Christian life within the Church.

It is the Word preached and sealed by the Sacraments that is thus effective.

The Word and Sacraments are the means whereby through the Spirit the members of the Church are consecrated to fulfill their royal priesthood.

The Word effects the sanctification of the heart by its power to subdue the flesh and to attract us to God.

The Word is effective through the creation and growth of faith.

Through Word and Sacraments the individual within the Church knows himself elected, and becomes personally related to Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.
In the birth growth and nourishment of our Christian life within the Church the decisive part is played by the Word of God - or the Gospel as it is proclaimed and taught within the Church. Calvin uses a great variety of expressions to describe the part played by the Word of God within the fellowship of the Church. It is the "spiritual food of the soul divinely offered by the hands of the Church" which, if we neglect to take, we deserve to perish. It is the channel through which the blessings of God's promises flow from the original fountain-head to reach us. By means of the Word, immortality and the Kingdom of Heaven are offered to us and in receiving the Word we can lay hold of these divine gifts. By means of the Word, God presents to us His peace. The Word is the means whereby Christ Himself comes into our midst in the Church, and whereby His blood which has been shed for our cleansing and redemption is applied to our souls, there being thus an inseparable connection between the blood of Christ and the preaching of the Word.

(1) Inst. 4:1:5
(2) Comm. on Ps 119:65, C.O.32:243
(3) Serm. on 2 Tim.1:8-9, C.O.54:48 Seulement ouvrons la bouche afin qu'il la remplisse, ouvrons le coeur, et donnons entrée à ce témoignage de l'Evangile, et l'immortalité du royaume céleste habitera en nous.
(4) Comm. on Ps 19:8, C.O.31:201
(5) Serm. on Gal.3:1-3, C.O.50:459 Or cependant notons que ce n'est point assez d'avoir commu en passant que nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ nous a si chereinent rachetez: mais qu'il nous faut continuer toujours en la doctrine de l'Evangile, iusques à tant que cela soit bien imprimé en nostre coeur, comme si son sang decouloit pour appliquer le fruit qui nous en revient à nostre usage. And Ibid. p.462 Car nous ne pouvons pas mesprimer la doctrine de l'Evangile, que nous ne profanions le sang du Fils de Dieu, qu'il a espandu pour nostre redemption: car l'vn ne se peut separer d'avec l'autre. Toutefois et quantes que Dieu parle à nous et qu'il nous presente la remission de nos pechez, qu'il nous declare qu'il est prest de nous recevoir à merci, il y a une aspersion quant et quant du sang de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ. Toute cette doctrine-la ne peut avoir nul effect, sinon que nostre Seigneur
Moreover God Himself "comes to meet us" or "comes down to us" and addresses us by means of His Word, and in thus presenting Himself He makes the Word a looking glass in which we are able to see Him who is otherwise invisible.

When Calvin speaks of the Word of God in such exalted terms, the form of the Word of which he is primarily thinking is not the Word read and meditated on in private, but the preached Word mediated through the ministry of the Church. It is by the "Gospel in the Church", the "external preaching", the "ministry of men" that "the renewal of the saints is accomplished and the body of Christ is edified". The Church is our school of Christ, in which our faith is nourished and grows because the Word is preached in its midst. It is within the fellowship of the Church and through the gift of the ministry within the Church that the true interpretation of the

Jesus Christ soit là au milieu pour nous approprier l'effusion de son sang.

(2) Comm. on ICor. 13:12, C.O.49:514-5
(3) Inst. 4:1:5
(4) Inst. 4:3:2; 4:1:5
(5) Serm. on Eph. 4:11-14, C.O.51:568 Brief, en toute sorte, sachons que quand Dieu a mis ce régime en son Église, que sa Parole se presche, c'est à fin que cependant que nous sommes en ce pelerinage terrien, tousjours nous venions à l'escole ou Dieu nous enseigne: car nous cheminons en foy....Or la foy dont procede - elle? Comment est-ce qu'elle se nourrit et s'augmente? C'est par la Parole de Dieu, Quand nous avons la predication...voici par où et par quel bout nostre foy commence, voilà comme elle continue et comme elle croist de jour en jour.
the Scriptures is given to the individual and he is enabled to grow in knowledge and understanding. Therefore Calvin can say that as in the Old Testament the fathers could speak of themselves as able to see the "face of God" in the sanctuary, so under the New Testament it is through preaching that we are able to see the glory of God which shone in the face of Jesus Christ. So remarkable is this office of preacher in the Church, so close the relationship between the living and powerful Word of God and what is uttered by the mouth and tongues of men, that what is affirmed about the power of the Word of God can also be affirmed about the word of the preacher in fulfilling his office in the midst of the Church.

The Word within the Church is always, for Calvin, the Word inseparably sealed by the sacraments. God seeks to further our Christian growth within the Church by means of the continual use both of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, along with the word. Our union with Christ, which is the source of all our growth, and of which the Sacraments are signs, is something which grows as faith grows. It is not only "figured" in the Sacrament but is more and more effected through the use of the sacraments, which thereby affect our whole Christian life and enable us to possess Christ more fully and enjoy Him in all His richness. The Lord's Supper "is intended to make us

(2) Inst. 4:1:5
(3) Inst. 4:1:5; 4:1:6; 4:1:22
(4) Cf p26 ff.
(5) Inst. 4:17:33
(6) Inst. 4.14:6
us grow in faith and confirm therein until His second coming". Jesus Christ Himself is present according to His promise, and by the incomprehensible virtue of His Spirit in the celebration of this mystery so that "as mortal men distribute the bread and the wine", He Himself works in our midst. Baptism, it is true, is administered only once to an individual, but like the Lord's Supper also, its efficacy is not necessarily tied to the moment of its administration. Baptism never "becomes obsolete" in a believer, and if what is represented and offered to us in our Baptism remains "fixed in our mind throughout our whole life" then the sacrament remains continually efficacious along with the Word and the Lord's Supper in effecting our Christian growth.

The Word and Sacraments effect the sanctification of members of the Church not only because they are the means whereby life and virtue are communicated from Christ to His people, but because they are also the means by which the members of the Church are consecrated to offer themselves and their works in thanksgiving as living sacrifices to God in fulfilment of their royal priesthood. For Calvin the Word of the Gospel is not only a channel by which the life of Christ flows to men, food and medicine for the soul's health, it

(1) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:14 ff, C.0.49:802
(2) Ibid.
(3) Serm. on Acts 1:1-4, C.0.48:634
(4) Inst. 4:14:7, C.0.7:741
(5) Inst. 4:15:3
(6) Comm. on Ps 63:3, C.0.31:524
(7) Comm. on Titus 3:5, C.0.52:430-1
(8) Cf pp. 24ff and pp. 40ff.
it is also the **spiritual** sword by which the people of God, who would offer the sacrifice of their lives, are, as it were, immolated for the sacrifice. It is by the Word of God that the mortification is effected whereby we are consecrated to God, and, enabled to make a true offering of ourselves in faith. It is the Word of God that purges and cleanses us in consecrating us. The faithful, then, "are sacrificed (immolati) to God through the Gospel". The offering of the heart and life that was meant to be given along with the offerings of oxen and rams and lambs in the Old Testament ritual - and that was typified outwardly in these bleeding sacrifices - is really made possible for us under the New Testament by the mortifying and cleansing power of the Word of God. "The true and lawful consecration is by the Word". "Mount Zion, then, is now different from what it was formerly, for wherever the doctrine of the Gospel is preached there is God really worshipped, there sacrifices are offered, in a word, there the spiritual temple exists. "Grant Almighty God", Calvin prays, "that since we cannot otherwise really profit by thy word than by having all our thoughts and affections subject to thee and offered to thee as a sacrifice - 0 grant that we may suffer thee, by the sound of thy Word, so to pierce through everything within us that being dead in ourselves we may live with

(1) Comm. on Phil.2:17, C.0.52:36 Evangelium est spiritualis gladius ad caedendas victimas. Cf on Heb.4:12, C.0.55:49-51 In sermon. on 1 Tim.1:8-11, C.0.53:60, Calvin refers to preaching as "glaive spirituel".

(2) Ibid. Nulla enim fides sine mortificatione, per quam Deo consecratur. Cf comm. on Exod.20:8, C.0.24:577 Vide ut sit huius sanctificationis summa: nempe carnis interitus.

(3) Serm. on Deut.7:5-8, C.0.26:614 Qui est cause que nous devons estre un peuple sanctifie à nostre Dieu? assavoir sa parole: car il est dit: Vous estes nets à cause de la parole que le vous ay preschee. Voici donc le moyen par lequel Dieu nous sanctifie à soy, c'est à dire, il nous retire de la pecher commune de tous les enfans d'Adam, et nous prend pour estre de sa...
Unto Thee.

The effect of the Word in consecrating the people of God is inseparable from the mortifying sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover the sacraments along with the Word assist in enabling us to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, in the fulfilment of our royal priesthood. Though Calvin insists that there can be no propitiatory effect in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, it is nevertheless the occasion for a true Eucharistic sacrifice of the whole Church to God in love and service to one another. It would also be in line with Calvin's whole outlook (though he does not explicitly emphasise the point) to regard Baptism as the basic act of consecration to royal priesthood, and of commitment to a life of sanctification in the pattern of Christ's death and resurrection.

The Word of God is not only food, it is also the medicine which we must constantly use for our spiritual health. Everything that the doctor can do to the human body in face of various diseases (by purging, blood-letting, giving medicine, dieting) the Word of
of God can do for our souls in face of all our evil vices. The Word of God is the instrument by means of which God's vineyard (whether the Church or our own hearts) is pruned and cleansed and made fruitful.

Calvin, in his commentary on the Psalms in particular, frequently speaks about the power of the Word of God or of the Law, to discipline and control the mind and heart of man. It is true that the discipline and teaching of the Word are alien to our corrupt nature. Yet at the same time the Word is more powerful than the corruption of our hearts and minds. It can "bridle the wild intemperance of our flesh". In those who yield to its

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim.1:8-11, C.0.53:61  Car dequoy nous doit servir la parole de Dieu? C'est une paste de nos ames; et puis c'est une medicine. Nous avons le pain et les viandes qui nous servent de nourriture pour les corps; la parole de Dieu a l'usage tel envers nos ames: mais elle emporte encore plus, c'est que quand nous sommes malades de nos vices, qu'il y a beaucoup de corruptions et cupiditez meschantes, il faut que nous en soyons purge: et la parole de Dieu nous sert maintenant de purge, maintenant de saignee, maintenant de diette; brief, tout ce que les medecins peuvent appliquer aux corps humains, pour les guair de leurs maladies, n'est pas une dixieme partie de ce que la parole de Dieu nous sert pour la sante spirituelle de nos ames. Pour cela saint Paul parle ici de la saine doctrine.

(2) Comm. on John 15:3, C.0.47:340
(3) The two are practically identical in Calvin's comments, for the Law of God to the Psalmist was simply the Word as he knew it.
(4) Cf comm. on Ps. 19:7, C.0.31:200; on Ps. 50:17, C.0.31:505
(5) Comm. on Ps. 119:147, C.0.32:281
its heavenly instruction it will have the power not only to restrain the impetuosity of youth but will serve as an antidote to correct vice throughout their whole life. So powerful is the effect of the Word upon our life that the "best rule of moderation" is simply to follow the example of the Psalmist, "to keep our eyes concentrated upon the Word of God".

The Word of God in affecting the reformation of our lives works deep within our hearts. Though the law of God is "odious to the flesh which it subdues into order", nevertheless in subduing the flesh it, at the same time, attracts us to God by its sweetness; and though in our natural state nothing is more agreeable to us than what is sinful, nevertheless the delight which we now feel in the law carries us in the opposite direction. Thus the Word of God in reforming us has a twofold effect upon us. It not only "compels us to obedience" by restraint but also "allures us by its sweetness", and by the expulsive power of this new love for God's law the allurements of the flesh are overcome. Calvin notes that this holy love for the law is the dominating passion in the life of the psalmist replacing the unholy love of money which seems to be the

(1) Comm. on Ps.119:9, C.O.31:218
(2) Comm. on Ps.17:14, C.O.31:161
(3) Comm. on Rom.12:14, C.O.49:244 Deus autem verbo suo non tantum manus coercet a maleficiis, sed amarulentos quocque affectus in animis domat.
(4) Comm. on Ps 119:22, C.O.32:226
(5) Comm. on Ps 119:15, C.O.31:220-1
(6) Comm. on Ps 19:10, C.O.31:202
(7) Comm. on Ps 112:1, C.O.32:172
the dominating passion in the rest of mankind, and he asserts that the same love for the Word in us "will serve effectually to deliver our hearts from an immoderate desire for gold and silver".

It is then through the creation and growth of faith within the Church that the Word of God is primarily effective in producing the growth of the Christian life of the members of the Church, it is in the context of man's encounter by the Word of God that faith is created confirmed and increased. Faith is indeed man's response to the Word of God as that Word addresses man. "There is no faith without God's Word, for of His faithfulness we cannot be convinced until He has spoken...for we must ever hold that there is a mutual relation between God's Word and our faith". But when God addresses man in His Word faith is indeed awakened in man's heart, for the confidence that lays hold of the Word of God is indeed faith itself. It is especially the promises of the Word of God that tend to beget and increase the response of faith within our minds and hearts, for in the promises of the Word, God confronts man primarily in His gracious aspect, and faith is founded "chiefly on

(1) Comm. on Ps 119:13, C.O.32:220
(2) Comm. on Ps 19:10, C.O.31:222
(3) Comm. on Heb. 11:11, C.O.55:154
(4) Comm. on John 4:50, C.O.47:102
(5) Inst. 3:2:7; 3:2:29
on the benevolence and kindness of God".

It is through the Word and Sacrament within the Church that the individual finds himself personally confronted and addressed by Jesus Christ and is enabled to apply to himself as an individual the virtue of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. It is not enough that Christ died for the world as a whole or that His spiritual gifts are poured out upon the Church in general. The individual within the Church must be singled out and must know himself as singled out and related personally to the death and resurrection of Christ. "The words 'for me' are very emphatic" says Calvin in his comment on Gal. 2:20, "It will not be enough for any man to regard Christ as having died for the salvation of the world, unless each can claim for himself as an individual the effect and possession of this grace. We have already noted that God has His Word for and His work with the

(1) Comm. on Heb. 11:11, C.0.55:154 Yet it must be remembered that this response to the Word of God is no mere human response. Faith can be added to the Word only when it is at the same time "begotten within us by the inward operation of the Spirit." Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:2, C.0.55:208 for faith (cf. pp. 35-36) "does not arise out of the ordinary faculties of men but is an extraordinary and rare gift of God (comm on John 12:37, C.0.47:296) Cf sermon. on Acts 1:9-11, C.0.48:617 Ne scions-nous pas que la foi surmonte tout sens humain? Car ce n'est pas une faculté que les hommes aient d'héritage, mais c'est une grace que Dieu leur fait en corrigeant leur nature. And sermon. on Eph. 1:13-14, C.0.51:301 Il faut bien que Dieu bessonne par son S. Esprit et par une grace speciale, outre ce qu'il veut que l'Evangile nous soit presche.

(2) Comm. on Gal 2:20, C.0.56:200; Cf sermon on Gal 2:20, C.0.50:450 Or il ne se contente point de dire qu'il s'est livre pour le monde en commun: car cela seroit aussi trop maigre: mais il faut qu'un chacun applique A soi en particulier la vertu et le fruct de la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ. ... Il faut qu'un chacun en son endroit se contigne à nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ, et qu'il conclue, C'est pour moy qu'il a souffert.
the Church as a whole and that it is a great matter for the individual to realise this. But the Word in its action within the Church can never remain simply a vague word addressed to the people of God as a whole. It must become a word that reaches and singles out each individual with particular relevance to the problems and circumstances that beset each individual within the Church. The word that evokes faith must be such a particular word in which God personally addresses, by name and speaks precisely to our situation.

As Mary heard herself personally by the risen Jesus addressed and called by name in the garden so the word must become not an "ordinary voice (non communi voce) which sounds indiscriminately in the ears of all" but a voice by which He specially (peculiariter) calls His own sheep.

It is noticeable that in discussing this matter Calvin can

(1) (see p.283 )
(2) Cf serm. on 2 Sam.2:1, p 29 Quoy qu'il en soit, David scait bien que ce n'est pas assez qu'il ait entendu, quelle est la volonté de Dieu quant à la règle commune, mais il faut qu'en sa vie il sache, de quel costé il se doit tourner....Car nous sommes suffisamment enseignez par sa parole de ce qui est bon droit et juste; cependant il reste que Dieu nous donne intelligence de sa volonté, et qu'estans illuminez par son Esprit, nous comprendons ce qu'il nous a donné par sa parole. Mais ce n'est pas le tout. Car nous serons en quelque differand de cecy et de cela, et apres aunoir balance long temps, encore ne pourrons nous concevoir beaucoup de choses particulieres pour certaines. Lè, comme jay desia dit, il nous faut invoquer Dieu et recourir à lui.
(3) Comm. on Ps 12:6, C.O.31:129 Neque enim satis foret, Deus apud se statuere quid facturus sit in salutem nostram, nisi recta nos et nominatim compelleit, nam inde nobis spes salutis effulget, quum Deus voce sua ostendit se nobis for sus propitium.
(4) Comm. on John 20:16, C.O.47:432
can emphasise that it is not only by the Word but also by the Sacraments that the individual comes to know himself personally singled out and addressed, and is enabled to apply to himself the fruit of the passion of Christ.

In the response of faith to the Word of God that can so particularise itself towards the individual, there is bound to be an intensely personal element in which the individual applies the Word to himself, as if addressed to himself, even when it speaks in terms that are no more than a general promise. The man of faith like the psalmist will always tend to find strength in calling the Lord his own God.

When we know ourselves thus personally addressed and thus personally responding to the Word this is a sure sign of our election. This indeed constitutes our calling. "After electing us He testifies His love towards us by calling us". Though God addresses His Word

(1) Serm. on Deut 4:27-31, C.O.26:197  
Ton Dieu n'a il pas dit, qu'il aura cite de ceux qui l'invoquent? Et voire - mais ie ne say si ie suis d'un tel rang. N'ay-ie pas este baptise au nom de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ? N'ay-ie pas la sainte Cene, qui m'est encore un second gage par lequel Dieu me monstre qu'il me reçoit au nombre de ses enfans? Cf serm. on Gal.2:20-1, C.O.50:450 Quand nous sommes baptizé en son particulier, afin d'avoir une application speciale...aussi quand nous recevons la sainte Cene, chacun vient prendre sa portion, pour nous montrer que nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ nous est communiqué voire a chacun de nous.

(2) Comm. on Ps 7:2, C.O.31:80. 10th serm. on Ps 119, C.O.32:601-2  
Que nous ne facions point comme les Papistes, qui diront, O, il est vray que Dieu a promis cecy et cela, mais nous ne savons pas s'il nous appartient...Or au contraire, il nous faut faire cette conclusion que fait yci David, Seigneur, selon ta parole donnee a ton serviteur. Il dit point, Selon ta parole donnee a ie ne scay qui, aux hommes du nombre descuels ie ne suis pas, en telle sorte que ie ne m'y puisse pas appuyer: mais il dit, Selon ta parole donnee a moy, Seigneur. Apprenons donc a son exemple...Quand nostre Seigneur dit, Je reçoys tous pecheurs a mercy: que chacun disce, l'en
Word to all men and disappoints no one who will respond, nevertheless "we are to trace to the fountain of the secret electing purpose of God this difference, that the Word enters the heart of some, while others only hear the sound of it". Without such a response of faith election will be imperfect. But election must inevitably lead to our being called to faith in Christ and therefore our faith is a "sufficient attestation of the eternal election of God" to make our Christian life one of assurance.

(3) sui un, Seigneur, ie suis une poure creature desesperée, ie vien à toy, et t'allegue la promessee que tu m'as donnee. Voyla comme il nous en faut faire: ou autrement nous ne ferons que vaguer en l'Ecriture saincte tout le temps de nostre vie. Comm. on Ps 65:5, C.0.31:606
(1) Comm. on Ps 81:14, C.0.31:766
(2) Comm. on John 6:40, C.0.47:147 Tolle fide et mutila erit electio
(3) Ibid. Cf serm. on Eph. 1:3-4, C.0.51:265 Que nous soyons tout resolus et persuadez que Dieu nous tient pour ses enfans. Et comment aurons nous cela, sinon d'autant que nous embrassons sa misericorde par foy, selon quil nous offre en l'Evangile, et que nous sachions aussi que nous sommes fondez en son election eternelle? Car si nostre foy dependoit de nous, il est certain qu'elle nous eschaperoit bien tost.
PART IV  CHAPTER 3

Discipline under the Word

Constant obedience to the Word necessary for the Christian life

A Christian will make the Word his sole source of guidance and inspiration

Meditation

The Word must be allowed to possess mind and heart by constant meditation

Some aspects of the Gospel on which we should chiefly meditate

By meditation we should cultivate the fear of God and live with a sense of His wrath

We must also cultivate gratitude by meditating on His goodness

Self-examination

A Christian must constantly examine his sins

Such self-examination undertaken with prayer and the Word

Self-examination creates humility, and sympathy and prepares us for final judgment

Self-discipline

We must not only hate ourselves but also discipline ourselves

This is a constant and deliberate inward exercise

To practice such self-denial is true fasting
There is an occasional place in the Christian life for the external discipline of fasting as a help to prayer.
The Christian life is for Calvin a life lived under the influence and guidance of the Word of God. A Christian is one who gives himself up in a spirit of utter docility to the teaching of the Word, to be ruled and disciplined by its precepts, even though its teaching and discipline is alien to our own corrupt nature. Whether or not we subject ourselves thus to the Word of God is the sure test of whether or not we fear God Himself. "An unfeigned love of God's law is certain evidence of adoption since such love is the work of the Holy Spirit". The hard heart is the heart that despises the Word, in contrast to the heart that is soft and pliable to the hearing of the Word in receiving it with reverence and obedience. Moreover to despise the Word of God is to despise God Himself.

Only the life that is based upon, directed and inspired by the Word of God, can truly please God. It is true that what first matters in seeking to please God is to have our hearts right with Him.

(1) Comm. on Ps.19:7, C.O.31:200; on Ps.50:17, C.O.31:505  Itaque ferocia nostra nos exasperat contra Dei verbum, quia correctionem non liberenter suscipimus, nec fieri potest ut quis mansueto et docili animo Deum loquentem audiat, eiusque verbo obtemperet, donec se regendum et corrigendum ei tradat.

(2) Comm. on Ps.50:17, C.O.31:505; on Ps.111:10, C.O.32:171  Merito igitur hoc examine probari Dei timorem dicit propheta, si liberenter iugum eius suscipimus, nosque regi patimur eius verbo.

(3) Comm. on Ps.119:159, C.O.32:236

(4) Comm. on Ps.95:8, C.O.32:33
Him, for the right heart is more important than the outward behaviour. Nevertheless even with the right heart it is vain for any man to imagine that by himself apart from the Word of God he can devise and conceive ways of pleasing God. "No man must frame for himself, at his own pleasure, a new form of righteousness unsupported by the Word of God, but we must allow ourselves to be governed by divine authority". If our life and our service of God is to be acceptable, they must be ordered and guided by faith - a faith which will learn only from the Word of God. We must beware in this matter of building castles in the air by doing merely what we think right even with the best intentions, for God wants to guide us clearly by His Word. "The first thing then that God requires of us is this humility to allow ourselves to be controlled by His pure Word". Whatever human action or worship that does not arise out of the Word of God is false and unstable and is not approved by God Himself.

A Christian therefore binds himself to the Word of God

(2) Comm. on Ps.119:79, C.O.32:249 Vera igitur religio et cultus Dei ex fide oriuntur: ut nemo rite Deo serviat, nisi qui edoctus fuerit in eius schola
(3) Serm. on Deut.9:8-12, C.O.26:667 Or en ceci voyons-nous que c'est une chose de grande consequence, que la parole de Dieu nous soit communuee, que nous ne doutes point qu'elle ne procede de luy, et que nous sachions qu'il nous y faut assuettir: si nous n'avons cela, il n'yaura nulle religion entre nous. Il est vray que nous en cuiderons bien avoir: mais le principal fondement de religion, c'est à dire, de foy, de service de Dieu, c'est que la doctrine nous soit certifiee. Car si nous y allons par cuider, comme les Payens, les Turcs, et tous Idolatres: comme les Papistes aussi auront leurs bonnes intentions: tout cela est frivole, c'est bastir en l'air, et par fantasie. Notons bien donc que la premiere entree que nous devons avoir pour servir Dieu, et pour estre approuvez de luy, c'est que nous ayons une regle toute assuree, que nous ne disions pas: Je pense que cela soit bon, on me l'ainsi dit: mais nous avons la parole de Dieu qui nous guide...car nostre conducteur ne nous trompera jamais.
(4) Serm. on 1 Tim.4:1-5, C.O.53:366
well as to gratuitous promises". The Word of God is, for him, like purified gold, free from all defilement or spot or stain.

The Christian is so bound to God's Word that he will betake himself to it even in the most severe and difficult conflicts, knowing that "should he depart from God's Word no hope would be left for him". In the tension and conflict that constantly take place between his own natural unregenerate human reason and the Word of God the Christian will say goodbye to the prudence of the flesh in order to follow the guidance of the Spirit. For "what sort of insanity is it to embrace nothing but what is welcome to our human reason? What authority will God's will have if it is admitted only as far as it pleases us? This applies, of course, especially to the ordinary Christian man when he is asked to judge God and his own situation solely by looking at the state of affairs before his own eyes. Calvin is constantly telling us that we must always have our eyes shut to everything that might prevent us from believing in God, in order that we may rest in His promises.

(1) Comm. on Heb. 11:7, C.0.55:151
(2) Comm. on Ps. 119:140, C.0.32:278
(3) Comm. on Ps. 119:25, C.0.32:224
(4) Comm. on Ps. 81:13, C.0.31:765
(5) Comm. on Ps. 115:25, C.0.32:109

Il est vray qu'il nous faut avoir les yeux fermez, quant à tous objets de ce monde qui nous pourroient divertir de nous reposer en Dieu et en ses promesses. Car il est certain que si nous voulons entrer en conseil avec nostre sens naturel, si nous en voulons jurer selon les apparences, que toustours nous serons en branle, et jamais Dieu n'aura son autorite envers nous telle qu'il merite, Et pourtant, que la parole de Dieu nous soit pour une verite certaine et infallible. Car les hommes opposeront toustours, Voire ceci, Voire cela; mais de nostre costé ayons toustours les yeux fermez à ce qui nous peut empescher de croire a Dieu. Cependant il nous les faut ouvrir à ce qui nous peut servir de bien contempler ses œuvres. Cf. serm. on Gal. 5:4-6, C.0.50:574
According to Calvin our response in love and gratitude to the Word of God must include in a pre-eminent place a response of the mind and thinking to the Word of God. We must love the Lord with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. In this response of our faculties to God's grace the mind must play the leading part and we must discipline ourselves to constant, true and deliberate thinking about God's Word. A true response to the Word will mean not only obeying it with hands and feet but also giving it the chief place in the mind and affections. So important is it that we should allow the Word of God to dominate all our thinking that otherwise it is impossible for us to love God at all or to respond to him with our heart and strength. "Do we know God with our minds as we ought? This matters much. Otherwise it is impossible to love him with all our strength and with all our

(1) Serm. on Deut 6:4-9, C.0.26:434-5 Il met donc Ame, Coeur, Pensees; comme s'il disoit, qu'il faut qu'un homme qui voudra bien observer la Loi, se dedie en tout et par tout en l'obissance de Dieu, et en son amour. Or nous voyons qu'en nos ames il y a premiерement la vertu de penser, quand nous concevons les choses pour juger, pour discerner: voila la première faculté de l'ame. C'est qu'aprés avoir veu les choses, nous entrons en deliberation, et iugement, nous concluons ceci ou cela. Dieu donc veut retenir a son toutes ses pensées-la.

(2) Comm. on Ps 119:2, C.0.32:216 Non satí s est pedibus et manibus obsequium praestare, nisi primum locum teneat cordis veritas.
our feelings: for knowledge comes before love. If our knowing God is only partial, if there should be still much haziness surrounding us, our love will also be very weak. If, however, we do surrender all our mental and cognitive faculties to the love of God this is bound to draw the other faculties and powers also into love and obedience and to have a profoundly sanctifying effect on our life. The sanctification of the thoughts is of supreme importance, moreover, because it is by seeking to insinuate evil first into our minds that Satan seeks to enmesh us in his snares and errors and thus by evil communications corrupt our whole lives. Calvin reminds us that as the body can be weighed down by surfeiting and drunkenness so the mind can be overpowered by the cares and lusts of this world and that true watchfulness and victory over such temptations involves us in meditating on the things of God.

Therefore we cannot be good Christians merely by going to

Serm. on Deut. 6:1-9, C.0.24:1485.

Ibid. p 435 Si tu fais la moindre chose du monde, et que toutes tes pensées ne tendent à aimer Dieu, que l'amour de Dieu ne te conduise: tout cela est corrompu.

Serm. on Deut 6:13-15, C.0.26:457-8 Car il est impossible que nous pensions à Dieu, que nous ne soyons incitez à l'honorer, sinon que nous en faisons une idole. Car quand la maistre de Dieu nous vient en memoire, ne faut-il pas que nous soyons touchez, pour nous humilier devant icelle? Ne faut-il pas que nous sachions qu'il nous a creez à ceste condition-la, d'astre du tout à luy, et de nous decier à son service? Notons bien donc que la memoire de Dieu emporte que nous le craignions.

Cf comm. on 1 Cor.15:33, C.0.49:554; on Ps 119:29, C.0.32:226

Comm. on 1 Cor.16:13, C.0.49:570 Haec autem vigilantia mentis est: dum soluti et expediti a curis terrenis meditamur quae sunt Dei.
to sermons and in that way being taught what we need for salvation and "yet at the same time to be negligent and to think no more in meditation on the things we have already heard". To behave like this is to behave like a warrior who has fine armour but hangs it up and lets it rust. We must meditate on and apply to ourselves the Word we hear from the pulpit. The Word, then, must not be received in a superficial manner but must be allowed deeply and constantly to influence the mind and heart of the Christian. It was by continued meditation that the Psalmists strengthened themselves to resist their temptations. It was only by such meditation that the Word could become "imprinted on" or "deeply fixed within" the soul, or "deeply enclosed within the intimate recess of the heart in order to effect its sanctifying work in the heart.

In considering the nature and place of meditation as an aspect of Christian discipline we cannot forget the place Calvin gives to meditation on the Future Life in forming the attitude of the Christians to this present world and claims and pleasure. Yet the future life need not be the only focus of our meditation. "It is

(1) Serm. on Job 3:11-12, C.0.33:188
(2) Serm. on Matt 2:9-11, C.0.46:356 Mais il suffit de l'avoir touche en bref, afin que chacun y pense. Car les choses qui se disent en chaire, quand elles sont entendues, se doivent puis apres mediter, et chacun y doit appliquer son estude en particulier.
(3) Comm. on Ps 38:2, C.0.31:336 Meditazione longa; Comm. on Ps. 38:16, C.0.31:333 Meditazione assidua
(4) Serm. on Gal 3:1-3, C.0.50:459
(5) Comm on Ps 19:11, C.0.32:208
(6) Comm. on Ps 119:166, C.0.32:290...penitus atque intimo cordis recessu clausam
(7) Cf pp. 136 ff.
is of great importance that we should be told what is necessary for us to know and what the Lord desires us to contemplate... The love of Christ is held out before us in meditation on which we ought to exercise ourselves by day and night, and in which we ought to be wholly plunged. He who has this one thing has enough". Calvin frequently recommends us to meditate upon the meaning of the passion and death of Christ. If we meditate on this we will be made strong to face and overcome our difficulties and temptations, to endure the waves of persecution, to give us courage when our hearts are tempted to waver and desert His cause. It is true, of course, that we need not confine ourselves to meditation only on the cross. Indeed if we begin with meditation on the Cross we are bound to be led through this very exercise to contemplate Christ in the heavenly glory of His resurrection, but it is at least safe to anchor our meditation on to His passion and death. It is true also that the

(1) Comm. on Eph 3:18, C.O.51:188
(2) Serm. on Gal 2:20-1, C.O.50:449
(4) Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:15, C.O. 52:330
(5) Cf pp.115 ff 480ff.
(6) Serm. on Gal 2:20-1, C.O.50:449-50 Il est certain que la victoire nous sera bien aisee contre toutes tentations, quand nous pourrons considerer que va la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, et qu'elle emporte...Car il nous faut estre arrester a la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, connoissans qu'elle est suffisant pour nous retirer des abysmes de mort. Et au reste, il nous faut contempler nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ non seulement comme mort en l'infirmite de sa chair, mais comme estant resuscite en sa vertu divine et celeste. Cf e.g. we are to meditate on His second coming (Inst 2:16:17)
the glory of God which must be the subject of our contemplation is not confined to the events of the Gospel but it "shines forth" and may be viewed as extending to the entire structure of the world. Therefore there must be time and place in the life of the Christian who in Christ knows the true Creator, for thankful contemplation of God's work in creation, and for learning from its order. But Calvin's whole attitude on this matter of the place of natural theology even in the devotional life is determined by the fact that in Jesus Christ there are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge. "Beyond this there is nothing solid, nothing useful - nothing in short that is proper or sound. Though you survey the heaven and earth and sea, you will never go beyond this without overstepping the lawful boundary of wisdom.

We must meditate also on those aspects of God's dealings with us that help to make us fear God. When we contemplate the Cross and try to understand the meaning of the sufferings of Christ and His cry of dereliction it is impossible for us not to tremble with fear and astonishment at the revelation it gives us both of

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 13:12, C.0.49:514
(2) Cf pp. 151 f., 215 f., and e.g. comm. on Ps 104:1, C.0.32:85; on Ps. 68:33, C.0.31:635
(3) Comm. on Eph. 3:18, C.0.51:188
of our own sins and God's wrath against us. To ignore this aspect of God's grace which should make us tremble, and to take His grace for granted, is to tempt God. "There is nothing that more provokes God's wrath to its limit, then when He sees that we take no account of His anger!" It is our Christian duty therefore to have the fear of God always before our eyes so that we may regulate our lives by it and that like a bridle it may restrain our unruly passions.

To restrain ourselves by the fear of God must involve us in solemn thought about the consequences of sin. Calvin, for example, in appealing to his congregation to keep watch over their hearts and minds lest they fall into sexual sin, urges them to let the fear of God restrain them and reminding them of how such sin is punished, says "let us have always before our eyes the judgment that is here

(1) Serm. on Isa. 53:4-6, C.O.35:225-6 Mais quand nous voyons que Dieu n'a point espargné son Fils unique...et cu'en son ame mesme il a este afflige jusques au bout, jusques a s'ecrier, Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu laisse? Quand nous voyons toutes ces choses, il est impossible (ou nous sommes plus endurcis que pierres) que nous ne fremissions et concevions une telle crainte et estonnement en nous, que ce soit pour nous rendre du tout confus; et que nos offenses et iniquitez ne nous soient detestables, veu'elles provocuuent ainsi l'ire de Dieu contre nous.

(2) Serm. on Deut 6:15-16, C.O.26:474

(3) Serm. on Job 14:12-18, C.O.33:632

(4) Comm. on Ps 36:1, C.O.31:339 Ideo dicitur timor Dei esse ante oculos, quam vitam hominum regit, at quaeunque se vertunt, occurrere, objectu suo libidines refranet. Cf comm. on 1 Cor 7:9, C.O.49:498, and on 2 Cor. 7:1, C.O.50:84

(5) Calvin does insist, however, that forgiveness can be followed even during our earthly life, by deliverance from the punishment due for sin. Such deliverance testifies that God is no longer displeased with us. In this Calvin argued against those who said, "God retains the punishment though he forgives the fault". Yet Calvin admits that God does not always immediately on forgiveness give men relief. He can chastise the forgiven. Yet even here he "moderates His rigour" (Cf comm on Ps 35:3, C.O.31:786; on Ps 130:3, C.O.32:538
1. And in another sermon, after quoting some very severe texts from Holy Scripture in warning about the consequences of evil, he says, "Hearing such texts let us tremble and let us take heed to walk so justly and so truly uprightly with our neighbours that men will know that we are continually restrained by the fear of God". After all, it is no virtue to be stupid and to fear nothing where there is real danger, to act like a drunk man throwing himself out of the window, or like a madman casting himself into the fire. A Christian tempted to inflict injury on a neighbour or commit any wickedness will do well to remember God's way of avenging things even in this life by which those who prepare a pit for others are cast into it themselves, and, consulting his own salvation, should restrain himself from even the smallest crime. It is not the wicked, but believers who "contemplate with the eye of faith the judgments of God" who are thereby "quickened to the observance of the divine law".

The thought that we live always under the eyes of One who sees and marks all that we do, and whose hand and judgment we cannot escape must continually be allowed to enter our mind. This thought that God is a personal God infinitely close at hand should serve to

(1) Serm. on Job 31:9-15, C.O.34:652-3
(2) Isa. 33:1; Ps. 17:16; Jas. 2:13.
(3) Serm. on Deut. 7:19-24, C.O.26:562
(4) Comm. on Ps. 7:17, C.O.31:27
(5) Comm. on Ps. 119:127, C.O.32:271
(6) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.O.35:137 Ce mot ici Cheminer avec Dieu emporte que l'homme s'adonne tallement au service de Dieu, qu'il pense tousjours à rendre compte, qu'il connaisse. Celui qui m'a cree et forme, me conduit et gouverne, je ne puis pas fuir sa main, ni eschapper de son jugement: et ainsi, il faut que je lui soye present devant ses yeux, il faut qu'il connaisse non seulement toutes mes oeuvres, mais aussi mes pensées. Cf. serm. on Job 31:1-4, C.O.34:634-5
to check and restrain our conduct, and to this must be added serious meditation on the fact that we must one day give account before the final judgment seat. Through this the Christian comes to "know the terror of the Lord" of which Paul spoke, and becomes so touched with fear that all careless living disappears.

It will be seen that for Calvin there is an experience of the wrath or terror of God that a Christian man should have and should allow himself to live with. It is a holy awe of God "which makes us truly and seriously feel His anger". No other fearful experience in life can be compared to it. It is a sense of God that brings trembling and dread and "absorbs the whole man". This experience can, of course, be specially acute when our conscience is specially awakened, as with David (Ps 51) "His eyes and all his senses transfixed in God", "pressed down and even overwhelmed by the weight of God's judgments". But it is not the wicked nor peculiarly great sinners who pass through such experiences, it is rather the faithful and the godly. The wicked indeed "are full of trouble and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate into their souls as to abate their ferocity. The minds of the godly alone are

(1) Comm. on Ps.94:7, C.0.32:21
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor.5:11, C.0.51:66 Scire igitur terorem Domini est esse participem illius cogitationis, quod semel reddenda sit ratio cœrum Christi tribunali. Nam qui hoc serio meditatur, necesse est ut tangatur timore et neglectum omnem excitiat. Cf comm. on Ps 10:8, C.0.32:110
(3) Comm. on Ps 90:11, C.0.31:338
(4) Comm. on Heb.10:3, C.0.51:138 Itaque quisquis sibi cum Deo esse negotium reputabit, eum (nisi valde sit stupidus) serio trepidere et expavescere necesse est. Imo fieri necuit quin ille Dei sensus totum hominem absorbeat: ut nulli dolores vel cruciatus cum eo sint conferendi.
(5) Comm. on Ps.51:6, C.0.31:511
are wounded by the wrath of God, nor do they wait his thunderbolts (to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks) but they tremble at the very moment when God lifts even His little finger. The faithful alone are sensible of God's wrath under which when it subdues them they acknowledge that they are nothing and with true humility devote themselves wholly to Him.

But the cultivation of fear has its dangers and its limits. Calvin recognises that there is a kind and degree of fear that instead of rousing us with real active concern for God's service merely serves to destroy all the confidence of our faith and to stupify us. Therefore if fear is to have its true place in our Christian life it must always rest on a firm basis of confidence in God's mercy, and it must thus never be separated from gratitude and love towards God. To contemplate so many the tokens of God's anger would plunge us into the dark death of despair did we not at the same time discover anew that God is merciful and thus become restored to life. We cannot praise and serve God as we should with either our lives or our hearts merely by letting His power and justice provoke us to fear and obedience, but rather we must let Him win us to a prompt and hearty response by His goodness and mercy.

While we must fear, then, we must not allow ourselves to be beaten down by fear, and we must remember that gratitude and love

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(1) Comm. on Ps. 30:11, C.O. 31:839 But here it must be remembered that to speak of God's anger is an inappropriate mode of speaking (Cf p. 56 and esp. comm. on Ps. 74:1, C.O. 31:692
(2) Comm. on Heb. 4:1, C.O. 55:45 Caeterum hic nobis commendatur timor, non qui fidei certitudinem excutiat, sed tantum incutiat sollicitudinem ne securi tor perfundam
(3) Comm. on Ps. 6:9-11, C.O. 31:78
(5) Serm. on Deut. 7:19-24, C.O. 26:562
love give us a more powerful incentive to resist our temptation and to serve God from the heart than merely an enforced fear. In true godliness, then, reverence for God is inseparable from the love which comes from knowing His benefits. It is gratitude, rather than fear, that can create in us an all-consuming desire to do the will of God, gives us the power to be patient in the midst of tribulation, and to overcome evil. "As long as this thought prevails in our minds, that God cares for us it is the best means of resisting powerful temptations".

Therefore we must meditate on every aspect of God's providential goodness towards us that we may "thereby stir ourselves up to trust invocation, praise and love of Him", for the purpose of our redemption and of all the gifts of God is to keep us entirely devoted to Him through remembering and meditating on His goodness.

In calling to remembrance the benefits God has showered upon us they become not only bridles to the wantonness of the flesh but also

(1) Serm. on Job 31:9-15, C.O. 34:654 Et au reste, que nous avisions de n'etre point seulement retenus d'une crainte forcee, pour ne point commettre l'acte de paillardise; mais voyons que Dieu nous a fait ceste grace de nous choisir pour estre temples de son saint Esprit, et qu'il nous a attirez a soy.....Et d'autant que nous sommes entez au corps de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ....regardons de ne luy faire point cest approbre cue de nous aller ainsi polluer en telle turpitude. Voila donc comme les fideles se doivent induire à chasteté, non point d'une crainte forcee seulement, mais en cognissant la grace et l'honneur que Dieu leur a fait.

(2) Inst. 1:2:1
(3) Comm. on Phil. 4:6, C.O. 52:61
(4) Comm. on Rom. 8:33, C.O. 49:163
(6) Inst. 1:14:22
(7) Comm. on John 5:14, C.O. 47:109
also ladders by which we can ascend nearer to Him.

But we can only fully benefit from the blessings God confers on us when we "exercise ourselves in constant meditation upon them". Each experience of God's goodness in stirring us up to gratitude should, if we keep it in remembrance, as we should, strengthen our hope for the future. It is because we fail to consider and meditate on the experiences we have of the grace of God that we do not grow in our faith. Therefore, especially when we are in trouble, our meditation should be to collect together every evidence we can of the goodness of God and remember His further loving kindnesses, both to ourselves from our very childhood and to His people throughout history. In this way our faith will be strengthened and sustained. Moreover in the midst of adversity "it behoves us to consider that He has created us and put us in this world, imprinting His own image upon us, and giving us many tokens by which we can know that we are His children. This ought to make us lift our minds aloft to yield Him His worthy praise, and moreover it must serve as a spurt to make us trust Him". Even our food and drink and clothes, the gifts of sight and hearing are meant to be to our minds tokens of His liberality that can rouse us to magnify His name for His liberality.
Our meditation on the Word should be accompanied by constant self-examination. "The only way of pleasing God is for us to be severe critics merely of ourselves! In scripture we are taught that it is not enough, for absolution, to make a confession of our guilt in words but "to make a rigid and formidable examination of our sins". Nor is it enough to be content with formally acknowledging our share in the common sins of mankind but "each must privately examine himself so that each can make his particular confession of his own guilt". This self-examination must not be spasmodic and momentary feature of our Christian experience but should be a duty which we perform diligently each morning and evening. And when our sins are brought to our mind we must think about them and "let the bitterness of them dwell within us" in order that we may be driven not to despair but to increased watchfulness over our lives. In the midst of such self-examination, to be reminded of one sin "should be the means of recalling others to our recollection until we are brought to prostrate ourselves before God in deep self-abasement". And further we must be led to think about the sins of the fathers in which we too are involved and which

(1) Comm. on Ps. 106:6, C.0.32:118
(2) Comm. on Ps. 51:5, C.0.31:510 Ideo discamus, non modo ore nos dannare, sed rigidum et formidable examen habere de peccatis nostris, si quinimus a Deo absolví.
(3) Comm. on Ps. 65:4, C.0.31:604
(4) Serm. on Deut. 9:6-7, Il nous faut entrer en connoissance de nos pechés: et non pas seulement pour un coup, mais qu'un chacun s'appareille à un tel examen, et soir et matin, et quand nous aurons commis une faute, que nous entriions en connoissance de l'autre. Cf. sermon on Deut. 9:20-24, C.0.26:706
(5) Serm. on Deut. 8:16-19, C.0.26:476-7
(6) Comm. on Ps. 51:3, C.0.31:515
which are visited upon their children unto the fourth generation.

But in this matter of self-examination, we have no natural ability nor willingness to come to true self-knowledge. We may be infected before God and stinking like lepers but we do not know it. We can throw our anchor to the bottom of the sea but God alone can sound our hearts. We cannot trust our own conscience in this matter for even the saints are so entangled in the snares of Satan that they are unconscious even of their grosser sins quite apart from the hundred lesser sins of ignorance and inadventure. Left to our conscience alone we are full of guile and we cover over our nakedness with leaves.

Therefore if we would truly know ourselves we must present ourselves before God, praying to Him to sound our hearts. It is only when we are conscious of ourselves as in the presence of God whom nothing escapes and who sees close at hand with intimate detail

(1) Serm. on Deut. 9:6-7, C.O.26:662-3 Et voilà comme il nous est expedient de penser aux pechés qui ont esté commis devant que nous fussons nais; que nous regardions; Helas! il est vray que l'estoye à paït de ce temps-la; mais que sera-ce si nos peres ont failli, et que de nostre part nous soyons mis avec eux? Car il est dit que Dieu recueille l'iniquité des peres jusqu'au quatrième generation.

(2) Serm. on Acts 1:4-5, C.O.43:603

(3) Comm. on Ps. 19:12, C.O.31:204


(5) Serm. on 2 Sam. 3:28f p 76 Presentons nous à Dieu, afin qu'il nous sonde, comme il est dit au Pseaume : "Seigneur, que tu examines mes reins".
detail all our ways, and counts all our steps, overlooking none of our deeds or thoughts, that we begin to form a true estimate of our sins. Moreover, in the presence of God we must examine ourselves not according to our own standards but according to the teaching of the Word as to what is sin in the sight of God.

Self examination is a necessary discipline in the Christian life. It should destroy our peaceful self-confidence, and make us groan within ourselves at our imperfections, for in the process we denude ourselves of every drop of pride or presumption and of anything in which we can glory. Only through self-knowledge can we become truly humbled. Calvin quotes Augustine's saying that "the
"the whole humility of man consists in the knowledge of himself". He also quotes the popular proverb "He who knows himself much, praises himself little", would be better to read... praises himself not at all but is rather annihilated in the confusion of his shame! But such inward "groaning" over our past life should not make us fall into carelessness or despair but should stimulate us to repentance and to new thankful effort in gratitude to God.

The benefits of self-examination is a theme to which Calvin often returns. Self-examination should prepare us better to receive the grace of God. If it leads to our finding anything good within us it should lead to our celebrating the free and undeserved goodness of God for such a wonderful gift. It should make us realise that we ourselves are very near to the evils we sometimes have to condemn and rebuke in others, and therefore while hating evil the more, it can make us far more mild and gentle in our judgment if we examine ourselves before we judge other men. It should help to prepare us for the final judgment, for it is better to face our sins now than to wait till God opens the books, when it

1. Goren, on Ps. 9:20-1, C.0.31:108
2. Though self-knowledge comes not only through the discipline of self-examination but also through the chastisements with which God visits us and others in this life. Cf. ibid and serm. on Deut.9:1-9, C.0.26:644. Ainsi donc voulons-nous estre despouillez de toute vaire gloire? Advins de nous mirer en ceux que Dieu punit, et contre lesquels il use de sa rigueur extreme. Valons-nous mieux qu'eux?
3. Serm. on Deut. 9:1-6, C.0.26:645
4. Comm. on 1 Pet. 4:3, C.0.55:271; serm. on Deut. 10:15-17, C.0.27:55. Et toutesfois nous devrions estre attentifs, et de soir, et de matin de penser à nos fautes passees: non point pour estre nonchalam, ou pour en tomber en desespoir: mais afin de gminir, afin d'estre plus soigneux de cheminer autrement que nous n'avons point fait, afin de remercier Dieu de sa bonté, d'autant qu'il luy a pleu de nous corriger.
5. Serm. on Deut. 7:5-8, C.0.26:519. Quand donc un tel examen sera fait: Voila les hommes qui seront disposez à recevoir la grace de Dieu, et de l'englorifier quand ils l'auront receu.
6. Comm. on Gal. 6:1-2, C.0.51:46; and on Gal. 6:2-5, C.0.51:77.
it will be too late for us to condemn ourselves. It should enable us to prevent ourselves from being overwhelmed by our temptations for it will give us a better knowledge of where we are weak and of how weak we are, and it will enable us to eradicate those evil affections through which Satan is able to gain possession of our lives.

(1) Serm. on Deut. 9:20-24, C.O. 26:706. Qu'un chacun regarde à ses pechés et n'attendons pas que Dieu œuvre ses registres, comme il fera au dernier jour, et ce sera trop tard de passer alors condamnation; mais aujour'd'hui qu'il nous adcourne par sa parole, qu'il nous advertit, qu'il nous faut penser à nos fautes, qu'un chacun se vienne rendre comme un povre malfaiteur devant son ince.

(2) Serm. on Deut. 7:5-8, C.O. 26:510 Ainsi il n'y a rien meilleur, que de connostre nostre infirmité, et en la connoissant user du remede que Dieu nous donne. Si un homme sent son cerveau débile, et qu'il ne puisse porter trois verres de vin qu'il ne soit surprins: s'il boit sans discretion, n'est-il pas comme un porceau?... Ne doit-il pas penser au vice cui est en lui pour le prevenir? Cf. serm. on 2 Sam. 3:26-7, p 72-3.
We have seen that, for Calvin "self-denial" primarily means communion by faith with the death of Christ through the Holy Spirit, for it is through such communion that we are given the power to die inwardly with Christ and to mortify concupiscence. As this communion with the death of Christ is nurtured within the life of the Church, there is, however, also a place for responding, by the deliberate discipline of the "flesh", to the grace that God is seeking to work within us. We must not only hate ourselves, we must also discipline ourselves. Even though a Christian is regenerated and has a new nature, he dare not imagine that he may now follow his "natural" impulses, for the old nature is always too ready to assert itself. He must continue always to keep "nature" under strict and deliberate control. "Our nature drags everything back, and we will never love goodness unless we are made to do so by force or violence. Therefore men must enforce and constrain themselves to do violence against a mortal enemy when they want to progress in goodness. And who are our enemies? Truly the devil is the chief...but at the same time all our own thoughts, all our own affections, all our desires are all deadly enemies that labour to bring us to destruction." We have then, a duty to "force and constrain ourselves". We must "struggle with" ourselves and "do

"do violence to opposing desires", suppress our natural feelings, and sedulously keep ourselves from our iniquity.

All this involves the deliberate practice of self-discipline. We should wish to be angels so that our energies need not be directed from the service of God to such self-centred effort but since we are not so, we must "learn to force ourselves and to hold ourselves as prisoners, even though it goes entirely against the grain to do so. Let us indeed go even further, that God may win the upper hand of us". One aspect of the yoke which Christ invited His disciples to bear was to train them under the burden of discipline (exercere sub disciplinæ onere) with a view to enabling them to engage in the warfare of the flesh. Christians therefore must "diligently labour in training and mortifying the flesh so that it may appear that they are controlled by the study of piety". Certainly Calvin would agree that Christian virtues are the fruit of the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ in the heart and that to acquire them we must yield our hearts to the influence of the Spirit, yet this is not the only aspect of the matter. Since a virtue such as meekness is so difficult to attain we must labour for it with the

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(2) Inst. 3:7:4
(3) Comm. on Ps.18:24-5, C.O.31:182
(4) Serm. on Gal.5:14-18, C.O.61:29. Calvin also speaks of our need to "hold ourselves in" (se retenir) Serm. on Job 2:11-13 C.O.33:130; Cf. serm. on 2 Sam.1:17ff, p 10-11. Ne laissons pas de nous tenir en bride courte.
(5) Comm. on Matt.11:29, C.O.45:322
(6) Comm. on Rom. 8:1, C.O.49:136
the more intense application. \((\text{intentiore studio})\)

This habitual process of holding ourselves in check and curbing our desires is true fasting. "That sobriety and temperance which ought to be habitual \((\text{perpetua})\) in Christians is a kind of fasting\(^2\).\) Calvin recommends the deliberate cultivation of temperance by such voluntary fasting. But besides this constant process of fasting there is occasionally place for a more definite exercise of fasting after the example of the men of the Old Testament who fasted with sackcloth and ashes when they were visited by calamities and signs of God’s displeasure. We do not need to copy them in sackcloth and ashes, "yet the exercise of fasting remains in force amongst us at this day\(^4\).\) Such fasting is a "solemn expression of penitence with a view to deprecating God’s anger\(^5\).\) But on the whole, fasting is a secondary activity and

(1) Comm. on Rom. 12:14, C.0.49:243
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:5, C.0.49:404
(3) Serm. on Deut. 9:8-12, C.0.26:672. Car quand nous ne ferons point de 
\(\text{karesme, il y a les iusnes qui nous sont commandez par l'Escriture sainte: c'est assavoir en premier lieu}
\(\text{attremance, et sobriete en toute nostre vie, que nous ne}
\(\text{gourmandions point un jour pour estre sobres l'autre: mais}
\(\text{que nous usions moderate en des biens que Dieu nous donne. Que}
\(\text{ceux qui en ont a largesse n'abusent point de cela a}
\(\text{superfluite: mais que nous iusnions, voire nous constraingant}
\(\text{d'une bride volontaire tant au boire et au manger, cu'aux}
\(\text{autres choses ou nous nourrions commettre exces, et}
\(\text{intemperance, que nous avons toujours une abstinence}
\(\text{volontaire.}

(4) Comm. on Ps. 35:14, C.0.31:352
(5) Comm. on 1 Cor. 7:5, C.0.49:404; Cf. on Ps. 102:4-5, C.0.32:63
and can be dangerous. Where austerity of life is practised, men always tend to delude themselves and to think it achieves more than it does, for after all "Christ did not lead so austere a life as John the Baptist - was He therefore any whit inferior? We must keep fasting in its proper place. It is a subordinate aid to prayer. It is good if it helps us to pray better. Fasting must not be indulged in merely for the sake of being austere. "It is pleasing to God only in so far as it is directed to another end, that is to train us to abstinence, to subdue the lust of the flesh, to excite us to earnestness in prayer and to testify our repentance".

(1) Comm. on 1 Tim. 4:8, C.C.52:239
(2) Comm. on Matt. 6:16, C.C.45:204; Cf. comm. on Luke 2:37, C.C.45:96; Serm. on Deut.9:8-12, C.C.26:672. Quando nos tres Seigneur nous afflige, ou que nous sommes en quelque difficulté, que nous recourons aux iusnes, voire pour nous picquer à prières et oraisons; et que cela soit pour mieux eslever nos coeurs en haut, et pour nous humilier, rendons témoignage de nos fautes devant Dieu.
Adherence and loyalty to the visible Church

We must adhere loyally to the visible Church in spite of its defects.

Separation

Though we must always have dealings with the ungodly, we must find separation within the Church from all ungodly fellowship.

We are too weak not to remain separated in this way.

What such separation involves

We must seek to ensure that the fellowship of the Church is cleansed from evil.

Witness

We are elected and separated within the Church in order that with the whole Church we might bear witness to and serve all mankind.

This witness is corporate.

It must be given not only by word but by heart and life — and by layman and minister.

We should therefore seek to be of good reputation.

Yet we must share the shame and misunderstanding that were the lot of Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless witness can be given.

Order within the Church

A Christian must be faithful in observing Church ordinances.

Mutual love amongst Church members reflects the perfection of the order of nature.
We must cultivate mutual love

This must be practical and find expression in mutual intercession

Such love will humbly accept the help God is seeking to give through other members

Cultivating the unity of the Church involves making liberty subservient to love

The welfare and unity of the Church must be the chief concern of its members
Since the individual is dependent on the Church for his sanctification it becomes the duty of the individual to adhere loyally to the visible Church. He may assume that there is an "invisible church which is manifest to the eye of God only". Calvin himself finds that Scripture in referring to the Church sometimes speaks of this Church "as it really is before God - the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by sanctification of the Spirit true members of Christ". But this invisible Church cannot be thought of as something in anyway divorced from the "whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world who profess to worship one God and

(1) Inst. 4:1:7
and Christ, who by Baptism are initiated into the faith; by partaking the Lord's Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, agree to hold the Word of the Lord and observe the ministry which Christ has appointed for preaching of it". For all practical purposes membership of the invisible Church is inseparable from membership of this visible Church which Calvin thus carefully defines. To believe in the Holy Catholic Church "relates in some measure to the external Church", involves cultivating its communion, submitting duly to its authority and conducting ourselves as sheep of the Flock.

We must adhere loyally to such a Church in spite of all its defects. Even although the Church includes in its membership those whose sincerity and the reality of whose faith we may have good reason to doubt, we must accept them as brethren if the Church accepts them, and if they perform outwardly the duties expected of Church members. Calvin has much to say in warning to those who are tempted to withdraw from the Church because of its impurity, the faults of its members, or because they do not agree with the way it is governed. Christ told the parable of the wheat and the tares "to restrain and moderate the zeal of those who fancy that they are not at liberty to join in a society with


(1) Inst 4:1:7
(2) Inst 4:1:3; 4:1:7
(3) Inst 4:1:9
(4) Inst 4:1:8
with any but pure angels". "If we feel disgust at being associated by Baptism and the Lord's Supper with vile men, and regard our connection with them as a sort of stain upon us, we ought immediately to descend into ourselves and to search without flattery our own evils. Such an examination will make us willing to be washed in the same fountain as the most impure". There always have been, and suggest that there always will be, "master builders" in the Church who seem to try to subvert the rule of Christ, but "it would certainly indicate a sad state of the Church if she never had any pastors except those who were deadly enemies of her welfare". We cannot say that the leaders of the Church have in every age been continually blind! And if we have no excuse for separating from the Church when the builders build wrongly, much less will we be excusable when the master builders build well. Moreover, Calvin adds, since it is God who superintends the government of the Church whether it be wise or unwise, "it is reasonable to expect that the Church must be governed according to our understanding of matters, inasmuch as that which is miraculous surpasses our comprehension."

Therefore all of us, however exalted we are in the world, must divest ourselves of pride and become "obedient children of the Church". The ministry of the Word and Sacraments cannot but have

(2) Comm. on Matt.9:12, C.O.45:250; cf Inst 4:1:15 "Paul does not require that we should examine others, or...the whole Church, but that each should examine himself".
(3) Comm. on Ps.118:25-6, C.O.32:212
(4) Comm. on Ps.48:10, C.O.31:471
have beneficial results if it is received by faith even within a
Church and from the hands of the ministry in which we see many
faults. for the ordinances of God are too great and powerful to be
deprived of their efficacy by the fault of some ungodly men. The
fact that amidst "such a conflux of evils" as at Corinth Paul
recognised a Church to exist means that "the faults of individuals
do not prevent a society that has the genuine marks of religion
from being recognised as a Church".

Since the Church is an elect community separated from the
world and with a quite distinctive life of its own, it is obvious
that in adhering to the Church we must in daily life deliberately
to some extent separate ourselves from the fellowship of the ungodly
who live apart from the Church, and seek constantly the fellowship
and company of those who fear God. "It is befitting that we keep
ourselves undefiled from all uncleanness that we may not pollute
the sanctuary of God". Yet we must associate to some extent with

(1) Inst. 4:1:9; 4:1:10; 4:1:16; C.O. 9:26; Comm. on John 4:2,
C.O. 47:78
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor. 1:2; C.O. 50:9 Notandum semper, ut ecclesiam
agnoscat, ubi tanta erat malorum colluvies, non enim cuorum-
dam vitia impedient quominus ecclesia censeatur quae veras
religionis tesseras habet
(3) Cf p. 294 ff.
(4) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:25-30, C.O. 49:691 Em somme notons de ce
passage que songeusement les enfants de Dieu se doivent
retirer de toute mauvaise compagnie, de peur d'en tirer quel-
que mauvaise infection. Et la dessus ils taschent de pratiquer
ce qui est contenu au Psaume 15, c'est à savoir d'honorer
les gens craignans Dieu et d'aimer leur compagnie, afin que
nous y profitions: et quant aux meschans, et ceux qui se
mocuent de Dieu, de les avoir en mespris comme des brebis
ronneuses qui sont pour infecter tout le troupeau.
(5) Comm. on 2 Cor. 6:7, C.O. 50:83
with the ungodly if we are to remain in this world at all, for the world is filled with them. "We eat the same bread, we breathe the same air" and God means us to try as far as possible to lead them into the way of salvation. Yet while we cannot avoid ordinary intercourse (commercium) with the ungodly, we must avoid "participation (participatio) in works in which Christians cannot lawfully have fellowship (communicare)". We can converse but not commune with them nor involve ourselves in intimacy with them.

Calvin's basic conviction on this matter seems to be that if we have any such intimate fellowship with the ungodly they are much more likely to influence us for evil then we are to influence them for good. Our main reason for maintaining such separation from the society of the ungodly is simply that it is dangerous.

We are already infected enough with evil without drawing more

(1) Ibid; and on 2 Cor. 6:14, C.0.50:81. And serm. on Deut. 7:1-4, C.0.26:506; Serm. on 2 Sem.3:12-13, p 65.
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor.6:14 & 17, C.0.50:81 & 83.
(3) Serm. on Deut. 7:1-4, C.0.26:506 Il nous faut donc habiter avec eux. Mais en quelle sorte? Que ce soit avec telle mesure, que nous n'ayons point accointance, né de privauté avec eux.... Nous devons converser avec les meschans. Mais de nous envelopper parmi eux, d'avoir accointance ni privauté; c'est manifestement tenter Dieu.
(4) Serm. on Deut. 7:1-4, C.0.26:506 Voici Dieu qui nous admonneste de la fragilité qui est en nous, et nous dit que si nous sommes meslez parmi les meschans, qu'ils nous attireront à mal plue etost que nous ne les pourrons pas reduire à bien : que donc il nous faut garder de leur compagnie.
more infection. Our battle with evil in our weakness is already desperate enough without allying ourselves with those who can only help us to lose. We are already cold and unenthusiastic enough without mixing with those who can only discourage us further. Therefore let us not deceive ourselves by imagining we are stronger than we really are - as if God did not know us better than we know ourselves when He warns us of our weakness!

Therefore Calvin advises us as Christ's sheep not to "howl with the wolves". He can be very specific on this subject. We must

(1) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:25-30, C.0.49:690 Ainsi donc S. Paul parlait de frequenter parmi les infideles, dit qu'il ne pout pas defendre simplement, pour dire, Voyla un peche mortel: mais y a que par conseil il montre que c'est une chose dangereuse, et qu'on en doit user sobrement; et qu'il est possible de s'en abstenir, on le doit faire. Et pourquoi? Car nous tacherons de attirer l'infection, qui est desir, par trop en nous. Calvin often seems to argue that even though there is no law forbidding any particular indulgence or pleasure, it is wrong if it is at all dangerous. We have an instinct within us for stumbling (une senence de trebuscher). So weak and perverse is our nature that if we have no occasion to fall we will go out of our way to seek one. Indeed we will hurl ourselves down to destruction on the very ladders God has given us for climbing up to heaven. (serm. on Deut.4:19-24, C.0.26:162) It is for this reason that Calvin warns his hearers against such things as the dances and games (ieux) Si les hommes sentent en eux une telle fragilité, il ne faut point qu'ils cherchent les occasions; car si un homme se va letter au milieu du feu, son esceint, ne bataille-il pas manifestement contre Dieu? (serm. on Deut 7:22-6, C.0.26:579) Therefore it is no use asking Calvin where such things are forbidden in Holy Scripture? A drunkard could also ask Where is wine drinking forbidden? Such an approach would justify drunkenness for wine drinking is not forbidden. The obvious answer is "You can take what you can hold". But Calvin obviously regards dancing etc. as a universally dangerous pastime leading men to an excess they cannot avoid and this is why it is generally wrong in his eyes (serm. on 1 Cor.10:25-30, C.0.49:689

(2) Serm. on Deut 20:2-9, C.0.27:614 Calvin especially warns his congregation against mixing with those who indulge in blasphemous or unchaste talk or sing dissolute songs (Evil communication corrupt good manners), no matter with how much brilliance and wit and conviviality. We must flee from such like devils! (it is not quite clear whether they or we are compared to devils!) Who would bare and present his throat if he saw some one with an open dagger in his hand - or go in search of

Refs. (2) contd. (3) and (4) on next page
must repel and keep ourselves aloof from the wild and execrable opinions that prevail in the world. We must "abstain from having any association with or giving any consent or advice or assistance to" any wickedness - for this means having fellowship (communicare) with the unclean works of darkness. We must avoid flattering or accomodating ourselves to or giving honour to the persons of any evil men in authority, even if we have to obey them, for not to reprove such is also fellowship with darkness. And above all we must avoid plunging ourselves into evil and renouncing God by contracting any marriage contract with anyone who might despise Him. And in avoiding bad company we must remember the strength and courage that can come to us through the friendship and leadership of those who have already proved themselves in the service of God.

We must seek to ensure that the Church itself is a community cleansed as far as possible from evil. Even though we must not separate ourselves from the Church because of its impurity, and may not have the power to cleanse it, nevertheless "it is our duty to
to desire her purity". "It is no new thing if we see in our own
day the Church of God polluted by profane men. We ought, however,
to beseech God quickly to purge His house and not to leave His Holy
Temple exposed to swine and dogs as if it were a dung pit". Our zeal
for the welfare of the Church as the Holy habitation of God should
stir us up to remove all the abuses which disfigure and defile it.
Not only "public care" but also private efforts of each man in his
own sphere of Church life are required if the Church is to be
purified. History teaches only too clearly the grave dangers that
beset the Church when she "cherishes within her bosom" hypocrisy and
wickedness. Nevertheless we must soberly acknowledge that God alone
can truly cleanse the Church, and He will do so in His own time. "We
must bear with the evils which it is not in our power to correct,
until all things become ripe and the proper season for purging the
Church arrives".

Since the Christian life cannot be lived apart from the

(1) Comm. on Ps 22:25, C.0.31:233
(2) Comm. on Ps 10:16, C.0.31:119
(3) Comm. on Ps 118:19 f., C.0.32:208
(4) Comm. on Ps 26:5, C.0.31:267. Cf. comm. on Ps15:1, C.0.31:143
Simul tamen iubentur fideles, pro se qui quisque dare operam,
ut a corruptelis purgetur Dei ecclesia.
(5) Comm. on Ps 15:1, C.0.31:143 But of comm. on Matt.13:24ff,
C.0.45:368 where Calvin says we must not extend this principle
of toleration (that what cannot be corrected must be endured)
to "wicked errors which infect the purity of the faith".
Our adherence to the visible Church, and our separation from the world is bound to involve us in an obligation, along with the whole Church to witness to and to serve all men in the name of Jesus Christ. We are elected and separated within the Church not merely for the purpose of our own individual sanctification and salvation but in order that we might be witnesses. "We are called by the Lord on this condition, that everyone should afterwards strive to lead others to the truth, to restore the wandering to the right way, to extend a helping hand to the fallen, to win over those that are without". In Baptism we are pledged to allegiance to Him before men. Therefore our separation from the world should in no way make us proud in our isolation or our privilege, but should make us tireless in toiling to share our faith with others. We should have our arms extended as our Heavenly Father has, towards those outside. The Christian who is indebted to God's mercy is bound to become, like the Psalmist "the loud herald

(1) Comm. on Heb. 10:24, C.0.55:132
(2) Inst. 4:15:3.
(3) Serm. on Eph.4:15-16, C.0.51:583. Que donc nous ne soyons point separez d'avec le monde de nostre bon gre: mais que nous ayons comme les bras tendus pour amener tous ceux qui se viendront rendre dociles à l'obeissance de Dieu, à ce que nous puissions avoir une meme foi ensemble, et que nous mettons neine à cela. Et c'est aussi pourquoi saint Paul nous declare ici que la foi et obeissance que nous rendons a Dieu, n'est pas pour enfler nostre coeur de fierté, en sorte que nous rejettons les autres, et que chacun se prise et se contente de soy: mais c'est à fin que nous ensuyvions l'exemple de nostre Pere celeste, d'autant qu'il convie à soy ceux qui en estoient eslongnez.
herald of the grace of God" to all men. We are reconciled to God "in order that each should endeavour to make his brethren partakers of the same benefit". The light of "heavenly doctrine" is given us not only that we may judge ourselves and guide ourselves, but also "that we may show it to others".

Such witness should also be the outcome of our desire for the glory of God. To remain careless about bringing our neighbours and unbelievers to Christ is not only to be careless of God's honour and to set limits to His Kingdom but is also to limit the scope and the power of the death of Christ which was for the whole world. Therefore our witness to the Gospel must be borne to all mankind. "A true Christian will not be content with walking by himself in the right way but will try to draw the whole world into the same way".

Our witness is given not simply as isolated individuals but

(1) Comm. on Ps. 51:16, C.0.31:521
(2) Comm. on Ps. 32:8, C.0.31:322
(3) Comm. on Phil. 2:16, C.0.52:35
(4) Comm. on Ps. 51:14-15, C.0.31:520. Sed huc etiam impellere eos debet pietatis studium et zelus gloriae Dei, ut omnes, quantum in se est, eiudem gratiae participes faciant.
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim. 2:5-6, C.0.53:161-2. Notons que tous ceux qui ne tiennent conte d'amener leurs prochains au chemin de salut, ceux qui ne soucient d'amener aussi les pevres incredules, et qui les laissent aller à perdition, monstrent bien qu'ils ne portent nul honneur à Dieu, et qu'ils diminuent la puissance de son empire entant qu'en eux est et qu'ils luy veulent assigner des bornes, afin qu'il ne domine point sur tout le monde; et d'avantage qu'ils obscurcissent en partie la vertu de la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ, qu'ils amoindrissent la dignité qui luy a esté donne de Dieu son Pere.
(6) Serm. on Job 4:1-6, C.0.33:181
but within and through the witnessing fellowship of the Church. The Church is the sphere in and through which the witness of Christ's people to Himself is most potently given. Calvin can speak in exalted terms about the influence which the "examples of the saints" within the Church should have upon us. "The virtues of the saints are so many testimonies to confirm us, that we, relying on them as our guides and associates, ought to go onward to God with more alacrity". To reverence and love and imitate the servants of God is an essential part of the "study of godliness". To see them triumph in the midst of suffering should be a pledge to us of our certainty of victory. In spite of what he says elsewhere about the hiddenness and obscurity of the new divine life in the believer, Calvin can go the length of saying that in the examples of the saints we see the image of God and that in the righteousness and holiness which we see in the servants of God "the brightness of God's Spirit shines forth". It is the will of God that even in this world there should be conspicuous marks and, as it were, visible escutcheons of His glory which may serve

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor.1:6, C.0.50:12. *Hic succurrere nobis debent sanctorum exempla, quae nos animosiores animosiores reddant.*
(2) Comm. on Heb. 12:1, C.0.55:170
(3) Comm. on Ps.15:4, C.0.31:146. *ad pietatis studium*
(4) Comm. on Phil.1:14, C.0.52:14. *Hac freti, plus solito audere debemus, iam in persona fratrum pium victoriae nostrae habentes.*
serve to conduct us to Himself. The faithful, therefore, bear His image that by their example we may be stirred up to meditation upon the heavenly life". Not only the examples of the living saints, but the examples of those who have gone before us in the Church ought to stir us with new courage and faith. Calvin quotes Tertullian: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," and adds: "The slaughter of so many martyrs has been attended at least with this advantage that they have been as it were so many seals by which the gospel has been sealed in our hearts". It is our duty, moreover, not only to profit from this means of grace; but continually to add our own witness and testimony in thanksgiving before the assembly of God's people. "It is highly necessary that everyone should publicly celebrate his experience of the grace of God as an example for others to confide in Him." Though Calvin always emphasises that the Church must continually witness to men by proclaiming the word, he acknowledges the futility of our trying to witness by the word if the same time

(1) Comm. on Ps.16:3, C.O.31:151. Sanctos autem qui in terra sunt, diserte exprimit, quia Deus etiam in hoc mundo illustres gloriarque suae notas exstare vult, quibus nos ad se deducat. Ac ideo teneelas imaginem eius gestant, ut nos suo exemplo incitent ad coelestis vitae meditationem. Eadem causa praeceleros vocat, vel magnificos, quia iustitia ac sanctitate, in quibus relucet spiritus eius claritas, nihil pretiosius esse nobis debet.

(2) Comm. on Phil.1:7, C.O.32:11.

(3) Comm. on Ps.26:12; C.O.31:270. Nec vero tantum dicit se privatim fore beneficiorum memorem, sed publicos etiam conveni tus testes fore, quia ad exemplum interest, quam quisque expertus est Dei gratiam, palam celebrari. Cf. comm. on Ps.115:2, C.O.32:183.
time our confession of His name does not come from the heart. If we are to convince men "we must show in very deed that we have not spoken superficially (comme dehors - the old translation gives "from the teeth outwards!) but that the word which has come out of our mouth retains at the same time its root within our hearts. Moreover, our outward lives must seal our witness by word and heart, "for this is the proof we ought to give of our faith, and of the hope we have of eternal life. If we do nothing but speak, that is a very meagre thing. But when a man conducts himself so that others see that his profession to serve God is made in good earnest, and that he lives out his teaching - that is something convincing and sure". Calvin was also very conscious of the need for witness of the Church to be borne not only by the ministers of the Word but also by the laymen under every kind of circumstances and in a multitude of varied ways. "A more public confession of faith, no doubt, is demanded from teachers than from persons in private station. Besides, all are not endued with an equal measure of

(1) Serm. on Deut. 32:1-4, C.0.28:661. Nous sommes ici enseignez, que le principal que nous ayons à faire en toute nostre vie, c'est de magnifier le nom de Dieu, et de prêcher ses louanges, non seulement de bouche pour inciter un chacun à le louer d'un accord avec nous, mais de coeur, qu'un chacun s'employe là, et qu'on s'y exerce.

(2) Serm. on Job 4:1-6, C.0.33:131

(3) Serm. on 1 Tim. 6:12-14, C.0.53:603.
of faith, and in proportion as anyone excels in the gifts of the Spirit he ought to go before others by his example. But there is no believer whom the Son of God does not require to be His witness. In what place, at what time, with what degree of frequency, in what manner, and to what extent, we ought to profess our faith, cannot easily be determined by a fixed rule: but we must consider the occasion that not one of us may fail to discharge his duty at the proper time. We must also ask from the Lord the spirit of wisdom and courage, that under His direction we may know what is proper, and may boldly follow whatever we shall have ascertained that He commands us.

If we are going to be witnesses we must seek to have a good reputation with men. "It were indeed desirable that our integrity should be approved of by men, not so much on our own account as for the edification of our brethren. We should seek to stand high in the esteem of the outside world provided that we seek this reputation for the glory of God and are always prepared to bear shame as well for the sake of our faith. He quotes Augustine with approval: "He that is regardless of fame is cruel, because it is not less necessary before our neighbour than a good conscience is

(1) Comm. on Matt. 10:32; C.0.45:291
(2) Comm. on Ps.69:5-6, C.0.31:639
is before God." A Christian who is of good reputation and who is known by his fellowmen to seek their good can, like Abraham, have a strong influence on the outsider. Moreover, though it is a difficult task we must not underestimate the influence we can have on the ungodly for we are apt to conclude too hastily that attempts to reclaim them are hopeless.

Yet here Calvin realistically and frankly recognises the difficulties. It is impossible that all men should speak well of us. After we have done all in our power to win men's approval they may misconstruct and pervert all our word and actions; for there are plenty of dogs going about whose bites and barks we cannot avoid. We must realise that "to be ill spoken of for doing well is something which daily befalls the saints." Moreover the

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor. 3:21, C.0.50:105. Cf. serm. on Gen. 14:20-34, C.0.23:674. Ce n'est point assez d'avoir notre conscience pure devant Dieu, mais aussi qu'il nous faut procurer (comme saint Paul nous en monstre l'exemple) d'avoir bonne estime et réputation envers nos prochains. Pourquoi? Afin qu'ils ne nous condamnent point, quand ils crieront qu'une chose mauvaise est faite par nos mains; plus tost que nous les incitations à bien faire. Il est vrai que nous ne pourrons eschapper les morsures et les abais de beaucoup de chiens; et quand nous serons sans aucune tache et macule, si ne laisseront-ils pas de detracter et mesdire de nous; car le Fils de Dieu a bien passé par la: tous les Prophètes et Apôtres ont esté chargez de fausses calomnies.

(2) Serm. on Gen. 14:13-16, C.0.23:643
(3) Comm. on Ps. 61:15, C.0.31:620
(4) Comm. on Ps. 69:5-6, C.0.31:639. Calvin's own difficulty is witnessing for the truth in Geneva e.g. in serm. on 1 Tim. 1:8-11, C.0.53:57-8
(5) Serm. on Gen. 14:20-24, C.0.23:674
(6) Comm. on Ps. 4:2, C.0.31:58. If it happens to us in this way we must make sure "that we do not make ourselves odious through our own fault so that the saying should be fulfilled in us 'They hated me without a cause'!" Comm. on Phil. 2:14, C.0.52:34.
the Church in its witness must be content to take its share in the misunderstanding and scorn that were the lot of Christ Himself in bearing His own witness during His earthly life. Men refused to accept His witness not simply because they hated His doctrine but also because they could see no manifest glory or divinity in Him. "He hath no form nor comeliness". (Isa.53:2) Commenting on this text Calvin says "This must be understood to relate not merely to the person of Christ,...but to His whole Kingdom, which in the eyes of men had no beauty, no comeliness, no splendour". This means that the Church even in its attempt to bear witness to the glory of Christ must at the same time be content to share in the deformity that marred and obscured the glory of Jesus Christ - especially when He hung on the Cross. The beauty of the Church itself is hidden under the Cross. Even though the Church truly has Christ within its life and is truly seeking to show forth the grace and beauty of Christ, those who have not faith are unable to see even in that witness the glory that the Church is seeking to proclaim. We have to believe in the holy Catholic Church because "oftentimes no difference can be observed between the children of God and the profane", and this is not always the fault of the children of God.

(1) C.O.37:256
(2) Cf. introd. to comm. on Ps.87, C.O.31:800
(3) Inst. 4:1:2
God. Indeed it may be a condition due to the faithfulness of the children of God. The Church if it is to be conformed to Christ in His death must be prepared to appear "even contemptible in the eyes of the world under the revolting dress of the cross" with its glory recognised only by the "faith which comprehends heavenly and invisible things". If the Church in its witness must share thus in the shame and darkness that beset Christ in the Cross, the individual Christian must also accept the same limitation remembering that He participates here and now more manifestly in the cross than in the resurrection.

But this does not mean that to witness to the glory of Christ becomes impossible or our duty in this respect any less urgent. If the Church (and the Christian) is faithful to its witness even when it finds it has little glory to show to the world, there will come times and occasions when its hidden glory will shine forth to bear glorious witness. The dove lying amongst the pots does not always appear as dirty and broken as the vessels that surround it but it "retains its native beauty of colour, and contracts no defilement on its wings. From this we learn that the Church does not always enjoy happy serenity, but it emerges at times from darkness, and recovers its splendour as if it were always undefiled by any evil". This breaking forth of the glory

(1) Comm. on Isa. 61:10, C.C.37:378
(2) Comm. on Ps.68:13-14, C.C.31:624-5
glory of the Church is an event that happens, rather than a continuous state, and men are apt to complain that this "splendour of the Church" is not of long duration. Yet, answers Calvin, "under the cross the glory of Christ shines forth, so that the name of God remains and there is a people that calls on Him by faith". Even if we remain under the cross we can always at least seek to "represent Christ" in our lives and "express the form of His example". We can seek to make certain that the virtue of sanctification should overcome the power of sin within us "that our life may testify that we are indeed the members of Christ". "No one" says Calvin, "ought to be reckoned among the disciples of Christ, unless we perceive the glory of God impressed upon him, as by a signet ring, by the likeness of Christ".

(1) Comm. on Isa. 60:15, C.O.37:365
(2) Inst.3:6:3
(3) Comm. on Rom. 6:12, C.O.49:111
(4) Comm. on John 17:22, C.O.47:388
Since the Christian life cannot be lived apart from the visible Church, it is an important part of the Christian life to observe carefully the ceremonies and "religious exercises" which are such an important part of the life of the Church. To pay honour vaguely and at random to some supposed deity is not enough. "We must distinctly yield to the true and only living God the worship that is fitting to Him". As in the Old Testament times the Temple was the place where God was met and worshipped, so today God still keeps His people under a certain "external order" (sub externo aliquo ordine), The Word, sacraments, public prayers and other helps, replacing the Temple and being to us no less than the Temple was to the Jews. We must see in the "common discipline and order" of the Church a means whereby God allures us to Himself. Nothing but the most reckless pride could make us desert or despise the common services of worship which God has instituted to be helps to the weakness of our faith. Therefore we must frequent the holy assemblies (sacros conventus) where the faithful incite one another to the worship of God. "Thus God, in order that we may be one in Him gathers us together by common sacraments in hope of eternal life and in the united celebration of His name". Private Bible-reading and meditation can never be a substitute for attending the public preaching of the Word, even though we may be forced to listen with docility to a word that comes through a mere feeble man sprung from the dust. Moreover "we must

(1) Comm on Ps 42:2, C.0.31:426 Pietatis exercitia
(2) Comm. on Ps 9:12, C.0.31:101
(3) Comm. on Ps 27:4, C.0.31:274; Cf on Ps 42:2, C.0.31:426
(4) Comm. on Ps 26:8, C.0.31:268 Ostendit autem haec contestatio, Davidem, quemlibet alios fide praecelleret, veritum tamenuisse ne vulgaribus istis rudimentis, quae Deus ecclesiae suae tradiderat, eum privaret tyrannica hostium violentia. Namse communi disciplina et ordine opus habere vicens, de retinenda templi possessione sollicita contendit.
(5) Comm. on Ps 52:10, C.0.31:529
(6) Inst 4:1:5
(7) Inst. 4:3:1 This trains us in humility and tests our obedience
must hold that he who declines to pray in the public meeting of the saints, knows not what it is to pray apart in retirement, or at home".

If we set any value on the presence of Christ, we will not only observe the ordinances of the Church but we must also cultivate the unity of the Church in love. It is within the Church that the mutual communication of offices which, as we have seen is that aspect of the order of nature which is the basis of human society, finds its truest and best expression in the service of one member for another within the body of Christ - this "beautiful order" and "Symmetry" of the Church being a true reflection of the order and symmetry of man's original creation in the image of God. "The perfection of the faithful....consists in love". The bond of faith and unity created by the Holy Spirit between Christ and His people is not real unless it expresses itself in love. We can have no access in prayer to God, no union with Christ our Head, no hope of future inheritance unless we are united in love to all our other brethren. Christ "embraces all His people together that they may cherish one another."

There we must cultivate brotherly love within the Church.

(1) Inst. 3:20:29
(2) Comm. on Matt. 18:20, C.O. 45:517 Nam quisquis vel sacros conventus negligent, vel se disuniont a fratribus, ac segniter se gerit in coelenda unitate, hoc in se demonstrat se Christi prae sentiam pro nihil ducere.
(3) See pp. 218 ff.
(4) Comm. on Rom. 12:6, C.O. 49:228
(7) Comm. on John 15:12, C.O. 47:344
Church. Whether or not we do this is the sure test of whether or not we love God, for "though God is invisible He represents Himself to us in the brethren, and in their persons demands what is due to Himself". Therefore we should dread any dissension that might estrange us from the fellowship, realising that "Whoever cuts himself off from the brethren becomes an alien to the Kingdom of God". It is within the Church in particular that we must cultivate this unity with our fellow-men, for we are bound to those within the household of faith in closer relationship than we have with other men. Therefore if we ought to love and serve those who are still aliens to the flock of Christ, how much more care should we give to those with whom God has already united us! Though we must love and care for all men, nevertheless, our first duty in serving God aright is "to endeavour to do good to His holy servants" realising that God, "since our good deeds cannot extend to Him, substitutes the saints in His place towards whom we are to exercise our love".

Such love within the Church should be practical. The hand

(2) Comm. on Gal 5:14, C.O. 50:251
(3) Comm. on Eph. 4:4, C.O. 51:191
(5) Comm. on Heb. 10:25, C.O. 55:132 *Ce passage nous admoneste de nostre devoir: c'est essouvoir qu'ins eceux qui portent le nom de Jesus Christ, nous doivent etre recommandez par special, que nous les aimions comme nos freres, que nous soyons concordes et unis avec eux: car autrement nous ne sommes pas dignes que Dieu nous adouc pour ses enfans. Car quand nous dechirons le corps de Jesus Christ, quelle part et portion pretendons nous en est heritage immortel, auquel nous sommes appelez?*
(6) Comm. on Ps. 16:3, C.O. 31:180
hand which we extend to our brother as a sign of our fellowship with him should also be a token of our willingness to lend him practical help. We must also fulfil in love the "office of mutual intercession" one for another, and remember too that the Lord has given us prayer as an exercise of love (caritatis exercitium) between us in the Church, and that such intercessory prayer one for another cannot be in vain. Here is Calvin's cure for us when we are tempted to grow slack in our prayer life because no great and pressing personal need drives us to our knees: Let us think about how many of our brethren are worn out by varied and heavy afflictions - are weighed down by sore perplexity, or reduced to the lowest distress. If reflections like these do not rouse us from our lethargy we must have hearts of stone. Intercession is not, of course, confined to the Church. We are not to pray for believers only, but for all men. "And yet in prayer, as in all other offices of love, our first care is unquestionably due to the saints."

To participate in such offices of love within the Church requires humility which is the bond of mutual communication and through which a man recognises that not having enough by himself he must borrow from others. We must have the humility, for instance, not to overlook any assistance that has been appointed for us by God,

(1) Comm. on Ps. 112:63, C.0.32:242
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor. 1:10, C.0.50:15
(3) Comm. on Col. 4:3, C.0.52:127-8. Calvin in both above passages reminds us that this does not justify praying for the dead.
(4) Comm. on Eph. 6:18, C.0.51:237
(5) See chapter on Prayer
(6) Comm. on Eph. 6:18, C.0.51:237-8
(7) Comm. on Rom. 12:6, C.0.49:238
God, and, follow the example of the Apostle Paul, who though he
surpassed all others in prayer, nevertheless implored his brethren
to help him by their intercessions. We must "diligently seek help
from the prayers of others". Calvin often speaks of our need for
humility if we are to profit from the ministry of the Word within
the Church, for those through whom God gives us the Word are
certainly always "contemptible mortals" and frequently "vile and
worthless persons" and "inconsiderable men". Yet we must remember
that our unity in love with them in the body of Christ means that we
should be humble enough to receive what edification it pleases God
to give us through them - and indeed we must not be too proud to
constantly open our minds to, and be willing to test and receive,
whatever new truths are presented to us from whatever source within
the Church, for it is the Spirit who gives others the zeal to edify
us.

Thus we can take our place within the unity of the fellowship
only if we begin with humility. The ambition of the Psalmist to be
a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord is an ambition sadly lacking
and we see far too many who can never rest till they attain eminence

(1) Comm. on 2 Thess. 3:1, C.O.52:203; on 2 Cor. 1:10, C.O.50:157
(2) Comm. on Col. 4:3, C.O.52:128
(3) Inst. 4:3:1
(4) Comm. on John 9:34, C.O.47:231
(6) Serm. on Job 18:1-11, C.O.34:66 Toutes fois nous sommes ici
admonneste quand on nous presentera quelqu doctrine, de
discerner ce qui en est; que nous ne rejettons point ce qui
nous est inconnu: comme nous en verrons qui ne font pas grand
cas, si on leur veut montrer ce qui seraut utile pour leur
salut, de rejeter tout. Que nous n'ayons point donc cet orgueil-lä en nous; car non seulement nous constristerions...
l'Esprit de Dieu qui habite en eux, et qui leur donne ce zele
de nous edifier.

(7) Comm. on Eph. 4:2, C.O.51:190
eminence even in the Church. The only consideration that can keep us in true humility is that all men should realize their poverty and miserable condition apart from the grace of God.

Cultivating unity in brotherly love within the Church means also limiting our liberty in face of the demands of love towards our weaker brethren who might be offended or led astray if we expressed within the Church our full freedom before God. In this connection Calvin speaks of our "matching" or "yoking in" (accoupler) with one another in meekness, of our "tempering ourselves" to the weak, (infirmis attemperare). We must in no way despise anyone in the Church, for "love must be connected with respect". It is true that we cannot accommodate ourselves to everybody. While we must seek to please the weak we need not be uneasy at offending the obstinate. We must maintain always our "liberty before God in our hearts". But though we may imagine that many things are lawful, "participation is in no case lawful unless it be regulated by the law of love". Liberty

(1) Comm. on Ps 84:11, C.0.31:784
(2) Comm. on Eph 2:13-15, C.0.51:402
(3) Serm. on Gal 2:6-8, C.0.50:377-3 Si nous voyons que quelqu'un soit retardé de venir à l'Evangile, ou bien qu'on le trouble, d'autant qu'il n'est pas encore bien fortifié. Il nous faut abstenir de ce qui nous estoit licite: comme nous avons veu par cidevant qu'il nous faut tousjours regarder ce qui est expedient et propre pour le salut de chacun. Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:25-30, C.0.49:687 Meus quand je verray que l'acte que je fay pourra troubler mes freres, qu'ils pourront turner cela en mal, ou concevoir quelque suspacion, que (brief) ils pourront estre mal edifiez de moy...il faut que ie me proive de ce qui me seroit licite: car ma conscience demeure neantmoins toutsours en son entier.
(4) Serm. on Gal 5:11-14, C.0.51:18
(5) Comm. on 1 Cor. 9:22, C.0.49:448; Cf. serm. on 1 Cor. 11:11-16, C.0.49:742 Cez ceux qui sont grands, descendant pour se conformer avec les petits
(6) Comm. on 1 Pet 3:7, C.0.55:256
(7) Comm. on Matt. 15:14, C.0.45:453
(9) Comm. on 1 Cor. 8:13, C.0.49:435
Liberty must always be subservient to love.

The Church must be the chief concern of all its members. "If we do not prefer the Church to all other objects of our solicitude, we are unworthy of being accounted among her members". Moreover, like David, we must have a greater concern for the welfare of the Church than for our own individual welfare. We must realize that we are so closely bound up with the body of the Church that no individual member can flourish without the whole body flourishing. In this Jesus Christ is our example, for He sought nothing for Himself, His only concern being for the common good of His own people. Nothing therefore must vex us more or give us more anxious concern than to see disputes in the life of the Church or scandals in the conduct of any member. The accounts of civil strife in the life of Israel draw from Calvin the comment that no victory in internal war within the Church is ever worth having when such strife causes weakness within the body. Therefore the peace of the Church must be our first concern. Schism within the Church is a sign that individuals "find it difficult to accommodate themselves to the ways and habits of others" and that each of us would have a Church of our own if we could. But such a splitting up of the Church sunders it from Christ. The Church can be strong only when united. Calvin can look forward in hope to the possibility that the Papists might return "to that holy concord from which they have apostatized."

(1) Inst. 3:19:12; Comm. on Rom. 14:14, C.O.49:264
(2) Comm. on Ps. 102:4, C.O.32:62
(3) Comm. on Ps.128:5, C.O.32:329
(5) Comm. on 1 Cor.5:2, C.O.49:378-9; on Gal.5:15, C.O.50:252
(6) Serm. on 2 Sam.2:14f., p.42 Or par ceci nous sommes admonestez que nulle victoire de guerre interieure n'est a desirer.... D'autant que l'Eglise de Dieu en sera cependant amoindrie.... Il vaudroit beacoup mieux chercher le paix et faire tout ce qui
qui nous est possible, à ce que Jésus Christ règne, sans entrer en combat.

(7) Comm. on Heb. 10:25, C.0.55:132
(8) Comm. on 1 Cor.1:13, C.0.49:316
(9) Comm. on Ps 122:3, C.0.32:304
(10) Comm. on Ps. 133:1, C.0.32:354
The trial and temptation of faith

The conflict which Jesus Christ had with evil foreshadows the conflict which the Church and its members must always face.

God trains our faith by allowing hardship to come to us and by giving us a sense of His wrath.

We need such discipline.

God controls, as a Father, all our afflictions for our good.

Our conflict is made the harder by the inward struggle with the temptations and doubts of the "flesh" and the insinuations of the devil.
The man of faith continually finds himself in a conflict which exercises his faith, and which demands from him both constant watchfulness and an ever-growing dependence upon the Word of God.

Faith cannot exist except under tension and conflict with evil. "We must be good soldiers, or we cannot be men of faith" says Calvin. "Our faith neither can nor should exist without fighting something". It is true that all human life is hard. All men by reason of their mere humanity are involved in a multitude of varied trials, cares, sorrows, fears and griefs, and God's people are "subject in common with all to the miseries of human life. Yet the hardness of the struggle is especially severe for the Christian.

We must prepare ourselves, then, for "a hard warfare". Christ Himself was subject to far more than the common troubles that beset ordinary men. He suffered unusual shame and reproach and a unique degree of enmity from those who hated to see His

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim. 6:12-14, C.0.53:595
(2) Serm. on 1 Tim. 1:5-7, C.0.53:29 Nostre foy ne peut et ne doit estre sans combat.
(3) Comm. on Ps.90:10, C.0.31:338
(4) Comm. on Ps.121:6, C.0.32:301...humanae vitae miseriis promiscue subiaceant fideles.
(5) see also pp.69-70, 99 ff.
(6) Comm. on Ps.13:1, C.0.31:170 Quod nobis cognitu non parum utile est, ne immunitatem speremus ab omni molestia, ubi sequimur vocantem Deum, sed nos potius ad duram militiam paramus.
His Kingdom advancing. We must remember that the antagonism that He had to face during His earthly life is a foreshadowing of something that would continually confront and harass the life of the Church and its members in the "gradual development of His Kingdom even until the end of the world". The fact that the innocents were massacred round Christ's cradle is to Calvin a sign that His whole career was to be a career of conflict with evil forces and that those who take Him as their captain today must not expect peaceful repose in quiet obscurity, but must fight the same deadly and determined enemy. To enlist in His army is "to have the greater part of the world rising in hostility against us, and pursuing us even to death", and is to have the devil as "our perpetual enemy". He will heap up difficulties in our way, He will inspire and use malice against us in the hearts of others. He will make our path thorny and our progress slow.

As Christians/assailed not only by evil men and evil powers, but we are also especially tempted and tried by God Himself - indeed, the assault upon us by the powers of evil is possible only because God deliberately allows us to become so assailed! Our Christian experience, under the guidance of God, is always such as

(1) Comm. on Ps.69:5, C.0.31:639; and on Ps.118:25, C.0.32:211-2 Interea meminerimus, quod in Christi persona impletum fuit, spectare ad continuum regni eius cursum usque ad finem mundi.
(2) Serm. on Matt.2:16-22, C.0.46:444.
(3) Comm. on Matt.5:10, C.0.45:164.
(4) Serm. on Matt.26:40-50, C.0.46:849 Le diable est nostre ennemi perpetuel, si nous sommes membres de nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ.
(5) Serm. on 1 Tim.6:12-14, C.0.53:595. Even though there is no wickedness perpetrated by men to which Satan does not excite them, nevertheless Satan merely kindles into a fierce furnace a flame that is already there. Therefore men under the power of Satan are inexcusable for their misdeeds. Comm. on John 13:2, C.0.47:305-6.
(6) This, Calvin finds, is the meaning of the dialogue between
as to train us in the faith and to assist the growth of our faith, for we are continually brought into situations in which we can live only by faith. Sometimes we find ourselves subject to a painful kind of temptation when God seems to cast off all care about us, and to pass over our groanings and miseries as if He did not seek them. Sometimes He removes the light of His countenance or allows it to be clouded over. This means that either the "sense of His love" or the "outward signs of His favour" are withdrawn and the conscience maybe struck with terrors and the Word ceases to have any real flavour for us. Indeed, when David prays in his Psalms and describes his condition in what seems to be exaggerated language signifying extreme physical distress and sorrow of heart, he is describing not so much his bodily state as his condition of mind and soul. When under a sense of God's wrath he seems to see, "as it were, Hell, open to receive him". Such experience, Calvin asserts, can be ours if we follow Christ today. "Nothing should hinder us today, by the stupidity of our flesh, from experiencing in ourselves what David describes concerning himself. God can be, as it were, angry with His own people. He treats us more severely than the Devil, who

between God and Satan in Job. Serm. on Job 1:9-12, C.0.33:74. Comm. on Ps.22:2, C.0.31:221. Hac tentationis specie...ubi Deus quasi abiecta nostrī cura ad nostras miserias et gemitus connivet.

(1) Comm. on Ps.67:2, C.0.31:613
(2) Comm. on Ps.119:135, C.0.32:276 Saepe autem contingit ipse quoque obnubilari in hac parte Del faciem, dum genuino verbi sui gustu eos privat.
(3) Comm. on Ps.6:6-7, C.0.31:77
(4) Comm. on Ps.79:8, C.0.31:750
who flatters men to destroy them.

The fact, that in the assaults which our faith receives the enemy is under the control and direction of God Himself, can be not simply a terror to us but a great comfort and strength, for it means that our trial is bound to have a blessed issue. Calvin gives many and varied reasons why God allows such persecutions to come upon us and inflicts such suffering with His own hand. Too much unmingled happiness would make us intoxicated, indulgent in excess, so God has, as it were, to save us by putting water in our wine, sending sorrow when we are over elated by joy. Any slackening of discipline over us would cause us to become like wild rebellious horses, therefore God has to check our impetuosity and make us more cautious for the future by constantly using the whip. Such discipline must be continuous and prolonged, for if the rod were not held out to us continually we would constantly relapse into disobedience.

God never ceases to be a Father to us even in His anger. In afflicting His people continually moderates the cross which He calls

(1) Serm. on 2 Tim.3:16-17, C.0.54:291 Ho,nous voulons estre gagnez par douceur ....Allez-vous en à l'escole du diable, car il vous flattera assez à vostre perdion.
(2) Serm. on 1 Tim.6:12-14, C.0.53:598 Le second est, qu'il ne nous doit point fascher si Dieu nous esprouve, car ce n'est point à l'aventure que nous bataillons, nous ne sommes point en danger de perdre nostre vie sans la recouvrer,...mais l'issue de nostre gendarmerie est desireble, d'autant que Dieu preside sur nous.
(3) Serm. on 2 Sam.1:1-16 p2.
(4) Serm. on Deut.6:10-13, C.0.26:448.
(5) Comm. on John 5:14, C.0.47:109-10; on Heb.12:4, C.0.55:173
(6) Comm. on Ps. 85:9, C.0.45:788
calls on them to bear. He always mingles comfort with sorrow and

gives them real experience of His mercy and love even as He punishes
them. He never gives men what they deserve in the way of chastis-
ment and in giving them punishment. He does mete out, He always
supports those whom He afflicts. He takes care that whatever
affliction He sends to us will not be so bitter as to drive us out of
His service. He studies our weaknesses and our ability to bear
suffering, and never lays on us a burden heavier than we have the
experience to bear. It is only as our strength increases that He
increases our affliction.

Always, then, it is the true welfare of His people that
determines the nature of the affliction which God sends upon them. He
adapts his method of discipline to the diversity of our vises

(1) Comm. on Ps.74:9, C.O.31:695 Proinde nos quoque si materiam
patientiae et consolationis quaerimus, ubi nos Deus castigat,
discamus ad istam moderationem, qua nos Deus ad spem invitat,
oculos intendere: atque inde statuemus Deum ita irasci ut non
desinet tamen esse pater. Correctio vero quae salutem affert
laetitiam continet dolori admistam. Cf. comm. on John 21:18,
C.O.47:454. Sic temperat Dominus crucem, qua vult servos
suos experiri.

(2) Comm. on Ps.39:11, C.O.31:403

(3) Serm. on Job 34:10-15, C.O.35:146-7. Ainsi donc notons que
Dieu ne punit point les pecheurs, et qu'il ne leur fait point
sentir sa vengeance en mesure egale, si tost qu'ils l'ont
desservi: mais il les supporte, tellement que tous les
chastimens que nous recevons en ce monde, ne sont
qu'advertissemens que Dieu nous fait, nous donnant encore
lieu de repentance.

(4) Comm. on Ps.125:3, C.O.32:315

portee, et selon que nous sommes exercez à endurer les
afflictions, il nous les envoye petites ou moyennes: mais
quand nous y sommes, comme endurcis, alors il nous peut bien
charger d'avantage: car il nous a donne aussi dequoilporter.
Cf. comm. on John 21:18, C.O.47:454
vices "humbling some by poverty, some by shame, some by diseases, some by domestic distresses, some by hard and painful labours," Calvin suggests that to be "buffeted" (colephis caedi) by God is a peculiarly severe kind of affliction sent to the proud in which besides pain and fear there is a large element of shame. But there are "no certain or uniform rules" by which we can fully understand God's providence in this matter. "He chastises some, while He spares others. He heals the secret ills of some, and passes by others because they have no need of such a cure. He exercises the patience of some, inasmuch as He has given them the Spirit of fortitude; and finally He sets forth others by way of example. But He humbles all in common with the tokens of His anger that by such incitements they may be stirred up to repentance." Certain it is, however, that God encourages us to walk in His ways and to serve Him not only by changing our minds and hearts but also sometimes by compelling us through the sheer force of outward circumstances.

The conflict in which the Christian man is involved is the more acute because he has to contend not only with the hostility of external enemies but also never ceases to find himself confronted

(1) Comm. on Ps.119:67, C.O.32:244
(2) Comm. on 2 Cor.12:7, C.O.50:139-40
(4) Serm. on 2 Sam. 4 p85. Here again we have to remember that the children of God are afflicted more than the wicked because God reserves the judgment of the wicked for the last day and treats His people with greater severity in this present life. See p.... Comm. on 1 Pet.4:17, C.O.55:281-2; on John 9:2, C.O.47:217; Inst. 1:5:6
confronted from within his own heart by temptations and doubts that arise from the "flesh". The whole process of self-denial is indeed simply the constant struggle between the spirit and the flesh which is described by Paul in Romans 7 and Galatians 5. The flesh here is for Calvin simply the old human nature whose inclinations remain constantly against the will of God, and which must be constantly restrained and mortified if man would obey the will of God. The "spirit" is the new spiritual nature of the regenerate man. Therefore the Christian constantly feels himself divided between the flesh which seeks to plunge his life into sin and excess and disorder and which can never be perfectly controlled and the new spiritual desires and powers which seek to conform the life to the law of God. "The godly in whom the regeneration of God is begun, are so divided

(1) see pp.
(2) Cf. comm. on Rom.7; on Gal.5:17, C.O.50:252-3; on Col.3:15, C.O. 52:123; serm. on Deut.5:12-14, C.O.26:290. Or tent y a que nous ne pouvons point nous acquitter tellement en renonçant à nos affections, qu'il n'y ait toujours à redire. Sainct Paul se glorifie bien que le monde luy est crucifié, et qu'il est crucifié au monde: mais cependant il ne laisse pas de dire que sa chair combat contre l'esprit: et qu'il n'y a jamais d'accord: et mesmes il confesse au septieme des Romains qu'il a toujours senti en soy ceste repugnance, qu'il ne faisoit pas le bien qu'il eust voulu, c'est à dire, il ne l'accomplissoit pas d'une affection si ardente, il n'estoit pas si resolu de cheminer selon Dieu, qu'il n'y eust toujours des empechemens pour le retarder. In comm. on John 21:18, C.O.47:455, Calvin traces Peter's unwillingness to face martyrdom to this conflict between flesh and spirit. In serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.O.35:132 he links up Job's conflict with himself, and Jacob's wrestling, with Rom.7, and Gal.5:17.
(3) Comm. on Gal.5:17, C.O.50:252-3.
divided that with a special desire of the heart they fervently aspire to God, they covet celestial righteousness and hate sin, but again by the relics of their flesh they are drawn towards the earth. This conflict is felt only by the regenerate man. The natural man does not resist the flesh in this way.

The struggle with the flesh means a constant inward struggle not only against wrong desires, but against false ideas and unbelief, for unbelief is also the activity of the flesh or the old nature whose judgment about God and our situation is always opposed to faith. In the experience of the people of God the judgment of faith— that God is always near and victorious—has continually to oppose and wrestle against the weakness and judgment of the flesh. Calvin finds in this conflict the explanation of the many apparently contradictory utterances of the Psalmists in the midst of their trials. Even though faith may firmly believe that God loves us, nevertheless at the same time the unbelief of the flesh may give rise to apparently faithless questions as to why God is absent. One verse of a psalm can be a magnificent expression of faith only to be soon followed by a very contrary expression of natural doubt. The cry

(1) Comm. on Rom.7:15, C.O.49:130. Pii contra, in cuius coepta est Dei regeneratio, sic divisi sunt, ut praecipuo cordis desiderio ad Deum suspirent, coelestem iustitiam expetant, peccatum oderint: sed rursum carnis suae reliquis in terram retrahentur.
(2) Comm. on Gal.5:17, C.O.50:253; Cf. comm. on Rom.7:15, C.O. 49:129. Notandum est, hoc certamen, de quo loquitur apostolus, non prius existare in homine quam spiritu Dei fuerit sanctificatus. Nam homo naturae suae relictus totus sine repugnantia in cupiditates furtur.
(3) Comm. on Ps.44:24, C.O.31:448 Statuendum ouidem est, a Deo nos respici, etiamsi dissimulet: quia tamen haec persuasio fidel est, non carnis, contrarium illum sensum quem ex praesenti rei adspectu concipiunt, familiariter exonerant in sinum Dei.
(4) Comm. on Ps.69:15-19, C.O.31:645
cry "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" expresses "the contrary affections" which are mingled and interwoven with the prayers of the faithful".

Our temptation to unbelief arises not only through the weakness of the flesh but also through the insinuations of the Devil who comes to us in the midst of the combat and makes faithless insinuations, suggesting that God has withdrawn the support of His Spirit and instigating us to despair. "The devil desires nothing more than...to put in our heads that God has cast us off".

Thus in the midst of great afflictions, Calvin asserts, none of us need any outside agent such as Eliphas was to Job in order to impress upon us the desperate nature of our position. We each of us carry in our own nature the seed bed of sufficient vexation to drive us to despair. Against such temptation to despair our faith must stand and refuse to yield. "It becomes us to wrestle against despair, in order that our sorrow, although it may seem to be incurable may not shut our mouths and keep us from pouring out our prayers before God."


(2) Comm. on Ps.55:5, C.O.31:536
(3) Serm. on Job 14:13-15, C.O.33:686
(4) Serm. on Job 2:11-13, C.O.33:140
(5) Serm. on Job 4:7-10, C.O.33:190
(6) Comm. on Ps.49:7, C.O.31:484
The attitude of faith in conflict and suffering

The Christian looks away from himself and every other possible source of help to God alone.

To look thus away from self to God involves an attitude of self-denial under affliction.

The Christian will comfort himself by the fact that his afflictions come from God and will "look to the hand of God" in his suffering and thus seek God.

He will look on his suffering as a token both of God's wrath and judgment, and of His fatherly love, for God does not exercise His anger without remembering His mercy.

There is always cause for thanksgiving and confident faith, even in the severest affliction.

In looking to God in the midst of suffering the Christian will lay hold of the Word.

We must remember that if we care for the honour of God there are evils towards which our policy must not be submission or separation but attack.

A Christian must face and overcome by faith not only suffering but also death which is a witness to the wrath of God.

Though a Christian shares with all men a natural horror of death, yet its sting is removed.

Nevertheless, we need to listen to what death has to say to us.

Death can be a means of blessing and communion with Christ, and of entrance into life.
The Christian can learn to despise death and to desire death as well as to dread death.
The man of faith, under his afflictions and trials takes up an attitude completely different from that of the unbeliever. Whereas affliction can make the faithless and godless more and more obstinate, the same affliction tends to turn the man of faith towards God in true repentance.

It is characteristic of the man of faith that in the midst of all the assaults of evil and the blows administered by providence, he says to God "Thou art my God", he looks to God alone and puts his trust in God alone. He is forced to do so because our real state of affairs on earth is that "to whatever quarter we turn our eyes we will see everywhere nothing but ground for despair till we come to God". Within ourselves we see simply a "mirror of death" full of rottenness. Around ourselves in whatever direction our eyes turn we see corruption and decay. All earthly change is a "prelude to destruction". Stability is to be sought and found in God alone.

Therefore he will look constantly to God alone. Nothing will make him turn his eyes to any other quarter for help and comfort save to God, for if he does he will fall. He will not transfer even to man the smallest portion of confidence which he should place in God

(1) Inst. 3:8:6
(2) Comm. on Ps.31:14, C.O.31:307-8
(3) Comm. on Ps. 102:25-6, C.O.32:73
God alone. In contrast to the unbelievers who "gaze about" looking hither and thither, turning now here for help and now there, all his prayers and desires have one aim and direction.

To look thus to God alone means not only to have renounced all help from the world but also to have become convinced of our own inability to help ourselves. Calvin always emphasises that to have faith in God involves "renouncing ourselves". Therefore under affliction faith will take up an attitude of stern self-denial, for it happens that in the midst of suffering we are most severely tempted to let our feelings run riot and drive us to wrong actions and to give way to despair and blasphemy. Since God through the Cross is seeking to soften our hearts, "we should at least endeavour to grow gentle, and, laying aside all stubbornness, cheerfully bear the yoke which He imposes upon us". Since God through the Cross is seeking to reduce us to nothing, "we ought patiently to permit God to mortify us". Calvin frequently warns us that under deep affliction we must, as it were, "pull ourselves together", and

(1) Comm. on Ps.118:8, C.O.32:204
(3) Comm. on Ps.28:1, C.O.31:281
(4) Comm. on Matt.21:32, C.O.45:590 To have faith involves "distrusting our own strength" (Comm. on Phil.1:6, C.O.52:9), "self despair" (serm. on Gen.15:6, C.O.23:699), becoming "desperate of all good" (Ibid p.700) The Holy Spirit sometimes "sets the assistance of God in opposition to human strength" (Comm. on Ps.20:7-8, C.O.31:211)
(5) Comm. on Ps.143:10, C.O.32:404
(6) Comm. on Ps.119:67, C.O.32:244 Suo interim exemplo docet propheta, saltem ubi duritiem nostram subigendo ostendit Deus, se velle nos habere discipulos, dandam esse operam ut mites-camus, et deposita ferocia, quod nobis imponit iugum, libenter feramus.
and continually "hold ourselves in check". Calvin finds in the phrase "poor in spirit" which occurs in the beatitudes of Jesus, a description of the right attitude of those who would truly bear suffering according to the will of God.

The Christian man will look to God in faith that his suffering comes from the hand of God and that his situation is entirely under the control of God. Since God orders all things by His counsel, therefore whatever His children suffer, they suffer under His good hand and according to His ordinance and command. "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 of God: moreover, that everything He does is in most perfect order". Calvin approves of the Augustinian view that even the apparently unreasonable calamities that make suffering such a dark mystery to the questioning mind should be thought of as occurring not simply by the permission of God but rather by His will and decree - though sometimes he can speak of certain calamities as

1 Comm. on Ps.10:18, C.O.31:120 Verum si locum dare cupimus eius auxilio, domandus est fervor noster, sedanda impatienitia, mitigandi dolores, usquedum miseriae nostrae Dei gratiam provocent. Cf. comm. on Job 1:9-12, C.O.33:71 Il nous faut apprester quand il plaira à Dieu de nous affliger et nous exercer en beaucoup de maux, et de misères, que toutesfois nous soyons tenus en bride, que nous ayons ceste humilité: Ne nous assubiettir à luy, que nous soyons patiens et paisibles pour recevoir toutes ses corrections.


3 Inst.1:16:3 Hoc solatio in rebus adversis se lenient fideles nihil se perpeti nisi Dei ordinatione et mandato.

4 Inst. 3:8:11.

5 Comm. on Ps.115:3, C.O.32:184 Ideo apposite et scite Augustinus hoc testimonio probat, non simplici Dei permissu accidere quae videntur nobis absurda, sed nutu etiam et decreto. Calvin's reasons are cogent: Nam si facit Deus noster cuae cunctae vult, cur permitteret fieri cuae non vult? Cur diabolum et omnes impios sibi repugnantes non coercet? Si medius fingitur inter actionem et passionem, ut toleret quae fieri non vult:
as happening "by the permission of God".

The lament and warning of Isaiah about those who under affliction will not look to Him that smites them is obviously often in Calvin's mind. He mourns that most men are quite thoughtless and insensible on this subject. They do not differ from the beasts of the field in estimating their affliction "only by the feeling of pain which it produces". But our thoughts under affliction should not dwell only on the extent of the calamities which have happened in their relation to our own comfort and hopes and bodily well-being. We must get beyond all this, and in the time of our affliction we must look to the hand that strikes". "We ought to acknowledge the hand of God which strikes us and not to imagine that our distresses arise from blind impetuosity of fortune". What distinguishes the attitude of the truly faithful under suffering in the Old Testament is that in all their afflictions they related their suffering to God. They discerned that it was He who was affliction them. Their suffering was to them a sign that the hand of God was upon them.

If the wicked were persecuting them, their first thought was that it

1 erit igitur otiosus in coelo, ut Epicurei somniant.

Comm. on 1 Pet.4:19, C.0.55:283 Reducit tamen in memoriam, nihil nisi Dei permissu nos pati: quod multum ad consolationem valet. Cf. comm. on Ps.79:5, C.0.31:748-9

(1)

Comm. on Ps.38:3, C.0.31:387. Atqui David in morbo, sicut in aliis rebus adversis, manum Dei suis oculis proponit ad punienda peccata armatam. Et sane quisquis in mali sui sensu subsistit, nihil a pecudibus differt.

(2)

Comm. on Ps.6:2, C.0.31:73. Et tamen videmus quantus torpor omnes fere occupet in hac parte, nam quum se miseros esse clamitent, ad manum ferientem vix centesimus quisque respicit. Cf. comm. on Ps.38:3, C.0.31:387 Sed quum nos de iudicio adhonestat omnia eius flagella, haec vera fidelium prudentia est, manum percutientis respicere, ut propheta Ies.9:13, loquitur. And comm. on Ps.79:5, C.0.31:749. Quoties nos flagellis suis ferit Deus, ad manum eius attendere convenit.

(3)

Comm. on John 5:14, C.0.47:109

(4)

Comm. on Ps.74:1, C.0.31:691. Notandum autem est, quod fideles a profanis gentibus vexati, oculos tamen ad Deum attollunt, ac si plagas omnes sola eius manus infligeret. Cf. comm. on
it was God who was deliberately giving loose rein to the bridle by which He held the wicked. If the help of friends failed them they did not so much brood over human frailty as over the thought that this human failure was a sign that God had deliberately withdrawn his aid. It is precisely in the experience of such afflictions that we have one of our prime opportunities for seeking the Lord. For since He is the personal agent in all such affliction, to yield submissive obedience under the cross is a better and surer way of seeking God than the ceremonious prayers, fastings and tears of the hypocrites. "The Lordship of life and death is ascribed to God that every man might better bear his estate as the yoke imposed by Him.... If therefore at any time the flesh recoils in adversity, let us remember that he who is not free has no right over himself, and perverts law and order if he does not depend on the good pleasure of his Lord".

In looking to the hand of God the believer will meditate on the fact that in some way connected with the deserved punishment of his past sins. "Whenever we are afflicted, we ought immediately to call to our mind our past life". He will look on his suffering as a

comm. on Ps. 79:5, C.0:31:749
(1) Cf. ibid.
(2) Comm. on Ps. 83:9, C.0:31:803. Quod notatu dignum est: quia nisi in memoriam succurrat, ideo nos destitui humanis mediis, quia Deus manum suam subducit, tumultuamur sine fine et modo.
(3) Comm. on Isa. 9:13, C.0:36:204
(4) Comm. on Rom. 14:8, C.0:49:261
(6) Inst. 3:8:6
as a token of God’s wrath against sin and God’s judgment upon it.

"Those persons have made little progress under their afflictions who do not immediately face their sins squarely so that they can feel that they have deserved the wrath of God". Indeed affliction is often sent precisely for the purpose of bringing such thoughts into our minds, and it is in this respect that unbelieving men who are incapable of so relating suffering to sin, differ from believers in their attitude to affliction. Calvin therefore undoubtedly teaches that the Christian will accept whatever suffering comes to him as being in some relation to his own sin.

When Calvin tells us to look on affliction as a token of the

(1) Serm. on Job 5:17-18, C.O.33:260 Nous avons à retenir...que si tost qu’il nous advient quelque mal, l’ire de Dieu nous doit venir devant les yeux, que nous devons connoistre qu’il ne peut porter le peché; et sur cela faut que nous sentions la rigueur de son jugement. Cf. serm. on Job 3:20-26, C.O.33:168 Ainsi quand il est question de nous fascher...que cela nous advise de monter plus haut: ne nous arrestons point au mal corporel, mais cognoissions, Voici les fruits de nos fautes.

(2) Comm. on Ps.6:2, C.O.31:73.

(3) Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C.O.33:144. Or cependant il est vrai qu’il y a de cuoy gemir et pleurer, d’autant que quand nous sommes ici, nous sommes en un abysme de maladies, mais quoy? il nous faut regarder d’où cela procede. Les Payens n’ont gognu sinon que la condition des hommes estoit miserable: mais il nous faut regarder pourquoi Dieu nous a assubittis à tant de maux: c’est à cause du peché.

(4) But Calvin never teaches that we should as any general rule assert that when any person suffers, that is due to his or her sins. Calvin’s comments on the problem of the man born blind in John 9 are important in this connection. "It is undoubtedly true", he asserts, "that all our distresses arise from sin". But, he points out, often the cause of suffering is concealed and we ought, in judging cases, to restrain our curiosity that we may neither dishonour God nor be malicious to our brethren. It is difficult to make any judgment on individual instances; for sometimes God, in sending affliction has the purpose simply of training us to obedience or testing our patience. Moreover God is far more severe in punishing his Church (which must be conformed to Christ in His death) at present than the wicked whose punishment is reserved for the judgment day. "They are
the wrath and judgment of God on our sin, he also at the same time urges us to seek to discern in the same affliction the token of God's fatherly love. The aim of affliction is to humble us in order that God may have mercy upon us. If God casts us down, it is in order that He may raise us up. We must not therefore allow our suffering to have the merely negative effect on us. Suffering can thus be to us a sign that God thinks of us in His fatherly love, for the very fact that God is punishing us, means that He is planning for us in love, and does not will to leave us alone to perish, and is calling us to repent. The fate most to be dreaded would be if God did not punish us for our sins nor sought to remedy them and bring us to repentance. God exercises His anger towards His people only in such a way as never to be forgetful of His mercy and in such a way that are false interpreters therefore who say that all afflictions, without any distinction, are sent on account of sins".


(1) Inst. 3:8:6 Ergo in ipsa quoque tribulationum acerbitate, Patris nostri clementiam erga nos ac benignitatem recognoscere convenit: quando ne tum uidem desinit salutem nostram promovere. Cf. serm. on Job 5:17-18, C.O. 33:260 Nous avons à retenir ces deux points... l'un est que... l'ire de Dieu nous doit venir devant les yeux.... Et au reste que cependant aussi nous apprehendons la bonté de Dieu de ce qu'il ne nous laisse point aller en perdition sans nous retirer à soi.


(3) Serm. on Job 14:13-15, C.O. 33:684. Au reste, cependant que nous vivons, que ceci nous soit bien resolu, qu'il n'y a rien meilleur pour nous que quand Dieu pense de nous: voire et rust-ce mesmes pour nous punir. Si Dieu pense de nous, afin de nous faire sentir sa grace, voila ou consiste toute nostre joie et nostre gloire, comme il est dit au Pseaume huictieme (v5).... mais comme i'ai dit, s'il nous chastie de nos pechez, encore nous fait-il grace: car il monstre par cela qu'il ne veut point que nous perissions.

(4) Comm. on Ps. 31:12, C.O. 31:764-5.
that His punishments are to be taken as evidences of His paternal love rather than of His anger. The scourges of God which in themselves are signs of God's wrath can be blessed in Christ and can provide the occasion for us to lay hold of the fatherly love of God. Therefore under affliction we must tremble before God's judgments "as far as is requisite for the mortification of the flesh", but at the same time not miss the consolation they can give us by reminding us of God's watchful providence over the human race.

There is therefore always cause for thankfulness when we suffer affliction. Indeed, when we consider the suffering of men like Job, we are bound to realise that whatever comes our way of affliction is but a gentle chastisement, a mild and comforting affliction compared with what might have been. When we consider the massacre of the innocents by wicked Herod, we must also realise that the powers of evil around us are so fierce and determined on our annihilation that our lot would be cruel and terrible indeed did not God continually stretch out His hand to restrain the powers that are against us — and just as Satan cast down on the ground in violence

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:32, C.0.49:495
(2) Comm. on Rom. 8:31, C.0.49:162
(3) Comm. on Ps.119:52, C.0.32:237 Si quis obiciat contrarium esse Dei iudiciis ut consolationem nobis afferant quae deebant terorem incutere: responsio facilis est, iudiciis Dei terrer: tides quatenus illis ad carnis suae mortificationem expedit: sed quatenus inde agnoscent Deo curae esse genus humanum, ampla consolationis materia sese offerit.
(4) Serm. on Job 2:7-10, C.0.33:118 Or nos afflictions sont moyennes et douces, si on les accompare à celles dont il est ici parle. Concluons donc que Dieu se monstre benin et pitoy-able envers nous, quand nous sommes chastiez ainsi doucement de sa main.
(5) Serm. on Matt.2:16-22, C.0.46:446-7
violence the little epileptic boy whom Jesus was in the process of saving, so the powers of evil are all the more violent in their attacks against the faithful who are in the hand of Christ for eternal redemption. Our very suffering is the necessary accompaniment of such redemption, and since we are in His hand we cannot be overcome or confounded.

In looking to God and renouncing all other help in the midst of the conflicts and contradictions that face his faith, the Christian is enabled to stand and endure because he lays hold of the Word of God. The Word of God alone is the source from which we derive our patience and become habituated to the endurance of the Cross. The Word of God alone is the place in which we find a true wisdom which contrasts with all the blind wisdom that gives such mistaken direction to the life of this world. No matter how apparently God-forsaken and abandoned we may seem, we can find satisfaction and solid ground for joy by resting on the truth of God's promises.

(1) Serm. on Mark 1:23-7, C.0.46:744 Et cependant aussi notons, que comme ce povre homme a este delivre de Satan avec grans tourmens qu'il a endurez, que le diable l'a ietté par terre, et l'a comme deschire, encore qu'il meuyair peu muire pour le ruiner du tout, aussi quand Jesus Christ nous tire et delivre, de la tyrannie de Satan, si nous endurons quelque violences qu'il ne nous faut point trouver cela estrange.

(2) Cf. Inst. 1:14:18
(3) Comm. on Ps.94:12, C.0.32:24.
(4) Comm. on Ps.119:24, C.0.32:224-5; on Ps.86:11, C.0.31:795; serm. on Deut. 6:13-15, C.0.36:465.
(5) Comm. on Ps.56:5, C.0.31:548-9; on Ps.11:1, C.0.31:120; Serm. on Luke 1:69-72, C.0.46:173
Indeed God is seeking to teach His people, in the midst of the hard struggle that exercises their faith, precisely this lesson, that when all other supports are taken away they should rest upon the "naked word". Therefore they must turn their minds away from the "present aspect of things" and inspired by the Word "stand, as it were upon a watch tower, waiting patiently for the fulfilment of what God has promised". "In place of/reality", says Calvin, "we rest upon the Word". It is thus the Word that retains us, holds us back, and enables us to say, "Lord thou art just", in the midst of circumstances that seem to contradict altogether His righteousness.

While Calvin admits that a large part of our Christian warfare consists in patiently standing up against the onslaughts of evil rather than in aggressive action, and while he is always

(1) Comm. on Ps.56:11, C.O.31:552  Ad hanc meditationem se assuefaciant fideles, ut inter tentationes firmam gloriam retineant, nudo verbo contenti....Vix tamen unquam tres passus conficere licebit, nisi in solum verbum recumbere didicerint. Cf. on Ps.51:9-11, C.O.31:616

(2) Comm. on Ps.87:3, C.O.31:801. Cf. Serm. on Gal.2:20-1, C.O.50:448. Voilà donc comme il nous faut vivre par foi....que nous prenions ce miroir de la parole de Dieu, pour regarder les choses qui surmontent tout nostre sens, qui sont eslongnees de ce monde et qui sont invisibles du tout; et que nous eslevions nos veux iusques là: non point selon que nostre raison et prudence nous y pourra guider (car ce n'est point assez), mais que nous surmontions ce monde, et que nous quittions les choses presentes, afin de nous entretenir en l'attente des promises de Dieu.

(3) Comm. on 2 Cor.5:7, C.O.50:63  Loco rei. in verbo acquiescimus

(4) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.O.35:139-40

(5) Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:3, C.O.52:361
always emphasising the need for abstinence and detachment in the face of the enticements of what is evil he nevertheless lays it down clearly that it is not enough merely to abstain from participating in and practicing evil God means us to attack evil in any form in which it meets us. We must espouse the cause of the innocent when they are oppressed, and take up the fight for justice. We must show ourselves the enemies of evil doers and seek to take action against them. Otherwise in the sight of God we will be held as accomplices in those things that we do not actively condemn. Calvin looks on it as equivalent to renouncing the cause of God and separating ourselves from Him when out of fear for the displeasure of those who are involved in evil we consent to their evil doing by our silence and lack of protest. To do this is to uphold the cause of wickedness. It is our duty also to attack evils and abuses within the Church. We may have no authority and no power to do such, yet even in such circumstances it is the duty of those who do not possess authority to "oppose with their tongue, which they have at liberty, those vices which they cannot remedy with their hands".

Our attitude towards the evils and wrongs we see around us

(1) see pp. 294f., 345-7
(2) Serm. on Matt.5:11-12, C.0.46:311. Car la malice des hommes est si grande, qu'il faut entrer souvent en combat pour maintenir les bons et innocens qu'on afflige; et pour prendre en main les bonnes causes et lustes... Ce n'est point assez e tc. Ce n'est point assez que chacun s'abstienne de maléfice et d'outrage, mais il faut que nous procurions le bien, entant qu'en nous est.
(3) Serm. on Deut. 9:20-24, C.0.26:703-4
(4) Serm. on Job 27:5-8, C.0.34:457-9; Cf. comm. on Ps.118:158, C.0.32:285-6.
(5) Comm. on Matt. 21:12, C.0.45:580
us must be determined by zeal to maintain the glory and cause of Christ. We must see God's honour at stake when evil is allowed to flourish unchecked. We must realise that God had put the vindication of His righteousness in our hands and it is our business to "maintain God's quarrel", no matter what men may think of us or do to us. A Christian must remember that Christ is the heir of the whole world, and has indeed already sanctified the whole world in His death, and therefore everything should be even now subject to Him. If we are sensitive about the wrongs done to ourselves and inflamed with anger when our own honour is injured, we should be much more concerned and filled with sorrow when God's honour is attacked by evil.

(1) Comm. on Ps.139:22, C.0.32:385 Cuisquis ad scelera connivet, eaque foveat suo silentio, perfidus est causae Dei proditor, qui nobis omnibus iustitiae suae patrocinium commendat.
(2) Serm. on Gal.5:11-14, C.0.51:14
(3) Comm. on Matt.17:25, C.0.45:522-3; and serm. on Deut.6:1-4, C.0.26:427. Notons aujourd'hui nous devons être incités beaucoup plus de servir à Dieu, veu qu'il a dédié toute la terre à soi, et qu'il veut que son Nom soit reclame par tout: car le sang que nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ a espadu, a sanctifié tout le monde qui estoit pour lors comme en pollution. Car nous savons qu'il n'y avoit que ceste terre que Dieu se reservast, et en laquelle il voulust dominer jusques à la venue de son Fils.
(4) Comm. on Ps.119:139, C.0.32:278: on Ps.139:22, C.0.32:385
Calvin has a good deal to say about the way in which a Christian should face and overcome not only suffering but also death itself. Death, if we face it frankly, is always so fearful a fact as to arouse within us naturally implanted feelings of dread and revulsion, for it is a corruption of the nature due to the curse of God, and a reversal of the true order which God established before the fall. "A horror of death is naturally implanted in all of us, for to wish to be dissolved (dissolvi) is revolting to nature. Death is thus a witness to the wrath of God, to man's rejection from His presence and his alienation from the Kingdom of God. Calvin asserts even pagans and unbelievers are constrained to recognise that death is a curse of God pronounced on Adam and all his seed, not only because everyone desires to live, and in death we are, as it were, annihilated, but also because God has left some kind of mark (quelque marque) so that men understand this without knowing hardly a word of Christian teaching. Death, then, has a twofold purpose. It is ordained "not only for the dissolution of

(1) Serm. on Job 27:5-8, C.0.34:467-8; Cf. comm. on 1 Cor. 15:21, C.0.49:545 Mors non est a natura sed ab hominis peccato.
(2) Comm. on John 21:18, C.0.47:455. This dissolving is the dissidium carnis et spiritus.
(3) Serm. on Cant. Zech. v.9-12, C.0.35:523
(4) Ibid.
of man, but also in order to make him feel the curse of God".  
A Christian shares with all men this natural dread of death, for a Christian is not unnatural. But to face and experience death is not so terrifying for a Christian as for an unbeliever who looks on it apart from Christ and thus sees in it nothing but a curse. If we are Christians, however, we must dread death, but we must so struggle against the dread of death that it does not impair the open confession of our faith, nor overcomes the joy and consolation of our hope. Our piety should overcome and suppress our fear. It is when we turn our eyes to the glory of the life that is to come that our dread of death is overcome. Death for the Christian does not mean the agony of being torn violently and against his will from his earthly surroundings as it

(1) Serm. on Matt. 26:36-9, C.O.46:840. Calvin points out here that in His death our Lord, besides His physical pain, suffered far more than being taken from this world and sundered in body and soul, for death is also an entry into the abyss of hell and should alienate us from God and take away all hope of salvation. This is truly what death means and if Christ had not suffered it, it would have been our lot.
(2) Comm. on Heb. 2:15, C.O.55:33
(3) Comm. on Matt. 10:32, C.O.45:230; on 2 Cor. 5:8, C.O.50:64
(4) Inst. 3:9:5
(5) Comm. on Phil. 1:23, C.O.52:18. Inter e a non desinunt fideles mortem horrere: sed cuum oculos convertunt ad vitam illam quae mortem sequitur, consolatione ista facile vincunt formidinem.
it does for the unbeliever. For the Christian the sword of death, which could otherwise mortally penetrate into the heart, has been blunted, and though it can wound it can only wound without danger, for death is the entrance into life. Death, like sin, may dwell in us, but it cannot reign.

When faith quickens the soul of man, death already has its sting extracted and its venom removed, so that it cannot inflict a deadly wound. Death for us is no longer a mortal death. It is only a warning of the curse of God, for Christ has borne the real curse for us.

Though death has been overcome for us, however, it has still a great deal to say to us and we must heed its testimony. It reminds us that we have but one life that quickly vanishes away instead of the thousand lives that we sometimes imagine we have. It teaches us that it is mere vanity to rest at our ease amidst earthly goods and honour. It can shatter our pride and covetousness as well as our false sense of security by reminding us that after all our ambition, not simply to swallow up this earth, but to have God create new worlds for us, our earthly end is nothing more than to possess a piece of ground our own

(1) Serm. on Job 27:5-8, C.O.34:465-6
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:26, C.O.49:548
(3) Comm. on John 8:51, C.O.47:212
(4) Serm. on Isa. 53:11, C.O.35:662 & 663. La mort ne nous est plus mortelle,...et...nous sommes affranchis de la malediction de Dieu....Car la mort a laquelle nous sommes maintenant sujets, n'est qu'un avertissement de la malediction de Dieu.
(5) Comm. on Ps. 90:5, C.O.31:836
own length in which to rot and consume away to nothing! It can
remind us continually of what Christ had to suffer for us, for if
we ourselves had not to face death in some form, the death of
Christ would not have its true effect upon us. It should always
remind us of the anger of God against sin. We must, then, "think
continually upon death, for though we can philosophise admirably
on the vanity of life when we see funerals or walk amongst the
tombstones, we soon forget, and relapse into supine security".

Death has not only a message to bring to the Christian man, it
can actually be a means of blessing and communion with Christ.
It is the completion of the process of our mortification in Christ
which helps to complete our vivification in Christ. To die in
faith is the last act in bearing our cross with Jesus Christ in
faith. Calvin does not seem to say as clearly as Luther that death
is the fulfilment of our Baptism, but he nevertheless emphasises
that "we perish in order to be revived". Death is the way by
which Christ leads us into life in fulfilment of His purpose that
we should be like Himself in death and resurrection, and since there

(1) Serm. on Job. 1:20-2, C.O.33:97-3. Calvin goes on to
indicate that he regarded pompous funerals and magnificent
tombs as a rebellion against God. Et neantmoins on en voit
beaucoup qui bataillent contre une telle nécessité: ils
feront des sepulchres braves, ils auront des funerailles
triomphantes: il semble que telles gens veulent resister à
Dieu.

(2) Serm. on Isa. 53:11, C.O.35:663
(3) Comm. on Phil.2:27, C.O.52:41. Hoc primo fidelibus perpetuum
est: quod in morte cuiusvis de fera Dei adversus peccatum
commoneriunt.

(4) Serm. on Job 3:11-13, C.O.33:162
(6) Inst. 3:9:5
this is so our submission to death is something we have "in common with Him". "We do not die apart, but along with Christ that we may afterwards have life in common with Him". Death is our "sleep in Christ" which means that we retain in death our coniunctio cum Christo.

Death, then, and indeed our whole tendency to corruption, can be used by the Christian, in faith, almost as a sacrament to confirm our union with Christ and to further our renewal in Christ. But it is only by means of faith that death can have this use. For the unbeliever death can bring no hope and no blessing. A Christian can, however, learn throughout his life to die well as well as to live well, and by facing and using death by faith can profit as much from death as from life. He can make this poisonous thing serve him like medicine since Jesus Christ has swallowed all the poison that was there. To be able to take up

(2) Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:11, C.0.52:365
(3) Comm. on 1 Thess. 4:14, C.0.53:165
(4) Serm. on Gal. 2:20-21, C.0.50:445-6. Nous ne pourrions pas estre renouvellez pour parvenir au royaume de Dieu, sinon que nous mourions. Il nous faut toulouse tendre a cette corruption, et cependant n'estre point arrestez à ce que nous appercevons à veue d'oeil: car ce n'est qu'un ombre de cette vie terrestre, ce n'est que femme qui s'escoule et s'esvenouit: par cela meantmoins nous sommes renouvellez au dedans. Non pas que cela soit commun à tous, car les incredules appercevront assez leurs foiblesses, ils sont contraints de sentir les adournemens de la morte, surtout quand ils viennent en vieillesse, ils connoissent qu'il ne faut qu'un souffle pour les mettre bas. Sur cela ils se tempestent, et veulent quasi despiter Dieu et nature. Quoy qu'il en soit, ils ne sont pas renouvellez, combien qu'ils pourissent.
(5) Serm. on Deut. 31:14-17, C.0.23:629-30
(6) Serm. on Matt. 26:36f, C.0.46:341
up this attitude to death is to reach the stage at which we are able to "despise death". Such "contempt of death" means that a man is able to face death and the other extreme troubles of life, and to use them by faith to further his ultimate salvation. This is the greatest miracle that faith can achieve - far greater than if a man could prolong his life for five generations or recover miraculously from incurable sickness. Our Lord Himself in His teaching sought to "incite His disciples to contempt of death". Thus the horror mortis must become the contemptus mortis.

Faith in enabling us to overcome the horror of death begets in us not only a contempt of death but also a desire of death (desiderium mortis). Thus faith can "compel us eagerly to desire what nature dreads." Calvin can be very emphatic in urging us to long for death. In this matter he can employ very cold logic. To wish to die is not simply something we are permitted to do but something which is our duty. Everything should tend to strive towards the end for which it was created. But the end to which we

(1) Comm. on Ps. 16:10, C.0.31:156
(2) Comm. on Heb. 11:35, C.0.56:187
(3) Comm. on Matt. 10:28: C.0.46:283.
(4) Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:8, C.0.50:64. Observa hic...veram fidem non contemptum modo, sed etiam desiderium mortis signum esse, cum mortis horror supra epee gaudium et consolationem in nobis dominatur.
(5) Inst. 3:9:5
(6) Inst. 3:9:4
to which we must aspire is beyond. Therefore we must wish to leave this world, and to do that soon. But this longing for death must be moderated. It must not become an "unbridled passion" for we must submit quietly to the will of God "to whom we ought to live and die". Moreover, in desiring death we must be impelled by the right desire to leave the present world. We must not wish to depart merely because we hate life and are made unhappy by misfortune or sickness or poverty but because here we are held in bondage to sin, and have many imperfections and are not yet fully reformed in the image of God.

A Christian, then, will always be "ready to go" and in spite of the horror that death still holds will face it cheerfully, being able "not only to live well, but also to die happily".

(1) Serm. on Job 3:20:26, C.0.33.170
(2) Comm. on Rom. 7:24, C.0.49:135
(3) Serm. on Job 3:20:26, C.0.33:167 & 170
(5) Inst. 2.16:14; Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:1, C.0.50:60-1.
(4) Serm. on Deut. 31:14-17, C.0.28:629.
Prayer as the principal exercise of faith

Prayer as the exercise of faith
Faith is bound to express itself in prayer
All true prayer must arise from faith
Prayer is response to the grace of God in true humility and confession

Prayer and the mediation of Christ
We can approach God only through Christ
The sacrifice of Christ is the basis of His own intercession and of all our prayers
Our prayers linked up with the intercession of Christ

Prayer and the Word of God
Prayer must be a response to the Word of God.
Prayer must be controlled and formed by the Word
This is the source of true boldness in prayer

Prayer and our need
Prayer must be constantly related to our human need
Especially to our need of forgiveness

Prayer as the expression of the heart to God
Prayer is our means for disburdening our hearts before God
The outward form of prayer should express the feeling of the heart

Thanksgiving and prayer
Thanksgiving more than merely an aspect of prayer
It sanctifies the whole of life
It sanctifies all prayer
The Holy Spirit and prayer

All prayer must be inspired not only by our own natural feeling but by the Spirit. The Spirit inspires both heart and mind.

Intercession

Our prayer for ourselves must flow into prayer for the Church and for all men.

Intercession is the most powerful and practical means of expressing our love and advancing the Church and Kingdom.

Intercession means self-identification with others in our participation in the intercession of Christ.

Seeking an answer

God is the hearer and answerer of prayer.

Prayer can be spoken of as prevailing upon God.

Yet God does not vary in purpose.

Our prayers must accord to God's will though there is room for tension between us and God.

We must avoid prescribing God's way too closely.

God is free in answering our prayers.

The discipline of prayer

We are constantly discouraged by difficulties and lack of inspiration in prayer.

Therefore regular discipline is necessary.

Meditation as an aid to prayer.
"The principal exercise which the children of God have" says Calvin, "is to pray; for in this way they give a true proof of their faith". In the chapter on prayer in the Institutes he calls prayer the "perpetual exercise of faith". Prayer is the inevitable outcome of the presence of faith in the human heart, for wherever faith exists it cannot be sluggish. It is bound to break out spontaneously and immediately into prayer. By prayer, faith, as it were, "digs up those treasures which the Gospel of our Lord discovers" to its eye. Therefore prayer is nothing else but the expression of a living faith. Prayer is faith uttering the love and desire towards God which is natural to it. The same promises which give rise to faith in the heart are a constant call and challenge to prayer for their realisation, and the same Spirit who creates faith in the heart constrains the believer also to pray. The exercise of prayer is therefore sure evidence of the presence of faith but without prayer faith cannot be genuine. Moreover, the exercise of

(1) Serm. on 1 Tim.2:1-2, C.O.53:125
(2) Inst. 3:20
(4) Inst. 3:20:1-2
(5) Comm. on Ps.54:6, C.O.31:533. Docet...precatum esse ex vivo fidei sensu.
(6) Comm. on Ps.31:15, C.O.32:3 Amor enim ille et desiderium quae ex fide nascuntur, nos ad eum invocandum adducunt.
(7) Serm. on 1 Cor.10:12-14, C.O.49:648. Cf comm. on Ps.145:18, C.O.32:413
(8) Inst. 3:20:1
of prayer is given so that faith can be kept alive and active. The constant challenge and call to prayer arouses faith out of sloth and keeps it from going languid and torpid or from lying idle or dead.

Calvin admits that pagans and unbelievers may utter prayers for help and deliverance, and such prayers may be heard and answered by God even though they do not spring from faith. But this fact has no important significance for believers. Though the heathen under the constraint of their need call upon God, though they do so in a "confused and tumultuous manner". There is all the difference in the world between such an approach to God and the approach of the Christian guided and inspired by his faith and knowledge of the fatherly favour and goodness of God. True and genuine prayer is "not the mere idle lifting up of the voice, but the presentation of our petitions from an inward principle of faith". Since prayer is the testimony to our hope that we can obtain from God all that we need, then to pray without faith is to "pray dissemblingly" and is to irritate God by our distrust and insincerity. "Doubtful prayer is nothing else than mere make-belief". Therefore Calvin makes it

(2) Inst. 3:20:15
Significat propheta, nisi praecedat Dei cognitio, non posse ipsum invocari. Serm. on Eph. 1:3-4, C. O. 51:265
(6) Inst. 3:20:11
it one of his four conditions and rules of prayer that "we should be
animated to pray with the sure hope of succeeding. Elsewhere he
says that the first step of prayer is "the firm belief that our
prayers are not in vain". Our prayers must "follow the footsteps
of faith" which "goes before to illumine the way, giving us the
full persuasion that he is our Father" and opening the gate that we
may converse freely with Him. To be able to pray is a miracle. "It
is not within the power of man either to convert himself or to pray.
therefore
Prayer must be thought of as response to the forgiving grace
of God in Jesus Christ. It is an approach to God made possible only
through His initiative in coming near to men in His fatherly
forgiving love. Prayer is essentially the activity of the forgiven
within the relationship of reconciliation. It is true that we need
to pray for pardon. Indeed, according to Calvin we must not begin to
pray without pleading for forgiveness. But we pray for pardon only
because we are already sure of His pardon and have already been
caught up in His pardoning love. As with faith, so with prayer. We
pray only because God presents Himself to us with open arms to
receive us as His children. We could not possibly pray without God

(1) Inst. 3:20:11
(2) Comm. on Mark 9:22, C.0.45:495
(3) Inst. 3:20:11
(4) Comm. on Ps.18:7, C.0.31:173
(5) Comm. on Jer.29:12, C.0.38:595 (quoting Augustine)
(6) Comm. on Ps.143:10, C.0.32:405. Tam quum dicit, quia tu Deus
meus, ostendit non aliunde quam ex gratuita adoptione et
promissionibus se petere immetrandi fiduciam. Neque enim in
arbitrio nostro est facere ut sit Deus noster, donec gratis
nos praevinat.
(7) Comm. on Ps.130:4, C.0.32:335. Ut autem orando quis proficiat,
eum necesse est a gratuita peccatorum remissionem incipere.
(8) Comm. on Ps.51:9f, C.0.31:517. Imo sic habendum est, non posse
nos serio precari, ut Deus peccanti ignoscat, nisi ipsi fide
concomitans, ipsum fore placabilius. Calvin goes on to point
out that in the Lord's prayer "we...begin by addressing God as
our Father, and yet afterwards...pray for remission of sins".
Cf comm. on Isa.63:16, C.0.27:402 "Believers do not contend
God Himself being there beforehand to "anticipate us with His invitation". Before we turn to Him, He is ready to receive us, before we have our mouth opened, He has His hand stretched out ready to give us all that we need. Moreover what we say to Him we can say only as the echo of His own gracious Word of encouragement and invitation. In prayer we claim Him as our God because He has pronounced us in His Word to be His people. Our confidence in praying is inspired by the "lovely and soothing" titles with which He invests Himself in His Word and the promises to hear and answer which are always attached to His command that we should pray.

The prayer of faith will thus be the prayer of self-abasement and humility. Though faith gives rise to an approach of childlike confidence to the Heavenly Father faith is also inseparably linked up with repentance. Therefore the attitude of the believing man as he approaches God is bound to be one of fear and trembling, and his prayer is bound to be prefaced with a confession of his guilt not only for the sins of the passing day which he can call to mind but also of the sinfulness of his very nature. Therefore though believers persuaded of the paternal love of God, have no hesitation in approaching Him, they do so "not elated with supine and presumptuous security", but as "humble and abased suppliants".

Calvin from an examination of many of the prayers of the Bible
Bible proves that the confidence of the man who prays is based solely on the mercy of God; for God rejects those who imagine that there is any good either in themselves or in the service they render to Him.

Prayer can be made only in the name of Christ, and through Christ as Mediator. There can be no approach to God with any hope of that filial and familiar intercourse which we know to be the basis of prayer unless the name and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ are made the sole ground of that hope. It is only through the interposition of Christ that the throne of God’s dreadful glory and majesty is converted into a throne of grace. We are clean and acceptable in God’s sight only if we cleanse ourselves by faith in Jesus Christ and present to God the grace which has been acquired for us by His death and passion. Indeed if we wish to use the title "Father" when we speak to God in prayer, we can only do so as we have recourse to the death and passion of Christ. "In no other way then through Christ can God be called Father". Moreover we must remember that the promises of the Word which inspire our prayers and invite us to pray are all themselves sealed in the

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(1) Inst. 3:20:9-10
(2) Comm. on Ps. 16:2, C. O. 31:150 Summ. est, cum ad Deum accedimus, exuendam esse omnem confidentiam. Tam si quid penes nos esse fingimus, quia praecipuam honoris sui partem ei detrahimus, non mirum est si nos repudiat. Si vero nostra obscuria amentis per se nihil esse, nulloque prætio digna, haec humilitas quasi suffitus est boni odoris cui illis gratiam conciliat.
(3) Inst. 3:20:17
(4) Serm. on Job 1:2-5, C. O. 33:46
(5) Serm. on Deut. 21:22-3, C. O. 27:700. Ainsi, quand nous voudrons trouver Dieu propice, que nous le voudrons nommer nostre Pere (comme il faut que nous usions de ce titre), si nous le
the blood of Christ. Only, therefore, by such an approach to God through the mediation of Christ can we have any confidence in our praying. But such an approach is effective in breaking down all the barriers that might otherwise make prayer an impossible task. "We have the heart of God, says Calvin, as soon as we have placed before Him the name of His Son".

Calvin frequently speaks of our prayers as being washed in, or sprinkled with, the blood of Christ, or sanctified through the death of Christ. He speaks also of our prayers as having a connection with the intercession of Christ, and is always ready to notice in the Bible the close connection between sacrifice and prayer. In Old Testament times "when the fathers prayed..., their hope of obtaining what they asked for was founded upon sacrifices". God commanded in the law that "the priest alone should enter the sanctuary bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on his shoulders and as many precious stones on his breast, while the people stand at a distance in the outer court, and thereafter united their prayers with the priest". The sacrifice "had the effect of ratifying and confirming their prayers". As sacrifice made prayer effective in the Old Testament so the sacrifice of

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le voulons prier en vrai confiance) recourons toujours à la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ.

(1) Serm. on Deut.26:16-19, C.O.23:292
(2) Inst. 3:20:16
(5) Comm. on Ps.20:4f, C.O.31:209
(6) Inst. 3:20:18
of Christ makes His intercession for us at the right hand of God for ever effective. Calvin asserts that "the blood by which He atoned for our sins, the obedience which He rendered, is a continual intercession for us". Indeed when we think of the intercession of Christ we are not meant to imagine that Christ is continually on his knees before the Father imploring for His people, but simply that "He appears in the presence of God and that the power of His death has the effect of a perpetual intercession for us".

Since it is the intercession of Christ, then, that makes the atonement efficacious continually before God, we ourselves, in our approach to prayer in the name of Christ, in pleading the sacrifice of Christ must link up our prayers with the intercession of Christ in the same way as the people in the Old Testament linked up their prayers with those of the priest who bore their sacrifices into the sanctuary. All prayers which are not supported by Christ's intercession are rejected, says Calvin. Our prayers must not only be grounded on His sacrifice but we must at the same time be assured that it is He who is carrying the word to God for us and causing us to be heard. He presents the prayers of His people continually. Therefore Calvin insists not only that all our mutual intercessions within the Church must have reference to the one intercession of

(1) Comm. on 1 Tim.2:6, C.0.52:272 Lege quartum caput ad Hebraeos circa finem, et initium quinti: reperies quod dico, intercessionem, qua propitiatur nobis Deus, in sacrificio fundatum esse.

(2) Comm. on John 16:26, C.0.47:371 Virtus sacrificii, quo semel Deum nobis placavit, semper vigens et efficax, sanguis quo expiavit peccata nostra, obedientia cuan praestitit, continua est pro nobis intercessio.

(3) Inst. 3:20:20

(4) Comm. on Heb.7:26, C.0.55:95

(5) Serm. on Job 42:9-17, C.0.35:507 Nous serons la receus à pitié; voire quand nos craisons seront fondées sur ce sacrifice qu'il a offert, et que nous connaîtrons que c'est
of Christ upon which they are all grounded but also that our thanksgivings too can be sanctified only in connection with the sacrifice and intercession of Christ.

In order to be a genuine exercise of faith, prayer must be founded upon the Word of God. The faith that gives rise to prayer is created by the Word and is ever aroused to fresh life and vigour by listening to the promises of the Word. Through the Word God continually promises us to be His people and presents Himself so that we can lay hold of Him. This means that faith can respond "Amen" to such promises, but that the door is thrown wide open for us all to "introduce ourselves into God's favour" without subtle artifice, to seek God and to pray, not as the hypocrites or the ungodly "who pray under the constraint of present necessity", and "with a mere expectation of a chance issue", but to make a bold approach inspired by the fact that God has anticipated our fears and has given us a clear and cordial invitation, and has even commanded us to come to Him. Unless God makes such a personal and
and gracious approach to us through the Word and our confidence in prayer is a response to such a Word, none of us can have any access to the presence of God through prayer, for we must wait till He invites and calls us. "What mortal man otherwise would dare present Himself before God and say, 'Do me an obligement, and let us make a pact together to the effect that you will be my God and I will be numbered among your people?'' Such an approach could be regarded only as "diabolical boldness". Therefore there can be no access to God for any prayer that is not founded upon the Word of God.

It is necessary not only that the Word of God should precede and inspire the approach to prayer, but also that in its direction and in all its details our prayer should be governed and restrained by the same Word. We are not at liberty in this matter to follow the suggestions of our own minds, or to form our wishes according to our own fancy. We dare not ask for more than God would freely bestow. To do so would be to tempt God. In the exercise of faith, self-denial and self-control and obedience to the Word of God are always the ruling principles. "As nothing is more at variance with faith than the foolish and irregular desires

invitatae patefacta fuerit editus...Iam ergo David se
hac clave iamam sibi ad Deum cuarendum fuisse apertam
dicit...Ita nihil opus est anxium artificium et longas
ambages cuarere quibus se fideles in Dei gratiam insinuent.
Cf. comm. on Ps.65:2, C.0.31:663
Comm. on Ps.71:22, C.0.31:663
(1) Serm. on Deut.28:16-19, C.0.32:289. Cf. comm. on Ps.80:10, C.0.31:756. Quis enim in nostrum Dei conspectum proelior, donec praeventat nosipse?
(2) Comm. on Ps.119 (10th) C.0.32:601
(3) Serm. on Ps.119 (10th) C.0.32:601
(4) Comm. on Ps.35:23, C.0.31:356. Ergo ut rite composita sint vota nostra, fulgent in cordibus nostris primum necesse est fides providentiae Dei: nec tantum ordine praecedat omnes
affectus, sed etiam temperet ac dirigat.
(5) Comm. on Ps.91:15, C.0.32:9. Unde iterum patet...legitimam
precandi rationem fundatum esset in Dei verbo: quia hic nihil
desires of the flesh, it follows that those in whom faith reigns do not desire everything without discrimination, but only that which the Lord promises to give". Therefore we cannot pray in faith unless we moderate our desires and confine our prayers to what God has laid down. For in this respect the rule of prayer follows the rule of faith. The one safe rule, then, is to form our prayers only in the clear light of the Word of God, in compliance with what He has commanded, making our prayers an echo in our hearts of His promises, and not allowing ourselves to seek anything more than He has promised. Calvin frequently warns us to avoid trying to make God subservient to our own humour and caprice or ambition, to our over hasty or vague and incoherent desires, or foolish headstrong passions. "The sole end and legitimate use of prayer... is that we may reap the fruits of God's promises".

Calvin constantly recommends the use of the actual language of Holy Scripture in the prayers we utter to God. It is true that in the Lord's prayer and elsewhere the main purpose of scripture is to "guide and restrain our wishes" rather than to dictate words from

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Ref. cont'd. from previous page:

5 proprio arbitrio audendum est. Cf. comm. on John 15:7, C.0.47:341; on John 17:2, C.0.47:376 haec perpetua est orandi regula, non plus petere quam cuod utro daturus esset Deus.

Comm. on Ps.106:14, C.0.32:121-2

(1) Comm. on Matt.17:13, C.0.45:496

(2) Comm. on Ps.7:7, C.0.31:82 Nec sane aliter ex fide concinitur oratio, nisi dum in prenis respicimus quid Deus praecipit, ne temere vel fortuito prospicient animi posti ad superendum plus quam licet.

Comm. on Matt.21:21, C.0.40:335

(3) Comm. on Ps.7:7, C.0.31:82; on Ps.50:15, C.0.31:503

(4) Comm. on Ps.55:22; C.0.31:545; on Ps.7:7, C.0.31:82; on Ps.109:6, C.0.32:149; Inst.3:20:44

(5) Comm. on Ps.119:33, C.0.32:231

(6) Comm. on Ps.119:33, C.0.32:231
from which we are not at liberty to depart; nevertheless even of the Lord's prayer Calvin can say that our Lord "puts words in our lips". He recommends meditation upon the promises of Scripture so "that we may be furnished with words" for prayer. He speaks of the Holy Ghost in the psalms as "dictating" to us "forms of prayer". Such forms of prayer are "accomodated to our understanding" by the Holy Ghost. In the use by the crowd on Palm Sunday of the prayer "Hosanna" he notes that here we have a prayer originating in the Scripture and used by the Church throughout an uninterrupted succession of ages, and he urges us not only to cherish in our hearts the same desires as are expressed in the prayer but to note that God in order to stir us up to true ardour in this matter "dictates to us the words". The very fact that such forms of prayer have been inspired and put in the mouth of God's saints should be regarded as implying the promise that the use of them will not be in vain.

When it is founded upon the Word of God in the way that has been described prayer becomes characterised with true boldness. Calvin insists that we must come with our heads erect to the throne of grace and that a pusillanimous spirit defiles our prayers.

(1) Comm. on Matt. 6:9, C.0.45:195
(2) Inst. 2:20:34
(3) Comm. on Ps. 85:6, C.0.31:787. Sic anima inter precandum promissiones Dei meditari convenit, suas nobis verba summident.
(4) Comm. on Ps. 102:9, C.0.32:64. Nam spiritus sanctus hac precipendi formam dictando, testari voluit, Deum talibus contumelios moveri ut suis succurrat. Comm. on Ps. 120:20, C.0.31:446. Sciamus autem in his verbis dictari nobis a spiritu sancto precandi formam.
(5) Comm. on Ps. 13:4, C.0.31:133
(6) Comm. on John 12:13, C.0.47:232-3
(7) Comm. on Ps. 17:8, C.0.31:163 Nam quam haec precipendi forma a spiritu sancto dictata sit, promissionem in se continet.
prayers and profanes the name of God. It is the Word of God which inspires such boldness. The Word is continually encouraging us to expect from God things far greater than all our human imagination or reason can conceive, and to cease measuring the love and power of God by our own thoughts and standards. We must take His great promises seriously and let them encourage us to come to Him with all the greater boldness and do Him the honour of holding Him to what He has declared in His Word, and if He does not fulfil at first our demands we, like Moses and Abraham, must refuse to be put off; even when He seems to tell us to go away and let Him alone. "Let us learn that God in His promises is set before us as if He were our willing debtor", says Calvin. We can go to Him and with full assurance that it is not in vain require Him to behave towards us as He has promised. The very clarity of the promises given in Scripture incite us to so much more boldness. Thus it is that the same Word which inspires humility and fear in those who hear it, and which restrains the desires of the flesh and constrains to absolute submission to the will of God nevertheless at the same time inspires those who submit to it with a remarkable boldness and confidence in their approach to God. "A bold spirit in prayer", says Calvin, "well accords with fear, reverence and anxiety."

(1) Serm. on Luke 1:72-8, C.O.46:186. Il faut...que nous puissions nous presenter devant lui la teste levée, et que nous l'invocations en fiance et hardiesse, comme il est dit au 3 ch. des Ephesiens. Car sans cela aussi toutes nos prières seront souillées et n'y aura que puissance, et nous profanerons le nom de Dieu.
(2) Comm. on Ps.31:19, C.O.31:309; 10th serm. on Ps.119, C.O. 39:593; Serm. on Deut.9:13-14, C.O.26:686-8
(3) Comm. on Ps.119:58, C.O.32:240
(4) Serm. on Deut.26:16-19, C.O.28:222
(5) Comm. on Rom.8:15, C.O.49:150. Nam quo apertior est promissio, etiam major praecipi libertas.
(6) Inst. 3:20:14
Prayer must arise out of human need. "To seek when we feel the need of God's grace is nothing else but to pray". Prayer is the genuine cry of the human heart for help in the midst of circumstances that cannot be met by merely human resources. It is true that prayer must also be inspired by the Spirit of God and must be a response to the love and grace of Jesus Christ, nevertheless at the same time it must find its inspiration in our human need, otherwise it can become the mere performance of a formal devotional exercise. It is true that in all prayer the glory of God, and not the mere relief of human need must be the first motive, and yet it would defraud God of His honour did we not refer every cause and every situation in which we are involved to Him and leave Him to determine the issue. All who truly give themselves to the service of God are made to feel keenly their need of His help and are brought into such situations that only in prayer can they find relief and assurance, and only through prayer can they win the day. God thus exercises His people under a cross in order to teach them to come to the knowledge of their need and thus to pray. "No one

(1) Comm. on Jer.29:13, C.O.38:595. Quaerendi autem ratio, ubi opus habemus Dei gratia, non alia est quam precari.
(2) Inst. 3:20:6
(4) Comm. on Ps.17:1, C.O.31:159
one can give himself cheerfully to prayer until he has been softened by the cross and thoroughly subdued."

We must therefore not be ashamed of making our need the pretext and inspiration of our prayers. Indeed David made his need a chariot by which he ascended upwards to God. We must realise that the exercise of prayer is "the most effectual solace" given to us by God for all our miseries, and is to be accepted as His gift while our troubles continue. It is true that we should pray under all circumstances, however comfortable and quiet our situation. Indeed if we only realised it, our need and dependence on the grace of God under such circumstances is just as desperate as at any other time. But times of affliction are to be regarded as times when we must specially exercise ourselves in prayer. The more adverse and cruel our circumstances "the more we ought to be roused to eagerness in prayer", realising that severe affliction is a call and challenge from God to us to pray the more earnestly. "Whenever therefore we are assailed by any temptation, let us betake ourselves forthwith to prayer as to a sacred asylum".

(1) Comm. on Ps.30:9, C.0.31:297
(2) Comm. on Ps.143:6f, C.0.32:403
(3) Comm. on Ps.14:7, C.0.31:141
(4) Comm. on Ps.50:15, C.0.31:502
(5) Comm. on Ps.17:9, C.0.31:163
(6) Comm. on Ps.118:5, C.0.32:203. Circumstantia temporis cuam exprimit, admonet, cuo magis nos premunt res adversarum, tunc vero opportune esse grandi temporis.
(7) Comm. on Phil. 4:6; C.O.32:61. Summen perre viterum verbo uno perpetuit, cuod imploreaverit misericordiam Dei... Rei enim Deos i non misericordia nullus nobis, neecessitates enim nostrae sunt innumerae, unum tamen nos maxime et unice optendum, ut nostræ misericordur, unde reliques flumnt.
We must remember always in our praying that our true need before God is for forgiveness. Though we may have many other urgent needs, "the thing which we must principally and particularly request is that He will have mercy upon us, which is the source of every other blessing". The penitent man of faith before God will implore the cure of his sin and will "beware of imitating foolish patients, who anxious about curing accidental symptoms, neglect the root of the disease". Even in praying for release from the most severe affliction we must do so in "a duly chastened spirit of devotion" without any sinful complaining and with the confession of sin and the hope of forgiveness, not demanding the complete removal of the affliction but willing to be content with its least mitigation.

Calvin stresses the fact that prayer is the disburdening of the heart before God. It is a pouring out of the soul with its complaints into His bosom. God's purpose in sending us affliction is that, instead of allowing hidden sorrow to eat into our hearts

(0) Comm. on Ps. 119:58, C.O. 32:289-40
(1) Inst. 3:20:9
hearts we should unburden ourselves to Him in prayer and thus exercise our faith. All prayer, whether it takes the form of thanksgiving or supplication or confession, is thus an "effusion and manifestation of internal feeling before Him who is the searcher of the hearts." Through this exercise God seeks to enter deeply into our hearts and hold communion with the inward feelings of our mind. Only when we can disburden our souls thus into the bosom of God can we prevent detestable thoughts from entering deeply into our souls. We have all a natural tendency to shut up our afflictions in our own breasts, to suppress our fears and griefs with stoical obstinacy, to drink up our own sorrow and keep it to ourselves, to complain to our fellow-men rather than to God, and to covet retirement. All this is bad for us, and it is the mark which distinguishes the believing man from the unbeliever that he instinctively casts his burden on the Lord in prayer. It is an infallible proof, in the midst of distress, that a man has faith when he refuses sullenly to gnaw the bit or withhold his groaning from God, but will have fellowship with God over his need. Here is


(2) Inst. 3:20:29. Quando vero hunc esse orationis scopum iam prius dictum est, ut erecti in Deum animi ferantur, tum ad confessionem laudis, tum ad opem implorandum; ex eo intelligere licet primas eius partes in mente et animo positas esse: vel potius orationem ipsam, esse propriè interioris cordis affectum, qui anuid Deum, cordium acrutatorem, effunditur et exponitur.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Comm. on Ps. 73:11, C.O. 31:680
(5) Comm. on Ps. 62:2, C.O. 31:583
(6) Comm. on Ps. 143:8f, C.O. 32:403
(7) Comm. on Ps. 39:4f, C.O. 31:392
(8) Comm. on Ps. 35:2, C.O. 31:806
(9) Ibid.
(10) Comm. on Ps. 3:5, C.O. 31:54-5
is one answer to the question, why we should pray when God already knows our need before we ask Him? It is true that there is no need to inform God of what He already knows. It is superfluous to argue with Him. Nevertheless, when we willingly make God the witness of all our afflictions by pouring out our hearts before Him, "our cares are greatly lightened and our confidence of obtaining our requests increases". Calvin, pointing out the frequent repetition of the same request in prayer in one of the Psalms, can say "Nor is this repetition...to be thought vain, for hereby the saints, by little and little, discharge their cares upon the bosom of God, and this importunity is a sacrifice of a sweet savour before Him."

In prayer both the posture of the body and the words in which the prayer is expressed should be a genuine expression of what the heart either feels or wills to feel. Since in prayer we direct ourselves not to man but to God who sees the heart unerringly, therefore artificial eloquence or the rhetoric we might use successfully to impress our fellow men is entirely out of place. All that matters is "pure simplicity". It was to emphasise this

(1) Comm. on Ps. 34:4, C.C. 31:229; on Ps. 10:19, C.C. 31:116
Comm. on Ps. 10:19, C.C. 31:116. Nam usus praeandis semper notandus est; ut acilicat Deus omnium nostrorum effectuum testis sit; non quod aliqui ipsum lateant, sed quia, dum coram ipso effundimus corda nostra tantundem levantur curae nostrae, et angescit inpertendi fiducia. Cf. on Ps. 54:4, C.C. 31:532

(2) Comm. on Ps. 86:6, C.C. 31:793
(3) Comm. on John 17:1, C.C. 47:375. Cavendum est ne plus exprimant caeremoniae quam sit in animo, sed interior effectus oculos, manus, lingueum, et quiocid est impellat.

this that Jesus gave us the advice when we pray to go into our closets and shut the door and pray secretly. He did not thereby mean to teach that prayer necessarily was to be a solitary exercise, but that prayer is so much a matter of the inward secret heart before God alone that we can only be natural and spontaneous in it when we are conscious that we have no other witness than God. We should not normally, however, attempt to communicate this inward feeling of the heart to God without any outward form of expression. It is fitting, though not, of course, necessary, that the attitude of the heart should express itself in definite speech, and that it should be reflected in a posture of humility, and with the hands and eyes so directed as to indicate that our desire is that our heart should be raised to heaven from whence alone can come our help. The ideal in prayer is that the heart should "move and direct the tongue", and that the tongue should not go before the heart, and that the body should follow the mind of its own accord.  

Indeed the feeling of the heart should be so overpowering that "the

(1) Comm. on Matt.6:6, C.O.45:123. Utile quidem est fideliis, quo libereus vote sua et gemitus coram Deo effundat, subductere se ab hominum conspectu...Summa autem est, sive cuius solus, sive coram aliis precetur, hunc tenem affectum induendum esse, quasi abditus in conclave solum Deum habet testem. Cf. Inst.3:20:29

(2) Comm. on Ps.109:30, C.O.32:158. Et si enim pectus linguam praserire debet in celebrandis Dei laudibus, frigoris tenem signum est nisi lingua etiam comes accedat.

(3) Inst.3:20:33; Comm. on Ps.35:6, C.O.32:31. Hoc enim tribus verbis exprimitur, officio suo non defungi fideles, nisi palam et genu flexione et aliis signis se in sacrificium offerant.

"the tongue spontaneously breaks forth into utterance and our other members into gesture". Nevertheless there are times when the heart is cold and sluggish. At such times both the external exercise of the body and the use of the words and singing by the tongue can come to the aid of the heart, provided that the heart responds to the external ceremony and the feeling of the mind goes along with the words that are used, so that hypocrisy is avoided.

Though Calvin can often treat of thanksgiving as an aspect of prayer, he nevertheless can view it at other times as an important aspect of the Christian life worthy of independent treatment apart from anything we may say about prayer. Thanksgiving is "the chief exercise of godliness" in which we ought to engage during the whole of our life. God's whole purpose in creating us, in adorning the

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Referenced footnotes:

(1) Comm. on Ps.102:2, C.O.32:62
(2) Comm. on John 11:41, C.O.47:266-9
(3) Comm. on Matt.6:7, C.O.45:123
(4) Inst. 3:20:33
(8) Cf. e.g. comm. on Ps.50:14, C.O.31:501; Comm. on Heb.13:15, C.O.55:192-3.
the world with such a magnificent variety of beautiful and good things, and in watching over us with such careful providence is that we might be moved continually to render praise back to Him. 

God is satisfied even with the "bare and simple acknowledgement" from man that he owes every good thing to God. To omit such thanksgiving is to rob God of the honour due to His name. Where all other attempts to recompense God will fail, the gratitude of the heart is acceptable as a "singular recompense" for His love.

Calvin almost invariably refers to thanksgiving in Biblical terms as a "sacrifice of praise". In the Old Testament ritual, when the people brought sacrifices to the altar God was seeking not primarily the sacrifices themselves, but the grateful hearts of which the gifts were meant to be a sign. Under the New Covenant in Christ, since the propitiatory aspect of the sacrificial ritual has been fulfilled and abolished, mere thanksgiving offered as a sacrifice, pleases God in a way that nothing else can do. Without thanksgiving nothing can please God. He accepts all service only as it is an expression of grateful thanks for His mercy. Therefore thanksgiving sanctifies the rest of life and the rest of our service.

(1) Comm. on Ps.146:1, C.0.32:421. In hunc finem alit et sustinet suos Deus in mundo, ut toto vitae cursu se in ipso laudando exercent. Comm. on Ps.7:13, C.0.31:87; Comm. on Ps.104:31, C.0.32:96

(2) Comm. on Ps.116:13, C.0.32:193. Summa huc tendit, non esse magnopere laborandum fidelibus quomodo se libereat, cuia Deus satisfactiones non quiserit cuibus eos scit carere, sed nuda et simplici gratitudine contentus est: nam haec ista solutio est, fateri omnia illi nos debere.

(3) Comm. on Ps.109:30, C.0.32:158

(4) Comm. on Ps.104:31, C.0.32:96. Haeec gratitudo unicae compensationis loco est anud Deum, ubi debita eum laude prosequimur.

(5) Cf. comm. on Ps.50:23, C.0.31:507; on Ps.7:13, C.0.31:87; Inst. 3:20:28

(6) Comm. on Jonah 2:8-9, C.0.43:245; Comm. on Hosea 14:3, C.0.42:501.

service to God. But since it is Christ alone who offered to God the perfect sacrifice of thanksgiving we must remember that all our attempts to offer this sacrifice would be polluted if they are not sanctified by the intervention of His priesthood.

Thanksgiving sanctifies not only the rest of life but also the whole activity of prayer. We can only pray aright if our heart is pervaded by a true sense of gratitude to God, since prayer must arise from a feeling of love. Otherwise the heart will not unburden itself with true spontaneity before God. Moreover gratitude, by making the will of God the "grand sum of our desires", will sanctify the requests we make so that these are in line with what is His will. Only when our feelings are regulated and our desires restrained by thanksgiving can we avoid the fretful and morose murmuring against God, and the impatience with His slowness in answering or His refusal to grant selfish wishes, which mars the prayer life of so many. But thanksgiving is not merely a
a restraining influence in the life of prayer. It invigorates our faith and stirs us up to new fervour in prayer, to give place in our minds to the acknowledgement of God's goodness and to remember what He has done for us in the past. Through such thankful remembrance David encourages himself to good hope for the future emergencies, "and by this means opens the gate of prayer".

Even though prayer must be a genuine expression of the heart in its felt need and in its gratitude, prayer should not be dictated or inspired by merely the natural impulse of the heart. No man can pray aright through the spontaneous impulse of his own feeling. Such prayer apart from the Spirit of God is nothing more than mere heathen babble and a mockery of God. Indeed to allow our own natural impulses to direct our prayers is to seek to make God the agent of our wicked concupiscence, rather than to approach Him as our Judge. It is dangerous therefore to open our lips

(1) Comm. on Ps.85:2, C.0.32:735. Diximus autem alibi, nulla nos melius animari ad precandum, quam ubi recordamur superiores Dei gratias. Comm. on Ps.7:11, C.0.31:54

(2) Comm. on Ps.3:3, C.0.31:96; Inst.3:26:3.

(3) In. comm. on Jer.33:12. Calvin quotes Augustine: Sequitur ergo nos non proprius carnis impulsu orare, sed quum spiritus sanctus corda nostra dirigit, et quodemmodo orat in nobis.

In comm. on Rom.12:19, C.0.43:247, we are warned against praying ex privato affectu rather than ex puro spiritu zelo

(4) Comm. on Rom.8:26, C.0.43:157. Nemo sancta et pia vota sponte concineret.

(5) Ibid.

(6) Comm. on Rom. 12:13, C.0.43:247.
lips before God "unless the Spirit instruct us how to pray aright". The ability to engage in true prayer is therefore the gift of the Spirit. God must be allowed the initiative within the heart in the inspiration of prayer. "We cannot pray to God unless He anticipates us by His own Spirit." Even our very prayers for the Spirit of God to come into our hearts can only be inspired by the first-fruits of the Spirit already within us therefore should be framed as prayers for the increase of the Spirit.

The Spirit, then, helps us in the framing both of the mind and of the heart, making both "intent upon God" and regulating our requests and our affections. The Spirit of adoption is the author of the filial approach in boldness and confident hope of succeeding in our requests, that is the distinguishing mark of true prayer. It is the Spirit, too, who inspires our prayers with the ardour and earnestness which are also important characteristics of Christian prayer. It is the Spirit who moves our hearts with such fervency that they can "pierce into the very heaven". Yet "while the inspiration of the Spirit is effectual to the formation of

(1) Inst. 3:20:34
(2) Comm. on Rom.3:26, C.0.49:157. Deo exauditas, colligit tamen Paulus in ipso praecondi studio iam lucere coelestis gratiae praesentiam. Quare bene praecondi modum a spiritu dictari necesse est.
(3) Comm. on Jer.23:12, C.0.38:595
(4) Comm. on Acts 1:14, C.0.43:16.
(5) Inst. 3:20:5
(7) Comm. on Rom.3:26, C.0.49:157. Deinde corda nostra sic officiata (spiritus) ut suo ardore in coelum usque penetrant.
of prayer, it by no means impedes or retards our own efforts" and we have to discipline ourselves to wait on the Spirit in prayer. Moreover, however great or small our spiritual fervour may be, it is of the utmost importance that in prayer the mind and understand-
ing should be continually employed.

Our prayers must not be self-centred. It must arise not only because we feel our own need as a burden which we must lay upon God, but also because we are so bound up in love with our fellow men that we feel their need as acutely as our own. In this matter we must guard against the danger of becoming engrossed in our own personal sorrows which are intended by God "to admonish us to direct our concern to the whole body of the Church". We are to feel so much one with the Church in our common fate, afflictions, wrongs, rejoicings, and destiny that our prayers arising out of our personal sorrows, like those of David in the psalms, will inevitably

(1) Inst. 3:20:5; Comm. on 1 Cor.14:15, C.O.49:582....quod praecipuum est. ne mens sit otiosa. requirit (in precatioribus).
(2) Serm. on 1 Tim.2:1-2, C.O.53:125. Il s'ensuit donc que nous devons pratiquer ce moyen-ci en priant Dieu; et ne faut pas que l'on se soit adressé à sa personne, ni à ses amis particuliers; mais que nous étendions notre charité et sollicitude envers tous, et amis et rivaux, et ceux qui nous sont privés, et ceux qui nous sont inconnus....Il faut commencer par eux avec lesquels nous sommes confidents en foi....Mais....il faut aussi que nous avons pitié et compassion des nôtres incredules, qui cheminent encore en erreur et ignorance. (Here are at least the seeds of Foreign Mission enterprise!)
inevitably pass into intercession for the Church in all its afflictions. Therefore our prayers are bound always to seek to express themselves in intercession for all mankind, but especially for the whole Church not only in this generation but in generations yet unborn.

To make intercession for men is the most powerful and practical way in which we can express our love for them. "The greatest help we can give to those in need is to pray God that He will not reject them altogether". It is an outstanding sign of God's goodness to us that in saving us He not only allows us to further our own salvation by prayer but also gives us the privilege of helping others by this ministry of intercession and indeed "the higher honour of committing to God the glory of the Kingdom of Christ which is more precious than the salvation of the whole world". Thus to every Christian Christ commits the welfare of the Church by committing to him the vital task of interceding for the Church and Kingdom. It is the presence in the midst of the Church in every age of those who come before God to make intercession that continually saves the Church in each generation from perishing through the coldness and indifference of the rest of its members.

In exercising the ministry of intercession for our brethren

(1) Comm. on Ps.25:25, C.O.31:263. Hoc vero ad fidei confirmatio nem non parum valuit, quod David nihil se a toto fideli um corpore separatum habere consitens, suas patiethatum injuriam, sibi cum omnibus piis duxit esse communes, sed illa etiam tendenda ratio, ut cum sua quisque male disponat, simul etiam curas suas at vota extendat ad totam ecclesiam.

(2) Comm. on Ps.30:16, C.O.31:841
(3) Serm. on Job 3:11-13, C.O.38:137
(4) Comm. on Ps.51:20, C.O.31:523
(5) Serm. on Deut.9:13-14, C.O.26:652-3. C'est une chose desirable cu'il y ait gens entre nous qui intercedent evers Dieu, et qui le surpassent: car nous voyons la frelure qui
brothers in their need, we must feel ourselves identified with and personally involved in the need of those we pray for. We must "keep them company" in our spirits mourning with them and humbling ourselves before God with them. We must lay aside all our selfish personal considerations and "clothe ourselves with a public character." It is as members of the body of Christ sharing in the intercession and priesthood of the Head that we are inspired with love to make our intercessions. Our intercession for the Church is an echo of the continued intercession of Christ. It is our expression of our unity with one another in the body of the Church and with our great High Priest and Head. Calvin notes the picture given in Psalm 20 of the people praying that David's prayers might be heard, and he sees in it an analogy (analogia) of the relation between Christ's priestly intercession and the prayers of the Church. "Since Christ our King, being an everlasting priest, never ceases to make intercession to God, the whole body of the Church should unite in prayer with Him, and further we can have no hope of

est en la plus part. Quelquefois on un peuple, en une tont brangé multitude on ne trouvera point ou trente ou dix personnes qui ayent un droit zele pour prier Dieu...Or ceux seroit-ce si ceux-la n'estoyent a la bresche?...Et ainsi apprenons que souventfois Dieu nous esparence, d'autant qu'il y en a que nous ne cornoissons point, mesnes qui intercede pour nous....Hélas! si l'estoye seul, et si tout le monde estoit semblable à moy: cue seroit ce? Nous pourrions perir...mais...notre Seigneur ne nous veut point laisser perir, quand il ordonne gens qui viennent ainsi au devant de luy.

(1) Serm. on Job 12:11-13, C.O.33:137
(2) Comm. on Ps.79:6, C.O.31:743-50. Tenendum est...non posse in hunc modum presari nisi qui publicam personam induerint, et omisso sui respectu, curam susceperint totius ecclesiae.
(3) Inst. 3:20:19
of being heard except He go before us and conduct us "to God". But it must be asserted that our intercession within the Church is not something which we add in order to perfect or supplement the prevailing intercession of Jesus Christ. It is rather an echo within our hearts of His intercession in which we participate by the Spirit who prays within us. It is only thus that we are enabled to enter the sufferings of others in love. By sharing in the one Spirit and by allowing the prayers which the Spirit inspires to find their true echo in our hearts we find ourselves praying "each for the whole body, in common, as it were, under the person of all men". Indeed the very privilege of calling God "our Father" in prayer is given to us only as we are bound together in brotherly love within the Church.

God cannot do otherwise than answer the prayers which arise out of our human need in His service and which He Himself inspires according to the Word. On the invocation of the Psalmist, "O thou that hearest prayer" Calvin comments, "The title here given to God conveys a highly important truth. Our prayers will never be in vain. For in rejecting them God would, in a way, deny His own nature. Nor does David say that hearing prayer is something God does only on

(1) Comm. on Ps. 20:2, C.0.31:203
(2) Comm. on Acts 1:14, C.0.48:17 Christus singulos pro toto corpore, et in commune, quasi sub omnium persona orare luben: Pater noster, de nobis etc. Unde haec linguerum unitas nisi ab uno spiritu?
(3) Cf. Ibid. and comm. on Isa. 63:16, C.0.37:402
on occasion but that it is an abiding part of His glory, so that He can as soon deny Himself as become deaf to our petitions. If we could only impress it upon our hearts that it is something peculiar to God and inseparable from Him to hear prayer, our faith in prayer would never be shaken." For us to be able to pray means not only that we have open access to God but also that His hand is always stretched out to assist His people. The Old Testament examples of Elijah and Joshua defeating the enemies of the Lord and changing the order of nature by prayer are not utterly unique and exceptional instances but are, rather, vivid illustrations of a privilege that is open to us who have access in prayer to Jesus Christ.

Holy Scripture gives us authority to speak as if by prayer we can in some way prevail upon God to do things He would not have done unless we had prayed. When the Psalmist asserts that God will "gratify the desires of all those that fear Him", it is difficult to say how seriously we ought to take such an expression. "Who is man that God should show complaisance to his will?...Yet He voluntary subjects Himself to these conditions so that He can comply with our desires". "Faith will succeed in obtaining anything from the Lord, "says Calvin" because He values it so much that He is

(1) Comm. on Ps. 65:3, C.0.31:603
(2) Inst. 3:20:3
(3) Serm. on Deut. 9:13-14, C.0.26:682
(4) Ps. 145:19, Cf. Serm. on Deut. 9:13-14, C.0.26:680-1.
(5) Comm. on Ps. 145:19, C.0.32:419 Quid enim est homo, ut eius voluntati se morigerum præbeat Deus...? atqui ad hanc legem ultero se demittit ut nostris desideriis obtemperet.
is always ready to gratify our desires as far as is good for us." The parable of the importunate widow teaches men that "they ought importunately to harass God the Father till they at length wrest from Him what He would otherwise appear unwilling to give." God "wills to be, as it were, wearied out by prayers" and will give way if men persist in the exercise of prayer. Calvin makes much of the fact that God is spoken of as saying to Moses, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven". It seems to be here indicated that God is hindered by Moses prayer from giving free expression to His anger. Moses seems to be able by prayer to set bounds to God's liberty. Out of His goodness He "brings Himself so much under obligation (s'oblige) to pur prayers and supplications that they are like obstacles to His wrath, that where at times He would cause everything to perish yet if we will come and humiliate ourselves before Him it is as if He were changed".

Yet, to say such things is simply to use analogies suitable to our crudity and weakness. God does not vary in purpose. He is not subject to changes in passions and attitudes. He does not go back on what He has previously decided. In using such language, then

(1) Comm. on Matt.15:28, C.0.45:460. Fides quidvis impetret a Domino, quia tanti eam aestimat, ut semper paratus sit votis nostris quoad expedit morem gerere.
(2) Comm. on Luke 18:1-8, C.0.45:416
(3) Ibid.
(4) Deut. 9:14.
(5) Serm. on Deut.9:13-14, C.0.26:630-1.
then, He is humiliating Himself to speak in our way. He wants us to understand that "He has made a pact with us that when we shall require it He will accomplish all that we ask so that we can always feel that He has willed to accord to our will and desire". We must not therefore imagine that by our prayers "we gain a victory over God and bend Him slowly and reluctantly to compassion".

If our prayers are thus to prevail with God they must be according to His will. "The first thing requisite in prayer is consent to the Will of the Lord, whom our desires in no way hold in bonds". In this matter of prayer God is the One who takes the initiative by His Word. He is always there before us, calling us to Himself, and our prayers are simply a summing up of His promises. Therefore there is nothing more blasphemous than for us to try to give the naturally corrupt and unruly desires of our hearts loose rein in prayer. In this, as in every aspect of the Christian life, the flesh must be subdued, and the desires of the heart must be moderated and inspired by the Spirit, for then our desires become the work of His Spirit and He will not reject them. It is if we are satisfied with the enjoyment of God alone that He literally

(1) Serm. on Deut. 9:13-14, C.O.26:680-1
(4) Serm. on Deut. 26:16-19, C.O.28:291
(5) Comm. on Ps. 145:19, C.O.32:419
literally bestows upon us all that we shall desire. He is always ready to direct the hearts of His people into prayers that are according to His will. There is, nevertheless, room in prayer for tension between the human will and the will of God. There can be "a kind of indirect disagreement" with the will of God which is free from guilt and regarded as blameless. Calvin gives, as an example of this, our prayers that the Church may be flourishing and peaceful when, indeed, it pleases God to make it quite otherwise.

In praying for those things that we know are God's will for us and for this world, we must be careful not to specify too closely the means God should use in answering our prayers and the exact manner and time in which His answer should come. It is often when we try to prescribe the way in which the Kingdom of God should advance that we fall into error in our praying. For though God always answers our prayers for salvation and for deliverance in real need, He does not always answer in the way that we seek His answer. Sometimes, indeed, God does not grant even what we ask for we do not always pray aright in this respect, but nevertheless in hearing even

(1) Comm. on Ps.37:4, C.O.31:368
(2) Comm. on Ps. 10:17, C.O.31:119
(3) Comm. on Luke 22:39, C.O.45:722...esse temen quandam obliquae dissensionis speciem, quae culpa caret, nec in peccatum imputatur. In Inst.3:20:15 Calvin notes that in Holy Scripture there are cases where the prayers of men were not in perfect accord with God's will, and yet God complied to them (Judges 9:20; 16:28). This is exceptional and cannot be made a general rule for believers - yet it demonstrates the mercy of God. Other cases where e.g. Abraham, Samuel, Jeremiah (Gen.13:23; 1 Sam.15:11; Jer.33:16) uttered with true faith rejected prayers "without any instruction from the Word of God" are more difficult. God regulates events so that even such prayers are not in vain, but we must not imitate such prayers.
(4) Comm. on 2 Cor.12:8, C.O.50:140-1
even such prayer He finds a way to help us and thus we obtain from Him as an answer more than we would have had had He fully granted our original request. It is therefore often out of love for us that He crosses our wrong desires by His refusals to answer our prayers or gives us a different answer than we had expected. In thus refusing us the answer, He is indeed truly hearing and answering our prayers, for it is only to the wicked and perverse that God sometimes yields in His wrath the exact answer their flesh seeks - and to their own damnation!

God may make us wait until He answers our prayers, or at least till we realise that He has heard and is answering. "The actual facts do not all at once make it evident that He is sympathetic to our prayers. Yet even though the answer may be long delayed God will never allow the faith of His servants to faint or fail, nor does He allow them to desist from praying, He thus "holds them to Himself until it actually appears that their hope has been neither vain nor ineffectual". Therefore even if God seems to be inexorable towards us we must not imagine that He will act contrary to His real character or that He is fickle in His purpose. We must believe if we are to receive. If our prayers are according to His Word, His Word cannot but effect its own fulfilment.

(1) Comm. on Heb. 5:7, C.0.55:63
(2) Comm. on Ps. 78:26, C.0.31:731
(3) Comm. on Luke 18:1-8, C.0.45:416
(4) Comm. on Ps. 10:17, C.0.31:119
(5) Comm. on Ps. 25:6, C.0.31:253
(6) Comm. on Ps. 6:9-11, C.0.31:78
(7) Serm. on Luke 1:36-8, C.0.46:95
For a Christian to pray as he ought requires hard effort and discipline, and a firm resolve not to be discouraged by the many difficulties men experience in trying to pray. We will not pray unless we make ourselves pray, in spite of our feelings. If we were left to our own inclination in this matter our prayer life would die out. Even affliction, which should drive us to our knees and stimulate us in prayer, can have the contrary effect and can stupify us and render us prayerless unless we "stir up our minds to pray". We will be constantly tempted to look on our prayers as fruitless. Even in the act of praying we will have to confess this feeling of the flesh and the doubts that arise in our minds. Even in the series of unrelievedly hopeless lamentations and murmurings of the 88th Psalm Calvin finds a true example of a prayer of faith and an illustration of what Paul means in Rom.8:26 for the psalmist could not have prayed in this way had he not believed. We must believe that such feelings do not in any way render our petitions inefficacious for if we confess them they are forgiven and do not defile our prayers.

Since all this is so, we must make all the more strenuous efforts in the midst of our perplexity and heaviness of heart to

(1) Comm. on Ps.55:18, C.O.31:542
(3) Comm. on Ps.145:18, C.O.32:419
(4) Comm. on Ps.38:22-3, C.O.31:395
(5) Comm. on Ps.88:15-19, C.O.31:810
(6) Comm. on Ps.44:24, C.O.31:448
to break through such obstacles in our approach to God. Under these circumstances it is good that, as in public worship, we observe particular and fixed hours for our secret devotions. Making such rules can save our prayer life from dying out. We must pray even though we feel no inspiration whatever to do so. We must not make it an excuse for our sloth that we are waiting for the Holy Spirit to inspire us - "as if we were to leave the office of prayer to the Holy Spirit"! Even if the Word of God should be silent - a distressing experience! - we must not be discouraged from engaging in prayer. Nor must we be discouraged by distracting thoughts gradually stealing our attention in the midst of prayer - especially when we are in trouble. We need not expect that when we enter to prayer our faith will always "immediately penetrate to heaven", for faith can lose its liveliness and yet still remain living faith. We must learn to persevere even though there are no clear signs that God is immediately taking us back into His favour. Even though we are disappointed in our expectations in our prayer we can at least carry on making known to God our perplexities about our very prayers - unburdening even this burden into His bosom. We must remember that we have never any excuse for refusing to pray. We may by unfortunate circumstances be deprived of the use of the Sacraments or of the privileges of public worship, but the privilege

(1) Comm. on Ps. 61:1-3, C.0.31:581
(2) Comm. on Ps. 55:17-18, C.0.31:542
(3) Onst. 3:20:5
(4) Comm. on Ps. 77:8-9, C.0.31:714
(5) Comm. on Ps. 89:47-8, C.0.31:829
(6) Comm. on Ps. 85:6, C.0.31:787
(7) Comm. on Ps. 22:3, C.0.31:222
privilege can never be taken from us of communicating thus with heaven by the way which has been opened up for ever by the blood of Christ. Even when paralysed by our sense of guilt we will find forms of prayer in Holy Scripture which can give boldness and hope to those in the most desperate of such conditions. We must not allow any feeling that God has rejected us hinder us from having recourse to prayer.

In the midst of our prayers we must struggle with wandering thoughts "In this matter we must labour the more earnestly the more difficult we experience it to be". Calvin recognises the value of our Lord's own example in removing Himself from all the interruptions that could easily have destroyed the ardour of His prayers. He makes helpful practical suggestions in His frequent exhortations to meditation as an incentive to prayer, and as a means of helping us to persevere in prayer. He notes how in the Psalms the "continuity of prayer is broken" and the prayers are often punctuated by meditations on various aspects of God's nature. David "intermingles his prayers with meditations for the comfort of his own soul". Such meditation can "reanimate our languid minds with new vigour" "As one must frequently lay on fuel to preserve a fire, so the exercise of prayer requires the aid of such helps."

(1) Comm. on Ps.61:1-3, C.O.31:581
(2) Comm. on Ps.80:6, C.O.31:756
(3) Comm. on Ps.44:3, C.O.31:437
(4) Inst. 3:20:5
(6) Inst.3:20:13
(7) Comm. on Ps.57:4, C.O.31:556; on Ps.7:11, C.O.31:84
(8) Inst.3:20:13. Cf. comm. on Ps.7:10, C.O.31:84
(9) Comm. on Ps.25:8, C.O.31:254
Assurance, boldness and stability

Assurance necessary for living the Christian life

The basis of our assurance is to be found in the forgiveness of sins

Evidence of good works a further help to assurance yet the works of believers require justification

Assurance should be characterised by boldness and joy before God

Such assurance is accompanied by courage before earthly danger and care

The Christian is sensitive to danger and care but constantly overcomes his fears

We must beware of presumption and carelessness

Faith in the Word gives us stability by raising us "above the world" to the heavenly realm where Christ is exalted

Our assurance will express itself in liberty of conscience and will maintain liberty of conscience over against every attempt to bring it under bondage to scrupulosity or law
The Christian life can be lived only if we have assured consciences and are certain that God is propitious to us and that our lives are accepted by Him. Calvin often dwells on the necessity of our being first assured, if we are to be wholehearted in our response to Jesus Christ. It is only when we have lost all anxiety on our own account that we can be wholehearted in sacrificing ourselves for the service of God. Men follow Christ most readily when they cease to have to care for themselves and realise that Christ "takes care of those who neglect themselves to follow Him". It is the assurance that we are in the hands of the Good Shepherd, and that love and self-sacrifice bring their own reward that alone can prevent men from reacting with revenge when others offend them. It is the assurance that God will provide for all our needs if we deprive ourselves of financial security that can alone make us truly open-handed in our Christian liberality. "What makes us more close-

(1) Serm. on Luke 1:72-8, C.0.46:185 Les fideles s'adonneront à craindre Dieu quand ils seront assurez. Car de fait, cependant que nous sommes en trouble, et agitez assavoir si Dieu nous sera propice ou non, et si nos services luy seront agradables ou non, cependant donc que nous serons en tel brenle, il faut que nous soyons esgardez quant et quant et que nous quittions le service de Dieu.
(2) Comm. on John 6:2, C.0.47:131
(3) Serm. on Job 42:5-17, C.0.35:507-8.
close-handed than we ought to be is - that we look too carefully and too far forward in contemplation of the dangers that may occur -

that we are excessively cautious and careful - that we calculate too narrowly what we will require during our whole life - or, in short, how much we lose when the smallest portion is taken away. The man that depends upon the blessing of the Lord has his mind set free from these trammels and has at the same time his hands opened for beneficience".

Moreover, no matter how good an action may be in itself, it is spoiled if it is done with an uncertain or doubting conscience. "Every work, however excellent and glorious it be, if it is not grounded upon a right conscience is counted for sin. . . . Wavering and doubtfulness corrupt all our actions". Tranquillity of mind and conscience alone can be the basis of the true worship of God. Without it the whole of faith and religion falls to the ground. Those who "fluctuate in uncertainty between hope and fear" can never sincerely and honestly obey God, however anxiously they may labour to do so.

But such assurance can come to us only by the constant

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor. 8:2, C.0.50:96
(2) Comm. on Rom. 14:23, C.0.49:268-9; Cf. comm. on 1 Cor. 3:7, C.0.49:433 Sicut enim operum bonitas ex timore Dei et conscientiae rectitudine manat.
(3) Comm. on Luke 1:74, C.0.45:49 Significat enim, non posse nisi tranquillis animis rite Deum coli.
(5) Comm. on Luke 1:74, C.0.45:49. In this context Calvin emphasises the necessity of cheerfulness in carrying out the service of God. Cf. comm. on Ps. 130:4, C.0.32:335; comm. on Luke 1:74, C.0.45:49.
constant exercise of faith in the forgiveness of sins. Every Christian man must admit that his Christian life even on its highest reaches is hopelessly spoiled and distorted by sin. Even his best works, which may be inspired and carried out under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, apparently with the whole consent of all his heart, are nevertheless impure in the sight of God and could be totally rejected by Him. No Christian can love the Lord with all his mind and heart and soul and strength. Even our best prayers need to be pardoned. At our best we are unprofitable servants. We need therefore constantly to lay hold by faith of the comfort and assurance that the continual pardon of God can give us. "Those are grossly mistaken "says Calvin, who conceive that the pardon of sin is necessary only to the beginning of righteousness. As believers are every day involved in many faults, it will profit them nothing that they have once entered the way of righteousness, unless the same grace which brought them into it accompany them to the last step of their life. The conflict with despair fought under such a sense of

(1) Comm. on Matt. 6:24, C.O. 45:208
(2) Serm. on Job 10:16-17, C.O. 33:499. Serm. on Luke 1:5-10, C.O. 46:20-1. Et mesme qu'on prennne les meilleures oeuvres des fideles, si est-ce qu'on ne trouvera pas qu'il y ait une telle purete qu'il est requis, car jamais n'aiment Dieu de tout leur coeur, et de toutes leurs pensees et affections, d'autant qu'ils ne se peuvent despouiller de beaucoup d'infirmitez. Il est vray qu'ils tendront a Dieu d'un desir rond et entier: mais quoi qu'il en soit, il y a tousjours a redire, tellement que tout ce que nous pourrons faire, ie di mesmes par la vertu de l'Esprit de Dieu, tout cela sera comme entache de quelque macule, et Dieu n'en accepteroit rien, quand il le voudroit iuger a la rigueur. Cf. comm. on Ps. 32:1, C.O. 31:315; comm. on Rom. 7:18, C.O. 49:132; serm. on 1 Cor. 10:3-6, C.O. 49:606.
(3) Comm. on Ps. 89:47, C.O. 31:830;
(4) Serm. on Isa. 53:11, C.O. 35:666
(6) Comm. on Ps. 32:1, C.O. 31:317
of the sinfulness of our being and our works is not won merely through one battle. It is a war that continues all our days and in which we need a continual recourse to the repeated promises of forgiveness in the Word of God.

There is, however, a state of assured "integrity of conscience" which we can be helped to attain by the signs of divine favour towards us that are manifested in our own good works. Our assurance must first be "founded, built up and established" on the mercy of God alone. But it can be "further established" when we review ourselves before God and find evidence of God's dwelling and reigning within us in the works he has enabled us to do. Purity of life can be to us a true evidence and proof of election, for the righteousness which God gives us does not always remain buried in our hearts but our newness of life is testified by good works. But all such evidence is "an inferior aid, a prop to our faith, not a foundation on which it rests.

Calvin finds this "consciousness of purity before the Lord", which arises from the evidence of God's regenerating work in the heart, referred to in the Psalms where the Psalmists in the midst of

(1) Ibid. p.316.
(2) Inst. 3:14:18-19 Conscientiae innocentia
(3) Inst. 3:14:18
(4) Comm. on Pet. 1:10, C.0.55:450
(5) Comm. on 1 John 3:7, C.0.55:334
(6) Comm. on 1 John 3:19, C.0.55:341-2; Inst. 3:14:19
(7) Inst. 3:20:10
of persecution and danger find their own good conscience to be a great comfort and strength. This confidence (fiducia) or consciousness of integrity (conscientia probitatis or integritatis) is the basis of their ability to pray to God and of all their assurance in their prayers that God will vindicate their cause in judgment between them and their enemies.

When he examines his own works, however, the Christian must find comfort in the fact that God continually justifies not only the persons of believers but also their works. "Even our works are reckoned as righteous before God". The same gratuitous imputation of righteousness which covers over the evil that resides in our persons also covers over the evil that is always inherent in our

(2) Comm. on Ps.7:5-6, C.O.31:81; on Ps.54:2-3, C.O.31:532; on Ps.71:4, C.O.31:655; on Ps.17:1-2, C.O.31:158-9. As to the question "how can David boast of his own integrity before God, when in other places he deprecates God entering into judgment with him?" Calvin finds the answer "easy". (Comm. on Ps.7:8-9, C.O.31:83) When David boasts of his integrity he is not thinking of his whole life but merely comparing himself with his enemies in the matter on hand. (Ibid. & Inst.3:20:10; 3:14:18) It is the justice of their cause rather than their persons that they are pleading and boasting of. (Comm. on Ps. 25:21, C.O.31:262) Moreover they think of themselves in the light of the free grace & electing love of God who in spite of their sins declares them to be among His children. (Comm. on Ps.139:23, C.O.32:386; Inst.3:20:10.
(3) Comm. on Gen.7:1, C.O.23:129. Ita non modo fideles amat, sed eorum cuoque opera. Notandum temen est, quia semper aliquid vitii haeret in operibus, non posse probari nisi cum indulgentia.
our works. God does not examine our works according to the "severe rule of the law." His attitude to our works is rather like that of the father who is pleased to watch and accept what his little child tries to do even though it be of no practical value. "He looks not so much on our works as upon His grace in our works," and in accepting them as righteous He acknowledges and receives the gifts which proceed from His own grace. Not only does God accept our works as righteous but actually rewards us for them as if they were worthy of such reward, though such reward proceeds not from our merit but from His undeserved grace. Believers even in offering God such imperfect works, if they sincerely desire to serve God in spite of their sins and in the midst of their self-dissatisfaction are reckoned as keeping the commandments of God and are looked on by Him.

(1) Comm. on Gen.15:6, C.0.23:214 Castearum ut bona eorum opera Deo placent, ea quoque ipsa justificari gratuitala imputatione oportet.
(2) Comm. on Rom.6:14, C.0.49:112.
(3) Serm. on Job 10:16-17, C.0.33:499. Si est-ce que toutes les bonnes oeuvres... tant s'en faut qu'il y ait dignité ou merite... qu'il n'y ait cu'infection. Voire, mais Dieu les reçoit, Ouy, comme un pere recevra ce qui procede de son enfant, encore qu'il ne vaille rien.
(4) Comm. on Heb.6:10, C.0.55:74.
(5) Ibid & comm. on Gen. 7:1, C.0.23:129.
(6) Comm. on Ps.18:21, C.0.31:180. Respondeo, mercedis nomine non ostendit quid Deus nobis debet, ideoque perperam et falso meritem vel operum dignitatem ex eo colligi, sic enim Deus iustus iudex cuique retribuit secundum sua opera, ut tamen omnes sibi teneat obmoxios, nemini vero sit ipse adstrictus. Ratio est non ea solum quam Augustinus reddit, nullem eum justitiam in nobis invente cui praemium reddat, nisi quam gratis donavit: sed etiam quia operum nostrorum maculis ignoscens, injustitiam imputat quod iure respuere posset. In this discussion Calvin in the citations given in the two previous notes also acknowledges his debt to Augustine.
Him as unbelievers or hypocrites who seek to serve two masters. It must be emphasised, however that at the same time as we comfort ourselves in this undeserved liberty to walk and work before God with such boldness, we must nevertheless at the same time groan within ourselves at the compromise in which we are involved and continually detest ourselves taking care to yield to God as much as is in us the wholehearted and pure devotion of our hearts.

Calvin teaches that the Christian should be bold and joyful in his assurance before God. Faith which begins with reliance on the promises of God should develop in two further stages into confidence (fiducia) and boldness (audacia). Confidence is the possession of a peaceful and good heart and mind. Boldness is the power to "banish fear and to come with firmness and boldness into the presence of God". This development is less in some men than in others but it must in some measure take place in all. Faith must inevitably produce these "effects and fruits". "Faith cannot be without a settled peace of mind from whence proceeds the bold confidence of rejoicing". But boldness must be carefully distinguished from pride,


(2) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.0.35:135; serm. on Deut. 26:16-19, C.0.28:285.

(3) Comm. on Eph. 3:12, C.0.51:183-4. Cf. serm. on Deut. 26:16-19, C.0.28:289-90. Par la foi que nous avons en Jesus Christ, la confiance nous est donnée avec audace ou hardiesse de venir à Dieu.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Comm. on Heb. 3:6, C.0.55:32. Here Calvin says that the duo perpetui fidei effectus are fiducia et gloriatio referring also to Rom. 5 and Eph. 3.
the pride, for it is/boldness of one who is at the same time humble enough to receive without question whatever God speaks. It must also be distinguished from the foolish religious presumption that makes men careless and prayerless for it stirs men up to pray and to seek help from God. The "nature of evangelical peace" is "widely different from a stupified conscience, from false confidence, from proud boasting, from ignorance of our own wretchedness. It is a joyful calmness (serena tranquillitas) which leads us to seek the face of God as something we desire and love rather than to dread it." This assurance and boldness before God will tend to express itself also in fearlessness before earthly danger. Even the daily life of the ordinary man is full of such dangers that if they were faced frankly we would be appalled by fear and life would be miserable indeed, for fear and worry destroy happiness. But... "we obtain by knowing the love of God towards us, a peaceful calmness beyond the reach of fear". In the midst of all persecution and danger we can be upheld by "the testimony of a good conscience". Calvin insists

(1) Serm. on Deut.26:16-19, C.0.28:289-90
(2) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:12-14, C.0.49:647-3
(3) Comm. on Eph. 2:18, C.0.51:174
(4) Inst.1:17:10; Comm. on John 7:30, C.0.47:176
(5) Comm. on Ps.16:9, C.0.31:155-6 Scimus praecepium beatae vitae caput esse εὐθυμίας, sicuti nihil infelicius est cuam inter varias curas et pavores aestuare.
(6) Comm. on John 5, 4:18, C.0.55:358
(7) Comm. on Ps.69:4-5, C.0.31:638
insists that the Christian can overcome fear and worry. Faith and prayer, he asserts can give us the "peaceful and undisturbed state of a well regulated mind". The light of divine providence can enable us to overcome not only the extreme fear and anxiety which once oppressed us but also "all care".

But this freedom from fear and worry in no way means insensibility to the fears and worries of life. It is the assurance who in the midst of his fears and cares is enabled to cast them upon God that though he still feels them acutely he is now in no way dominated or controlled by them. When the Psalmist says "what time I am afraid I will trust in thee", "he makes no pretension to that lofty heroism of one which confidently despises all danger" but he admits his fear at the same time as he confesses his confidence in God. The dangers of life are such that for a man to claim in literal truth that he had no fear at all in his heart would be more an indication of insensibility than of virtue. Only the unbelieving man wrapping himself up in "carnal security" and sleeping the sleep of death can claim himself thus devoid of

(2) Inst. 1:17:11. At ubi lux illa divinae providentiae semel homini pio affulsit: iam non extrema modo, qua ante perebatur, anxietate et formidinesed omni cura relevatur ac solvitur.
(4) Comm. on Ps.56:3-4, C.O.31:548
(5) Comm. on Ps.27:3, C.O.31:272 Porro se promuntionis securum fore, non prorsus a metu se eximit: (quod magis stupori tribuendum esset, quam virtuti) sed opponit fidei clypeum, ne objectis terroribus cor suum succumbat.
of fear. When the men of the Bible claimed that they were not afraid, on the other hand, what they meant was that "fear is not so expelled but that it ceases to assail our minds, but it is so expelled that it does not torment us nor impede that peace which we obtain by faith". Calvin points out that David, in the 23rd Psalm when he said "I will fear no evil" could not have meant that he would be devoid of all fear, "For thy staff and crook comfort me... What need would he have had of that consolation if he had not been disquieted and agitated with fear?"

The "fearlessness" of the Christian man then, means simply constant victory in the struggle against anxiety and distrust in various degrees. Since we have always to struggle with the flesh, we never get beyond the need to resist fear as we never get beyond the need to resist the fears that arise within our hearts, or beyond the need continually to listen to the Word of God when it commands us not to fear. In this conflict, then we are never free from fear, but can always rise above fear to such an extent that we

(1) Comm. on Ps.23:4, C.0.31:240
(2) Comm. on 1 John 4:18, C.0.55:358. Ergo non ita pellitur timor, quin animos nostros sollicitet: sed ita pellitur, ut non turbet, neque impediat pacem nostram quam fide obtinemus.
(3) Comm. on Ps.23:4, C.0.31, C.0.31:240.
(4) Comm. on Ps.27:1, C.0.31:271. Discamus ergo tanti facere Dei virtutem ad nos servandos, ut ad profiliandos omnes metus praevaleat: non quod in hac carnis infirmitate a pavore semper intactae sint fidelium mentes, sed quia statim recepto vigore ex alta fiduciae arce pericula omnia despicimus. Cf. comm. on John 7:30, C.0.47:176; on Ps.46:2-3, C.0.31:461.
(5) Serm. on Deut.7:13-24, C.0.26:561. Et là dessus il ajoute: Tu ne craindrás point; comme s'il disoit: Il est vrai que votre nature sera tousjours timide; mais tant y a qu'il ne vous faut point craindre; il vous faut resister à une telle crainte. (Calvin in this sermon reminds us that the very presence of such fear in the heart is sinful: Tousjours ceste crainte est à condamner. Car regardons la source: si nous avions une foy parfaite en nostre Dieu, elle seroit pour abolir toute crainte.)
we can speak of fear and trembling as being banished from our hearts. Yet it is an extremely hard conflict. There is "nothing more difficult" than for men either to attain or preserve peace of mind when they are so constantly agitated in heart by their sense of misery and subject to so many dangers.

Here, again, we must beware lest our boldness should degenerate into pride and presumption. God's promises are such that if we add faith to them we are bound to be made bold. Indeed, if we tremble, it is a sign that we do not know Him. Yet on the other hand believers must "guard against that stupidity which shakes off all anxiety and fills their mind with pride and extinguishes the desire to pray". The middle course between two faulty extremes Calvin finds "very beautifully expressed" by Paul in the text "Work fear and trembling for it is God that worketh in you". (Phil.2:12) Calvin refers to the stability or magnanimity which faith in the Word gives to the believing man in face of the changes and adversities of life, that are bound to bring despondency and ruin to

2 Comm. on Ps.37:3, C.O.31:366
3 Serm. on Deut.20:2-9, C.O.27:609
4 Comm. on Matt.26:33, C.O.45:715
to the faithless. "The world turns round as it were upon a wheel, by which it comes to pass that those who were raised to the very top are precipitated to the bottom in a moment. But the Kingdom of Judah and the Kingdom of Christ of which it is a type are excepted. But let us remember that those only can depend on this stability who betake themselves to the bosom of God by an assured faith".

Faith may become disconcerted and alarmed in the midst of the instability of the present state of the world but it is never shaken, for the confidence which men place in God enables them to rise above all care. Calvin finds that Holy Scripture "sets heaven in opposition to this earth". In contrast to the confusion and turmoil of this present world faith can see and penetrate the heavenly realm which cannot be seen by sense or reason but where Christ is glorified and God reigns over all things in perfect order. By faith, then, (and also by means of the Word and Sacraments) our souls are enabled to rise up beyond this world to make contact with the invisible and transcendental realm into which Christ has been exalted, in which we are to seek Him spiritually, not with carnal sense, and through contact with which Christ is present with us. Faith is indeed the

(1) Comm. on Ps. 21:7-8, C.C. 31:216
(2) Comm. on Ps. 112:7, C.C. 32:175
(3) Comm. on Ps. 119:29, C.C. 32:253
(6) Cf. e.g. comm. on John 14:18, C.C. 47:330-1; on John 6:63, C.C. 47:160
the lifting up of the heart above the world and very heaven itself to Christ alone who is above all things.

It is through its ability thus to "rise above the world" that faith can always conquer unbelief and the temptation to despair. The faith that has risen above the world finds adequate strength in the Word of God to keep itself supported firm. "If faith reach to heaven" says Calvin, "it will be an easy matter to emerge from despair". This is true no matter how profound the depths of adversity in which we have been plunged. In such circumstances faith can not only sustain us, but lift us to God. By faith itself we are enabled to "withdraw from the present aspect of things lest the miseries by which we are surrounded should shake our faith.

It is because faith is founded on the unchangeable Word of God that its possession imparts stability. Since the truth of God's word is "settled in heaven" and therefore independent of the changing conditions and disorders of earth, the Word enables the believer to share in the stability of the Word which far transcends that of this present world. It is for this reason that Calvin can speak of the faith which relies on the Word as rising "above the whole world" so as to fix its anchor in heaven, and of the light of the Word and Spirit as enabling our minds to emerge out of the midst of the darkness above the world.

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:8, C.O. 55:214
(2) Comm. on Ps. 119:90, C.O. 32:254
(3) Comm. on Ps. 119:87, C.O. 32:252
(4) Comm. on Ps. 69:2, C.O. 31:638
(6) Comm. on Ps. 119:89, C.O. 32:253. Quia periculum erat ne suspensae haerent piorum animae si veritatem proponeret in mundo, ubi variae sunt agitationes, eam in coelis locans, domicilium attribuit nullis mutationibus obnoxium... Nan Petro interprete, 1 Petr. 1, 24 significat salutis certitudinem in
verbo esse quae rere: ideoque perperam facere cui in mundo subsidunt: quia verbi Dei firmitas mundi naturam longe transcendit.

(7) Comm. on John 20:29, C.0.47:445
(8) Comm. on Heb. 11:1, C.0.55:144
The assurance which we have through faith will express itself in liberty of conscience. We dare not do anything against our conscience. Even if a thing is not evil in itself, we cannot allow ourselves to do it or think it if it be in opposition to conscience. "God would have us try or attempt nothing but what we know is agreeable to Him. Whatever therefore is done with a doubting conscience is in consequence of doubts of that kind faulty in the sight of God. And this is what He says, (Rom.14:23) 'Whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Hence the truth of the common saying, that those build for hell who build against their conscience.' To take a step in opposition to conscience is to be "on the high road to ruin". To violate conscience even in apparently insignificant matter is to destroy our faith, for so closely is faith bound up with conscience that Calvin can say that faith is of itself goodness of conscience.  

But this means that a Christian will refuse to allow his conscience to be brought into bondage to anything other than the Word of God. A good conscience, according to Calvin is integrity of heart before God, conscience being that which "stands between God and man, not suffering man to suppress that which he knows in himself". By our conscience, then, we are not

(1) Comm. on 1 Cor. 8:11, C.0.49:435. Scopus enim, quo tendere nos tota vita convenit, est Domini voluntas. Hoc ergo unum est quod omnes actiones nostras vitiat, dum in eam impingimus: id fit non externo solum opere, sed etiam cogitatione animi, dum nobis quidquid permittimus repugnante conscientia, etiam si id per se malum non sit.
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor. 8:7, C.0.49:433.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 8:11, C.0.49:435.
(4) Comm. on Phil. 2:3, C.0.52:18. O bona conscientia, quantum polles ac vales! Bonae autem conscientiae fundamentum est fides: imo ipsa est conscientiae bonitas.
(5) Comm. on 1 Tim. 1:5, C.0.52:253-4. Inst. 3:19:15.
bound to our fellow man in any direct manner, but strictly speaking only to
God. Yet we are tempted constantly to allow this direct relationship
between our conscience and God to become distorted by other factors and
thus to allow our conscience to be brought into bondage.

The problem of maintaining liberty of conscience presents itself in an
acute form when we are dealing with the use of things which are neither good
or bad in themselves and about which God has left us an entirely free
choice either to use and enjoy or to deny ourselves "things which God has
put in our own power, but in the use of which we ought to observe moder-
ation". Calvin calls such things "indifferent" or "external" or "inter-
mediate". To guard our consciences against coming into bondage to men or
to our own selves by developing scruples about such outward things is, for
Calvin, a most important aspect of our struggle for Christian liberty.

(1) Calvin points out that Scripture at times speaks as if by our conscience
we were directly bound to our fellow men. e.g. in Rom. 13:5, 1 Tim. 1:5,
Acts 24:16. But he insists that in those instances Scripture is speaking
loosely rather than strictly, indicating that "the fruits of a good conscience
go forth and reach even to men". Properly speaking, conscience refers to
God only. Inst. 3:19:16. Cf. comm. on 1 Cor. 10:29, C.0.49:470.
(2) Inst. 3:19:7,8,16. Serm. on Gal. 2:6-8; C.0.50:377-8. Comm. on 1 Cor.
8:1, C.0.49:428. Res medias voco, quae nec bonae sunt per se, nec mala,
sed indifferentes; quas Deus potestati nostrae subiecit. Sed in usu
debeamus modum servare, ut discrimen sit inter libertatem et licentiam.
Cf. serm. on 1 Cor. 10:19-24, C.0.49:680. Il nous faut user sobrement de
nostre liberté en toutes choses qui sont moyennes, et esquelles (comme on
dit) il n'y a ne bien ne mal.
(3) Serm. on Gal.5:1-3, C.0.50:658-9, Voilà donc comme nous sommes
affranchis, c'est en connoissant que Dieu nous reçoit à merçi au nom de
nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ.....Il y a pour le second, que nous ne soyons
point agités de costé et d'autre pour faire scrupule de tout ce que les
hommes auront inventé en leur teste; mais qu'il nous suffise de cheminer
selon la parole de Dieu, scachans au reste que nos consciences sont libres.
Cf. Inst. 3:19:7. Where Calvin makes "freedom of conscience touching the
use of indifferent things" the third part of Christian liberty, the first
part being freedom of conscience from the terrors of the law, the second
part being the free and unconstrained obedience of conscience to obey the
law from the heart.
He is very emphatic about the dangers of such scrupulosity. Under certain circumstances, he suggests it might even be right to allow others to do us injustice without protest, but under no circumstances dare we ever allow another to bind our conscience. To allow this would be to lose the light that is in us, and is to offer insult to Christ the author of freedom. Calvin admits that discussion on this matter may seem trivial for it descends to trivialities such as the eating of flesh and the free use of days and clothes, and such like things, but he points out that it is precisely through such trivialities that an abyss is opened up into which a man can fall to his ruin, "when a man begins to doubt whether it is lawful for him to use linen for sheets, shirts, napkins and handkerchiefs, he will not long be secure as to hemp, and will at last have doubts as to tow; for he will revolve in his mind whether he cannot sup without napkins, or dispense with handkerchiefs. Should he deem a daintier food unlawful he will afterwards feel uneasy about using loaf-bread and common eatables, because he will think that his body might possibly be supported on a still meaner food. If he hesitates as to a more genial wine, he will scarcely drink the worst with a good conscience; at last he will not dare to touch water if more than unusually sweet and pure. In fine he will come to this that he will deem it criminal to trample on a straw lying in his way." 


(2) Inst. 3:19:7.
Judging from the frequent occurrence of similar passages in his sermons and other writings the danger of falling into such extreme scrupulosity over trivial matters was a real and common one in Calvin's time partly owing to the attitude of mind encouraged by the teaching and customs of the Roman Church. Calvin reminds his hearers that a man can be brought in to such bondage of conscience not only by other men, but also by following his own uncontrolled imagination and imposing on himself moral burdens that have no relation to the Word of God, and by bringing to the interpretation of scripture an attitude that is slavishly literal and legalistic. Calvin clearly saw two grave dangers which might ensue when a man reached such an extreme state of bondage to scruples as he describes.

He came under the danger either of losing himself in despair, or of throwing aside all restraint in reaction to his bondage, and of plunging into a license to which there is no bounds.

(1) Cf. e.g. serm. on Gal. 5:11-14, C.0.51:17. Nous voyons comme les pourres ignorans qui sont detenus en superstitions sont toujours en doute et en scrupule....Chacun dira selon que son cerveau le porte, il me semble que telle chose seroit bonne, voila que ma devotion me dit: il sera bon de faire encore ceci et cela. Or quand ils sont entrés en un tel labyrinthe, et en la fin ils douteront de se peigner, ils feront scrupule de manger d'un tel doigt, et ceci et cela: brief il n'y a ne fin ne mesure. Also serm. on Job 1:2-5, C.0.33:41; and serm. on 1 Cor. 10:19-24, C.0.49:680 where Calvin refers again to the fear of stepping on straws as being due to the fear of stepping on anything that might be in the shape of a cross.

(2) Serm. on 1 Cor. 10:19-24, C.0.49:680, on Gal. 5:11-14, C.0.51:17.

(3) Comm. on Luke 3:10, C.0.45:120. Atqui non trepidationem modo iniiciunt conscientiis, sed eas desperatione obruant, quiscunque legem imponunt, ne quisquam proprium aliquid possessidat.... Si fas non est duas habere tunicas, idem de patinis, salinis, indusiis, totaque supellectile erit dicendum.

It is true that, as we have seen already, there are occasions when we must refuse to express our liberty of conscience in outward behaviour, lest we offend others within the Church. Yet even when we are subjecting the outward expression of our liberty of conscience to the law of charity, however, nevertheless our conscience can at the same time remain free before God and unbound by our outward behaviour. It is our brother's conscience that is bound and not our own when we abstain for his sake from things which produce offence. Calvin notes that Paul "always carefully takes heed not to diminish liberty...in any degree." Our own liberty remains unimpaired when we accommodate ourselves to our neighbours. There is no need therefore to imagine that our freedom to do what we like in things indifferent must be constantly expressed if it is to be preserved and that therefore we must continually in public be asserting it by indulging in behaviour which runs counter to accepted custom within the fellowship of the Church. Our liberty can remain unimpaired before God even though we never use it. It "consists as much in abstaining as in as in using."

Yet there are occasions when our liberty should be clearly asserted before men. We are to accommodate ourselves to the weak, but not to the

(1) Cf. p 344.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor. 10:29, C.0.49:470.
(4) Comm. on 1 Cor. 10:23, C.0.49:468. Agnosces libertatem nihilominus manere illibatam, dum proximis te accomodas.
Pharisees who want to bring all men under bondage to their self appointed austerity. If it is the Pharisees that are offended we must obey the injunction of our Lord: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind". There are times when charity must be subservient to purity of faith, and when we must beware of offending God for the sake of our neighbour.

In the realm of conscience a man must always and can always remain in his freedom before God - no matter how he may be bound at the same time in outward behaviour in apparent compromise to this freedom. "The soul of a pious man looks exclusively to the tribunal of God, has no regard for man, is satisfied with the blessing of liberty secured for it by Christ, and is bound to no individuals, and to no circumstances of time and place".

(1) Inst. 3:19:11 & 12. Cf. serm. on Gal 2:6-8, C.0.50:377-8. Mais si nous voyons que sous ombre qu'une chose ne sera bonne ne mauvaise on y
vueille mesler quelque sainteté, et qu'il y ait quant et quant obligation pour astreindre les âmes et les asservir, là nous avons à resister jusques au bout.
(2) Inst. 3:19:13.
(3) Comm. 1Cor. 10:29, C.0.49:470.
Satisfaction and hope

The Christian life is happy and satisfying

Yet we enjoy happiness in the midst of contrary feelings

Our happiness depends on our state of mind

Our main source of happiness is to be found in our relationship with God in the Gospel

Our happiness depends on our Christian hope and our relation to the world beyond

Our present happiness is a foretaste which should make us aspire after the fullness of the life-to-come and maintain our Christian warfare by hope

The relationship of faith and hope

Hope of reward, a worthy incentive to Christian living

Our present happiness and future hope both determine the quality of our Christian service
Calvin affirms that the life of the Christian even in this present world is a happy and satisfying life. All believers receive this fruit of their faith, that, being satisfied with Christ alone, in whom they are fully and completely happy and blessed, their consciences are calm and cheerful. The comfort and happiness that God gives to those who willingly give up all for Christ is to be preferred to all the riches of the world, and more than compensates for anything that has been given up. Moreover, they also have the knowledge that their chief reward awaits them in Heaven. "Men is made happy by self-denial" says Calvin, and this happiness is not a momentary fleeting feeling but an assured state that no change of fortune can take away.

But the Christian lives in the flesh as well as in the Spirit. He is no log of wood, and therefore, as we have already seen he

(1) Comm. on Ps. 128:2, C.O. 22:327 M eminerimus autem, prophetam non de ultima felicitate locui...sed promit tere etiam in hac peregrinatione vel terrenost hospito fidelibus felicem vitam quaternus patitur mundi conditio; quemadmodum dicit Paulus, pietati utrumque promitti, ut scilicet Deus toto vitae curriculo nostri curam gerat (1 Tim. 4:8) donec ad aeternam gloriam tendem nos perducat.
(2) Comm. on John 8:56, C.O. 47:215
(5) Comm. on Ps. 13:6, C.O. 31:134
(6) see pp. 280-1.
he keenly feels sorrow, fear and danger, and he is sensitive to the persecutions that come to him because of his faith. How he can be happy in this world is, therefore, a mystery which passes human understanding. "It is a paradox strongly at variance with the feelings of the flesh, that God supplies His people in this world with everything that is necessary to a happy and joyful life". The Word of God promises hope to those who are in despair, wealth to those who are in poverty, strength to those who are in weakness, and therefore happiness to those who at the same time are in misery. Therefore believers, in their Christian experience, are "conscious of two very different states of mind. On the one hand they are afflicted and distressed with various fears and anxieties; on the other hand God inspires them with secret joy". Calvin indicates that in the midst of these "contrary feelings" joy is the dominant feeling which constantly displaces and overcomes sorrow though it never puts an end to it since it does not divest us of our humanity. At any rate our "spiritual joy" is always enough to compensate for the bitterness of our cross, and to give rise to thanksgiving.

Calvin recognises that "happiness is connected with the state

(1) Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:6, C.0.55:212
(2) Comm. on Isa. 33:20, C.0.36:575. Ergo non promittitur eiusmodi tranquillitas quae carnis nostrae sensibus apprehendit possit: sed ad intimos animi sensus veniendum spiritu Dei reformatos, ut pace illa fruamur, quae nullo humeno ingenio apprehendi potest.
(3) Comm. on 1 Tim. 4:9, C.0.52:300
(4) Comm. on Phil. 4:7, C.0.52:62
(5) Comm. on Ps94:19, C.0.32:27. Nam fideles duplicem in animis suis affectum gerunt, quia ab una parte anguntur, distraherunt etiam in varios metus et curas: sed Deus ercanam illis laetitiam inspirat.
(6) Comm. on 1 Pet. 1:6, C.0.55:212. Tristitiam ergo ex malis sentient: sed quae ita lenitur fide, ut gaudere propterea non desinent. Ita non impedit tristitia insorum gaudium, sed potius locum ili cadit. Nuncus gaudium tametsi tristitiam...
state of mind of that man who enjoys it". It will evade those who imagine that it is to be found in ease honours or worldly wealth. The servants of God therefore find contentment in moderating their expectations of what this life should offer them, and in practising contentment with what they have in God alone. "In this way we will find our lot—

experience our condition to be always pleasant and agreeable, for he who has God as his portion is destitute of nothing which is requisite to constitute a happy life." God blesses with happiness those who are willing to obey Him and commit themselves to His care believing that all things work together for good to those that love God. "God gladdens His people so that the small portion of good that they enjoy is more highly valued by them and far sweeter than if out of Christ they had enjoyed an unlimited abundance of good things". 

There are several aspects of the faith in which the Christian man should especially find real happiness. Happiness is a gift of the grace of God which itself is not known otherwise than through the Word.
Word and in the inward earnest of the Spirit”. The Word is the continual and neverchanging source of our earthly happiness since it assures us that even in this life God will be our Father. This should be enough to bring us abundant joy whatever our circumstances otherwise. Calvin lays great stress on the comfort it brings to be assured thus of God’s protection in this life. "Although we collect together all the circumstances which seem to contribute to a happy life, surely nothing will be found more desirable than to be kept hidden under the guardianship of God". But the basis even of this joy, as Calvin admits, must be a good conscience, the assurance that our sins are forgiven, and thus the knowledge that in the service of God we do not labour in vain or without hope of recompense. Moreover, a Christian has a sense of the living presence of God Himself with him and looking down on him, in possession of which he can find true satisfaction. "It would not be enough for God to take care of us and provide for our necessities unless on the other hand He irradiated us with the light of His serene and reconciled countenance and made us taste of His Goodness". True happiness consists in dwelling "as it were under His eyes", and in

(1) Comm. on Phil.4:7, C.0.52:62. Sola Dei gratia, quae ipsa non cognoscit nisi per verbum et interiorem arrem spiritus.
(2) Comm. on 1 Tim. 4:8, C.0.52:300
(3) Comm. on Ps.128:1, C.0.32:326. Cf. comm. on Ps.5:12, C.0.31:72 Porro docet hic locus, non aliunde quam ex Dei praesidio nasci verum gaudium.
(4) Comm. on Ps.19:8, C.0.31:200-1. Nulla alia est nisi bona conscientiae solida laetitia: qua tunc demum fruimur, ubi certo sumus persuasi vitam nostram Deo placere...Hinc etiam piis Dei cultoribus inaestimabile gaudium oritur, quod sciunt non tamere nee frustra se fatigari
(5) Comm. on Ps.15:5, C.0.31:153
(6) Comm. on Ps.21:7, C.0.31:211. Neque enim sufficeret, Deum curam nostri serere, nobisque prospicere, nisi vicissim nobis sereno suo vultu irradians, bonitatis suae gustum praebet.
(7) Ibid.
in finding in that presence a source of full and overflowing abundance of joy.

But all this present experience is not sufficient for the Christian unless he has also learned to "seek his happiness out of the world" so that by the consolation of hope the bitterness of the cross might be mitigated. "The happiness which is promised to us Christ does not consist in external advantages such as leading a joyful and tranquil life...but properly belongs to the heavenly life". Calvin frequently reminds us that in the midst of our afflictions only the certainty of the blessed and joyful end that awaits us can alleviate our present bitterness. Moreover the glory and fullness of the life to come surpasses by far the shortness of our experience of misery here even were that itself life-long. The discipline through which God puts His people in this life is at times so severe and causes them such pain that a Christian would be of all men most miserable did he not mix and season his grief with the joy of anticipating deliverance and hoping in the resurrection. The disciples of Christ must therefore in learning how to live a happy life must "learn the philosophy of placing their happiness beyond the world and above the affections of the flesh", thus

(1) Comm. on Ps. 9:3, C.0.31:97
(2) Comm. on Rom. 12:12, C.0.49:242. Extra mundum suam felicitatem quae rerum didicerit.
(3) Inst. 3:2:15
(4) Comm. on 1 Tim. 4:10, C.0.52:300; on Ps. 94:12-13, C.0.32:24
(5) Serm. on Acts 1:4-5, C.0.48:603-4
(6) Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:19, C.0.49:544-5; on 1 Pet. 4:17, C.0.55:282. Comm. on Ps. 14:7, C.0.31:142 Quamvis autem sancti populi laetitiam David in tempus liberationis differat, consolatio tamen haec non modo ad temperandum dolorem nostrum valere debet, sed etiam laetitia concludendum.
thus sweetening even the bitterness of the cross by hope. We have to find our happiness in dying as well as in living for it is the children of this world who are more happy on earth than in heaven.

When Calvin speaks of our present happiness as being a "taste" (gustus) of God's goodness he means that it is in reality a small foretaste of the experience of God's presence which will be ours in the life to come. Even now in the midst of their sufferings, God bestows upon His people blessings that are a foretaste of the felicity that will be theirs in eternal glory. Through faith and through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts we have here and now a participation in the blessed life to come, and thus we experience the first fruits, "a few crops", of that eternal gladness which is laid up for us in heaven. This foretaste should both satisfy us and at the same time lead us to aspire after the real fullness of such experience which can be ours only in the future life. Thus both present happiness and future hope are elements in our Christian experience. Our present satisfaction is directly related to the glory

2. Comm. on Phil.1:21, C.O.52:17
3. Comm. on Ps.119:69, C.O.32:245
7. Serm. on 1 Cor.11:2 & 3, C.O.49:720 Nous en iouissons en partie, en partie nous esperons encore. Nous iouissons du témoignage qu'il nous donne de la remission de nos pechés: nous iouissons du privilege que nous pouvons venir à Dieu, estans assurez qu'il nous a adoptez, semblablement qu'il nous gouverne par son saint Esprit, mortifie toutes nos meschantes cupiditez, oui autrement regnroyoyt du tout en nous: mais nous esperons la vie éternelle, nous esperons ceate
glory of the life-to-come. When David said "I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness", this did not mean that he expected to have no joy till he attained the after-life. Though the vision and satisfaction of which he speaks cannot be complete for believers until the second coming of Christ, nevertheless there are rays of the knowledge of His love which even now penetrate our heart and through the Holy Spirit give us great joy.

This earnest or foretaste of eternal life is given to us now to help us to maintain by means of hope our Christian warfare in the midst of all the difficulties we have to face. If we weight the signs of God's favour against the signs of His anger we will always find that His anger is but for a moment while His favour endures to the end and continues beyond it. But we must also look beyond this life in faith to the blessed resurrection and "view from a distance the Divine grace even though it is still hidden" for "the day has not yet shone which will reveal the treasures that lie hidden in hope.

Therefore it requires hard and sustained effort to begin to deliverance par laquelle Dieu nous montrera que ce n'est point en vain que nous avons cru en son Fils unique, et lui avons fait hommage comme à nostre chef.

(1) Comm. on Ps.17:15, C.O.31:168
(2) Comm. on Eph.1:14, C.O.51:154
(3) Comm. on Ps.30:5-6, C.O.31:295
(4) Comm. on Ps.63:5-6, C.O.31:596
(5) Comm. on Phil.1:6, C.O.52:10
to hope and to grow in the exercise of hope. Yet it is no more difficult to live by hope than by faith. For Calvin, "hope is nothing else but constancy of faith". He uses exactly the same language in speaking of hope as he does in speaking of faith so that the two words become in many contexts interchangeable. Hope as well as faith finds its foundation and inspiration through its inseparable connection with the Word of God. Hope as well as faith has the power to raise the hearts of men upwards above this world so that even though their earthly surroundings be comparable to a grave they can at the same time "dwell in heaven by hope". Hope as well as faith can exist only in constant tension with unbelief and fear and the temptation to despair. Hope as well as faith is maintained by patience, and is intent on the good things which are in the future though absent. It is possible that the main distinction between these inseparable gifts, faith and hope, is that faith is the most suitable word to use when speaking of our relation to those realities which are regarded as invisible rather

(1) Comm. on Ps.61:4-5, C.O.31:543
(3) Comm. on Ps.119:123, C.O.32:269
(4) Comm. on Ps.9:18, C.O.31:106 Descendunt quidem et fideles in seculum, sed non illo violento impulso, qui eos sine spe exitus demergat, quin potius in seculro reconditi, spe tamen in coelo habitant.
(5) Comm. on Ps.63:4, C.O.31:548
(6) Comm. on Rom.8:24-5, C.O.49:156. Iam speis non nisi per patientiam sustinetur.
(7) Ibid. Proprium spei est, futuris et absentibus bonis intentem esse.
rather than as future, and hope is the more suitable word to use when speaking of our relation to those realities which are to be regarded as future rather than as invisible. Hope alleviates present sorrow by reaching into the distant future and promising itself what at present there is no appearance of obtaining.

Calvin is not ashamed to speak frequently about the hope of reward as a worthy incentive to Christian living. "Surely we know well enough, as the Scripture shows us, that it is not lost labour to serve God, for He has promised us a plentiful reward, and we shall not be disappointed in our expectation". The promises of reward given in Holy Scripture are a concession to our weakness. "The eye of our mind being too dim to be attracted by the mere beauty of goodness, our most merciful Father has been pleased, in His great indulgence, to allure us to love and long after it by the hope of reward". That we should be rewarded for our good works is also a gracious outcome of the fact that God justifies not only the person but also the works of a believer. God, out of His grace, not only accepts our services but also bestows on them a reward. This reward then "is so far from being inconsistent with the righteousness of faith that it may be viewed as an appendage to it". Any such reward is given not because our works

(1) Comm. on Ps. 42:6, C.O.31:429. Spem suum...in longum tempus extendit. Atque ut emergat ex praesenti moerore, sibi promittit quod non apparet.
(2) Serm. on Job 4:7-11, C.O.33:187
(3) Inst. 2:8:4
(4) Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:19, C.O.52:334.
works in any way deserve it but simply because God is gracious enough
not only to accept our persons and works but to reward our service.

Though God cannot be put into debt by us, nevertheless He is so
gracious that He is willing to become our debtor so that He can reward
our works.

Both our present experience of contentment and happiness, and
our future hope play a large part in determining the quality of our
Christian life. The contentment and happiness which we at present
enjoy give us a moral stability that can prevent us from straying into
sin or being drawn away from God by the allurement of evil. They
enlarge the heart so that it can move freely to keep God's law without
being contracted by its own narrowness. To have hope in our hearts
when we are wronged and afflicted can make us meek instead of vengeful
and can train us to equanimity and patience. Hope prevents us in
contrast to other men, from being "driven by restlessness into
mischievous practices". The hope of reward, too, must be allowed to

(1) Serm. on Job 4:7-11, C.0.33:187-2. Or ici quand je parle du
    loyer, je ne traite point si le loyer nous est deu ou non: car
    nous ne sommes pas sur ceste matiere. Quand nous aurons fait
    tout ce qui est possible, Dieu ne nous sera/redevable, mais
    quand il nous promet loyer, i'entens qu'il est gratuit, que cela
    n'est pas que nous l'avons merité... mais c'est d'autant que
    comme il nous a receus en sa grace, il veut aussi advoyer nos
    oeuvres, ouy, lesquelles il fait par son sainct Esprit... cela
    est pour nous donner/mieux courage de le servir, regardans à
    ses promesses. Cf. Comm. on Ps.62:12-13, C.0.31:893
(2) Ibid.  
(3) Comm. on Luke 17:7-9, C.0.45:415  
(4) Serm. on Deut.5:19, C.0.26:356. La vraie richesse, est la bene-
    diction de Dieu. Il nous faut donc boire de ceste fontaine, et
    en este rassasiez, si nous voulons nous abstener de tous
    larrecins. Cf. comm. on Ps.116:1, C.0.32:132-3.  
(5) Comm. on Ps.119:32, C.0.32:227-3  
(6) Comm. on Ps.37:10-11, C.0.31:371  
(7) Comm. on Ps.26:3, C.0.31:265
to have its due place in our motive for Christian service. Calvin asserts that just as the hope of resurrection is an essential part of the Christian faith without belief in which the whole structure of our piety would fall to the ground so the hope of reward must be an integral part of our Christian ethics apart from which there can be no solid motive for good living. He holds out the hope of a great reward to men as an incentive to generosity in Christian giving. "If a heathen poet could say, 'What riches you give away, those alone shall you always have', how much more ought that consideration to have influence among us who are not dependent on the gratitude of men, but have God to look to, who makes Himself a debtor in the place of the poor man, to restore/us one day, with large interest, whatever we give away". Indeed he can preach to the commercially minded men of his day that their best investment a man can make is in the service of God who is more reliable and gives greater interest and enables us to make a greater profit than elsewhere.

(1) Cf also pp.49 ff.
(2) Comm. on 1 Cor.15:58, C.0.49:565 Ex adverso autem significat sublata spe resurrectionis, quasi evulso fundamento, ruere totum pietatio aedificium. Certe spe praemii remota et extincta non frigescet tantum, sed coincet currendi alacritas.
(3) Comm. on 1 Cor.16:2, C.0.49:567
(4) Serm. on Gal.6:9-11, C.0.51:101. Celuy qui a argent en bourse, voyant un profit s'offrir, espandra et de costé et d'autre, car il presuppose que rien ne sera perdu, et que la somme principale reviendra à luy; et puis il s'augmentera d'autant par le profit qui luy en reviendra...Voilà Dieu qui parle ainsi quant au mot de profit. Il adjoeste aussi bien la promesse qu'il n'y a ni usure ni gain si grand comme le profit qu'il nous faut esperer de luy. Yet here, again, Calvin counsels care lest we imagine that in this matter we can start bargaining with God (Serm. on Job 4:7-11, C.0.33:187) or give way to proud self-confidence. (Comm. on Ps.62:12-13, C.0.31:593)
Progress towards perfection

Christian perfection means a wholehearted response to the grace of God.

Such perfection unattainable in this life.

Yet we must strive and progress towards it.

There is a state of victory over sin and wholehearted surrender which by the grace of God may be called "perfection".

Yet we continually fail, and progress is slow.

Christian growth is primarily growth in faith.

Faith requires both to be illuminated and confirmed.

Faith grows in clarity and in its apprehension of the resurrection of Christ.

As Faith grows, our experience of Christ and His blessings is enriched, and our sanctification progresses.
There is a standard of perfection towards which a Christian must constantly strive in this life and against which he must constantly measure his progress, no matter how far short of true attainment his efforts may seem to come. Calvin is very careful to define the nature of this Christian perfection. He constantly criticises the view of the "subtle doctors" of the Roman Church. They taught that in commanding men to "be perfect", our Lord could not possibly be commanding something impossible of human attainment, and they claimed therefore that their monks could attain to an angelic state in this life in which the perfection set forth in the Sermon on the Mount was really achieved. They taught also that for the laity the command to be perfect was not really a command but simply "advice" which enables them to live on a lower plane of morality with a good conscience. Equally does Calvin condemn the views of the "enthusiasts" who taught that through union with Christ our inward corruption could be completely destroyed and angelic perfection attained to in this life. Only men "blinded" by


(3) Comm. on Ps. 89:31, C.O.31:822. Ostendit porro hic locus, dam cooptantur homines a Deo, non protinus exuere carnem suam cum vitiis: sicuti somniat fanatici homines, simulac inserimur in corpus Christi debere aboleri quidquid est in nobis corruptelee. Utinam quidem posseus repente mutare ingenium, ut vigere in nobis ista, quam requirunt, angelica perfectio.
by devilish pride" and lacking entirely in the fear of God could entertain such doctrines.

Calvin describes in various terms the perfection at which we have to aim. The perfection of God consists in His "free and pure kindness" in overcoming the malice and ingratitude of men. Our aim must therefore be to respond fittingly in our own humble sphere to this perfect grace in which God has presented Himself to us. It is obvious that for Calvin Christian perfection is perfection of faith, for God can ask no more of us than to add faith to His promises and to make them the foundation of our life and salvation. This perfection will express itself in wholehearted self-denial, in conforming ourselves to the will of God when it goes against the judgment of our own mind and the desires of our own heart, and in bearing the yoke of affliction without rebellion when it pleases God to send us troubles of various kinds. Calvin notes that Job is called in Scripture a "perfect man". But he prefers to use the words "rondeur" or "intégrité" to describe Job's "perfection" since what the Scripture really means by perfection is the dedication of the whole heart and mind to God with one single aim, without any doubleness or hypocrisy or holding back in any

(1) Serm. on Eph.1:4-6, C.0.51:273; Cf. Serm. on Gal.5:14-18, C.0.51:31. Comme nous voyons des chiens metsins auquelles il n'y a nulle crainte de Dieu ni religion, lesquels toutefois preschent que les fideles doivent estre parfaits. Or c'est un blaspheme diabolique et cui nous doit estre en execration.

(2) Comm. on Matt.5:43, C.0.45:190. Cf. comm. on Ps.33:19, C.0.31:333. Fideles duobus insignit titulis, quibus tota vitae nostrae perfectio continetur, primum enim est, ut Deum reverenter colamus, deinde ut intenti simus in eius gratiam.

(3) Serm. on Luke 1:45-8, C.0.46:111

(4) Serm. on Gal.5:22-6, C.0.51:52. La vraie perfection des enfans de Dieu consiste à s'aneantir. Cf. Serm. on Deut.8:10-14, C.0.26:613
any part. To approve ourselves to God means to conform our whole life
to God, not in one or two particulars but without making any reserve
whatever the cost. Our lives should wholly correspond to the Word of
God.

Such perfection is never to be attained in this life though it
must be striven after. When we are forgiven and regenerated we do not
lay aside the old nature with its constantly sinful concupiscence. The
failure of Job with all his patience to submit to God's will without
being able to control his passions, and the half victory of Jacob,
lamed because of his infirmity in the very hour of his victory, are for
Calvin typical of the failure of the best of God's saints in living the
Christian life. The fact that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples
is a sign that because of the mere fact that we are involved in the
life of this present sinful world we are bound to be involved
constantly in its sin and therefore "Christ always finds in us
something to cleanse". We are never truly wholehearted in our
response to Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is never able to occupy the
whole of us. His work is to subdue instead of transform the unruly
flesh. We never therefore possess the Holy Spirit in a perfect

(1) Serm. on Job 1:1, C.O.33:27-8
(2) Serm. on Deut.5:28-33, C.O.26:416
(4) Serm. on Job 34:4-10, C.O.35:132. Cf. comm. on Ps.62:2, C.O.
    31:585
    omnes affectus et curas, quibus mundum contingimus. Nam si omnes
    nostri partes occuparet spiritus, nihil cum mundi sordibus nobis
    amplius esset; nunc vero qua parte sumus carnales humi reptando,
    vel saltem pedes in lutum figendo, tantundem immundi sumus.
(6) Comm. on John 13:9, C.O.47:308
perfect relationship to ourselves. This means therefore that we are kept humble and constantly aware of our need to call upon God. It means too that we are kept in a state of requiring to make constant progress. "So long as there is daily progress there cannot be perfection". It means too that "the more eminently anyone excels in holiness, the farther he feels from perfect righteousness, and the more clearly he perceives that he can trust in nothing but the mercy of God alone". The Christian man, therefore, can live only by being continually justified by faith. The more he attains towards the goal of perfection the more he will acknowledge his own weakness. The perfect Christian man is he who, conscious of his sin and misery, has learned to live by grace.

Though it is a device of the devil to fill our minds with a confident belief in the attainability of perfection we are, nevertheless, "not to labour feebly or coldly in urging perfection" or in striving towards it. Progress towards perfection should be our constant aim.

1 Serm. on Acts 1:4-5, C.0.48:601. Vray est que nous n'en (i.e. du S. Esprit) aurons pas en perfection, d'autant qu'il nous est besoin d'etre tenus en humilite. Et si nous en avions en perfection, que serait-ce? Nous n'aurions plus soin d' invoquer Dieu, et ne penserions point avoir besoin de luy.

2 Comm. on Eph. 5:27, C.0.51:224-5. Cf. Serm. on Job 15:11-16, C.0.33:721. Cependant que nous vivons au monde, connoissions que nous sommes seulement au chemin.

3 Comm. on Ps. 32:1, C.0.31:317

4 Comm. on Gen. 15:6, C.0.28:218. Fide justificari sanctos quando in mundo vivunt.

5 Serm. on Eph. 1:4-6, C.0.51:273. Car la perfection des fideles et des enfans de Dieu, c'est de connoistre combien ils sont encore debiles, non seulement pour prier Dieu qu'il corrige tous leurs defauts, mais qu'il les supporte par sa bonte infinie, et qu'il ne les appelle point à conté en rigueur extreme. Cf. Serm. on Deut. 7:11-16, C.0.26:534

6 Inst. 4:1:20
aim. Indeed, says Calvin, "the highest perfection of the godly in this life is an earnest desire to make progress". Since the goal of the Christian life is to attain to the perfect manhood of Christ, the course of the Christian life should be like the period of youth a course of steady growth in vigour and wisdom, "marked by a constant desire and progress towards those attainments which they shall ultimately reach". "We must learn, then, to be always growing as long as we live in this world" regarding ourselves in humility as little children, and always conscious of our weakness, realising that we will always remain apprentices and novices requiring constant instruction. Even if we feel satisfied with what we already have we must realise that God is always waiting for us to enlarge our capacity for receiving His blessing, to open our mouth wider that He may fill it with much more than we already have. "Our own narrowness is what hinders God from pouring upon us an abundance of His blessings", for God "accommodates His liberality to the measure of our expectations".

The Christian life then, is no "settled state". It is true

(1) Serm. on Gal.5:14-18, C.0.51:26-7. Or il est vray qu'il faut tendre à ceste perfection et y aspirer tousiours. Mais quoy qu'il en soit, ne laissons pas de chercher Dieu, combien que nous ne puissions pas parvenir à luy, et qu'il y ait beaucoup d'empeschemens.
(2) Comm. on Eph.3:16, C.0.51:186. Summa itaque piorum in hac vita perfectio est proficiendi studium.
(3) Comm. on Eph.4:14, C.0.51:200-1.
(4) Serm. on Luke 1:1-4, C.0.46:11
(5) Serm. on Ps.113, C.0.32:593; Serm. on Eph.4:15-16, C.0.51:584
(6) Comm. on Ps.65:4-5, C.0.31:806
(7) Serm. on Acts 1:1-4, C.0.48:591. Dieu ne nous appelle pas à soy pour nous tenir en un estat, mais qu'il nous poussera tousiours jusqu'â ce qu'il nous ait amené à perfection.
true that our complete justification can take place at one moment of
time so that there and then we are accounted as wholly righteous
before God, but our sanctification is a process that is more and more
completed throughout the whole course of our lives to be perfected
only through death. It is true that on receiving the Gospel we enter
the Kingdom of God, but "Is it sufficient to have entered?" asks
Calvin, "not at all, unless we recognize that our life is a road on
which we must continue to march until we come to our Lord Jesus Christ.
Thus the Kingdom of God must increase in us more and more."

If we seek to make progress we will find that we can attain
here and now a decisive victory over sin, the flesh, and the devil.
The power to "bruise Satan" under heel given to Eve and fulfilled in
Christ's victory on the Cross, is imparted already to the Church, and
though our full victory over evil, as exemplified in the triumph of
Christ our Head, will be perfectly enjoyed by us only after death,
nevertheless it is now "partially obtained". Though Satan is indeed
still the "prince of this world" in respect to his dominion over
unbelievers, and, to an extent, the material realm, God does not allow
him to have dominion over the souls of believers. Though in the hearts

(1) Comm. on John 17:17, C.O. 47:335
(2) Serm. on Acts 1:1-4, C.O. 48:590
(3) Comm. on Gen. 3:15, C.O. 23:71. Quibus verbis significat Satanae
contereendi virtutem diffundi in homines fideles, etque ita
communem totius ecclesiae benedictionem esse: verum simul
admonet inchoari tantum in hoc mundo.
(4) Inst. 1:14:18. In capite quidem nostro semper ad plenum
exstitit haec victoria:...in nobis autem cui membra elus sumus,
ex parte nunc apparent.
(5) Comm. on Gen. 3:15, C.O. 23:71. Filios hominum captivos saeculis
omnibus duxit Satan pro sua libidine, et hodie luctuosum illum
triumphum continuat: ideo et princeps mundi quidem est semel a
Christo, sed non ita quin bellum assidue renovet.
(6) Inst. 1:14:18
hearts of the faithful the "flesh lusteth against the Spirit", nevertheless the Spirit of God always overcomes and subdues the flesh if we do not prevent Him. The believer may be "tied to the flesh" and may be vexed by the felt power of indwelling sin, nevertheless he can always allow himself to be ruled by the Spirit of God in such a way that he always has the upper hand of sin, and can have confident joy in facing temptations. Sin is therefore "deprived of kingly power" in the heart of the Christian. Our confidence in seeking to live the Christian life is based on the fact that though sin continues to dwell within us, it does not reign within us and God will always so work in those who trust Him as to be the ruling force in all their affections and desires. If we wrestle through the power of God in the terrible conflict with passion and trouble we will not be overwhelmed.

Calvin at times speaks as if this achievement of victory over sin can become a settled and stable state. Commenting on John 3:9 he points out that a Christian is free from sin in so far as he is regenerated, and that though no one is yet completely regenerated

(6) Serm. on Deut.5:21, C.O.28:382. Combien que nous ayons eu la victoire par la grace de Dieu, et que le peche n'ait point regne en nous: si est-ce qu'il y a quelque ordure et macule.
regenerated nevertheless "he who is born of God can lead a holy life, because the Spirit of God restrains the lusting of sin." Then he asserts that the government of the Spirit can be so effectual that our hearts are given an "inflexible disposition" (affectus) to follow His guidance. "The power of the Spirit is so effectual that it necessarily retains us in continual obedience to righteousness". For Scripture teaches that "the will is so formed that it cannot be otherwise than right". There can be a wholehearted surrender to God and a real harmony (un accord et comme une melodie) between us and God, when we seek to give the Grace of God the chief place in our life, and when the chief desire of our heart is that God should control us by His Spirit. In this case we may be said to serve God with true rondeur de coeur, for He does not impute to us the weaknesses that still remain in us. To be thus wholehearted is to be on the way to attaining the goal of purity and holiness, and is to have perfection attributed to us. To this extent we can achieve "perfection".

Yet our progress towards final perfection and full regeneration is slow and our experience in the process of making progress is often disappointing. "Even though we have experienced the victory by the grace of God, and sin has not reigned within us, yet it still dwells within us always, and there are stains and spots on our

(1) Comm. on 1 John 3:9, C.O.55:236
(2) Serm. on Deut. 1:34-40, C.O.25:694
(3) Serm. on Deut.26:16-19, C.O.28:234
(4) Inst. 4:1:17
our life. We must groan then, and we must groan in such a way that it drives us on to do our duty....and we must not become discouraged. Even though each day we see a million faults within us, yet we must always seek to get beyond." 1 Even after progress and victory there will come times when we will find ourselves completely swept off our feet and unable to stand or control ourselves and we will be forced to cast ourselves in desperation on the help and mercy of God. 2 Our progress is progress made always limping instead of running. Even though we fight and conquer the enemy we receive blows that blind and stagger us and we come out of the fight sorely wounded. This is a battle in which we at times feel feeble and languid and enveloped in darkness and unable to fight with courage. Our very battle with our own selves leaves us weak and exhausted instead of strong and exhilarated. All this makes steadfastness in Christian progress the result only of heroic determination.

Christian growth is primarily growth in faith. "Since faith

(1) Serm. on Deut.5:21, C.O.26:383
(2) Serm. on Job 3:11-19, C.O.33:154; Cf. comm. on Ps.34:4-5, C.O.31:337
(5) Comm. on Ps.17:15, C.O.31:168
(6) Serm. on Gen.15:4-6, C.O.23:687
faith responds to the preaching of the Gospel, as preaching continues through the whole course of our life, so we ought to continue growing in faith. Faith is always mixed with unbelief. Even the faith of Abraham had this patent infirmity. Indeed our faith viewed as it is in itself so weak and insignificant that it finds acceptance with God only by being reckoned as perfect. Nevertheless in the struggle against unbelief faith can be nourished and increased and unbelief diminished. "As our faith is never perfect it follows that we are partly unbelievers; but God forgives us and exercises such forbearance towards us as to reckon us believers on account of a small proportion of faith. It is our duty in the meantime carefully to shake off the remains of infidelity which adhere to us, to strive against them, to pray to God to correct them".

There is a twofold development in faith, as it grows. In its imperfect state faith suffers from a "twofold weakness" (duplex debilitas). It suffers from both ignorance (ignorantia) and instability (dubitatio), and it requires to be both illuminated and established. The two operations of the Spirit in faith are to

(1) Comm. on Heb. 3:15, C.0.55:43
(2) Serm. on Gen. 15:4-6, C.0.23:68; Serm. on Matt. 2:23, C.0.46:462
(3) Comm. on Mark 3:24, C.0.45:495. Nam quem nusquam perfecta exstat fides, sequitur ex parte esse incredulos: sic tamen pro sua indulgentia nobis ignoscit Deus, ut ab exiguo fidei moduli nos fideles aestimet. Nostrum interea est sedulo excutere infidelitatis reliquias, quae in nobis haerent, ut cum illis luctemur, ac petere a Domino ut eas corrigat.
(4) Comm. on Rom. 4:19, C.0.49:83
are to "illuminate the mind and confirm the soul", till faith becomes no longer mere knowledge \(\text{notitia}\) but a firm and steady conviction which admits of no opposing doubt. The process of confirmation is simply the growth of faith \(\text{fides}\) into \(\text{fiducia}\) and \(\text{audacia}\). Calvin can speak of a stage in the progress of faith that is "no ordinary attainment" in which we learn to "lean with our whole heart on God" knowing with true humility that we ourselves are destitute of all strength.

In the process of being confirmed faith grows in clarity. Growth in faith is accompanied by growth in knowledge. Faith in its very feeble beginnings, when Christ is born within us can indeed be little more than an "implicit seed of piety" \(\text{implicitum pietatis semen}\) rather than the clear knowledge of the truth \(\text{liquida veri cognitio}\) - a "confused feeling of piety involving much superstition" like some "hidden root" which will produce fruit ultimately. Such was the case with the disciples of Jesus before the resurrection in their doubt, hesitation, and sinful grief and though it was "almost no faith"

(1) Comm. on Eph.1:13, C.O.51:153; Cf. on Rom.4:19, C.O.49:83
(2) Cf p. 442.
(3) Comm. on Ps.84:5-6, C.O.31:781-2.
(4) Serm. on Eph.4:11-14, C.O.51:567. Et ainsi il faut que journellement nous soyons confernez de plus en plus, que la clarté de notstre foy s'augmente, comme nous voyons le iour aller tousjours en croissant iusques au Midi.
faith" it nevertheless inspired them with zeal and it was enough to prevent them from deserting Jesus. It was only after the resurrection that their knowledge became more clear, and they passed from the stage of little children to a more adult state of faith. Calvin applies to this incipient development of faith the reference in Paul's prayer for the Galatians that Christ might be "formed within" them as an advance on Christ being no more born within them. But no matter what stage we have reached in the Christian life, there is always much darkness and many clouds of ignorance which obscure the brightness of the Gospel. No matter how much enlightenment we have received we need to pray as the Psalmists did for further light.

Faith grows in knowledge by moving from the Cross to the Resurrection. We must beware in case our faith should stop short at the knowledge of the humanity and death of Christ. Faith must begin in this way, for Christ descended and was humbled in order that we might begin with this knowledge of Him as He was on earth "born in a stable and hanging on a cross". But after His humiliation Christ was exalted to His own and the Father's glory. So also our faith must "rise to the glory of His resurrection and proceed onward till

till it comes at length to His eternal life and power in which His divine majesty is gloriously displayed". This was the triumph and completion of Thomas' faith when he cried out "My Lord and my God". A faith that is truly growing, then, will "leave the sepulchre" and "ascend to the heavenly glory of Christ". But indeed even in this movement of faith towards the resurrection we must not imagine that we can leave the cross behind. "Let us learn that when the death of Christ is mentioned, we ought always to take in view at once the whole of the three days, that His death and burial may lead us to a blessed triumph and to a new life".

Calvin lays particular stress on the need of attaining not simply new knowledge, but greater clarity and conviction in our understanding of the things we already know, for believers are "in some measure ignorant of what they know". This process is no doubt simply the unfolding of what is already "implicit" in their faith. Growth in faith enables the faithful "more clearly and fully" to "hold their present views".

As our faith grows, our capacity to receive God's gifts and

(1) Comm. on John 20:23, C.0.47:444
(2) Comm. on John 20:3, C.0.47:428
(3) Comm. on Matt.17:22, C.0.45:499. Cf. on pp.57322 Calvin can distinguish between the knowledge that comes after faith, which is the Verum cognitio Dei et arcanae eius sapientiae and the knowledge that preceded faith and prepares for it which is operum suorum notitia. Comm. on John 10:38, C.0.47:254.
(4) Comm. on John 8:32, C.0.47:202. Fideles...quodammodo id quod sciunt ignorant.
(5) Comm. on Eph.1:17, C.0.51:155. Opus simul habebant incrementis ut ampliore spiritu donati magisque ac magis illuminati, certius et penitius tenerent quod iam tenebant.
and blessings increases, for the straitened faith of most of us is like a narrow mouth which partakes with difficulty of "only a few small drops" of the abundant supply which is available for those who will open their mouth wide. This means that as our faith is increased more and more, we are able more and more to inherit the glorious liberty of the children of God. As our faith grows, moreover, we are able to receive "fresh additions of the Spirit of God" who is given "according to the measure of faith", and thus we make progress towards "fullness of life". Indeed, Calvin can say that in proportion as our faith is more or less, not only is the Spirit more or less within us, but Jesus Christ Himself grows or diminishes within us showing Himself great or small within us as our faith is strong or weak. Though Calvin insists that our union with Christ whatever our progress has been, is always in a sense perfect (in that it can never be broken and in that it justifies us perfectly) nevertheless with the increase of faith and participation in the

(1) Comm. on Ps.81:11, C.0.763-4.
(2) Comm. on John 8:32, C.0.47:205. Hoc notandum est, libertatem suos habere gradus pro fidei suae modo.
(4) Comm. on John 10:10, C.0.47:241. Et certe prout quisque in fide progreditur, eo propius ad vitae plenitudinem accedit, quia in eo crescit spiritus, cui vita est.
(5) Serm. on Matt.2:23, C.0.46:462. Car voila mesmes comme nostre Seigneur Iesus Christ croist aujourd'hui en nous. Il est vray qu'en soy il ne peut augmenter ni diminuer aussi: mais quant à nous, il est certain que selon la mesure de nostre foy, il est petit ou grand.
the ordinances of Christ this union is increased more and more "until we are fully united to Jesus Christ".

The growth of faith is thus accompanied by deepening experience. Christ admits us to a "greater familiarity with Himself". The disciples had some faith in the promise of Christ that they would be able to cast out devils, but it was obviously not full faith, for later they came back expressing their astonishment at what had happened through the power of Christ. "This is frequently the case with believers that they receive from the Word only a slight perception (gustum) of the divine power and are afterwards carried away in admiration by actual experience". The growth of faith must also be accompanied by a growing measure of sanctification. "The true stages in the growth of Christians are when they make progress in knowledge and understanding and afterwards in love". As our faith grows, it is accompanied by increasing communion with the death of Christ and thus a deepening


(2) Serm. on Acts 1:1-4, C.O.48:190
(3) Comm. on John 8:32, C.O.47:202
(5) Comm. on Phil. 1:9, C.O.52:12.
deepening experience of the work of God in crucifying the flesh. Repentance, says Calvin, "is never perfect at the start, but after God planes us, He also needs to polish us". This is part of the continual "cleansing from all unrighteousness" which is progressively carried on from day to day in the process of sanctification.

To make progress in faith therefore means a progressive transformation in our way of living. To make progress in faith and in the knowledge of God means at the same time making progress in conformity to His image, for when faith looks on and meditates on the glory of God revealed in the Gospel it is no dead contemplation but one that transforms us into the image of God. These are the main lessons Calvin draws from the 2 Cor.3:18. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord". This text is often in Calvin's mind when he speaks about Christian growth. He quotes it to justify the place he gives to knowledge in his teaching about the Christian life "for the true knowledge of God is a living and not a dead thing, and it will manifest itself and bear fruit in our whole way of living", and if

(1) Comm. on Rom.6:7, C.O.49:108. Hoc enim opus Dei (i.e. crucifying the flesh) non primo, quo in nobis inchoatur, die, simul etiam perficitur: sed paulatim augescit, ac quotidianis incrementis paulatim ad finem perducitur.
(2) Serm. on Job 42:1-5, C.O.35:477
(3) n Comm. on 1 John 1:9, C.O.55:307
(4) Comm. in loc. C.O.50:47
if this has not happened to us we prove ourselves mere mockers of God in our claim to know Him. He quotes it to remind us that the future glory is promised to none but those in whom the image of God already shines and who are being transformed into it by continued advance of glory. He quotes it to remind us that if this process has already begun within us, even in a feeble and hidden way, - of increasing knowledge and contemplation bringing us into increasing conformity to God - then it is bound to go on all our life with increasing force and fullness for it promises ultimately the entire restoration into the image of God not only of our own beings but also of the whole creation.

(1) Serm. on Titus 1:15-16, C.0.54:433-4
(2) Comm. on Matt.13:43, C.0.45:371
(3) Serm. on 1 Tim.1:5-7, C.0.53:35-6; Comm. on Luke 17:20, C.0.45:425.
Perseverance to the end

The trial of faith is long and severe

Perseverance requires much patience and virtue

Our faith is bound to persevere since God is bound to see us through

Regeneration is an incorruptible seed of life

Our confidence in our perseverance must be accompanied by effort, and fear and trembling
The trial of faith in this life is long and severe. We are allowed no rest from fearful spiritual and moral conflict for our whole life is one unceasing battle with Satan. In this battle "Christ will have no discharged soldiers except those who have conquered death itself". Even if there are times of momentary relief after some one victory, we are soon called upon again to face fresh battles.

Therefore it is useless to begin the Christian life unless we have the resolve and the power to persevere. Calvin faces those who ask plausibly, "what can we wish more after having found Christ?" with the fact that "if He is possessed by faith we must persevere in it so that He may be our perpetual possession" for the one condition for the enjoyment of Christ is to preserve by faith the blessing we enjoy by faith. If in a moment of good impulse and resolution we put our trust and hope in the promises of God, it

(1) Serm. on Deut. 20:2-9, C.0.27:613
(2) Comm. on Heb. 12:4, C.0.55:173
(3) Comm. on Ps. 42:5-6, C.0.31:428-9
(4) Comm. on Heb. 3:14, C.0.56:48.
it is nothing, unless we continue. Time and again after a zealous start in the Christian life our holy zeal will prove to be mixed up with selfish ambition and other unworthy desires which are hard to purge. Therefore we must continue to submit to God's chastisement from which we are apt to be slow in obtaining benefit. The Christian is he who devotes himself to the practice of living rightly and justly in one constant and continual course. Closer fellowship with Christ is a reward that Christ bestows upon perseverance.

It requires much patience and virtue to persevere. The Psalmist whose eyes failed while he waited upon God is held out by Calvin to show us an example of the "perseverance combined with severe and arduous effort" with which we should seek the fulfilment of God's promises. Such steadfastness is the more difficult owing to the fact that such a large element in the Christian life is that of suffering. Christian steadfastness is the power to hold on not in the midst of spectacular victory but more often in the midst of

(1) Serm. on Job 14:13-15, C.0.33:691
(2) Comm. on Matt.20:20, C.0.45:552
(3) Comm. on John 5:14, C.0.47:110
(4) Comm. on Ps.106:3, C.0.32:116
(6) Comm. on Ps.119:123, C.0.32:269
of weakness and contempt from men. "The chief virtue of the faithful, therefore, is a patient endurance of the cross and mortification by which they calmly submit themselves to God". Christian patience involves us moreover in the constant exercise of humility - a humility which does not despise the feeble beginnings of faith and the gradual and small steps by which it is increased.

In the face of all the difficulties in maintaining constantly our Christian faith and life we would have no rest of mind if we were not certain that God Himself takes the responsibility not only of "preventing" us with His grace but also of sustaining us with His help all our life, and of confirming us in our perseverance. "It is not enough to be able to rely on God's help only for today. I must also be fully persuaded that He will help me

(1) Serm. on Matt.2:16-22, C.O.46:452. Et ainsi advisons...que neantmoins jamais nous ne nous lasions au milieu du chemin; et si nous sommes faibles, que nous prions Dieu qu'il nous donne vertu, non point pour nous escarmoucher, ni pour concevoir des opinions, et avoir la main levée quand nostre cerveau sera bouillant; mais que ce soit pour cheminer en infirmité, c'est à dire, que nous soyons comme foulez au monde, que nous soyons gens perdus et desesperez, que nous continuyons en cela: et que la vertu de Dieu se demontre d'autant plus que nous ne serons rien de nostre coste: et que nous n'attenterons aussi rien à la volee, mais que nous souffrions qu'il nous gouverne jusqu'à la fin.
(2) Comm. on Ps.118:166, C.O.32:290
(4) Comm. on Ps.68:29, C.O.31:633
me tomorrow, and right on to the end, says Calvin. Faith is not, then, a mere "waver ing persuasion". There is a felt and steady settledness about true faith that gives its possessors the assured confidence that it will persevere throughout the whole of life. What God has begun He is bound to complete.

Yet our faith perseveres in this way not because some new strength of character has been worked up within our psychological make up by the grace of God, nor because some new found and unshakeable strength has been imparted to our human will but only because God never goes back on His call to us and never disappoints us in His promise that we shall persevere to the end. We remain weak and fickle creatures even after we have come to faith, but God remains faithful. "Our salvation is certain because it is in the hand of God; for our faith is weak and we are prone to waver". Since it is in God's care our ultimate salvation is never in danger even though we ourselves may be continually exposed to overwhelming

(1) Serm. on Deut.20:2-9, C.0.27:603; Cf. serm. on Deut.4:39-43, C.0.26:224 and serm. on 1 Tim.6:12-14, C.0.53:529. Et ainsi c'est Dieu qui nous met en train, il nous dispose à courir, il nous montre le chemin. A-il fait cela? encore n'est-ce point assez: car au milieu du chemin nous clocherons et tomberons souventesfois, mesmes il nous adviendra de fourvoyer. Il faut donc que Dieu supplee à toutes ces feutes, et qu'il rende sa vocation ferme en nous, et qu'il la fortifie par ceste mesme grace dont elle est source et origine.

(2) Comm. on Rom.5:2, C.0.49:39. Et hoc verbo fidem non fluxam esse aut unus diei persuasionem significat: sed fixam et altem animis incidentem, ut tota vita perseveret.

(3) Comm. on Gal.3:11, C.0.50:209; cf. on Ps.7:1-2, C.0.31:30

(4) Comm. on Ps.138:8, C.0.33:376; on John 15:6, C.0.47:341

(5) Comm. on John 10:29, C.0.47:250. Denique ideo certa nobis salus, quia in manu Dei est, quia et fides nostra infirma est et nos ad vacillardum nimis proclives.
overwhelming dangers, and may undergo the most varied fortunes. His promises, assuring us unfailing help are not for one day but "for ever".

Calvin finds further assurance about the "inflexible perseverance" of the elect in the thought that the "seed communicated when God regenerates the elect, since it is incorruptible, retains its virtue perpetually". He admits that the good seed of the new life can be concealed and crushed and stifled till it appears as if its possessor had cast off all fear of God (as in the case of David when he sinned with Bathsheba) or all faith (as in the case of Thomas' doubt after the crucifixion). Nevertheless though all religion seem extinct, some latent spark of the new life always remains "like a live coal hid under the ashes". Faith may be choked but it is never wholly extinguished. If we must not follow those who teach that the elect fall into moral

(1) Comm. on 2 Tim. 1:12, C.0.55:335-6
(2) Comm. on Ps.12:7-8, C.0.31:131; serm. on 2 Sam.2:5-6, pp35-6
(3) Or ses promesses ne sont pas seulement pour vzn jour, mais il nous declare que ce cuill a commence, il le paracheuera. Ainsi donc quand nous aurons conceu et apprehende cela, que nous sachions aussi cuill ne se repent point, cuill n'est point muable a la facon des hommes,...Et puis sachons qu'il ne veut point estre fidele per bouffe, mais qu'il continuera en telle perseverance que nous peruiendronus iusques a la accomplissement de tous les biens cuill nous faut esperer.
(3) Comm. on 1 John 3:9, C.0.55:336-7. Ego temen non dubito quin semen illud, quo electos suas regenerat Deus, ut est incorruptibile, ita perpetuam vim retineat. Cf. comm. on Ps.51:12, C.0.31:519
(4) Comm. on John 20:28, C.0.47:443-4; comm. on 1 John 3:9, C.0.55:336-7
mortal sin they may lose the Spirit altogether. "God restrains His elect by a secret bridle that they may not fall into destruction".

It is most important that in the face of our failures in the Christian life we should comfort and encourage ourselves by remembering all this. "It is right for the saints when they have fallen into sin and have thus done what they could to repudiate the grace of God to feel anxiety; but it is their duty to hold fast the truth that grace is the incorruptible seed of God which can never perish where it has once been bestowed."

If we believe thus in God's faithfulness we are bound to

(1) Comm. on Ps.51:12, C.O.31:519. Discussing Heb.6:4, Calvin distinguishes two kinds of falling away- "one particular and the other general". The elect often offend God in some particular thing. They become overtaken in faults and ensnared by Satan but not to the extent of despising God with rooted malice. (Cf. comm. on Heb.6:4, C.O.55:70 and serm. on Gal.6:1-2, C.O.51:69) David fell "through the weakness of his flesh" but at the same time never deserted the service of God. (Comm. on Ps.18:22, C.O.31:161) But there is another kind of falling away, not of the elect, but of those who have been enlightened, of those who have had some taste of the grace of God, some sparks of light, some perception of His goodness and have come to "temporary faith". In such a falling away there is an entire renunciation of the grace of God, and element of virulent rage and deliberate malice, in which there is both blindness and yet enough light to know that they are spitting upon the face of God which is shining on them. (cf. comm. on Heb.6:4ff. C.O.55:70ff. and on Matt.12:31 C.O.45:340-2) Calvin insists that such a falling off cannot take place in those who have been truly regenerated. (C.O.45:341-2) (Nor can it take place in those who have had no enlightenment at all) Nevertheless the thought of such a fall should keep the elect in fear and humility(C.O.55:77)


(3) Comm. on Ps.61:12, C.O.31:519. Cf. serm. on Job 1:6-8, C.O.33:66-6. Et voila aussi comme Sainct Paul en parle au huitieme des Romains (v 16). Car apres avoir monstre que les fideles sont invincibles, quand l'Esprit de Dieu leur est un tefmoignage de vie, il dit que combien...qu'ils n'en aient
to reflect in our own attitude to God the same steadfastness as we find in Him. We must "keep pace with God in the steadfastness of our faith". This is not in man's power but it can be accomplished by the grace of God and we must strive towards it. It is precisely because God will continue from day to day to perfect what He has begun in us that we too must continue to the end without falling away from His obedience. To persevere in the grace of God in this matter requires on our part "striving and vigilance".

We must not, then, in any way presume upon the grace of God but we must live in constant fear and trembling. If God relaxed His restraining care over us even for a moment then no matter how far we may have progressed in sanctification, our hearts would immediately break out in insolent contempt of God. We are always prone to receive lies, to chase after frivolities and to abhor the truth. Even for the believing man nothing is so evanescent as faith and "nothing flows away so easily as love". Even the Christian must remember that he is man, and that man is like a shadow frail and

ayant qu'une petite goutte, si est-ce que c'est une semence de vie pour les assurer que Dieu accomplira ce qu'il a commencé, ..que fuscues à la fin il leur sera Père.

(1) Comm. on 2 Cor.1:21, C.O.50:24
(4) Comm. on Ps.19:13, C.O.31:206
(6) Ibid. p 175
and inconstant, with nothing stable in him that can be laid hold of, looking one day as if he had the courage of a lion, only to prove the next day that he is fainthearted as a woman. "Were God to withdraw His grace, the soul would be nothing more than a puff of wind, even as the body is dust, and there would be doubtless be found in the whole man nothing but mere vanity". Even the slightest fall on our part should be a sign to us that we would soon fall to destruction were we not continually upheld by the hand of God. Peter's denial of Jesus is for Calvin a sign of what could have happened to Peter or to any other man hundreds or thousands of times over unless God had continually spared him further testing.

Therefore the Christian man, living under the hand of God experiences a life that is marked on the one hand by humble trembling and fear of falling, and on the other hand by an assured confidence that we cannot fall and that we shall lack nothing. The confidence of the godly man in contrast to the undisturbed confidence of the ungodly, is the confidence of one who knows that his life "hangs only by a thread and is encompassed by 1000 deaths". The Christian is firm only in the midst of infirmity, and is most firm because of his very infirmity.

(1) Serm. on Job 3:1-10, C.O.33:141. Cf. Serm. on Matt.26:40-50, C.O.46:351. Ceux qui se peuvent nommer spirituels, c'est à dire qui ont un zèle ardent de servir à Dieu, qui sont tout accoutumés de recourir à luy, qui sont exercés en prières et oraisons, encore sont si débiles, qu'il ne faut que l'unique minute de temps pour les ruiner, sinon qu'ils invoquent Dieu.

(2) Comm. on Ps.103:15, C.O.32:81.

(3) Comm. on Ps.37:24, C.O.31:378

(4) Serm. on Matt.26:67 - 27:11, C.O.46:376-7. Contemplons donc en la personne de Pierre, qu'il faut bien que Dieu nous fortifie à une chacune minute de temps.... Si saint Pierre eust esté tenté cent fois en un jour, il eust renonçé Jesus Christ cent fois, et mille avec. Voyla qu'il en eust esté, sinon que Dieu eust eu pitié de luy: mais il l'a espargné, et...
ne l'a point voulu esprouver d'avantage.

(5) Serm. on Job 1:9-12, C.0.33:80
(6) Comm. on Ps. 10:6, C.0.31:113
(7) Comm. on Rom. 4:19, C.0.49:83