

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATEGORY OF FORM IN THE THEOLOGY
OF JOHN CALVIN

William S. James, A.B., B.D.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATEGORY OF FORM
IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

A STUDY IN CONSTRUCTIVE PROTESTANTISM

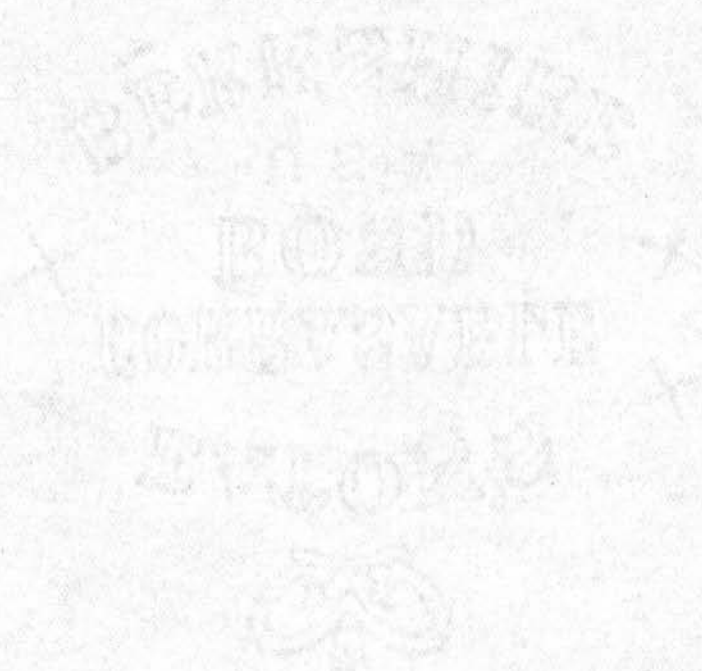
by

William Stanley James
A. B. B. D.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) of
Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, Scotland,
Faculty of Divinity

To J. B. F.
and C. J. F.

in anticipation



PREFACE

In presenting this thesis, I am keenly aware of my indebtedness to many sources. I am grateful to the patience and readiness to help displayed by my advisers, Dr. G. T. Thompson and Dr. John Baillie. To the rest of the faculty of New College, for whose willingness to listen to my questions and to advise in their respective fields, I owe the most humble and hearty thanks. To Principal Duthie of the Congregational College, who took the initiative in encouraging and enlightening me when my course seemed somewhat confused, I would like to say an especial word of thanks. To the individual students of Edinburgh, and even St. Andrews, with whom I discussed the problem, I wish to express my thanks. To my amazingly patient roommates, Dr. William Baker and Dr. Jack Cooper, who worried through many a knotty problem with me, I wish to express my thanks, as well as to Dr. Harry Phillips and Dr. and Mrs. Wallace Jameson for their willingness to discuss, not to speak of the genial encouragement of my host for two years, the Rev. Ronald Selbie Wright. My parents have been subjected to listening to the reading of the later, more extended versions of the thesis, and have given most sympathetic and helpful comments. Finally, the voluntary offer of Mrs. Robert S. MacLean to type the thesis in its entirety is probably the only reason why it is being handed in at all. Words fall silent before such kindness, the more because the typing has been undertaken in the midst of a busy family, community and church life.

A few technical explanations are called for. The American method of punctuation and spelling has been followed in the text of the thesis, but the quotations follow the method of their source, so all quotations from the Institutes, for instance, follow the British (or rather the Nineteenth-Century American) system. As the typewriter does not include the sign for brackets, [], the / / is used as a substitute.

Eastchester, New York.

William S. James
April 24, 1951.

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.....	1
<p>1) Two-fold movement in life of Church. "Formal versus "Spiritual" emphasis. Both needed. 2) Definition of "form". A. Shape or structure. B. Regulative or prescriptive method. "Hollow" form. 3) C. "Essential" form. Forms of Religion - essential or imposed? Personal, internal form versus external form. Theology involves the spiritual primarily, but also includes external world. 5) Tension between proponents of formal and spiritual realms. 6) Problem is of subordination of form to spiritual intention. This was purpose of the Reformation. 7) Catholicism. Problem continues in modern world. 8) Calvinism and Lutheranism as "church-type" of Protestantism. 9) The problem of Calvinism as a movement of formal reconstruction. 10) The method of the thesis.</p>	
<p>CHAPTER I</p>	
Form and Our Knowledge of the Creator.....	12
<p>13) Knowledge of God the creator must precede knowledge of justification. 14) Survey of problem in first book. 15) Sense of form and of external world in initiation of discussion. Spiritual, moral nature and form occurs in both God and man. Need for legitimate worship. 16) Calvin's appreciation of external world. Moral nature of God basis for pious fear. 19) External world bears witness to God's nature. 20) Physical and spiritual dependence on Creator should lead us to submission to his will. Wholeheartedness and sincerity of religion as opposed to the empty formalism of the contemporary Church.</p>	
<p><u>Natural Religion</u> 22) All men naturally religious. Problem not of whether men are religious, but whether they subordinate lives to true will of God. 23) Impure forms of religious expression. 24) Impure spiritual source for these forms in depraved heart. 25) To ignore God's law for worship, to use illegal forms, intensifies guilt.</p>	
<p><u>Natural Revelation</u> 26) Natural religion had false forms proceeding from heart, that were ineffective in the sight of God. Natural revelation has the good form of creation, itself, that reflects its source in the good will of God, but it does not penetrate to and transform heart. 27) God revealed in the glories of Creation, 28) the acts of Providence. 32) Man has failed to profit from this revelation, however. 33) He substitutes dreams and phantasms for naturally revealed God. 34) The tragedy of natural man. Starting with impure heart, he cannot purify himself with any form. Confronted with the good form of Creation, he cannot utilize it.</p>	
<p><u>Special Revelation</u> 35) Scripture provides us with additional assistance so that we can read natural revelation and God's character aright. 37) Only revealed will of God provides man with pattern for behavior. Revelation both formal and spiritual. 39) Necessity of the witness of Holy Spirit to persuade</p>	

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 2.

Page

man of authority of the Word. 42) While belief cannot be based on reason, rational proof of divine authorship is not difficult. 43) The sublimity of the matter, its historical accuracy and 44) the fulfillment of its prophecies all establish it rationally. Such are not the "fundamentals" of faith, but rather is the witness of the Holy Spirit. basic. 45) The Spirit, however, is tested by its conformity to the word.

True worship and thought of God. 46) God contrasted to idols. Idol proceeds from human mind, unauthorized. 48) Only worship in accordance to law is valid. Invisible God cannot be contained in human and external forms. 49) Visible form cannot represent God. 50) Visible signs used in Old Testament were not idolatrous. 51) Law of nature forbids idolatry. Non-educational. 53) Idolatry exists even if idols themselves not thought of as actually Gods. 54) No prohibition of sculpture and painting. 55) Images invariably attach worship to themselves. 56) The term "religion" means fundamentally "restriction." 57) Doctrines of Trinity and creation. Creation a continuous aid to the pious heart. 58) Providence.

CHAPTER II

Form in the Doctrine of Man and His Redemption.....

60

Form and Depravity 61) The problem is now how finite spirit is related to external form. Thus A. Man, body as well as soul, is handiwork of God. 62) B. Man has an ideal destiny that is above himself. C. Man is subject to limitations of time and space and is subject to the will of God expressed in law. 64) D. Man is depraved. Must be conscious both of his ideal nature and of his actual depravity. Depravity does not destroy good handiwork of God. The fact that man is handiwork of God does not minimize depravity. Good form standard for measuring man's depravity. 66) External form and the fall, - a break with a definite standard. It was disobedience to commanded action. Thus form a measure for internal rebellion. 68) Sin corrupts whole order of creation. It is transmitted through natural generation. 69) Three mistakes about transmission of original sin. Neither mere example followed, nor inherent in physical element, nor result of creation. 70) Physical continuity not cause of transmission, but simply the appointed means. 71) Definition of original sin. 72) Depravity not merely in members. Summary of the significance of external form in relation to depravity - Man an absolute sinner maintained by the good form of God's creation. Form does not transform personality, but expresses it. Man's body and talents expression of God's will, not man's. External form the helpless victim and witness of man's sin, and agent of God's judgment to depraved man.

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 3.

Page

Form and Redemption. Need for Mediator. 73) What external form cannot do, only personal Mediator with appropriate external forms can.

A) Law was 74) declaration of Christ, not to 78) "confine the ancient people to itself." Law defined as whole cultus, not merely decalogue. Taken by itself, ceremonial law ridiculous. 79) Shadow of things to come. 80) Priest and king were types for Christ. Neither could by inherent power bring salvation, but only witness to need for salvation. 81) Moral law revealed righteousness of Christ. By itself, it is impossibly high standard for depraved man. 82) Does God mock us in law? No, rather makes us to turn solely to him. 83) Demands of the law are spiritual, impossible to rise from external form of decalogue to the spirituality it demands. Three-fold use of the law. 84) I. Convicts man of unrighteousness. 84) II. It is an external restraint on the impious. 85) Even the elect, before their vocation profit by such. 86) III. The third use is as a discipline for the saints. 87) It provides an external reinforcement for the often feeble good intentions of the pious. 89) Distinction between the permanence of the moral law and the temporary nature of the ceremonial law. Ceremonies merely foretold Christ, moral law delineated the nature of Christ. 91) Performance of ceremonies implied acknowledgement of guilt. 92) Moral law as external form, and as spiritually interpreted. 93) Law humbles man. 94) Law is a more effective external spur to what our conscience urges all to ineffectively from within. 96) Promised rewards not on basis of merit, but as spur. Law proclaims only righteousness. 97) Spiritual Duty toward man is only achieved if we first obey God. 99 ff) Exposition of the moral law. 104) The fourth commandment in more detail. Reveals emphasis upon spirituality of the law. 107) Whole law summarized by love for God and neighbor.

B) Christ proclaimed by two Testaments. 109) Similarity of the two Testaments. Both reveal Christ, both provide same covenant, confirm same hope by different signs. 110) Differences: New Testament provides clear presentation of what had hitherto been presented by terrestrial figures. 111) Old Testament presented shadows, New Testament light, itself. New Testament more spiritually proclaimed and received, less external. 113) Old Testament limited to Israel, New Testament for all world.

C) External form and the Incarnation. 114) Mediator must be both God and man. Only thus could he bring salvation sufficiently close to us. 115) As guilt was "sealed in our flesh" so must redemption be. 116) Salvation to be brought into our flesh. Our flesh had to be offered as price of our sin. 117) Christ assumed three-fold office for our redemption. Spiritual nature of these offices. 118) The love of God preceded and was the motivation for incarnation. 119) Christ had to assume full nature of depraved

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 4.

Page

humanity. Death of condemned criminal. Resurrection completed triumph. Ascension assures us that his presence with us is spiritual. 120) We look to his coming again. 121) Christ not mere instrument, but author of our salvation. Summary of significance of external form in the doctrine of redemption.

CHAPTER III

Form and the Spiritual Life..... 124

125) Application of religious truth to individual and society involves external form. Personal faith distinguished from conformity to externals. 126) Holy Spirit described. 127) He makes internal what otherwise would be merely external history and word.

with Faith 128) Intensely personal and heartfelt. Not mere agreement to the external form of doctrine or the record of evangelical history. Implicit faith in Church pronouncements is gullibility, not faith. 129) Faith involves a direct knowledge and personal dependence on God. Implicit faith occurs when we accept truth which our human minds do not fully understand. 130) Faith involves knowledge of a person as presented in the word. Subjective response to objective manifestation. 132) It is not mere perception of externals, - but rather a change of heart. 133) Faith always rests on promises in word.

of Repentance 135) Like faith an inward concern. 136) Conversion of whole life to God arising from a knowledge of his judgment. Continual mortification of flesh and renewal of mind throughout Christian life. 137) Not a matter of external ceremonies. 138) Verbal confession follows true repentance. 139) Subordination of external form in repentance.

The Christian Life. 139) Calvinism accused of gloomy life-view. Calvin's emphasis on the spiritual. 140) Christianity does have a "philosophy of life." Scriptural plan is I) to instill a love of righteousness. We first are united to Christ that we may be infused with the love of righteousness. 141) II) God provides us with Christ as a pattern and rule for that righteousness. 142) External expressions and symbols of this new way of life. Whole man must be transformed. 143) Christian life summarized by self-denial. 144) Acceptance of external occurrences with patience. 145) The right use of terrestrial blessings set mind above them. Accept them as blessings, with real appreciation of their qualities. Other world far superior to this world. 147) Avoid extremes of asceticism and indulgence. 149) Rules for using external supports for life: I) Use the world as though we used it not. II) Bear penury with tranquillity and abundance with moderation. 150) III) We are stewards of earthly things. IV) Regard vocation. All vocations honorable in sight of God.

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

151) External form in the Christian life.
Justification by faith. 152) No form of external action, no good work can bring justification, but only an internal reliance on God through faith. 153) Saved only by Grace, by virtue of Christ's righteousness. 154) Good works are sign, not cause of justification. This doctrine provides a higher motivation than of reward for merit. 155) Promises of the law as incentives, but not "earned" by efforts at obedience. 156) Law remains for Christian, though he is not justified by it. 157) We are freed from obligation in regard to external matters of indifference. We must not abuse the weaker brethren. 158) Not freed from duty to temporal rulers. Justification and external form.

Prayer. 159) Spiritual nature stressed. Not mere repetition of phrases. A personal communion with the Heavenly Father in faith. Must maintain proper, orderly formality in private and public prayer. 160) We have a form or model for prayer in the Lord's Prayer. Spiritual source and formal discipline are both fundamental to an understanding of prayer.

Predestination. 161,162) Various aspects as related to external form.

The Resurrection as Goal of Christian Life. 163) The external form of the body is thus redeemed. This is ultimate destiny of external form in the Christian life,- to become completely renewed and subservient to spirit. CAP

Summary of the significance of external form in the Christian life.

CHAPTER IV

External aids for faith. Church, Sacraments, and Civil Government..... 165
 166) The Lord has accomodated himself to our frailty by providing external aids for the production of faith in our hearts.

The Church

166) "Believe the Church," not "believe in the Church."
 167) Church visible and invisible. 168) Respect and obedience to visible Church. Though they are human, we must listen to pastors as to the voice of God, when they are true to his word. 169) God's spiritual authority in the Church. He is present in it, yet transcendent to it. over?
 171) Maintain unity with church as long as it maintains outward signs. Satan's strategy is first to try to obliterate marks of true Church; failing that, he tries to make people hold them in contempt. 172) Faults of other members of the Church no excuse for leaving it. We are not perfect ourselves. 173) We are maintained in Church by the forgiveness of our sins. The marks of the Church. Not external cap

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 6

Page

historic continuity, but conformity to Word,- true preaching, pure administration of sacraments. 174) External form in "believing the Church." 175) The true and false Church compared. External continuity no guarantee of true Church. Doctrine is true test. 176) Principal bond of Roman Church is sacrilege of the Mass. 177) Roman external forms claim false inherent virtue.

The Ministry. Its significance as pivotal issue in the doctrine of the Church. 178) The use of human ministers a gracious act of God, not a necessity. Mutual dependence leads to mutual regard and charity. 179) No more glorious calling, that even angels cannot share. Pastor's office is similar to the Apostle's. The teacher is similar to the Prophet. Regulations on work of Pastor. 180) Order and propriety of call. Two-fold problem of Reformed Churchmanship. 181) I) Avoid too much superstitious veneration for external form of Church and II) still provide confident action for constructive churchmanship. Calvin allows certainty within visible realm as long as it is not too directly projected into spiritual realm. 182) Appointment of bishop or minister only with public approval, under supervision of other pastors. Ordination does not automatically bestow grace. 183) Roman perversion of ordination. Offices no longer what apostles intended.

Papal Defection. 184) Besides ordination, whole concept of function of clergy and church corrupted by Rome. Princely pomp instead of apostolic simplicity, zeal and pure doctrine. To see worldly riches of Church as fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies of Zion's glory is absurd. Idea of a human visible head of the Church not necessary or Christian. 185-6) Papacy reveals false use of external form.

Articles of Faith 186) Church's only power is in proclaiming the word of God. 187) Church can be stern and adamant when within the Word, but only then.

Matters of Conscience. 188) External authority of either church or state cannot legislate on matters of conscience where God's word alone holds sway. The same holds true in matters of worship. God alone is Lord of the conscience. 189) Laws necessary in Church and state to preserve polity. Unholy splendor of Roman Mass. Need for decency and order in worship. 190) Difference in polity permissible. Though Church given "keys of kingdom" 191) this does not give power in addition to preaching the Word. State controls external, temporal world. Church addresses only the spiritual world. Its power spiritual and subordinate to word. 192) Needs and method of discipline in Church. 193) Fasting for public sins. 194) Clerical behavior. The religious vow, its misuse, limitations and use. 196) Significance of category of external form in doctrine of the Church.

The Sacraments.

197) As another means of assisting our faith. Definition. Attitude toward sacrament reveals attitude toward external

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 7.

Page

form. 198) Contrast to other positions. 199) Sacrament as "mystery." 200) Although virtue of sacrament wholly in the Word, the sacraments "confirm and authenticate" it in our hearts. 201) Efficacy wholly through the Holy Spirit. 202) Sacrament is any seal of covenant. Rainbow, sacrifices, circumcision. 203) No opus operatum in sacrament.

Baptism. Sign of initiation into kingdom. 204) More than purely human symbol. No one type is solely permitted. 205) Baptism proper, but not necessary for salvation. Signifies regeneration by spirit. Same meaning as circumcision. 206) Thus proper for children on basis of the covenant. 207) Faith is on the part of the parents. *only?*

The Lord's Supper. As sure of our communion as if we had Christ visibly before us. 208) Even more, we are confirmed in the hope offered by his promises. Must avoid thinking of Lord's Supper as mere intellectual superstitious attachment to the symbols. 209) Meaning of the Lord's Supper to be found in Incarnation. Only hope for humanity was in word made flesh, when Son of God became visible and palpable. *cap* He then brought life to our flesh. The Sacrament permits us to unite with the Incarnate Christ. 210) Christ is not "attached" to elements. Truth of symbolism lost unless real bread stand for real body. Nor is Christ's body infinite. 200) Conduct of Sacrament. *sh*

Other ceremonies falsely called sacraments. 212) These ceremonies not sacraments because no promise of Grace attached to them. Ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance. 213) Summary of external form and sacraments.

Civil Government.

214) Civil government as external form. Its significance for faith. 215) The civil sphere must not be ignored, but it must not be confused with spiritual realm. Freedom in latter may co-exist with slavery in the former. Civil government maintains that order that is conducive to human well being and the health of the Church. 216) No one form of government is alone blessed. Civil law is based on moral law, which is, in turn, based on natural law. 217) More than one form of government possible. As civil government is ordained by God, *cap* obedience to it must be as to him, even when the ruler engages in unjust measures. 218) When the magistrate commands impure worship, however, no such obedience is due him, for he has forfeited the sole basis for his authority.

CHAPTER V

Concluding...

Form in an Apology for the Faith.

220) Letter to Francis I comes as a defense of Protestantism as a whole, in early part of Calvin's ministry. Concerned with the practical results of Protestantism on the public order of a kingdom. Claims the results of his religion not subversive of established order. 211) True religion only basis for true government. Protestants do not point to themselves, but to the

ANALYTICAL TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 8.

Page

God of whom they are faithful witnesses. 222) Claim of Protestants to the Word of God because they follow "analogy of faith" in its interpretation. 223) Different attitude toward form that this entails. External form as Roman Catholic ground of confidence. For Protestants it must be continually judged by will of God. 225) Gospel not novel since it is based on revelation which precedes the Church. True, spiritual religion not dependent on continual miraculous confirmation. Miracles prove nothing spiritually, when taken by themselves. 226) Attitude toward the Church Fathers. Closer agreement with fathers than have Romanists, although basic authority is Scripture. 227) The Fathers err on occasion. Custom no criterion for faith. 228) True form of the Church explained and defended. 230) True unity and form of Church not necessarily visible. Visible church can be withdrawn by God. True marks have fundamentally spiritual significance. 231) Avoid too great attachment to external splendor of Church. 233) Did Reformation produce social upheaval? It was accompanied by it because the truth aroused Satan to fierce opposition by both Romanist and Anabaptist. 234) Good example and civic virtue of Protestants. 235) Reformed faith defended not only for its truth, but also for its orderliness.

SUMMARY OF THESIS.

236) "Informed spirituality." Spiritual world - the personality of both God and man - has moral nature, spiritual form. Spiritual nature is expressed in external form. 237) External form a necessary support for proper spiritual life. Limits to spiritual effectiveness of external form. Is never granted inherent spiritual power. 238) A proper relationship called for. External form not foreign to spirit, but must ever be taken with its spiritual source. Need for external form a condition of creation. Ultimate supremacy of the spiritual realm.

CONCLUSION.

240) Institutes the chief embodiment of Calvin's doctrinal position, but Calvin's doctrinal positions pervaded whole life and writing. 241) Calvin's life-long concern for proper form, - Language. Need for good style. Clarity uppermost. Simplicity. Fit for communication of spiritual truth. Personality through words. 244) Doctrine of preaching. Verbal versus graphic and plastic arts. 245) Music has its use. 246) Calvinism and culture. Calvin and beauty. 247) Calvinism and culture. General tendency to emphasize language disciplines.

Calvin and the Law. 248) Conscience, the natural law, moral law, civil law, all based on righteous will of God for man, on God's enduring righteousness. 249) Primacy of law and democratic thinking. Dangers of secularization. Calvin's "spiritual legalism."

Theological postscript. 250) Stress on external form vs. stress on spirituality in Reformed Theology. Edwards. Appeal to Calvin as a support for more liberal theology.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CATEGORY OF FORM
IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the importance of the category of form in a system of theology. In John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion there is presented a system of theology which has been perhaps the most influential organized body of ideas in the entire Protestant movement. We are going to examine this theological system to find what place form occupies in it. In order to do this, we shall first review, briefly, the broader meaning and significance of the category of form in general, and try to arrive at a definite understanding of the term.

From the earliest times there have been two tendencies in the Church. On the one side there has been the tendency to emphasize the subjective "spiritual" quality of the faith. Christianity, for this school of thought, has been largely a matter within the individual soul as it stood in direct communion with God. Such inner religion rendered as of secondary importance the external elements of Church life. On the other hand there have been those who have emphasized the institutional life of the Church, the discipline, the proper liturgical sacramental observance, the ecclesiastical law, the hierarchical organization and those elements which are pertinent to the external existence of the Church. Both in the life and in the thought of the Church has this twofold tendency been evident. Some schools of thought have explained the rest of Christian truth in terms of the internal experience of the individual, while others have explained God's relation to man through the external forms of Church life.

This twofold movement is a necessity. Christian life and thought must move in two directions. It must move toward first principles,

toward finding the ultimate certainties of faith in the relation of man to God. On the other side it must move toward a more articulate understanding of the formal implications of the faith, toward finding the forms which properly express the ultimate certainties. The question of the essence of the faith is always involved in all other questions in the thought of the Church. It has never been able to stand apart from the form in which it has subsisted and by which it has been expressed, for the soul has not been independent of the body. Thus we observe why the task of understanding the faith and expressing it formally has been undertaken by the Christian community from the establishment of the Creed, Canon and authority of the bishop in the first centuries of Church history to the social and ecumenical efforts of the present day. Both the inner logic of the gospel, and the challenge to it from without have driven the faithful to formal endeavor. Accompanying and following the "ages of faith" there have been periods of formulation, of organization, of ordered consolidation.

According to the Webster's International Dictionary (1) "form" is to be defined as the shape or structure of anything as opposed to the material of which it is composed. There are many related meanings. It comes to mean "the manner or method, esp. regulative or prescriptive" of acting or speaking. Here the contrast to "spirit" can be understood, for this method or manner of procedure can be prescribed by custom, etiquette, etc. and can thus be found apart from the spirit or substance, and thus be called empty. As Cowper is quoted by Webster:

"..... to fill religion's vacant place
With hollow form, and gesture, and grimace."

(1) Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language. (Springfield, Massachusetts, U. S. A. 1914, G. & C. Merriam Co.).

We find Webster further defining the term as follows:

! "The ideal or intrusive character of anything, or that which imposes this character; hence a pattern or schema; specif.: a Metaph. That assemblage or disposition of qualities which makes an existing thing, to be what it is; called essential or substantial form, and contrasted distinguished from matter; hence, active or formative nature."

* Thus we have the dictionary definition of the term which is at the center of our discussion. The category of form is seen to be either the shape, structure or nature of anything as opposed to its essence. It is sometimes seen as something external and hence separate from or imposed upon the essence or substance. This dual meaning is important to remember as we become involved in the discussion of form in religion. Are the external forms of religion part of the substance of the faith or are they separate or imposed? Thus shape, nature or structure, whether inherent or separate, is what is meant by the term "form".

Religion, in its essence, is concerned ultimately with a knowledge of God and men in their interrelations. It is concerned with the nature of God, his relation to the creation which he has made and to man who has been made in his image. It is concerned with the nature of man as created, as compared to the divine nature, to his fellow man and to impersonal creation, as this nature is found since the fall. For it, the main distinction is between God and Creation and it thus affirms the distinction between inanimate creation and man, who is the image of God. As persons are said to have "nature or character", they may be said to have form, just as the external world has form. As the distinction between the realm of the personal and of the impersonal is very important, so is the distinction between personal and external form. Not only is the distinction important, however, but so also is the relation between them. The fact that man is both soul and

body means that he is involved not only in the spiritual but in the physical, impersonal world as well. His life is lived in constant relation to both areas. The external physical world is very important for a knowledge of God, inasmuch as it is His Creation, and as we are a part of this creation, we cannot step outside it in our knowledge of God, but rather remain within it, conditioned by it. ^{ed} Thus, while theology is first of all interested in persons, in spiritual matters, it is also faced with the problem of the external world, a world that affects and is affected by the spiritual realm. Temporal forms are external to, but they are necessary for religion. In the world are definite shapes. Whether we look at the order of the created world, and of the parts and species within it, or whether we look at the problem of organized religious institutions and laws, sacraments, etc., and the problems of such externally organized religion in the world of men who have their own institutions, still the fact remains that the issues of religion not only consist of internal spiritual problems of man who faces God, but rather simply because it must start with these problems, religion is also involved in the world of external form. How to relate the personal spiritual world to this external world remains a crucial problem of theology. How is the structure of the creation related to our knowledge of its Creator? How does the Christian face such problems as that of the law which is of itself an impersonal thing, yet given by God and directed to the improvement of man? The doctrine of incarnation, itself, as well as the whole conception of the work of God in history involves the acceptance of the importance of external form. Indeed it is because of this central affirmation of the importance of a

sacred history that the necessity of external forms is underlined.

As Hebert says:

"Both the Old Israel and the New look back to a Sacred History, a Heilsgeschichte, an epic story of God's saving work.....There could be no essential forms if Christianity consisted essentially of moral and religious ideals, nor yet if its central proclamation were that there is in all men an Inner Light. There must be such essential forms for a faith which rests on a Sacred History." (1)

Thus the Christian faith involves the external world and the form thereof as a corollary of the doctrine of Creation and Redemption. Nor can it avoid the problems created by the fact that men are called to be Christians in this world of time and space. Even when they are told to lift their eyes to the things of eternity, they cannot avoid the fact that they are involved in time and space during the course of their earthly pilgrimage. Not only the individual but also the Christian community must keep its witness to heavenly things while maintaining its organization, ordinances, sacraments and it must maintain proper relations to temporal society in this vale of tears.

Although the Church needs both spirit and external form, there has often been tension and even open conflict between those who have stressed form and those who have stressed the spirit. The formalist views with apprehension any lack of discipline. He fears chaos will result where external form does not hold in check the impulses of the believers. On the other hand, it has become a byword among those resisting extensive formalization, that the formal institution of faith has often been followed by loyalty to the form and the formula, while the original vitality has been lost. The form, it is claimed, becomes, if not the object, at least the obtrusive regulator, the arbitrator instead

(1) A. G. Hebert, The Form of the Church, (London, Faber and Faber, 1944), p. 15.

of the servant of faith. It has betrayed the original spirit with which the faith had been held.

The question of formal expression is, therefore, not only of how to express formally, but how to keep the form continually subordinate to the main intention of the faith. Heresies and reforming movements alike have sought, time and time again, to revise the formal nature and procedure of the Church in the light of new appreciation of the "spiritual core" of Christianity.

The Protestant Reformation itself can be understood from one point of view as an attempt to reaffirm the truly personal essence of the gospel, to strip away the husks of superstitious formalism and regain a truly "spiritual" religion. This task involved, by its very nature, a sharp difference in the understanding of what the spiritual essence of Christianity was, because no Catholic would admit that his tradition was unspiritual. It also involved a number of differences from Rome in the formal expression. As important, however, as the differences from Rome in this or that doctrine, or in this or that form, was a conviction in Reformed circles that henceforward the form of religious observance should, as it had not, ^{been} perhaps since apostolic times, be kept subordinate to the spiritual and personal core of religion. Indeed, from the point of view of, say, a Mohammedan, the doctrinal differences between Catholic and Reformed parties would be less important than their agreement. As for the particular formal observances, many of them survived almost unchanged in one or another of the Protestant communions. What Protestantism insisted upon was rather a reinterpretation of Christian doctrine in the light of the sufficiency of the direct personal experience of faith, as a means of salvation. It was not through the form of

external observance, but in the immediate personal relation of the believer to God that salvation was to be found. It was as a rebel against medieval formalism that Luther is summarized by Williston Walker:

"Not a great scholar, an organizer, or a politician, he moved men by the power of a profound religious experience, resulting in unshakable trust in God, and in direct, immediate and personal relations to Him, which brought a confident salvation that left no room for the elaborate hierarchical and sacramental structures of the Middle Ages." (1)

In this resistance to the extreme formalism of the Roman church, Luther was joined by Calvin. Commenting upon the religion of his day, Calvin said, "....men in general render to God a formal worship, but very few truly reverence him; while great ostentation in ceremonies is universally displayed, but sincerity of heart is rarely to be found." (2)

The Counter-Reformation, of course, contested the validity of the new "spirituality", the new emphasis on the justification by faith. The zealots and saints of the Catholic reaction stressed that Christian spirituality could only be valid within the "hierarchical and sacramental structures" of the Roman Catholic Church. The external forms of the Church were necessary checks and guides for the saving individual experience, nay rather were the presupposition of it.

This difference of opinion has come down to the present time. In the theological world, for instance, many of the differences between various schools can be stated largely in terms of their attitude towards external form. The Catholic NeoThomist scholastic

(1) Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, (New York 1943, Charles Scribner's Sons), p. 336.

(2) John Allen, Institutes of the Christian Religion Translated from the Original Latin, and Collated with the Author's Last Edition in French, by John Allen; Sixth American Edition, Revised and Corrected. (Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication.) Book I, Chapter 2, Paragraph II.

on the one side, and the Protestant NeoOrthodox, NeoCalvinist and Barthian on the other side, offer quite different solutions to the problem. There seems to be a tendency in both camps to try to restate the older positions. The Catholics are emphasizing the value of the objectivity of the older faith, and the NeoProtestants are stressing the transcendence of God and the judgment which His word brings to any "historical" institution.

While there have been extremists in the Protestant movement, there have also been those holding more moderate positions. The Lutheran and Calvinistic movements from the beginning represented what has been known as the "church-type" of reformed group. They accepted the need for external form in both the Church and the world. The Scriptures, Church order, the Sacraments, and civil society, they both maintained to be in agreement with the Christian gospel.

While there was an emphasis in both Lutheranism and Calvinism on salvation through the immediate personal relation to God as opposed to adherence to external form, it brought little uniformity in the establishment of the doctrinal, ecclesiastical, sacramental and civil forms appropriate for such a faith. It is here that divergences appeared between these two movements. Despite the common protest against the hierarchical system of Rome, the task of reconstructing a new church order on the new "evangelical principle" was not viewed with equal urgency by both parties. There was, indeed, a new appeal beyond the existing church order, to a new understanding of the heart of the faith as with the extremist groups. The emphasis upon justification by faith alone did not issue, however, in identical policies of reformation. The Lutherans maintained much of the old ceremonies

and institutional life. The Swedish Lutherans maintained their existing national hierarchy. On the other hand the Swiss, French, Dutch and Scottish Reformation resulted in more extensive reform. In general, the Lutherans were not too interested in going further than insuring what has been called the material element of Reformation thought - justification by faith - while the Reformed Churches emphasized the formal element - reconstruction of the church life under the sovereignty of the Word of God. In contrasting the material and formal roles of Lutheranism and Calvinism, Philip Schaff has said:

"The Lutheran Confession starts from the wants of sinful man and the personal experience of justification by faith alone, and finds in this 'Article of the standing and falling Church', comfort and peace of conscience, and the strongest stimulus to a godly life. The Reformed Churches (especially the Calvinistic sections) start from the supreme authority of God and the supreme authority of His Holy Word, and endeavor to reconstruct the whole Church on this basis." (1)

When one views the reconstructive task which the Reformed tradition set itself, certain questions come to mind. Did the strongly personal nature of Protestantism, with its attendant, although not always manifest, emphasis upon individualism and freedom of conscience, provide an adequate basis for a strict view of the discipline of form? Did Calvin, by his emphasis upon theocracy in all branches of life, introduce essentially pre-Reformation or even pre-Christian legalistic elements? It is a question of how a protest movement, a movement which was a direct appeal to the sufficiency of personal faith, could also be a movement of formal reconstruction.

The Reformation was a movement to free the personal faith of the Christian from medieval formalism, and indeed from any blind allegiance to external form. How, then, could one of its two

(1) Philip Schaff in "Bibliotheca Symbolica Ecclesiae Universalis," Creeds of Christendom, Vol. I (New York, 1881 Harper & Bros.), p. 216.

greatest traditions be so concerned with formal reconstruction, with asserting the importance of the law, the proper order and discipline of the Church, the establishing of Godly government in civil society, wherever possible? Is the title which Williston Walker gives Calvin - "The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism"⁽¹⁾ - synonymous with calling him the betrayer of the Reformation? Insofar as he attempted to clamp forms upon a spontaneous movement of faith, was he insisting upon a medieval Catholic or even a preChristian Judaistic framework for the faith? Whether or not a contradiction is felt to lie in such a task, the passage of the personal, subjective faith into a formally reconstructed Church life, represents an interesting theological problem. In the light of the new personal understanding of the faith, what was the significance of the forms which were now made to express and regulate the Christian gospel?

Thus we have seen that the problem of external form in theology is of how the form of that which is impersonal, is to play a part in the personal relations between God and man, and between man and man. We are concerned in this thesis with how Calvin answered the problem in the major theological departments in which it confronted him in the construction of his system. Having viewed the problem in the various areas of his thinking, we shall try to see if there is an underlying principle in connection with which we can assess the influence upon his solution of certain practical problems, and to estimate his influence and significance for later history.

The fundamental source which we shall consult in our investigation of Calvin's attitude toward external form, is the product of his life-long task of systematizing and coordinating his doctrine:- The Institutes of Christian Religion. Prefaced by a brilliant defense of the Reformed

(1) Williston Walker, John Calvin, The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism. 1509-1564. (New York, 1906 G. P. Putnam's Sons).

Cause which we shall examine in our fifth chapter and which was written as a letter to Francis I in 1536, the work consists of four books. The first is on God the Father, the Creator of heaven and earth. The second is about man, as created, as fallen and about the Redemption which the Son has accomplished. The third book is about the work of the Holy Spirit who effectively applies Redemption to the hearts and lives of the elect. The fourth book concerns the institutional and social implications of this religion which must be practiced among real men in this evil age. In this, the need for and nature of the Church, the sacraments and civil society are discussed.

CHAPTER ONE

FORM AND OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CREATOR

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim:
The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand."

Joseph Addison

The first book of the Institutes concerns the knowledge of God, the Creator. Here the fundamental relation is between man and his Maker. Here the basic proposition is that God created the world and that man is made in God's image. The underlying question is "How can the creature know the Creator?" The answer is that man can only know his Maker aright if his eyes are unclouded by sin, as he observes God's Creation. Since Adam's fall, however, man has needed the assistance of special revelation. He must spiritually receive God's word to know the God who made him. While such a proper spiritual state of receptivity implies some beginning of the redemptive work of Grace within us, yet we must understand God as our Creator and Sustainer before we properly appreciate and understand God as Redeemer. (1)

This conviction that a study of God as Creator of the world should precede a study of him as our Redeemer, is in itself a significant assertion. Lest we fail to realize how this attitude marks Calvin off from some of his disciples, we can contrast this order of procedure with that followed by Dr. Karl Barth, who maintains that the doctrine of creation is unintelligible until after the doctrine of justification. (2) For Calvin, as opposed to Barth, any knowledge of God must first take into account not only our spiritual need for God, but also our dependence upon God and the dependence upon him which is exhibited by the external world with which we are surrounded.

(1) Institutes Book I, Chapter 2, Paragraph I

(2) Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik (Munich, C. Kaiser 1932-1948) First volume "Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes", first appeared in 1932. The third volume, "Die Lehre von Schoepfung" first appeared in 1945.

We see in the first book (1) that Calvin's concern is to indicate to man the proper path toward a knowledge of his Creator. In this knowledge, however, there is involved not merely a direct personal relation. There is also involved that knowledge which takes into account the created world. It is expressed by forms of worship and is informed by the structure and nature of the world itself. Even the special revelation, necessary to show man who his Creator is, has needed to make use of the external world by being recorded in Scripture. On the other hand, the spirituality of our knowledge of God is underlined by Calvin's absolute refusal to allow any form of "idolatry" in the worship of God. Only in the two ordained sacraments can man legitimately use the physical world to symbolize Divinity.

The Creator is a Spirit, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The physical world is dependent, moment by moment, on his will. The events of the external world also express his nature as he governs the course of history by his Providence. In all we are told to remember that the external world and the form thereof is not self-sufficient, we should always keep our hearts and minds directed above it. This, then, is the groundwork for true piety. Unless we understand something of the subordination of our world to God, any true and proper acceptance of God as Redeemer is impossible. An appreciation of God's general grace in supporting the world which he has created and upon which we are dependent, is necessary if we are to value the special grace he bestows upon the elect. The nature or form of the external world as a whole must inform faith, but to take it properly into account, the eyes of faith must always look above it to the Lord, and must never ascribe his attributes to his Creation. The principles

(1) I, First book, Passim

which underly² our use of the Creation and our "enjoyment" of the Creator (to use Augustine's language) are presented in the first book of Calvin's Institutes.

In order to deal with Calvin's attitude toward external form, let us first examine how the language of external form enters^{into} the very definition of the nature of religion and theology as Calvin envisages it in the first chapters of the Institutes. Does he reveal premises upon which a treatment of external form can be based? In order to make external form a significant part of a theology, there must, in the first place, be some sense of form, even if it is the moral nature of personality (i.e. spiritual or internal form), and, in the second place, there must be some realization that the impersonal world affects and should affect faith. Whether or not form is yet treated as external or the external world is treated in respect to its form, yet where both concepts are present at the beginning of the theological development, (1) there is the basis for later treatment of external form.

Such concern with the realm of the formal and external does indeed come at the very start of the development in the Institutes and is bound up with the very meaning of theology as Calvin envisages it.

Theology (2), Calvin maintains, provides the answer to the question "What is true wisdom?" True wisdom consists in the knowledge of God and of man, these two divisions being closely connected, so that knowledge of either leads to a knowledge of the other. The former, however, provides the more promising starting point for doctrine of

(1) I, Chaps. 1 & 2

(2) I, 1

the Institutes. This knowledge of God, however, cannot be considered as merely abstract. A proper understanding of God can only be had when there is proper reverence, or where there is true religion. Pure and genuine religion is defined as "faith, united with a serious fear of God, comprehending a voluntary reverence and producing legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law." (1) When our historical knowledge reminds us of the church services and fast days of Geneva and other communities where Calvinism held sway, then we can grasp the meaning of "legitimate worship" which is thus involved at the very core of true religion. Wisdom involves knowledge of God; knowledge of God involves faith in God; faith in God implies legitimate worship and legitimate worship cannot be defined without using the terms of the proper external form.

If we look deeper for the reasons for external form's being so integral a part of Calvin's theology, we find that Calvin, from the first, discusses the subject of religion in terms which we have seen are essentially formal, and also that he is not hesitant in speaking of the importance of the external world, and of purely objective considerations for faith. Attacking any thought of self-sufficiency he shows that our personal nature and the very talents with which we are endowed are, by their origin, from a source outside us. ".....The talents which we possess are not from ourselves; these bounties, distilling by drops from heaven, form, as it were, so many streams conducting us to the fountain-head." (2) A sense of the form, or rather the deformity of sinful man is dealt with also. ".....Since man is subject to a world of miseries, and has been spoiled of his divine array, this melancholy exposure discovers an immense mass of deformity: everyone,

(1) I, 2, II

(2) I, 1, I

therefore, must be so impressed with a consciousness of his own infelicity, as to arrive at some knowledge of God. Nor can we really aspire toward him till we have begun to be displeased with ourselves. The knowledge of ourselves, therefore, is not only an incitement to seek after God, but likewise a considerable assistance towards finding him." (1) Thus a sense of our "talents" objectively viewed leads us to their Donor. Here is no embarrassment at using the same language about Creation and Creator. God is spoken of as the "fountain-head" from which the streams of our earthly blessings flow; and these earthly blessings actually lead us back to their source. A consideration of our own form, or rather our "mass of deformity" also leads us to seek and actually helps us to find God. The external world and the world of form each is shown to be very much within the concern of Calvin's treatment of man's approach to God.

As he discusses our knowledge of God we see that he speaks of the form or character of God. "...No man can arrive at the true knowledge of himself, without having first contemplated the divine character, and then descended to the consideration of his own." (2) "...The Lord..is the only standard by which this judgment (of ourselves) ought to be formed." (3) God is, indeed, contrasted to man, but the force of that contrast is precisely the grounds which exist for comparison. God's character is the standard for us to conform to. "For as long as our views are bounded by the earth, perfectly content with our own righteousness, wisdom and strength, we fondly flatter ourselves and fancy we are little less than demigods. But, if we once elevate our thoughts to God, and consider his

(1) Ibid
(2) I, 1, II
(3) Ibid

nature and the consummate perfection of his righteousness, wisdom and strength, to which we ought to be conformed, -- what before charmed us in ourselves under false pretext of righteousness, will soon be loathed as the greatest iniquity.....so very remote from the divine purity is what seems in us highest perfection." (1)

It is in this light that he interprets the "fear and trembling" of the worthies of the Old Testament. This comparison was the cause of the consternation of which we have such frequent examples in the prophets and judges. It is in this light that we can understand that

"Abraham, the nearer he approached to behold the glory of the Lord, the more fully acknowledged himself to be but 'dust and ashes.'" (2)

"....When he shall make a fuller and nearer exhibition of his splendour, it shall eclipse the splendour of the brightest object besides." (3) No existentialist, despite his sense of the overpowering presence of God, Calvin refuses to divorce heavenly and earthly righteousness. Yet, by insisting upon their commensurability, he underlines the overwhelming judgment with which the Divine Character and Will is contrasted to our earthly depravity. The moral form or character of God is the fundamental criterion for estimating our own. He therefore considers a knowledge of God to be the logical starting point for a discussion of man and God.

One cannot think of knowledge of God being purely an abstract affair. It is "not merely a notion that there is such a being." "For we cannot with propriety say there is any knowledge of God where there is no religion or piety." (4) This religion or piety, however, is not first of all that which proceeds from redemption, from an

(1) Ibid
(2) I, 1, III
(3) Ibid
(4) I, 2, I

evangelical experience. It is that which, by the very nature of things, we are to hold. It is that knowledge which the creature, simply as creature, must have of his Creator. This knowledge of God as the Provider of life and all that we have, as "the fountain of all good," (1) must provide a basis for any real worship of him. We must attain this proper perspective, we must understand that he "sustains the universe as he once made it, ...there cannot be found the least particle of wisdom, light, righteousness, power, rectitude or sincere truth which does not proceed from him and claim him for its author:For this sense of the divine perfections is calculated to teach us piety, which produces religion." (2) Piety, or "reverence and love of God, arising from a knowledge of his benefits," (3) is a state of mind and soul which produces the inner preparation for the religious life of action. This piety, then, is informed by the external world, by the nature of things, the make-up of the universe as a thing created by God. This piety, in turn, is necessary if men are "...voluntarily to submit to his authority.... truly and cordially /to/ devote themselves to his service...." (4).

We thus see that Calvin has not viewed spiritual religion as a thing unrelated to external form. The moral state, i.e. "form", of personality both of Holy God and sinful man, is at the heart of his concern. On the other hand we have seen the importance of the "external." The world outside personality has a real witness to bear concerning God, its Originator. It has a real influence to exert upon man, its inhabitant. Thus we find to be present the two fundamental concepts necessary for a discussion of external form.

-
- (1) Ibid
 - (2) Ibid
 - (3) Ibid
 - (4) Ibid

A purely abstract knowledge of God is as unthinkable as is a Creator and Sustainer to whom we must not give complete reverence and submission. "...How can you entertain a thought of God without immediately reflecting that, being a creature of his formation, you must, by right of creation, be subject to his authority; that you are indebted to him for your life and that all your actions should be done in reference to him. If this be true, it certainly follows that your life is miserably corrupt unless it be regulated by a desire of obeying him, since his will ought to be the rule of our conduct." (1) This combination of ideas is immensely important for understanding Calvin's theology. The appreciation of a dependence arising from our status as a Creature in God's Creation, is the groundwork for his theology. The piety, the sense of gratitude and awe which arises from and must ever be informed by this creaturely condition, must therefore consist in a submission to his will as a rule for conduct, - as a pattern for (our) obedience. The importance of the external world for the beginning of the faith (and as we shall see, the structure of that world is a fundamental element in its importance for faith) and the importance of a divine rule for the conduct that issues from faith, typifies Calvin's religious outlook. Throughout Calvin's theology there is an emphasis upon the moral law, which is an external form for the expression of piety. It is therefore understandable that his definition of true and pure religion must include not only "faith, united with a serious fear of God," but "legitimate worship agreeable to the injunctions of the law." (2)

Religion is, first of all, heartfelt, and is not "merely formal." (3) He immediately contrasts, therefore, his definition

(1) I, 2, II
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

with/ to the empty formalism of the contemporary church. "And this re- ^{cup}
quires to be the more carefully remarked because men, in general,
render to God a formal worship, but very few truly reverence him;
while great ostentation in ceremonies is universally displayed, (but) ^{of?}
sincerity of heart is rarely to be found." (1). Thus elaborate ⁺
ceremonies are not enough where there is no heartfelt piety, nor ^{of}
where they are not in accordance with the will of God. These two
points of reference - the heart of man and the will of God - are
the factors which determine the worth of any external form, for all
external form owes its origin to one or the other. If the external ^{of}
form is not the true expression of the spiritual character of the
heart of a man, it is worthless; but even more important is whether
the form, heartfelt or not, is in accordance with the will of God.
A form which is not, in some sense, the expression of the heart of
the man using it, is bad enough; but where that heart and the forms ^x
it finds for expression are not in conformity to God's law, do not ^{with/}
follow God's will, then they are under God's judgment. "Formal wor-
ship", unsupported by true reverence, cannot ipso facto be "true or
legitimate." By the term "elaborate observances", he implies that
whereas man should look to a piety of heart as the beginning of wor-
ship, he actually attempts a futile manipulation and elaboration of
the external forms as though they had an inherent salutary property. ^{of}
Indeed, ceremony is, by the very fact of being ostentatious, out of
harmony with the true intention of the outward form of worship. As
external forms are thus to be judged by their spiritual origin, man
cannot judge the true nature of religion merely by the amount of
ostentation displayed.

True religion must be judged, first, in terms of (the) hearts [?]
conformed to the will of God. But it is with the universal outward

(1) Ibid.

practice of religion that we are confronted. We begin, therefore, with the problem of evaluating this formal expression of religion on the natural level.

All men have a sense of God. "...The human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of Deity." (1) Thus the problem of the true knowledge of God, and therefore the worship of God, is relevant for all men by their mental composition. "For that no man might shelter himself under the pretext of ignorance, God hath given to all some apprehension of his existence, the memory of which he frequently and insensibly renews." (2) Does this lead to proper religious observance? Not necessarily. It means that whatever man does, he cannot claim that religion is "irrelevant" for him. He must be judged by the standards of religion; - must come to terms with God, "...so that, as men universally know that there is a God, and that he is their Maker, they must be condemned by their own testimony, for not having worshipped him, and consecrated their lives to his service?" (3)

To underline this assertion that the real problem is not disbelief in the existence of some sort of God, Calvin shows that man's realization that there is a God is found in all cultures and ages. (4) The very fact of being human involves one in a belief in deity. It is woven into the very fabric of our being, and is not to be attributed to the contrivance of the rulers of men. Atheism is against human nature, and even the most audacious atheist reveals an uneasiness that can only be attributed to an underlying realization of the existence of the Being whom he seeks to deny. Men do not use this

(1) I, 3, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) I, 3, II, III

knowledge properly, however. They do not direct every thought and action to the service of God, and therefore it is rather the multitude of errors than the amount of good that is increased.

It is the existence of external forms of worship which demonstrates the universality of religion. (1) Man looks about him to find some means of worshipping, and for some God to worship. He forms gods from material objects and formulates orders of worship, creates codes of injunctions and prohibitions. He pictures God in all sorts of guises. All these external forms of religious endeavor show that there is an active belief in God. This universal occurrence of religion means that the demand to join in the external form of worship and conform to the external demands of the law, includes all men. Since all men do know of the existence of God, they must all the more be subject to the demands of piety and conformity to God's will, which alone makes for a true knowledge of God. "Now, if the end for which all men are born and live, be to know God, - and unless the knowledge of God have reached this point, it is uncertain and vain, - it is evident, that all who direct not every thought and action of life to this end, are degenerated from the law of their creation." (2) Thus by the very fact of being created by God, and as all men are quite aware of the Divine Existence, they must conform themselves, first of all, to his will. It is as this awareness is made articulate in worship, that we can speak of man as being man. Where worship is thus defined as an attempt to make one's whole being praise his Maker, it "...is therefore the only thing which renders man superior to brutes, and makes them aspire to immortality." (3) As external form, i.e. the law, is involved in

(1) I, 3, I
(2) I, 3, III
(3) Ibid.

true worship, it thus plays its part in the definition of human nature itself. For man to be man, he must accept a certain pattern which comes from God's will as that to which he must conform, and he must express his piety in an external form of worship which has been laid down.

There is no virtue, however, in external form per se, unless it proceed from the proper source. Though it be natural for man to express himself in worship, this cannot be considered as having been done in service to God unless it have been directed by God and unless it be done with proper vision of God and his majesty.

"Pride and vanity are discovered when sinful man, in seeking after God, rise not as they ought above their carnal stupidity, and leave the proper path of investigation in pursuit of speculations as vain as they are curious. Their conceptions of him are formed, not according to the representations he gives of himself, but by the inventions of their own presumptuous imaginations. This gulf being opened, whatever course they take, they must be rushing fowards to destruction. None of their subsequent attempts for the worship or service of God can be considered as rendered to him, because they worship not him, but a figment of their own brains in his stead." (1) Here we have stated for us the root problem of all natural religion as it is viewed by Calvin. It can, in no sense, be considered as an approach to God, "an approximation of the truth," for it must inevitably express only its spiritual source. Even the best and the most rational form that has been initiated from the human mind, can still only transmit the spirit of man. In order to have a godly and efficacious form of religion, it must have its source in God. External form has no inherent effectiveness, though the proper form

(1) I, 4, I

must be involved in any spiritual relationship, while the improper form seals the condemnation of the evil heart which originated it. Man expresses his own insufficiently religious spirit in the forms of natural religion. These forms, therefore, cannot have the stamp of divine approval.

Unauthorized forms of worship involve their authors in opposition and denial of God by denying that he has a will which lays down the pattern to which they should conform; - a will which is actively concerned with the world. They inevitably compromise God's holiness and justice, and in so doing they ipso facto deny his existence, "...not that they deprive him of his being, but because they rob him of his justice and providence, shutting him up as an idler in heaven.Whoever extinguishes all fear of the heavenly judgment, and indulges himself in security, denies that there is any God." (1)

Thus a recognition of God's nature must be a part of any understanding of his being, and an awareness of his nature involves a recognition of the active part he plays in the world in which we live; - the external as well as the spiritual world. An appreciation of the spiritual nature or form of God makes us realize the relevance of the world of external form to the Lord who governs it. We must be ever aware that "...The Divine Will is the perpetual rule to which true religion ought to be conformed; that God ever continues like himself; that he is no spectre or phantasm, to be metamorphosed according to the fancy of every individual." (2) Any other form of religion implies another divinity. For unless you know the true God, you have not the true religion, "..for there is

(1) I, 4, II

(2) I, 4, III

no legitimate religion unconnected with the truth." (1) Where men should raise their view to God and then allow his nature expressed in his will to be the norm for all their action and external formal expression, they avoid obeying God's will which should direct their external actions and provide them with the proper external form for worship and obedience. Men, however, confident in themselves "...Whereas the whole tenor of their life ought to be a perpetual course of obedience to him, ... make no scruple of rebelling against him in almost all their actions, only endeavoring to appease him with a few paltry sacrifices. In a word, whereas their confidence ought to be placed on him, they neglect him, and depend upon themselves or on other creatures." (2) This is Calvin's summary of the forms of religion that proceed from man's religious consciousness. The formal expression of religion, which is only meaningful when it is an approach to the real God, is merely an extension of the mind of created man when it proceeds from the natural level of human experience.

Precisely the reverse of this problem occurs in regard to the efficacy of natural revelation. Here the question is not whether the forms involved are valid representations of God, but whether they are effective in penetrating to the heart of man. False religion had the wrong forms, but it proceeded from the inmost heart of man. Creation itself, on the other hand, has a form that truly reveals God, but man's heart is insufficiently elevated to read it aright.

Calvin begins his discussion of "The Knowledge of God Conspicuous in the Formation and Continual Government of the World" (3) by stating that "As the perfection of a happy life consists in the knowledge of God, that no man might be precluded from attaining

(1) Ibid.

(2) I, 4, IV

(3) I, 5 Chapter Title, Allen's trans.

felicity, God hath not only sown in the minds the seed of religion..., but hath manifested himself in the formation of every part of the world, and daily presents himself to public view in such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold him. His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, so that his Majesty is not to be perceived by the human senses; but on all his works he hath inscribed his glory in characters so clear, unequivocal, and striking, that the most illiterate and stupid cannot exculpate themselves of the plea of ignorance." (1) All parts of the world, and especially the heavens, proclaim the glory of the Lord. Here Calvin quotes the CIV Psalm in its proclamation of how the Lord "covers himself with light as with a garment," and how "...he layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; maketh the clouds his chariot; walketh upon the wings of the wind;" Thus "...whithersoever you turn your eyes, there is not an atom of the world in which you cannot behold some brilliant sparks at least of his glory. But you cannot, at one view, take a survey of this ample and beautiful machine in all its vast extent, without being completely overwhelmed with its infinite splendour. Wherefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews elegantly represents the worlds as the manifestations of invisible things; (2) for the exact symmetry of the universe is a mirror, in which we may contemplate the otherwise invisible God." (3) A knowledge of the liberal arts and sciences brings us much further "in investigating the secrets of Divine Wisdom. Yet ignorance of those sciences prevents no man from such a survey of the workmanship of God, as is more than sufficient to excite his

(1) I, 5, I
(2) Heb. XI, 3
(3) I, 5, I

admiration of the Divine Architect. In disquisitions concerning the motions of the stars, in fixing their situations, measuring their distances and distinguishing their peculiar properties, there is need of skill, exactness and industry." (1) Calvin states that such a study should raise the student's mind "to a sublimer elevation" for a consideration of the glory of God. The "endless yet regular variety" of the stars is an obvious proclamation of God's glory to every individual on the earth. And so, when we consider our own frame, "...it belongs to the critical exactness of Galen, to describe/ the connection, the symmetry, the beauty and the use of the various parts of the human body. But the composition of the human body is universally acknowledged to be so ingenious as to render its Maker the object of deserved admiration." (2) The mind and spirit of man, more clearly than elsewhere, proclaim the kind of being God is, "...for the vestiges of immortality impressed upon man are absolutely indelible." (3)

It is scandalous to think that these evidences of divinity in man and in nature should somehow be attributed to some immanent Spirit, for the doctrine that there is some "secret inspiration animating the whole world, is not only weak, but altogether profane." (4) Thus, while Calvin has agreed with the Stoics that the universality of religion and necessary presupposition of it by the human mind are a proof of its truth, he emphatically rejects the notions that religion has to do with what is purely immanent in the structure or form of creation. "Just as if the world, which is a theater erected for displaying the glory of God were its own

(1) I, 5, II
(2) Ibid
(3) I, 5, V
(4) Ibid

creator." (1) No structure or form has within itself the final explanation of itself. The glorious and manifest meaning of the structure of Creation is only understood when it is seen as pointing beyond itself to the Lord who made it. He grants, indeed, "...that the expression that nature is God may be used in a pious sense by a pious mind; (2) but it is harsh and inconsistent with strict propriety of speech, nature being rather an order prescribed by God, it is dangerous,...to confound the Deity with the inferior course of his works." (3) Thus, in his treatment of the order of creation, Calvin shows the crucial significance of form; but he also shows the need for an explanation and a source that transcends the forms under consideration, and sees as the explanation and source of the entire universe, God the Creator. He looks at the examples of tremendous power in nature and sees them as the proof of the even greater power of Him who has created and continues to sustain "...with his word this immense fabric of heaven with roaring peals of thunder, to consume whatever he choose with lightnings, and set the atmosphere on fire with the flame; now to disturb it with tempests in various forms, and immediately, if he please, to compose all to instantaneous serenity; to restrain, suspended as it were in air, the sea, which, by its elevation, seems to threaten the earth with continual devastation; now raising it in a tremendous manner, by the tumultuous violence of the winds, and now appeasing the waves to render it calm ... this way of seeking God, by tracing the lineaments, which both above and below us exhibit such a lively adumbration of him, is common to aliens, and those who belong to his family. His power leads us to the consideration of his eternity;

(1) Ibid

(2) Doumergue attributes such a remark to Zwingli.- Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin, les hommes et les choses de son temps*, Vol. IV (Lausanne, G. Bridel & Cie, 1899-1927), p. 45.

(3) I, 5, V

because he, from whom all things derive their origin, must necessarily be eternal and self-existent." (1)

Calvin not only asserts that the regular order of creation reveals God; but also the more extraordinary providential acts of God reveal him and his character. (2) He can be plainly observed, so Calvin maintains, in his providential care of his children, in the way he rewards the good and punishes the evil. Even when he chastens his own, we can raise our eyes to a more sublime view of his justice and mercy. Thus "...his wisdom is eminently displayed in ordering every dispensation at the best possible time, confounding the greatest worldly sagacity, 'taking the wise in their own craftiness,' (3) and finally disposing all things according to the dictates of the highest reason." (4)

Thus revelation of God comes not only in the machine-like regularity of the structure and functioning of the universe, but also in the way in which the sovereign Providence of God can rule and overrule in his governing the on-going development of this complex structure in the course of history.

What, then, is the real significance and the proper use of this revelation of God in the structure of creation? Calvin says that it is an invitation "to a knowledge of God; not such as, content with empty speculation, merely floats in the brain, but such as will be solid and fruitful, if rightly received and rooted in our hearts." (5) Indeed "...we conclude this to be the right way, and the best method of seeking God; not with presumptuous curiosity to attempt an examination of his essence, which is

(1) I, 5, VI
(2) I, 5, VII
(3) I Cor. III, 19
(4) I, 5, VIII
(5) I, 5, IX

rather to be adored than too curiously investigated; but to contemplate him in his works, in which he approaches and familiarizes and, in some measure communicates himself to us. The God who is not to be confused with his works, is not to be considered except through them. They provide us with the language and the approach to him." (1) He himself must not be examined directly; but the tangible yet significant creation offers us the proper basis for approaching him. With the proper formal preparation and restraint, and proper personal, spiritual or subjective state, we are then and then only, able to know properly God who is a Spirit and who is the Creator of the world.

It is not only God who is revealed by creation, but also man, in the full and proper dimensions and the spiritual possibilities of his life. Taking a view of the works of God, we are raised to a view of him, but we are likewise awakened and aroused to the hope of a future life. "For when we consider, that the specimens given by the Lord, both of his clemency and of his severity, are only begun, and not completed, we certainly should esteem these as preludes to greater things, of which the manifestation and full exhibition are deferred to another life." (2) It is not in its external aspect that, primarily, creation can be said to reveal God, for "...though those perfections are most luminously portrayed around us, we only discover their principal tendency, their use, and the end of our contemplation of them, when we descend into our own selves, and consider by what means God displays in us his life, wisdom, and power, and exercises towards us his righteousness, goodness, and mercy." (3) Thus, if he is to know God through nature, man must, above all things, know himself as a part of nature, as a creature of God.

(1) Ibid
(2) I, 5, X
(3) Ibid

Yet it is precisely here, within the soul of man, that the reason exists for the insufficiency of natural revelation. "For with regard to the structure and very beautiful organization of the world, how few of us are there, who, when lifting up their eyes to heaven, or looking round on the various regions of the earth, direct their minds to the remembrance of the Creator, and do not rather content themselves with a view of his works, to the total neglect of their Author!" (1) As for what men actually do learn from the course of history, Calvin adds "So also, while the government of human actions proves a providence too plainly to admit of a denial, men derive no more advantage from it, than if they believed all things to be agitated forwards and backwards by the uncertain caprice of fortune; so great is our propensity to vanity and error!" (2) He considers the amount of true knowledge of God that can be found in human wisdom, and he asserts that no true knowledge of God can be said to exist in this realm. "For to spare others chargeable with greater absurdities, Plato himself, the most religious and judicious of them all, loses himself in his round globe (in *Timaeo*)." (3) The faults among the rude and unlearned are tremendous, but even "...among the philosophers, who attempted with reason and learning to penetrate heaven, how shameful is the diversity! In proportion to the vigor of his natural genius, and the polish acquired by art and science, each of them seemed to give the more specious coloring to his own opinion; but, on a close inspection, you will find them all fading colors." (4) But even were there a greater degree of truth than there is in natural religions, those who fail to live or think with perfection are under an absolute

(1) I, 5, XI
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) I, 5, XIII

condemnation, for "...it must also be maintained, that whoever adulterates the pure religion, (which must necessarily be the case of all who are influenced by their own imagination), he is guilty of a departure from the one God." (1) Calvin explains this severe pronouncement on the basis of the criterion which he lays down for any valid form. He states that "...in the mysteries of heaven, an opinion acquired by human means, though it may not always produce an immense mass of errors, yet always produces some. And though no worse consequence follow, it is no trivial fault to worship, at an uncertainty, an unknown god; of which, however, Christ pronounces all to be guilty who have not been taught by the law what god they ought to worship." (2) Unless one proceeds from the personal will of God himself, which is the law;—unless we know God himself, all that we do or think, the forms of our thinking and doing, can not be considered as truly directed to God. The net result of all this is that man is rendered inexcusable and helpless, for our blindness rises from our own fault. "But, however, men are chargeable with sinfully corrupting the seeds of divine knowledge, which, by the wonderful operation of nature, are sown in their hearts, so that they produce no good and fair crop, yet it is beyond a doubt that the simple testimony magnificently borne by the creatures to the glory of God, is very insufficient for our instruction. For as soon as a survey of the world has just shown us a deity, neglecting the true God, we set up in his stead the dreams and phantasms of our own brains; and confer upon them the praise of righteousness, wisdom, goodness, and power, due to him. We either obscure his daily acts, or pervert them by an erroneous estimate; thereby depriving the acts

(1) I, 5, XIII

(2) Ibid

themselves of their glory, and their author of his deserved praise." (1)

Thus the tragedy of natural man is complete. He cannot be content without the Deity, and he realizes his need for religion. But because he does not begin with the true notion of God,- because he does not start with God himself, and because he seeks to satisfy his religious impulses by forms conceived at his own level, he cannot truly reach God. Starting from the human mind, one cannot arrive at God, despite the fact that God is revealed in the structure of creation. Having lost the true spiritual basis for interpreting, in terms of the Creator, the creation in which we find ourselves, we must inevitably misread what should be an adequate revelation of God. Revelation, therefore, can never be merely a matter of proper form. Merely to lay bare a formal declaration of the existence and the goodness of God, is, in itself, insufficient to bring about a true knowledge even of God, the Creator, much less of God, the Redeemer, for since even this first type of knowledge of God, the Creator, must imply true fear and reverence in the person holding it, any attempt of natural man to construct a religion out of his experience of mundane affairs is doomed to failure. Man must be instructed in the proper form of thought and worship, but the form must be so addressed that it will "get through" to the actual fallen human situation, with directions for thought and worship by which the mind of a man, lost in himself, can worship his Creator. But even more important is the need to penetrate to the innermost heart of man so that he will make use of even that form especially adapted to his need for knowing God. A proper spiritual relation to God must, in an integral way, be involved in the new forms that are now both proper for fallen man's use and in accordance with

(1) I, 5, XV

the will of the Deity. Only if man's heart is set on the true God, and conformable to his will, can the forms serve as a real and effective communication between God and man. Even the newly adapted forms cannot exceed the potentialities that exist for any form. Even with them, there must come the special spiritual ability to understand them.

In his miserable condition, man is given the Scriptures. They are the only means whereby man can make out the form of creation for what it is, - a testimony to its Creator, - for the Scriptures are a communication to the human mind in the human language. They are a form effective in meeting the situation of man, who has ceased to profit from the structure of creation. The Scriptures are adapted by their Author, - the Holy Spirit, - to the deformed condition in which the spirit of man finds itself. Though God's majesty is delineated in his creatures, yet we must have "...another and better assistance," properly to direct us to the Creator of the world. "Therefore he hath not unnecessarily added the light of his word, to make himself known unto salvation, and hath honored with this privilege those whom he intended to unite in a more close and familiar connection with himself." (1)

He began the process of special revelation by enclosing the Jews as a flock in a fold, "...that they might not wander after the vanities of other nations." (2) He preserves us in the same means by his Word. When we attempt to find God from nature, we are like people with dim sight who can see that something is written in a beautiful book, but cannot read it with their naked eye. When they have spectacles, however, they are able to read. So "...the Scripture, collecting in our minds the otherwise confused notions of

(1) I, 6, I
(2) Ibid

Deity, dispels the darkness and gives us a clear declaration by the true God." (1) The crucial importance of the Scriptures in allowing for a special view of God, and in setting off the Christian Church from other religious communities and faiths, is explained thus: "This, then, is a singular favor, that, in the instruction of the Church, God not only uses mute teachers, but even opens his own sacred mouth; not only proclaims that some god ought to be worshipped, but at the same time pronounces himself to be the Being to whom this worship is due; and not only teaches the elect to raise their view to a Deity, but also exhibits himself as the object of their contemplation." (2) For the person who wishes to found his religion upon reality, therefore, - who wishes to base his faith on the Source from which the world itself has its being, Scripture alone provides the means of so doing. It is Scripture which "...discovers God to us as the Creator of the world, and declares what sentiments we should form of him, that we may not be seeking after a deity in a labyrinth of uncertainty." (3) Thus the Word, when it is communicated to man by God, reveals the unique person of God himself, reveals the will of God, it also is explicitly adapted to man's needs and capable of appropriation by the human heart.

We can see, however, that it occurs not only as a "heart-to-heart" relation between God and man. It is a command as to "what sentiments we should form." It relates our knowledge of God to our knowledge of all that is in the world, so that we may say with meaning that he is "the Creator of the World." It also comes as the law for the proper worship of and the ethical obedience to God,

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

because though it came first to the Patriarchs by special revelation, "...he determined that the same oracles which he had deposited with the patriarchs should be committed to public records. With this design the Law was promulgated, to which the Prophets were afterwards annexed, as its interpreters." (1) Thus "...though every man should seriously apply himself to a consideration of the works of God, being placed in this very splendid theatre to be a spectator of them, yet he ought principally to attend to the word, that he may attain superior advantages." (2) For it is only by receiving and obeying God's Word that we can know him. "...Hence originates all true wisdom, when we embrace with reverence the testimony which God hath been pleased therein to deliver concerning himself. For obedience is the source, not only of an absolutely perfect and complete faith, but of all right knowledge of God." (3)

Unless the human mind have the strict discipline of the will of God as declared in the Scripture, it is unable to restrain its fabrication of false religions. We must come to the Word "...which contains a just and lively description of God as he appears in his works, when those works are estimated, not according to our depraved judgment, but by the rule of eternal truth. ...For it must be concluded, that the light of the Divine countenance, which even the Apostle says 'no man can approach unto' (4) is like an inexplicable labyrinth to us, unless we are directed by the line of the word; so that it were better to halt in this way, than to run with the greatest rapidity out of it." (5) "The invitation to a knowledge of God which heaven and earth present to all nations has not been accepted, so the law proclaimed by the word has

(1) I, 6, II
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) I Tim. VI, 16
(5) I, 6, III

become the peculiar school of the children of God." (1) Unless man has a direct relation with a God who provides information about himself in the external form of the written word, he is unable to find his way in the world. The word is at once a direct personal communication to the heart of man and an external form which must be used to judge and regulate the knowledge of the heart. Any understanding of revelation which sees the word merely as personal communication on the one hand, or as merely external formulation of divine truth on the other, is unbalanced. The original form of the word was directed to and received by the internal spiritual faculties of the patriarchs, prophets, etc. Revelation, however, was incompletely effective for the general good until its content was expressed and crystallized in the form of written documents. The Scriptures, by themselves, although rightly called "the Word of God", are insufficient unless the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to see speaking in them the very Lord who inspired them. (2)

While the Scripture has been shown to be the form adapted to the human situation, this does not mean that man, as he is, with his carnal mind, can simply lay hold of the printed words and thereby find God revealed. We have seen that a form is only effective in relation to a spirit already possessed. A spiritual nature in this world cannot help producing the proper external formal witness, but the witness can never be understood apart from the original spirit. Thus the Scripture is the only effective form from which to attain a knowledge of God, but the form of the word that is set down permanently in Scriptures is not, in itself, sufficient to arouse confidence within the heart of man. For such confidence, a specifically

(1) I, 6, IV
(2) I, 6, II

spiritual event must take place in the heart of the believer. This occurs when the Holy Spirit works in the heart as the heart is presented with the Word. This produces our confidence in Scripture. (1) Scripture's authority is in no way dependent upon the Church, upon other human agency, nor upon any other external means. (2) Since its author is the Lord and since it is the means by which he "hath been pleased to preserve his truth in perpetual remembrance, it obtains the same complete credit and authority with believers, when they are satisfied of its divine origin, as if they heard the very words pronounced by God himself." (3) The question is, how are they so persuaded?

The Roman Catholic answer is, of course, that this persuasion depends upon the sanction of the Church. For Calvin, such a confirmation of one temporal form, - the Scriptures, - by another temporal form, - the visible Church, - is the height of folly. Man needs more than the sanction of other men to attain the conviction that the form of revelation is from God. He needs God's own testimony to establish belief in the word. We are never "established in the belief of the doctrine till we are persuaded that God is the Author. The principal proof, therefore, of the Scriptures is everywhere derived from the character of the Divine Speaker." (4) It is quite true that "...the Scripture exhibits the plain evidences that it is God who speaks in it, which manifests its doctrine to be divine. ...If we read it with pure eyes and sound minds, we shall immediately perceive the majesty of God, which will subdue our audacious contradictions, and compel us to obey him." (5) Thus even the nature of the external form itself demands the recognition of its source in God.

(1) I, 6, V
(2) I, 6, I & II
(3) I, 6, I
(4) I, 6, IV
(5) Ibid

A demand to believe is far from being sufficient to produce belief, however. Argument is insufficient even where it is incontrovertible. "...It is acting a preposterous part, to endeavor to produce sound faith in the Scripture by disputations." (1) For "...though any one vindicates the sacred word of God from aspersions of men, yet this will not fix in their hearts that assurance which is essential to true piety." (2) What is needed is to convict the spirit of man by an argument that has its source above reason. This is obtained by means of the testimony of the spirit. Cap "...The testimony of the Spirit is superior to all reason. For, as God alone is a sufficient witness of himself in his own word, so, also the word will never gain credit in the hearts of men, till it be confirmed by the internal testimony of the Spirit." (3) The source of the form must become the conveyer of the form, for, "it is necessary,...that the same Spirit, who spake by the mouths of the prophets should penetrate into our hearts, to convince us that they faithfully delivered the oracles which were divinely intrusted to them." (4)

Thus the Scriptures are self-authenticating. It is not that the form has a magical power inherent in it, but rather that it is not dependent for its validation, on any other external form. It is the work of the Spirit which makes the Scripture come alive for us, makes us intuit God speaking therein. "...Being illumined by him, we now believe the divine original of the Scripture, not from our own judgment or from that of others, but we esteem the certainty, that we have received it from God's own mouth by the ministry of

-
- (1) Ibid
 - (2) Ibid
 - (3) Ibid
 - (4) Ibid

men, to be superior to that of any human judgment, and equal to that of an intuitive perception of God himself in it. We seek not arguments or probabilities to support our judgment, but submit our judgments and understandings as to a thing concerning which it is impossible for us to judge." (1) It is not a matter of superstition, but as a result of the perception in it of "...undoubted energies of the Divine power, by which we are attracted and inflamed to an understanding and voluntary obedience, but with a vigour and efficacy superior to the power of any human will or knowledge." (2) "It is such a persuasion, therefore, as requires no reasons; such a knowledge as is supported by the highest reason, in which, indeed, the mind rests with greater security and constancy than in any reasons; it is finally, such a sentiment as cannot be produced but by a revelation from heaven." (3)

Thus believers are made aware of the mysteries of heaven, not by a rational grasp of this or that formulated doctrine, or even by the external form of the Scriptures alone, but by the Holy Spirit working with the Word, and impressing it upon their hearts. It is not in its external aspect that the criterion lies for the acceptance of true form by the heart. The internal persuasion must always precede the external buttresses. Even the most irrefutable reason, on the one hand, cannot produce a full persuasion of the divine origin, and, on the other hand, even the almost universal human neglect and disdain, and the paucity of believers, cannot shake our faith in Scripture. Our certainty is the certainty of spirit recognizing Spirit, in the form of the written Word. The form of Scripture is an integral part of our perception of God. It is fully, exactly, uniquely

(1) I, 6, V
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

expressive of his nature and will. The spiritual relation must never be held to be independent of the formal witness of Scripture, for the Scripture is an external form which represents the spiritual nature of God. This nature found in Scripture is its primary proof. Thus, while the external is here the vehicle, the spiritual source is the ultimate basis for accepting the external form.

If Scripture came from and depended only upon man, it would be in the same predicament as natural religion; that is, representing God without proceeding from him. As he himself states when he proceeds to discuss the "Rational Proofs to Establish the Belief of the Scripture," that "without this certainty (of the witness of the Spirit) better and stronger than any human judgment, in vain will the authority of the Scripture be either defended by arguments, or established by the consent of the Church, or confirmed by any other supports; since, unless the foundation be laid, it remains in perpetual suspense. Whilst, on the contrary, when, regarding it in a different point of view from common things, we have once religiously received it in a manner worthy of its excellence, we shall then derive great assistance from things which before were not sufficient to establish the certainty of it in our minds. For it is admirable to observe how much it conduces to our confirmation, attentively to study the order and disposition of the Divine Wisdom dispensed in it, the heavenly nature of its doctrine, which never savours of any thing terrestrial, the beautiful agreement of all the parts with each other, and other similar characters adapted to conciliate respect to any writings. But our hearts are more strongly confirmed when we reflect that we are constrained to admire it more by the divinity of the subjects than by the beauties of the language." (1)

(1) I, 8, I

Thus the form of the Word is not established in the heart by any proofs, or by any admiration for its symmetry, beauty, antiquity, etc. It is established by its spiritual content and confirmed by the witness of the Spirit. This does not mean that Calvin does not value the immense importance of rational historical study to support the authority of the Scriptures, but rather that all such "rational proofs" are great aids and supports to strengthen a faith already achieved. When he proceeds to discuss these proofs he affirms that, despite occasional grandeur, the style of Scripture is usually humble and even sometimes "contemptible." The very fact that we must not found our faith upon elegance or upon "the enticing words of man's wisdom" (1) is shown by the way in which the Holy Spirit has often used the rude language of humble life to present the mysteries of heaven. It is not the inherent nicety, intricacy, and harmony; - it is not the rules of aesthetically proper style that single out Scripture for special reverence. These things are in the province of external form, as such. It is the force of the spiritual truth, of the effectiveness of the doctrine, that witnesses most strongly of the heavenly source of the Scripture. While the judgment of man is insufficient to establish, absolutely, a belief in Scripture, yet even here it is the wisdom of Scriptures in heavenly things, the witness of form to something beyond itself, rather than the external formal qualities, which force our judgment to revere them. The glories of this heavenly wisdom cause it to outshine the rhetorical perfections of the great classical authors, even on the human level, and even despite the lowly style in which it is couched. (2)

We need not go into the detail of Calvin's defense (3) of the Scriptures on historical grounds. He takes the classical view of the

(1) I Cor. II, 4
(2) I, 8, I
(3) I, 8, Passim

strictest authenticity of Scripture that in more recent years has come to be known loosely as Fundamentalism. While he concurs with fundamentalism in points such as the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, etc., as did practically every one of his contemporaries who would have called himself a believer; yet he constantly asserts that these "fundamentals" are not the basis of faith, - that faith is not based on them, but rather precedes them and is, itself, a product of the Spirit of God working in our heart. The spiritual, the personal realm is the fundamental concern. This does not mean to say that he takes belief in historical authenticity lightly. Its role in causing man to accept the Word, however, is subsequent to the seal of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. Furthermore, Calvin does not defend the Scriptures, first of all, as a history book, but as the declaration of divine wisdom. As opposed to presenting a furiously-minded defense of the historicity of every part of the Sacred Writ, as though faith hung in the balance, he urges, with Augustine "that piety and peace of mind ought to precede, in order that a man may understand somewhat of such great subjects." (1) The Calvinistic respect for proper external form cannot leave the question of the historicity of the Scriptures unanswered, for the Scriptures are a form of words inspired by the Spirit of God. The faith it preclaims in Scriptures, however, does not depend upon the latest theories of criticism, nor does credence exist only if these theories are disproven beyond question. As the external form, itself, proceeded from and reveals within it the nature of God who is a Spirit, so must our faith in that form be grounded on the witness of the Spirit of this same God. In the Spiritual Witness we have certainty, and it is a certainty which undergirds subsequent study of the historical source

(1) I, 8, XIII

and context of the written form of the word itself, but it is not dependent upon such study.

One cannot, however, appeal to the Spirit to gain independence from the form of the Word nor from the external form of Scripture. (1) Those who abandon the Scripture and imagine to themselves some other way of approaching to God "...must be considered as not so much misled by error as actuated by frenzy." (2) They must admit that if it is a true spirit by which they are led, it is the Spirit of Christ which was shared by the apostles in the New Testament. Yet the Spirit, far from leading the apostles to condemn Scripture then, rather led them to a higher regard for it, as the respectful references by Paul and the other apostles indicate. The Spirit is, indeed, promised to us to bring us into all truth, but "the office of the Spirit...is not to feign new and unheard-of revelations, or to coin a new system of doctrine, which would seduce us from the received doctrine of the Gospel, but to seal to our minds the same doctrine which the Gospel delivers." (3)

The question arises as to whether the insistence upon testing all spirits by the Word lessens the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit? In answer, Calvin admits that "if he were to be conformed to the rules of men, or of angels, or of any other beings, I grant he might then be considered as degraded, or even reduced to a state of servitude; but while he is compared with himself, and considered in himself, who will assert that he is thereby injured?" (4) The Scriptures are the product of the Holy Spirit. They are also the continual means of knowing what the Holy Spirit is like. When we test the Holy Spirit by the Scripture, we do not detract from him

(1) I, 9, Passim

(2) I, 9, I

(3) Ibid

(4) I, 9, II

but we make sure that we do not allow the spirit of Satan to insinuate itself in his name. Lest this happen, "...he chooses to be recognized by us from his image, which he hath impressed in the Scriptures." (1)

It is only when the law and the Word are separated from the Spirit of Christ that they are the "dead letter." But "...if it exhibit Christ, - it is the word of life." (2) Thus...the Lord hath established a kind of mutual connection between the certainty of his word and of his Spirit; so that our minds are filled with a solid reverence for the word when by the light of the Spirit we are enabled therein to behold the Divine countenance: and, on the other hand, without the least fear of mistake, we gladly receive the Spirit, when we recognize him in his image, that is, in the word." (3) We must not "quench the Spirit", but we must not "despise prophesyings." Without the word, men "...with equal confidence and temerity greedily embrace every reverie which their distempered imaginations may have conceived." (4) "The Word is the instrument, by which the Lord dispenses to believers the illumination of his Spirit." (5)

After Calvin has dealt with the problem of revelation, he treats the problem of the nature of the God so revealed. (6) In the discussion heretofore, we have seen that the category of set, tangible form is inescapable as the necessary means and test for revelation. To function thus, it must be undergirt by the spiritual certainty that the external form is from God himself, and by a spiritual perception of the meaning of the form. External form is necessary but subordinate to the direct spiritual perception of God speaking through the

-
- (1) Ibid
 - (2) I, 9, III
 - (3) Ibid
 - (4) Ibid
 - (5) Ibid
 - (6) I, chs. 10-13

form. We now find the same necessary but dependent relationship between external form and the Spirit, in the discussion of how we are to describe God.

We must realize, in the first place, that the true God is separated by an absolute distinction from any and all "phantasms" (false gods) proceeding from the religious consciousness of natural man. (1) Perhaps the one distinction, above all, that reveals this opposition between God and the heathen gods, is the absolute contradistinction between God and the idols. The idol is the symbol in Scripture, so Calvin says, of all that God is not. (2) It is a product of human thought and artifice. It is subject to all the unbridled whimsies and conceits of the mind of depraved man. It gives him security in the enjoyment of a carnal, worldly way of life. Even where it is purported to be a representation or even a means of approach to or worship of invisible gods, or of the Invisible God himself, it is equally scandalous. The pagans as well as the Romanists, thought that their images did stand for invisible gods, but their idolatry was none the less seen to be, by the prophets, the one thing above all else which opposed the gods of the heathens to the Living God. The idol, then, doubly departs from the criterion for proper religious form. Its use is in opposition to the most express command of God, who is to be worshipped. By its very nature it is the image of its depraved artificer. This invariably prevents its being used to achieve a real communion with transcendent God. (3)

The unique spiritual existence of God, - the utter disparity between him and the views of divinity entertained by the pagans, or indeed any view of God proceeding from depraved man, implies a unique

(1) I, 10, III
(2) I, 11, I
(3) I, 11, II

approach to him. "That exclusive definition,....which everywhere occurs, reduces to nothing whatever notions of the Deity men may form in their own imaginations; for God alone is a sufficient witness concerning himself." (1) This is a fundamental consideration determining the forms of Calvinistic worship. In the first place, the forms of worship must proceed from God himself; that is, they must be ordered by the Word. In the second place, the form of worship must be so ordered as to allow nothing but God's witness concerning himself,- it should be centered about the making of his word known to man. Thus all that proceeds from the imagination of sinful man is in opposition to the demands laid down by the word, and is a hindrance to the continual making known of the word. The prohibition of idolatrous worship, then, is derived both from Scripture and from a rational understanding of the nature of things which shows the impossibility of containing the Creator in the forms of creation. (2) It is now with the analysis of how any nonscriptural form of worship is guilty of both these offences, that Calvin is concerned.

Calvin states that Scripture speaks of idolatry as the essential antithesis to the worship of ^{the} true God. God is contrasted to idols ^{with} to show the fundamental distinction between him and false gods. This does not mean an exoneration of "the more ingenious and plausible systems of ^{the} philosophers," (3) but it shows the essential opposition between all products, or formulations of the human mind and God himself. It is as a condemnation of certain ways of thinking of God that the prohibition of idolatry must be viewed. There is, if one may be allowed the expression, an invisible idolatry which occurs when man pictures God with earth-derived thought forms, even when one

(1) I, 11, I
(2) I, 11, II
(3) I, 11, I

addresses him as "the unknown God." All human attempts to establish a relation with God by human forms, visible or invisible, are idolatrous. It is thus, by idolatry, that all heathenism is summarized in its opposition to the proper worship of the true God. Because of the aforementioned certainty, - that God, alone, is a sufficient witness concerning himself, - we "...ought to hold this as a certain principle, that, whenever any image is made as representation of God, the Divine glory is corrupted by an impious falsehood." (1) It is in this light that the commandment against making any graven image must be viewed, for in this commandment "...he forbids us to attempt a representation of him in any visible figure." Any visible figure, as such, is unsatisfactory and offensive, and one is not to be preferred to another. Deuteronomy calls to mind that "...ye saw no manner of similitude, on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb, out of the fire; yet heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; lest ye corrupt yourselves and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure." (2) Here, Calvin says, we see "...how expressly God opposes his 'voice' to every 'manner of similitude,' to show, that whoever desires visible representation of him, is guilty of departing from him." (3) This prohibition was not merely for the training of the Hebrews, but remains a universal prohibition, that is deduced "from his eternal existence, and the invariable order of nature." (4) Here we see emerging again, the basic attitude toward the relation of tangible, set form that can be isolated and objectified, and transcendent Spirit, Personality, Will, etc. Eternal Spirit is of such a constitution that, by "the invariable order of nature," material forms

(1) Ibid

(2) I, II, II Deuteronomy IV, 15

(3) Ibid

(4) Ibid

in themselves can never be made to represent it. The structure of nature, as it has come from God, does reveal its Creator, but it can never be shaped by man into a likeness of its Maker. Form can be, and must be used by Spirit to communicate himself, but it can never identify itself with the Spirit, can never, on its own merit, claim to represent the substance of Spirit.

Idolatrous representation of God, then, is not to be confused with the physical manifestations and signs that occurred in the Old Testament, particularly, and which were ordained by God for the spiritual instruction of the faithful. These signs, however, "...were well calculated for the instruction of men, and afforded clear intimations of his incomprehensible essence." (1) Here he demonstrates that "the cloud and the smoke and the flame" not only showed forth God's glory, but they also prevented the Israelites from penetrating any farther. Even Moses was not allowed to see the face of God. The momentary appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove should admonish us to realize that he is invisible, while "the appearances of God in the human form were preludes to his future manifestation in Christ. Therefore the Jews were not permitted to make this a pretext for erecting a symbol of Deity in the figure of a man." (2) The cherubim carved over the ark of the covenant emphasized, rather than contradicted, the unrepresentable nature of God himself, for they veiled the mercy seat with their wings so as to keep it completely hidden from the human senses. Even these images, moreover, were only proper to the dispensation of shadows, for the period of tutelage before Christ. Let the Papists claim that the Jews did use imagery to represent

(1) I, 11, III

(2) Ibid

God, even the pagan authors will deny them, for they ridiculed the Jews for worshipping "the white clouds and Deity of heaven", showing that even the pagans knew that of which Papists are ignorant, - that there was no image of God among the ancient Hebrews. (1)

As to the appeal to the law of nature, Calvin claims that nothing is so contrary to the nature of things as idolatry. "...There is nothing more unreasonable than the thought of contracting the infinite and incomprehensible God within the compass of five feet." (2) He reveals another reason against idolatry by showing that "idols are frequently stigmatized as being the works of men's hands, unsanctioned by Divine authority; in order to establish this principle, that all modes of worship which are merely of human invention, are detestable." (3)

But are not the idols the books of the illiterate? Far rather they are the source of the universal contempt and derogation from God. The prophets, far from admitting that images can instruct the illiterate in piety, assert that the true God and images are opposites that can never agree. Even the more discerning pagan authors see idolatry as a curse leading away from the proper fear of God. Augustine quotes Varro to this effect, and expresses his agreement. (4) For images bring Divinity into contempt. Even the last vestige of verisimilitude is lost by the immodesty of the garb of the saints, and the luxury of the furnishings of the churches. (5) As for the latter, Calvin asks, "to what purpose, then, was the erection of so many crosses of wood and stone, silver and gold, everywhere in the temples, if it had been fully and faithfully inculcated, that Christ died that he might bear our curse on the cross, expiate our sins by

-
- (1) Ibid
 - (2) I, 11, IV
 - (3) Ibid
 - (4) I, 11, V
 - (5) I, 11, VI



the sacrifice of his body, cleanse us by his blood, and, in a word, reconcile us to God, the Father? From this simple declaration they might learn more than from a thousand crosses of wood or stone; for perhaps the avaricious fix their minds and their eyes more tenaciously on the gold and silver crosses, than on any part of the Divine Word." (1)

As for the origin of idols, Calvin asserts that they have probably existed as long as man's tendency to sin. They are a symptom of man's tendency to demand a god to worship, and, at the same time, to bring divinity down to his own level. Calvin says that if he be allowed the expression, "The mind of man is, ...a perpetual manufactory of idols." (2) The true explanation is that "the mind of man, being full of pride and temerity, dares to conceive of God, according to its own standard; and, being sunk in stupidity, and immersed in profound ignorance, imagines a vain and ridiculous phantom instead of God. These evils are followed by another; men attempt to express, in the work of their hands, such a deity as they have imagined in their minds. The mind then begets the idol and the hand brings it forth." (3) The Israelites, for instance, when Moses was on Sinai, could not feel a certainty in God until they had constructed a golden calf. This occurrence, together with all idol-making, is the result of trying to present God to carnal eyes. (4)

It was a logical consequence, that when man thought he saw God in an image, he worshipped him there. A superstitious fascination is the result of the physical representation of God that idolatry involves. The monument or the image of God that stands as an object of worship, invariably obscures the divine glory. The human mind is

(1) I, 11, VII
(2) I, 11, VIII
(3) Ibid
(4) Ibid

such that it invariably confines God to any image which it makes to represent him, and therefore cannot but worship it. "Nor is it of any importance, whether they worship simply the idol, or God in the idol; it is always idolatry, when Divine honours are paid to an idol, under any pretense, whatsoever. And as God will not be worshipped in a superstitious or idolatrous manner, whatever is conferred on idols, is taken from him." (1) ^{IP} If contemporary "idolaters" claim that they are not worshipping idols because they do not call the idols, themselves, their god, they fail to realize that neither the pagans nor the erring Hebrews thought that the idols themselves were God. The Hebrews who worshipped the golden calf surely did not think that the god they had made with their hands had been he who had brought them out of Egypt. They must surely have remembered such a recent display of power. Their sin was thinking that such a God could be set before them in the representation of the calf. Even the pagans could not have been so stupid as to think of the idols themselves as god. They changed them at pleasure, and had several images for one god, in no way having as many gods as they had images. Some idolaters even went farther than the common defense that they "worshipped not the image, but the god that invisibly dwelt in it, to say that they worshipped neither the image, nor the spirit represented by it; but that, in the corporeal figure, they beheld a sign of that which they ought to worship." (2) Thus even the heathen were able to make the same distinction in their worship as the later Romanist idolaters. Their practice was defended, by the same excuses as the Papists have since employed. If they argue that they are not attached to their images "...why do they prostrate themselves before images? And when about to pray, why do they turn themselves towards them, as towards the

(1) I, 11, IX

(2) I, 11, IX

ears of God?" (1) "We never, say they, 'call them our gods.' Nor did the Jews or heathen in ancient times call them their gods; and yet the Prophets, in all their writings, were constantly accusing them of fornication with wood and stone, only on account of such things as are daily practised by those who wish to be thought Christians; that is, for worshipping God, by corporeal adoration before figures of wood or stone." (2) The basic fact remains the same, whether they call it eidolodouleia, or eidololatrea. (3)

Calvin hastens to add that his opposition to the use of images in worship does not imply a condemnation of sculpture as such. "But since sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I wish for a pure and legitimate use of both; lest those things, which the Lord hath conferred on us for his glory and our benefit, be not only corrupted by preposterous abuse, but even perverted to our ruin. We think it unlawful to make any visible figure as a representation of God, because he hath himself forbidden it, and it cannot be done without detracting, in some measure, from his glory. Let it not be supposed that we are singular in this opinion; for that all sound writers have uniformly reprobated the practice, must be evident to persons conversant with their works. If, then, it be not lawful to make any corporeal representation of God, much less will it be lawful to worship it for God, or to worship God in it. We conclude, therefore, that nothing should be painted and engraved but objects visible to our eyes; the Divine Majesty, which is far above the reach of human sight, ought not to be corrupted by unseemly figures." (4) There are two kinds of subjects for painting and sculpture. The one are histories or transactions. The second kind is of images and corporeal forms, without reference to any transactions. The former "...are of some use in information or

(1) I, 11, X
(2) Ibid
(3) I, 11, XI
(4) I, 11, XII

recollection; the latter, as far as I see, can furnish nothing but amusement. And yet it is evident, that almost all the images, which have hitherto been set up in the churches, have been of this latter description. Hence it may be seen, that they were placed there, not with judgment and discrimination, but from a foolish and inconsiderate passion for them." (1) This does not mean, however, that even the former type of image is a suitable fixture for a building set apart for the worship of God. (2) Such images in a church invariably attach the imagination and adoration of men upon themselves. In a setting for worship, they divert a regard that should consist of a spiritual attention to God as he makes his will known through the Word. Calvin calls to mind that John had exhorted Christians not only to keep away from the worship of idols, but from the idols themselves. But even were the danger less, "...yet when I consider the use for which temples were designed, it appears to me extremely unworthy of their sanctity, to receive any other images, than those natural and expressive ones, which the Lord hath consecrated in his word; I mean Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord, and the other ceremonies, in which our eyes ought to be more attentively engaged, and more sensibly affected, than to require any others formed by human ingenuity." (3) Calvin ends the chapter by a refutation of the later Council of Nicaea which had called for the use of images. He heaps ridicule upon their highly metaphorical interpretation of Scripture. He summarizes this criticism by quoting: "Let them rejoice and exult, who have the image of Christ, and offer sacrifice to it. Where is now the distinction of latria and dulia with which they attempt to deceive

of
(δοῦλεῖν)

-
- (1) Ibid
(2) I, 11, XIII
(3) Ibid

both God and men? For the Council gives the same honour without any exception, to images and to the living God." (1)

Then follows a brief chapter⁽²⁾ which underlines the necessary distinction between idolatry and true religion. For the knowledge of God can never be merely theoretical, but must also be a matter of worship, and this worship, to be true at all, must be a total thing, undistracted by a resort to idols, whether in douleia or latria, for these two terms represent a distinction without a difference. To share service to God with service to lesser objects, is as bad, if not worse, than sharing worship proper. He repeats, - to worship or serve that which is not God is to deny the basic condition of proper worship of him, and it is this proper worship which underlies all intellectual questions.

"Whatever belongs to Deity", therefore, "should not be transferred to another!" (3) The term "religion", indeed, has as its basic meaning, Calvin feels, "restriction." "The word is opposed to a liberty of wandering without restraint, because the greater part of the world rashly embrace whatever they meet with, and also ramble from one thing to another; but piety, in order to walk with a steady step, collects itself within its proper limits." (4) The antonym for the term "religion" is, therefore, "superstition". The law is of intrinsic concern to religion because it "first binds the faithful to himself as their sole legislator, and then prescribes a rule for the right worship of him according to his will." (5) Thus the adulteration of the spiritual worship of God by idolatry in any form or ^{on} any pretext, is to subvert the very core and meaning of

(1) I, 11, XVI

(2) I, 12

(3) I, 12, I

(4) Ibid

(5) Ibid

religion. Scripture's fundamental contrast, therefore, is between God and idols, - between true worship and all kinds of idolatry.

Here we have Calvin underlining what is his fundamental assertion concerning external form. We cannot exalt an external form and pay respect to it, even if we think that by so doing we are symbolically honoring God. We must maintain the truly spiritual worship of God. This spirituality, however, is not an escape from external form, but is rather the determining condition for the right use of the right external form. Idolatry is condemned for being the wrong external form to convey the spirituality of God, and it is an external form unauthorized by God, himself. It is the form of the law which, as we shall see, bridges the immense gap between the spiritual God and the external world in which man finds himself. All forms of worship and all forms of behavior are ultimately subordinate to the law as revealed in the word. It is also the concept of our thinking and the terms of our speaking that are controlled by the word of God. Calvin, at this point, defines and defends, at length, the doctrine of the Trinity on the basis of Scripture. (1)

He next goes, at length, into the doctrine of creation, keeping the whole doctrine separate from philosophical speculation, and keeping the terms both of inquiry and of affirmation, within the context of revelation. (2) This is not to say, once we have accepted Scripture's revelation of God as the Creator, that we should let the matter drop there. We can and should, being buttressed by faith, proceed to consider the works of the Lord. Believers should "...not pass over, with ungrateful inattention or oblivion, those glorious perfections which God manifests in his creatures; and .../should/ learn to make such an application to themselves as thoroughly to affect their hearts."(3) Thus the creation that cannot sufficiently reveal God

(1) I, 13, Passim

(2) I, 14, Passim

(3) I, 14, XXI

to the depraved mind, can still be a real help to a piety that has been previously illumined by the Word and Spirit of God.

Man, himself, is the image of God insofar as he is a spiritual being, for "though the glory of God is displayed in his external form, yet there is no doubt that the proper seat of his image is in the soul." (1) "The image of God was conspicuous in the light of the mind, in the rectitude of the heart, and in the soundness of all parts of our nature." (2) Man retains some remnants of this image, but it has become highly deformed. Man's external form, too, still bears the marks of the glory of his Creator's handiwork.

The God who made the world continues to govern it. This governance is not simply a general supervision, a "certain universal motion actuating the whole machine of the world and all its respective parts, but ... a particular providence sustaining, nourishing, and providing for everything which he has made." (3) All is ordered to the end, not by indirect influence, but by God's immediate supervision. (4) We should, however, avoid contemplating the will of God in the abstract, but should consider it in connection with the means he employs. (5)

Thus we see the significance of external form in Calvin's doctrine of creation. External impersonal form is a creation of God. It witnesses to the goodness of the God who created it. While the unaided human mind is unable to know God fully, from Creation, yet when revelation illumines the human mind, it is able to appreciate and rejoice in the external form of the created world. Thus the physical world depends upon God, and it expresses his benevolent nature. Once we have been illumined by revelation, the beautiful order of creation quickens piety and informs faith. Natural religion falls short because

(1) I, 15, III
(2) I, 15, IV
(3) I, 16, I
(4) I, 17, VIII
(5) I, 17, V

it has not begun with the self-revelation of God. The Christian doctrine of Creation, however, takes full account of the beauty and the assistance for faith which we find in the external form of the natural world; but it sees the need for an informed faith in a transcendent God, in order properly to appreciate the created world. God has created and continues to rule the world, and for the eye of faith, even the external world is a mirror in which we see his glory.

CHAPTER TWO

FORM IN THE DOCTRINE OF MAN AND HIS REDEMPTION

"Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in thee.
Israel's strength and Consolation,
Hope of all the earth thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart."

Charles Wesley.

We have seen the integral part which external form has played in the knowledge of God, the Creator. We are now to consider the part it plays in the knowledge and problem of man, who is a creature and is subject to redemption. As was remarked in the first chapter of the first book, self-knowledge must exist if our knowledge of God be kept in proper proportion. Man, the sinner, must know himself if he is properly to evaluate his need for and dependence upon God and the necessity for God's redemptive work. (1) Calvin thus approves of the ancient adage, "Know thyself." The lack of self-knowledge can mean a perversion of all our attempts properly to understand God, and a wrong approach to all the important problems of our lives. With self-knowledge, we are ready to humble ourselves before God and accept the redemption which God has purchased for us.

We turn, now, to the second book of the Institutes, which is concerned, first of all, with man, - his nature, his need for redemption, and the steps which God has taken to redeem him. A study of man involves us in external form not only because man, as an image of God, expresses his nature in external form, as does God, but also because man, being a part of creation, is limited and influenced by external form. He, himself, is both body and soul. New problems are thus involved when we attempt to relate finite personality to external form. (2)

First of all, man, himself, is the handiwork of God, while his

(1) I, 1
(2) Book II of Institutes Passim

spirit, above all else about him, is the image of God; yet the formation of his wondrous body reveals God's wisdom and goodness even as do the glories of the revolving spheres. The human body, by its intricate and harmonious form, is one of the foremost testimonies to the wisdom and benevolence of the God who fashioned it. In the state of innocence, the body even reflected, in part, the image of God, although this image was and is, spiritual. This image, which is the essential characteristic of man is, itself, as we have seen, by its nature, the most convincing testimony to the goodness of the Creator. The spirit and mind, - the personality of man, is the crown of the terrestrial order. (1)

This image of God in man has meant that man's glory and great destiny is a willing obedience to God, - a fellowship with him. No other terrestrial creature has such a noble end and purpose in its life. It is man's privilege to lift his eyes from earth to heaven, to have the light of eternity shine in them. (2) This supreme position, then, is given that man might willingly be the servant and child of God. There exists, then, an ideal pattern which is outside man's own being. This ideal form of being and behavior is thus external to him.

On the other hand, the fact of man's being created in the image of God implies not only the glories, but also the limits of creaturehood. Man is finite. His body is subject to all the laws and limitations of space and time. His mind is finite, and even at its best, can never grasp fully the mysteries of heaven. His eyes, even in innocence, could not pierce and probe the full counsel and wisdom of an infinite God. While the personality of man expresses itself in

(1) I, 15, III
(2) I, 1, I

external form, as does God, yet there is in man's situation this difference. His influence is finite. Where God not only formed, but brought the world into existence, man does not have absolute control even over the form of his environment. While the form of his behavior and the works of his hands witness to his character, their form is only partly due to his activity, as they are limited by the environment and the material with which he has been able to work. Even the proudest monuments of man's hands are local and crumble with time. Any formal expression must take into account the already existing matter and form. Not only are men's formal expressions limited, but man's personality, itself, does not grow or continue to exist in a vacuum. We are, if not determined, then at least vastly influenced by our environment, our physical heredity, the prevailing mental climate, the mores and sociological conditions, and, - here Calvin is quite explicit, - by our religious nurture. (1)

Most important of all, man is limited by the will of God for his life, involving a pattern of action commanded or prohibited. Man's decisions and way of life are not his own. He is obligated to conform to the will of his Maker, to obey his word. This involves not only an inner spiritual relation to God, but certain external acts which reveal the quality of obedience and subordination of man to his Maker.

The crucial aspect of the doctrine of man, as we have seen, is that he is a sinner, - that he has refused to submit to the limitations of his finitude. Because of his sin, his innate knowledge of God has been all but extinguished and the natural revelation of God is ineffectual. Being blind and rebellious, he has invented curious

(1) IV, 16, IX

and improper ways of worshipping and creating new gods and idols. He has refused and is now unable to conform to the will of God. (1) Spiritually, man is a miserable ruin. He is "totally depraved."

Self-knowledge is not to be confused with that which some philosophers urge. "For while they exhort man to the knowledge of himself, the end they propose is that he might not remain ignorant of his own dignity and excellence." (2) The self-knowledge which Calvin indicates is twofold. It must consist of a recognition, on the one hand, of the excellence of the human species as created, and on the other, the depraved condition into which man has subsequently fallen. "...The knowledge of ourselves consists, first, in considering what was bestowed on us at our creation, and the favors we continually receive from the Divine benignity, that we may know how great the excellence of our nature would have been, if it had retained its integrity; yet at the same time recollecting that we have nothing properly our own, may feel our precarious tenure of all that God has conferred on us, so as always to place our dependence upon him. Secondly, we should contemplate our miserable condition since the fall of Adam, the sense of which tends to destroy all boasting and confidence to overwhelm us with shame, and to fill us with real humility." (3)

Man is thus depraved, but he does not exercise this evil nature in a vacuum. He is a creature in the midst of a world created by God. We find the problem of external form is, in other words, complicated by the fact that that which is an expression of God has one nature, and that which is an expression of man, another. The problem of man is, to a large degree, the result of these two tendencies. The world around him and man, himself, is a creation of God. As a creature

(1) Book I, Passim
(2) III, I, I
(3) Ibid

of God's formation, man is good. His environment, his body, the powers of his mind and spirit are all good creations of a good God who allows man to continue to exist. In virtue of the wonderful formation of man, the creature in God's image, great excellence and a high destiny are his. External form acts as a witness to man's true nature as created by God, for environment and body, as well as the mental and spiritual powers, are involved in God's creation of man, and they, with the more spiritual gifts, enter into the witnessing to the end of man's creation. Reason and intelligence are given us so that, being in the image of God "...we may aspire to the mark set before us of a blessed immortality." (1)

Within the context of this world created by God, and within a body which was created by him and remains good and a testimony to man's high destiny, there lies the moral nature of man, the bent of his personality. Man is depraved. His spiritual nature, by virtue of which he could be designated as being in the image of God, has become alienated from God. By virtue of Adam's fall, the nature of all his descendants is "totally depraved." It is most necessary, then, to be aware not only of the nature of man as it has been created by God, but also of the spiritual conditionⁱⁿ which disobedient humanity finds itself, as a result of the fall. God's providential care has not allowed those gifts proper to the first state to be destroyed by the second, (2) but these remnants do not lessen the depravity, which is a matter of the personal bent of man, while they only redound to the mercy of God. Thus the two elements - good created form and depraved will, - are able to exist at the same time in man, as can be understood from the attitude toward external form already exhibited.

(1) Ibid

(2) I, 15, IV

As that external form which supports man's life finds its origin in the will of God, it is possible to see how it can coexist with the totally depraved soul of man. The goodness of man's external form derives from its Creator but cannot result in a change of man's personality. Man's duty is to know himself, and neither his good creation by God nor his subsequent fall can be omitted. Disgust with one's moral depravity must never lead to a derogation of one's talents, and an appreciation of what God has bestowed upon us must never make us forget that in the midst of this bounty, we are sinners. Calvin summarizes: ".we may divide the knowledge man ought to have of himself into these two parts. First, he should consider the end of his being created and endued with such estimable gifts; secondly, he should examine his own ability, or rather want of ability, the view of which may confound and almost annihilate him." (1) Thus external form has a dual significance. First of all it declares the goodness of God. It also acts as the measure of man's depravity. In the external world, man expresses himself. By the external standard of right and wrong, man's moral worth is measured.

This brings us to an examination of the first sin. Here we find that Calvin has viewed this occurrence, and therefore the very fundamental nature of sin, in terms of form, for it is as the fall is seen in relation to a particular standard of conduct, that it assumes significance. The fall of Adam, Calvin maintains, was not in the least, as is "vulgarly supposed", the result of a gluttonous desire for the fruit of the tree. Surely there was an abundance of every kind of fruit and good thing. The eating of the fruit was

(1) II, 1, IV

rather the failing of a test of obedience to the God whom Adam was bound to love and obey, "...because the prohibition of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was a test of obedience, that Adam might prove his willing submission to the Divine government." (1)

Although Augustine properly saw pride as the first of all evils, yet we get a more complete definition of the fall from Scripture. "For as the woman, by the subtlety of the serpent, was seduced to discredit the word of God, it is evident that the fall commenced in disobedience. .../The first man/ rebelled against the government of God. ...Adam would never have dared resist the authority of God if he had not discredited his word. This is certainly the best check for a due regulation of all the affections, that the chief good consists in the practice of righteousness, in obedience to the commands of God. ...Being seduced, therefore, by the blasphemies of the devil, he did all that was in his power towards a total annihilation of the glory of God." (2)

Man's creatureliness not only means that his powers are finite, but also that his choice should be subject to the commands of his Creator. It was in the rupture of this divine order that the original sin, therefore, largely consisted. The result of this sin is an increasing confusion of the original order wherever its affects penetrate. The nature of the original sin was not a mere satisfaction of desires - not merely pride. While it was based on pride, it was measured in terms of the refusal to conform to the regulations which man's Creator set down, - a refusal to follow instruction, to believe and act according to the pattern of conduct given them by God. Pride, ambition and ingratitude all sprang from and were associated with the refusal to allow God to order their lives. It

(1) II, 1, IV
(2) Ibid

was infidelity to God expressed in a refusal to submit to him, - to obey his word. The core of blessedness and felicity, for Calvin, is obedience to God in all areas of life, while the core of wickedness is disobedience to the Divine Command, revolt against the government of God. The emotions, affections and desires will all be in order as long as there is obedience to the commands of God.

Sin not only originates in a break with the ordered government of God, - it results in further baneful effects upon the order of creation. The affections and the God-given powers of mind and spirit, as we have seen, are perverted by the disobedience. The perversion extends to all creation; "...his defection...has perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth." (1) He quotes Paul's statement that "the creatures groan being made subject to vanity, not willingly."⁽²⁾ He logically infers, therefore, that "...his guilt being the origin of that curse which extends to every part of the world, it is reasonable to conclude its propagation to all his offspring." In Adam's "loss of wisdom, strength, sanctity, truth, and righteousness" which followed the "obliteration of the Divine image," (3) he suffered not alone, but involved all his posterity with him, and plunged them into the same miseries. This is that hereditary corruption which the fathers called original sin; meaning, by sin, a deprivation of a nature previously good and pure;..." (4) After commending Augustine's view of original sin and censuring Pelagius, he summarizes the doctrine: "Every descendant, therefore, from an impure source, is born infected with the contagion of sin; and even before we behold the light of life, we are in the sight of God defiled and

(1) II, 1, V

(2) Adapted from Rom. VIII, 20.

(3) Ibid

(4) Ibid

polluted. For who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (1)

In the definition of original sin and in the analysis of its transmission, Calvin opposes three positions. The first is to see, in the transmission of sin, merely the imitation, by individuals, of habits which their predecessors engaged in. According to this theory, Adam alone incurred guilt for his transgression and his children were innocent until they imitated his example. (2) The second mistake is that, instead of sin being the product of each individual's free choice, sin is an inherent part of our physical constitution, but that the spirit and mind are free from guilt and his pure spiritual part wrestles with his evil physical part. (3) The third mistake is to claim that man's nature is evil because it was created that way. (4)

These mistakes can be seen to involve opinions toward external form. The first would see the individual soul as independent and above the physical continuity between parents and offspring. The generation of offspring did not entail a transference of spiritual nature. For Calvin, the connection between the spirit and the flesh was much more intimate. He does not enter into the intricacies of how original sin is transferred, whether through soul or body. He is concerned simply to assert that, as Christ's righteousness is communicated and not merely imitated, so is Adam's sin. "No other explanation...can be given of our being said to be dead in Adam, than that his transgression not only procured misery and ruin for himself, but also precipitated our nature into similar destruction. And that not by his personal guilt as an individual, which pertains not to us, but because he infected all his descendants with the

(1) Ibid
(2) II, 1, VI
(3) II, 1, IX
(4) II, 1, X

corruption into which he had fallen." (1) The real cause for our inheritance of depravity in our nature is neither to be found in soul or body, but in the conditions which God had laid down when he bestowed the gifts of wisdom, strength, sanctity, truth and righteousness. "...The cause of the contagion is not in the substance of the body or of the soul; but because it was ordained by God, that the gifts which he conferred on the first man should by him be preserved or lost both for himself and for all his posterity." (2)

Thus the process of physical continuity in the generation of humanity is the occasion for transmitting a moral character, not because of any one element within the process, but because Sovereign Will has ordained that such transmittance would be made by the process. The process is important and controls man's spiritual nature, not as an automatic mechanism, but because the Divine Will had declared that the spiritual relation between the first man and God would be extended to his posterity by natural generation. This mental habit of Calvin, of referring the significance of any fact directly to the will of God, rather than becoming involved in scholastic debate on secondary causes, arises from his belief in the primacy of Will, even while he believed in the importance of external form. In such matters as these, later Calvinists would speak with much more self-assurance and minuteness than their master.

Thus the depravity of the first man, his spiritual poverty is transmitted to his posterity. An objection may be made that the spiritual purity of the sanctified believer should be transmitted to his descendants. Unfortunately sanctified nature is not transmitted to children because generation of offspring is by means of the carnal nature of man, while the spiritual is from God. "For their guilt is from nature, but their sanctification is from supernatural grace." (3)

(1) II, 1, VI
(2) II, 1, VII

(3) II, I, VII

Calvin simply defines original sin: "Original sin, therefore, appears to be an hereditary pravity and corruption of our nature diffused through all parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls 'works of the flesh.'" (1) He dismisses the theory that "the flesh" is the sensual part and therefore is most likely to be attracted to sin. Peter Lombard was wrong, Calvin maintains, in saying that the physical part of man is the principal seat of sin. Lombard quoted Paul's statement that the spirit struggles with the flesh. (2) The spirit here mentioned by Paul, however, so Calvin maintains, is not to be thought of as one faculty of man which is opposed to the fleshly part wherein depravity finds its chief home. "The flesh" represents the entire personality of fallen man. Man is a complete whole, and his depravity is in all his parts. "For man has not only been ensnared by the inferior appetites, but abominable impiety has seized the very citadel of his mind, and pride has penetrated into the inmost recesses of his heart;..." (3)

The "Spirit," then, in this regard, is not a faculty but is, rather, the grace of God which wrestles with the natural man. Not only does it denote grace, but it "comprehends a complete reformation of all its powers." (4) We see here how Calvin considers the personality, together with the supporting talents and powers, as a totality. It is either totally innocent or totally depraved. Depravity cannot lie merely in physical or external powers or parts. Depravity began with rebellion of the heart and it is in the heart that its chief seat remains. Yet we are conditioned, in some sense, by our external environment. Our physical surroundings allow the spiritual evil of

(1) II, I, VIII
(2) Rom. VII, 18

(3) II, I, IX
(4) Ibid

one personality to influence another. Yet the external world does not originate nor is it the seat of moral quality. Here we see that no element, no form outside the innermost soul, can drag it down. Action for good or ill originates with the soul and spiritual powers and it is there that the responsibility lies. The physical or fleshly parts merely express and confirm the intentions of the soul. Any influence they have is purely a reflection of the soul's original intention. Any struggle between "spirit and flesh" must consist not in one part of the soul pitted against another, but the whole natural man pitted against the grace of God which is working towards a reformation of the whole man.

Let us summarize the problem of external form in connection with human depravity. We face, in this regard, the problem of sinful man in a good creation. By virtue of his disobedience, man's personality has been alienated from God and is a source of evil. Hereafter the external world has been expressive of the character of its righteous Creator and is, at the same time, perverted by the fall of man within it. Even the most innocent creatures are involved in the fall, but at the same time even the depraved nature of man itself reveals the wondrous workmanship of God who has created it. The external form of creation, then, as an expression of personality, is influenced by two personal references; God, its creator and man, its inhabitant. Because it shows forth its Creator, the world does not allow man to escape his accountability to God. Because man has an evil heart, creation is perverted. Even the Divine workmanship still evident, cannot sufficiently penetrate man's understanding. The works of man's hands are totally unacceptable to God. The situation is a hopeless tragedy for man. He is maintained in his

sinful temporal existence by the external world in which he lives, and yet there is nothing in this world that can work a remedy. No merely natural descendant of Adam can bring man back to righteousness before God, for all hearts are under the same condemnation. Thus the form of the external world maintains man in his condemned existence, it allows him to express in it his evil nature in the form of his works, bringing further condemnation. It reveals God's Person and Nature in its structure, but this revelation is unavailing, since external form cannot, by any inherent property, transform the heart of man. External form is thus the helpless victim and witness of man's sin, and the agent of God's judgment to depraved man.

We come now to a new level in the significance of the category of form. We have anticipated discussion on this level by the presentation of the doctrine of Scripture in the first book, but on the whole we have considered external form on the natural level. We now come to the problem of external form on the level of the redemption of man. Here form is considered as it plays its part in the process which God has initiated and maintained to save his elect.

We remember that in the area of natural religion there is a two-fold problem of external form. On the one hand, the heart and the form which issues from it are under the judgment of the absolute standard of God. On the other hand, the glorious external form of creation is a faithful witness to God, but it is unable to bring about an inner transformation of the heart of man. In the realm of redemption, a similar two-fold problem presents itself. The soul of man must be reached and redeemed before any external form is justified. On the other hand, redemption only takes place in relation to the appropriate external form. A personal Mediator is needed to bridge the gap

between man's fallen condition and God's holiness. On the other hand, the law was delivered as a necessary means of providing the proper formal discipline and preparatory training to lead the elect to the Mediator. It was necessary, furthermore, for the Mediator himself to be divine, for only so could he have that internal spiritual authority to justify sinful man. On the other hand, he had himself to come in the form of man in order to reach man who was both body and soul. While penetration to the inner personality is always primary, an isolated spirituality is never sufficient. Redemption must bring with it the appropriate external form.

Only in a Mediator can man find redemption. It is true that man's nature was created good and endowed with great talents, but "the whole human race, having perished in the person of Adam, our original excellence and dignity, which we have noticed, so far from being advantageous to us, only involves us in greater ignominy, till God, who does not acknowledge the pollution and corruption of man to be his work, appears as a Redeemer in the person of his only Son." (1) It is true that there is a knowledge of God as Creator, but because of our sin even this is useless for salvation "...unless it be succeeded by faith exhibiting God to us as a Father in Christ. This, indeed, was the genuine order of nature, that the fabric of the world should be a school in which we might learn piety, and thence be conducted to eternal life and perfect felicity; but since the fall, whithersoever we turn our eyes, the curse of God meets us on every side, which, whilst it seizes innocent creatures and involves them in our guilt, must necessarily overwhelm our souls in despair." (2) Thus both the ideal excellence and dignity of humanity, and "this magnificent theatre

(1) II, 6, I
(2) Ibid

of heaven and earth," are forms which are unable to offer salvation to the soul without Christ. In the face of the glories of creation "...our minds, being blinded, do not perceive the truth; and our senses being corrupted, we wickedly defraud God of his glory." (1) Since we have made so little improvement in the natural knowledge of God, he recalls us to a faith in Christ. "Wherefore though the preaching of the cross is not agreeable to human reason, we ought, nevertheless, to embrace it with all humility, if we desire to return to God our Creator, from whom we have been alienated, and to have him reassume the character of our Father." (2) Thus, in our fallen condition, a knowledge of God is incomplete and useless for salvation unless we have a Mediator. Although worship of God is found in all parts of the world, yet where this worship is not conducted under the name of Christ it is useless. "...No worship has ever been acceptable to God unless it had respect to Christ." (2) As "...life was from the beginning in Christ," and as "the whole world are fallen from it," (3) we must return to Christ if we are to regain the life.

Thus where man has failed, where his heart, mind and soul has become corrupt, there can be no salvation merely by seeking to impose an external form upon him. Nor, having lost the power freely to will the good, can he seek for salvation within himself. Only in a Mediator can salvation come.

If salvation be said to come only through a mediator, the objection arises as to whether there could not have been salvation through the law that was given to the Children of Israel, for the law was surely given for the spiritual good of God's people. We are at this point

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

offered an interesting new insight into the significance of form in Calvin's theology. The law is an external form addressed to sinning man so that he might be helped to a proper relation to God. It cannot, because of its divine origin and its applicability to the human situation, be dismissed. It was, moreover, for ages the only apparent means of bringing people to a knowledge of God. On the other hand, it is external and its ceremonial and judicial sections are largely concerned with mere externals. How could salvation be connected with such an instrument, especially since we are to look only to a Mediator for salvation? The place of this external form of the law in the order of salvation is now Calvin's subject of attention.

The one fundamental fact about the law is its connection to ^{with/} Christ. It was as a promise of Christ that the law was the effective saving feature in the life of Israel. Far from the imposition of an arbitrary form on the natural human vitality, the law was the promise of Christ in whom, as John taught, life was from the beginning. It is necessary to conform to the law because "it is necessary to return to that fountain; and therefore Christ asserts himself to be the life, as he is the author of the propitiation." (1) None of the heathen are to be saved, because they are without the law, and to be without the law is to be without Him of whom the law alone is an effective promise, and without the promised Redeemer, there can be no salvation. (2)

As without the law there is no hope of redemption, so within the law there is no hope of God's favor without a Mediator. It was by the legal sacrifices that "the faithful were plainly and publicly instructed that salvation was to be sought solely in that expiation, which has been accomplished by Christ alone." (3) But apart from such a consideration, it is obvious, says Calvin, that it was not the

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) II, 6, II

earthly seed of Abraham with which salvation was to be connected, for they were often rejected. Far rather it is in the Mediator that salvation is to be found. In short, "...since God cannot be propitious to mankind but through the Mediator, Christ was always exhibited to the holy fathers under the law, as the object to which they should direct their faith." (1) To prove this, Calvin examines the examples of piety and hope in the Old Testament to show that they were meaningless unless they were based on the confidence in a coming Mediation. Since "there can be no saving knowledge of God without Christ,...consequently...from the beginning of the world he has always been manifested to all the elect, that they might look to him, and repose all their confidence in him." (2) Theism is not enough. God must be approached through Christ. Therefore, as the pagans "...did not hold the head, that is Christ, all their knowledge of God was obscure and unsettled; whence it came to pass that degenerating at length into gross and vile superstitions, they betrayed their ignorance." (3) Thus the basis for reforming the soul and body of man can be had only in God's own action, only in the Spirit of God and in Christ. It was this which was given by the law.

This description of Old Testament worthies seeing Christ as their hope, raises the problem of the nature of the law. If it was Christ who alone promised them true felicity, of what use was the strict set of moral obligations, of ceremonial forms which the Old Testament law contained? Just what was the relation between the law and Christ? What relation did it bear to the covenant made to Abraham which we have seen could not have had any validity except in the hope of the coming of the Redeemer? This Calvin answers by

(1) Ibid
(2) II, 6, IV
(3) Ibid

saying that the law was given "not to confine the ancient people to itself but to encourage their hope of salvation in Christ, till the time of his coming." (1) Thus is Chapter VII, Book II entitled. The law was in no wise added to Abraham's covenant to draw away the attention of the chosen people from Christ, "...but rather to keep their minds waiting for his advent, to inflame their desires and confirm their expectations, that they might not be discouraged by so long a delay." (2)

What, then, is this instrument for encouraging the Godly to wait for Christ? This law to which Calvin is referring is not merely the moral injunctions, but the whole complex of ceremonial procedure, as well. "By the word law, I intend, not only the decalogue, which prescribes the rule of a pious and righteous life, but the form of religion delivered from God by the hands of Moses." (3) It was this law which really comprised religion previous to the advent of Christ, which was a spiritual assistance for those who were looking for the Messiah. Moses did not abolish the blessing promised to the seed of Abraham, but renewed it, as we see from the way he reminds the Jews of the gracious covenant made by their fathers.

How, otherwise, could the ceremonial sacrifices be described? Surely if they were to be viewed purely in themselves, they would appear most vain and frivolous. Thus they fall into the same category as all external form. They must not be taken as having value in and for themselves, but as witnesses to their transcendent Source, and as valid only when that Source is kept in view. Calvin even goes so far as to say that "...the whole legal worship, if it be considered in itself, and contain no shadows and figures of correspondent truths,

(1) Title
(2) II, 7, I
(3) Ibid

will appear perfectly ridiculous." (1) It was in its function of shadowing forth that which was beyond it, that the law was able to be appropriated by the New Testament, as we see with Stephen and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. (2) Profane men are able to ridicule the law as burdensome and wearisome because of "...inattention to the end of the legal figures, from which if those figures be separated, they must be condemned as vain and useless. But the 'pattern' which is mentioned, shows that God commanded the sacrifices, not with a design to occupy his worshippers in terrestrial exercises, but rather that he might elevate their minds to sublimer objects." (3) It was as a pattern or copy and not as something self-explanatory, that the law was binding upon the ancient Hebrews. "This may be likewise evinced by his (God's) nature; for as he is a Spirit, he is pleased with none but spiritual worship." (4) This was frequently the burden of the prophets' message. They denounced the sacrifices as having no intrinsic value in the sight of God. Not that they wished to minimize the law, but "...being true interpreters of it, they designed by this method to direct the eyes of the people to that point from which the multitude were wandering." (5)

What is that point? What is the reason for the necessity of spiritual interpretation? "Now, from the grace offered to the Jews, it is inferred as a certain truth, that the law was not irrespective of Christ; for Moses mentioned to them this end of their adoption, that they might 'be unto God a kingdom of priests;' (6) which could not

(1) Ibid

(2) Acts VII, 44 Heb. VIII, 5 Ex. XXV, 40

(3) II, 7, I

(4) Ibid

(5) Ibid

(6) Exod. XIX, 6

be attained without a greater and more excellent reconciliation than could arise from the blood of beasts. For what is more improbable than that the sons of Adam, who by hereditary contagion are all born the slaves of sin, should be exalted to regal dignity and thus become partakers of the glory of God, unless such eminent blessing proceeded from some other source than themselves." (1)

We see that in the New Testament, Christ is shown to have been ever the true end of the sacerdotal law, for Christians are referred to as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood." (2) This shows that it is really in Christ that the meaning of the office of priesthood is to be found. Thus the "...plenitude of that grace of which the Jews enjoyed a taste under the law, is exhibited in Christ."

The law, which was "the form of religion delivered from God by the hand of Moses," consisted not only in the Levitical priesthood, but also the same basic relation to the Mediator was obtained by the institution of the kingly line in the family of David. Indeed, "...both in the posterity of David, and in the whole Levitical tribe as in a twofold mirror, Christ was exhibited to his ancient people." (3) The kingdom of the Hebrews was divinely appointed, and therefore functioned with a divine mandate. Yet the allegiance to the visible form of the kingdom was not to the thing in itself, but as with all outward form, it was the expression of spiritual intent, the means instituted for spiritual purposes. The priesthood and kingdom, then, were forms instituted as though to place the people under the authority of a schoolmaster. "For Christ being not yet familiarly discovered, they were like children, whose imbecility could not yet bear the full knowledge of heavenly things." (4) This does not change, but rather

(2) 1 Peter II, 9

(1) II, 7, I

(3) II, 7, II

(4) Ibid

underlines the basic proposition that "...irrespective of Christ, all the ceremonies of the law are worthless and vain." (1) An acquaintance with legal forms, by itself, then, is of no use, "...for we should derive no benefit from a knowledge of what God requires of us, unless we were succoured by Christ when labouring and oppressed under its yoke and intolerable burden." (2) Thus this external form of ceremonial observance, could it have been taken by itself, would have been both "perfectly ridiculous" and an "intolerable burden," and thus humbling to men, "by convicting them of their own condemnation." (3)

But all the law is not a matter of ceremonies or kingdom. The moral law would offer a means for reforming the spiritual nature of man, for unlike the ceremonial law, it is not merely a command to certain set observances, but is concerned with displaying and bringing to bear on man the true form of spiritual righteousness. In this sense it is to be contrasted to the ceremonial law which, taken by itself, was ridiculous. The moral law, were there a complete observation of it, would be righteousness in the sight of God. It is, nevertheless, a set form, external to the spirit of man as that spirit has been since the fall. Apart from Christ it is unavailing to salvation, not because it would be ridiculous, but because it would condemn us. Just as the structure of the world could savingly reveal God to us if we still had the eyes of innocence, so could the law save us, were we of sufficiently pure heart to keep it. But, because we have fallen, both the structure of creation and the set external form of religion which is the law, are not only insufficient, but are the vehicles for bringing the judgment of God to bear upon man. "Therefore, if we

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

direct our views exclusively to the law, the effects upon our minds will only be despondency, confusion and despair, since it condemns and curses us all and keeps us far from that blessedness which it proposes to them who observe it." (1) Thus the form taken in itself, apart (and in fallen man it must always be apart) from a corresponding inner spiritual state, brings condemnation.

Does God mock us, then? We shall cease to think of it in those terms when we reflect that we are condemned by the law unless God embraces us "with his gratuitous goodness, without any regard to our works, and unless we have also embraced by faith that goodness, as exhibited to us in the gospel, - then these promises are not without their use..." (2) The situation is much different when we realize "...that not rejecting our imperfect obedience, but pardoning its deficiencies, he gives us to enjoy the benefit of the legal promises, just as if we had fulfilled the condition ourselves." (3) An external form to which we cannot conform, yet which reveals the righteousness of God, must leave us hopeless, if we rested on our own strength. By being confronted with it, we are forced to agree that there is no ability in us to achieve true righteousness. Thus Calvin's doctrine of the absolute claims of the law, and human inability to meet the claims, prepares naturally, as he affirms, for the discussion of the doctrine of justification by faith alone that must be postponed to our third chapter.

In a brief defense of his assertion of the impossibility of observing the law, Calvin shows that it would be against the declared ordination and decree of God to grant the power of absolute obedience to man. Calvin maintains that there has never existed a saint from the

(1) II, 7, IV
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

remotest period of antiquity, "who, surrounded with a body of death, could attain to such a degree of love, as to love God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind.

...I assert also that no man in the future, will reach the standard of true perfection, unless released from the burden of the body." (1) Man cannot perfectly conform, for he exists in a body that is polluted by sin. Had he the absolute transcendence over it as has God over the world, he could bring an absolute reformation, or if he were merely a creature and not the image of God, he could also find a way out in innocence. He is, however, a soul guilty in the way that the rest of creation, though cursed, is not guilty. He is a finite soul, so he cannot transcend nature sufficiently to bring about an absolute reform. Despite his transcendence over nature, man remains, as long as he is in the body, an alienated creature of God, unable to effect that total obedience which alone can bring forgiveness by its own merit. "Certainly, if our will were wholly conformed to the law, and disposed to obey it, the mere knowledge of it would evidently be sufficient to salvation. But since our carnal and corrupt nature is in a state of hostility against the spirituality of Divine law, and not amended by its discipline, it follows that the law, which was given for salvation, if it could have found adequate attention, becomes an occasion of sin and death." (2) It is this spirituality of the law that renders the deformed will of man, residing in a corrupted creation, unable to raise itself to its level.

Man is unable to earn salvation by obeying the law. What, then, is the use of the moral law? What is the use of this formal code which "...discovers the righteousness of God, that is, the only righteousness which is acceptable to God..?" (3) Calvin states that the office

(1) II, 7, V
(2) II, 7, VII
(3) II, 7, VI

and use of the law can be listed under three headings. The first use is that "...it warns every one of his own unrighteousness, places it beyond all doubt, convicts and condemns him." (1) It does this by bringing to bear upon him a discovery of the righteousness which is alone acceptable in the sight of God. By making its absolute demand upon him, it reveals, thereby, the impotence of man to fulfill this. Realizing his impotence, man is forced to the awareness of his iniquity. Since the law condemns all non-conformity, and since man sees his own inability to conform, he is therefore forced to the awareness of his iniquity. Realizing his impotence and iniquity, he is forced to realize his obnoxiousness to the divine curse. Thus insolent boasting of ability to conform, together with pride in having believed oneself to have conformed, and a false sense of security in being at peace with God, are all shattered by the law. This should cast the sinner down in abject humility, but not undo them who, "leaving their foolish opinion of their own strength,...know that they stand and are supported only by the power of God; that being naked and destitute,...resort for assistance to his mercy, recline themselves wholly upon it, hide themselves entirely in it, and embrace it alone for righteousness and merits, since it is offered in Christ to all who with true faith implore it and expect it." (2) In this way, we find the law being the means of bringing that relation to God which, in the letter to King Francis I, Calvin calls the "analogy of faith." (3) It is the means of bringing man's proper self-effacement before God. It is as a means of confounding men in their own strength, whether it is that fruitful contrition of the children of God, or that hopeless despair of the reprobate.

The external restraint upon the impious is the law's second main

(1) Ibid

(2) II, 7, VIII

(3) See concluding chapter of thesis

office. For while it does not lead to their reform, it does force them into some kind of outward conformity. It causes "...those who, unless constrained, feel no concern for justice and rectitude, when they hear its terrible sanctions, to be at least restrained by a fear of its penalties. And they are restrained, not because it internally influences or affects their minds, but because, being chained, as it were, they refrain from external acts, and repress their depravity within them, which otherwise they would have wantonly discharged." (1) As we have seen again and again, such outward conformity is completely unavailing without an inner change of heart. Indeed a conformity forced upon an unwilling personality aggravates the inner rebellion against God. Calvin has perhaps anticipated some of the insights of modern psychiatry when he writes "...the more they restrain themselves, the more violently they are inflamed within; they ferment, they boil, ready to break out into any external acts, if they were not prevented by this dread of the law." (2) Unlike much modern psychology, however, Calvin feels that it is quite a good thing that they are thus pent up. Self-expression by the natural man would lead to total anarchy. Thus "...this constrained and extorted righteousness is necessary to the community, whose public tranquility is provided for by God in this instance, while he prevents all things being involved in confusion, which would certainly be the case, if all men were permitted to pursue their own inclinations." (3) An additional advantage of this enforced obedience, is to be found in the cases of those who, although still reprobate, are "exercised by its discipline before their vocation, while they are destitute of the Spirit of sanctification, and are absorbed in carnal folly. ...They are in some measure accustomed to bear the yoke of righteousness; so that when they are called,

(1) II, 7, X
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

they may not be entirely unaccustomed to its discipline as a thing altogether unknown." (1) As preparation for the reception of the gospel, the law is effective in two ways. It humbles some before God, and it is a bridle to restrain the licentiousness of others, "...lest they abandon themselves to carnal licentiousness, to such a degree as wholly to depart from all practice of righteousness. For where the Spirit does not yet reign, there is sometimes such a violent ebullition of the passions, as to occasion great danger of the soul that is under their influence being swallowed up in forgetfulness and contempt of God; which would certainly be the case, if the Lord did not provide this remedy against it." (2) Thus order and proper form are a necessary element to maintain creation, even if they must be enforced upon unwilling and rebellious hearts, for thus is God glorified, and thus is his way made straight to enter the hearts of his elect.

"The third use of the law, which is the principal one, and which is more nearly connected with the proper end of it, relates to the faithful, in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns. For although the law is inscribed and engraven on their hearts by the finger of God - that is, although they are so excited and animated by the direction of the Spirit, that they desire to obey God - yet they derive a twofold advantage from the law. For they find it an excellent instrument to give them, from day to day, a better and more certain understanding of the Divine will to which they aspire, and to confirm them in the knowledge of it." (3) Simple inner motive is insufficient. The spirit and soul of the believer must be informed, must be disciplined by law. It is quite true that the hearts of believers are attuned to obedience to God, yet man's

(1) Ibid

(2) II, 7, XI

(3) II, 7, XII

finite and still depraved spirit cannot claim the Spirit of God unless this is combined with the obedience to the will of God expressed in the form of the law. The true spiritual love of God which is the fundamental mark of the Christian, is useless without being sealed by the proper formal discipline. Thus the law is necessary as a set of requirements which express the will of God for man. The will of God for man is not merely a spiritual, personal thing, but it provides a definite form for obedience to assume. An implicit change of heart must, of necessity, be sealed with conformity to an external form. That the form of the law has been internalized in the heart must be shown by an attempt to live up to its external demands. Thus while form (the law) is conjoined with the spirit to produce a spirit of obedience, making the law part of the internal character of the spirit, this must be sealed and quickened, and disciplined by an outward conformity. The external form of the law is the expression of the very nature and righteous will of a sovereign God. It is the codified, external statement of what man must be. On God's side, the law is an expression of his nature, its form being a witness to its author. To man, the law is an external form which is a discipline to maintain a proper relation to the Lord who inspired it. Instead of being descriptive of the will, it is prescriptive for the will. By its office in relation to both God and man, it provides the basis for the only possible relationship between man and God. Only if the law writ upon the heart is checked, informed and maintained by the outer set form of legal commands, can the inner law continue to exist. It is both a guide and a goad to urge on the believer. Even the saints are burdened with the indolence of the flesh. "To this flesh the law serves as a whip, urging it, like a dull and tardy animal, forwards to its work; and even to the spiritual man, who

is not yet delivered from the burden of the flesh, it will be a perpetual spur, that will not permit him to loiter." (1)

The law, by itself, is death, but this is quite different from its use by the regenerate. There is great advantage derived "through the divine teaching from the reading of the law, by those whom God inspires with an inward promptitude to obedience." (2) Were merely the precepts of the law effective, it would lead to despair, but with the promises, and because of these alone, the bitter becomes sweet. David was able to sing in the psalms, about the sweetness of the law, only because he shows "that in the law he discovered the Mediator, without whom there is nothing pleasant or delightful." The law "...no longer exercises towards us the part of a rigorous exactor, only to be satisfied by the perfect performance of every injunction; but in this perfection to which it exhorts us, it shows us a goal, to aim at which, during the whole of our lives, would be equally conducive to our interest and consistent with our duty; in which attempt it is happy for us if we fail not. For the whole of this life is a course, which when we have completed, the Lord will grant us to reach that goal, towards which at so great a distance our efforts are now vigorously directed." (3) Thus the law is effective as an aid even where it is not thoroughly kept. Spiritual life must be lived in terms of it, as a reaching forward towards it. It helps to mold us to its pattern, even though we are never perfect. "The doctrine of the law remains, therefore, through Christ inviolable; which by tuition, admonition, reproof, and correction, forms and prepares us for every good work." (4)

Spiritual righteousness as it exists in man, thus demands the law as a form to correct it, improve it and stimulate it. This shows

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) II, 7, XIII
(4) II, 7, XIV

us the permanent use of the external form of the law for spirituality. It is not, itself, a means of gaining righteousness by external actions, but an external aid to internal reformation. All the law cannot be used in this way, however. While all three forms of the law were useful in foreshadowing Christ, yet only the moral law foreshadowed the very nature of his spiritual righteousness to which we should be conformed. The ceremonial law was concerned with foreshadowing Christ by mere external sacrifices and institutions. For us these are hardly equal, in their relevance, to those precepts of eternal spiritual righteousness which the moral law contained. By his strong insistence on the continuance of the moral law, Calvin differed in emphasis from Luther. In even his earliest writings, the exposition of the moral law was of extreme importance. By his insistence on the discontinuance of the ceremonial law, he was to differ from the Catholic conception.

We come now to an explanation of the difference between the ceremonial and the moral law. We have seen that they were similar in both pointing beyond themselves to Christ. Yet here a difference emerges. The moral law is undergirded and maintained by the advent of Christ, whereas the ceremonial law is abolished. (1) Why is this so? Does this lessen the significance of the purely outward observance? The fact is far otherwise. The moral law, although delivered in a set form external to and therefore condemnatory of the soul to which it is addressed, is nevertheless concerned with a delineation of the spiritual life. The ceremonial law was, first of all, a command to a certain set of external observances, a certain conformity on the purely physical plane. Although having significance, like the moral law, only

(1) II, 7, XVI

in the light of Christ, its signifying office was only operative when Christ's coming was future. The set form of the ceremonial law foretold the coming of Christ, whereas the set form of the moral law tells forth the very quality of his life. The moral law, because it was true, was impressed in a newly vital way on the hearts of believers, by Christ's coming. The ceremonial law, equally because it was true to its function of foretelling Christ, became obsolete once he whom it foretold had come. The ceremonies, then, have "...been abrogated not as to their effect, but only as to their use. ...As they must have exhibited to the people, in the ancient times, a vain spectacle unless they had discovered the virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, so, if they had not ceased, we should, in the present age, have been unable to discern for what purpose they were instituted. They were shadows, the body of which we have in Christ." (1) This is not minimizing their importance, because "...their very discontinuance gives us a better knowledge of their great utility before the advent of Christ who, abolishing the observance of them, confirmed their virtue and efficacy in his death." (2) It does reveal, however, Calvin's impatience with any purely external observance, or rather his denial of the ability of any external form to bring about any spiritual result by its intrinsic nature. The ceremonial law never had had any spiritual transforming power. The observance of its commands still remained the action of sinful men and could not redeem, by their merit, the sinfulness of the hearts of the performers. The ceremonies, did, however, have value in bringing a recognition of man's sin, but they had no power to eradicate the sin they thus confessed.

(1) Ibid

(2) Ibid

There is, in the writings of Paul, a definite theme which declares the ordinances of the law to be against or contrary to man, and that Christ, by his coming, has blotted out this handwriting that was against us. This shows that the law of ceremonies did not work the expiation of the performers. "For if in the rites you contemplate nothing but the...performing /of/ them, to what purpose were they called a 'handwriting that was against us' and almost the whole of our redemption made to consist in its being 'blotted out'? Wherefore it is evident, that here is something to be considered beside the external ceremonies." (1)

These external observances could not, in themselves, bring expiation, and therefore the performance of them, which was done as a type for the redemption wrought by Christ, was "rather a confession of sins than an expiation of them. For what did they do in offering sacrifices, but confess themselves worthy of death, since they substituted victims to be slain in their stead? What were their purifications but confessions that they were themselves impure? Thus the handwriting both of their sin and of their impurity was frequently renewed by them; but that confession afforded no deliverance." (2) Thus this external ceremonial form could witness to their spiritual nature, to the redeeming work of the Lord who commanded it. Such a witness could not be reflexive, however, in the sense of bringing about, by its own power, a change of heart that alone would represent a new standing before God, nor could it expiate, in the sight of God, the guilt it confessed. It could not reach to the heart of man to whose guilt it witnessed, nor could it, by the same token, reach above sinful man to the righteousness of God which he had offended. Thus because, as an external form, it was, in itself, insufficient,

(1) Ibid

(2) II, 7, XVII

it only attained its true function when it witnessed to the coming expiation. By witnessing to the need for an expiation it could not, in itself, achieve, it was "handwriting which was against" those who were still under its power. Its abolition by the perfect expiation in the death of Christ, was therefore the fulfillment of its purpose, its authentication as a valid foreshadowing of Christ, and its removal as a condemnation to those who were under it. In its fulfillment it was discarded, in its abolition it allowed those whom it condemned to be brought into that salvation to which it had directed them.

Thus the observation of external ceremonies of atonement cannot be permanent. Atonement cannot come from a ceremony. The sin is rather confessed than expiated in the external form of sacrifices. Transformation can come only from within. Any form which is not addressed to this inner transformation, is only temporary.

The moral law, as distinguished from the ceremonial law, is permanent. It is, so Calvin holds, a permanent commandment of what is pleasing in the sight of God, because "...the service which God has once prescribed always remains in full force." (1) This is the fundamental assertion of what has been called Calvinistic legalism. The law,--that is the moral law, - is the expression of God's eternal will for man. In order not to misunderstand this affirmation, we must rid our minds of the usual meaning of the term "legalism" where legalism means mere conformity to an external code of behavior. The law is, it is true, an external form in so far as it is a set of injunctions addressed to the personality from without, and especially in so far as it is codified and written and when it commands or

(1) II, 8, I

forbids this or that external action. As an external form it cannot be the source of spiritual righteousness. Yet it is far more than mere external form. In it is expressed and described the very spiritual righteousness of God himself and the righteousness which he commands his children to appropriate. The law is written on the heart of the believer, and even as an external code, it remains as guide and goad to his conscience. The law, therefore, is itself an external form. It is, however, the expression of a spiritual righteousness. The righteousness it commands is spiritual. It is as an aid to this spirituality that the law is used. An examination of Calvin's explanation of the ten tables of the law shows that this is indeed his interpretation.

The function of the law for man, in his fallen condition, is not only to show the righteous command of God, but to impress upon man the need for a salvation from outside of himself. In showing the abiding significance of the law for the religious man, Calvin refers to his definition of religion or true wisdom. The knowledge both of God and of ourselves, is made possible by the law, for therein is displayed a righteousness which reveals his holy character and, by contrast, convinces us of our own wretchedness. "The Lord accomplishes both these things in the law, where, in the first place, claiming to himself the legitimate authority to command, he calls us to revere his Divinity, and prescribes the parts of which this reverence consists; and in the next place, promulgating the rule of his righteousness, (the rectitude of which, our nature, being depraved and perverted, perpetually opposes; and from the perfection of which, our ability, through its indolence and imbecility towards that which is good, is at a great distance,) he convicts us both of impotence and of unrighteousness." (1)

(1) Ibid

Calvin does not deny the reality nor even the integrity of the "internal law, which has before been said to be inscribed and, as it were, engraven on the hearts of all men;.../it/suggests to us in some measure the same things which are to be learned from the two tables. For our conscience does not permit us to sleep in perpetual insensibility, but is an internal witness and monitor of the duties we owe to God, shows us the difference between good and evil, and so accuses us when we deviate from our duty. But man, involved as he is in a cloud of errors, scarcely obtains from this law of nature the smallest idea of what worship is accepted by God; but is certainly at an immense distance from a right understanding of it. Besides, he is so elated with arrogance and ambition, and so blinded with self love, that he cannot yet take a view of himself, and as it were retire within, that he may learn to submit and humble himself, and to confess his misery. Since it was necessary therefore, both for our dulness and obstinacy, the Lord gave us a written law; to declare with greater certainty what in the law of nature was too obscure, and by arousing our indolence, to make a deeper impression on our understanding and memory." (1)

In this way Calvin has related law, as an external set form, to the personality and character of God, as well as to the character and faculties of man. It is an expression, in an external form, of the same righteousness which characterizes God himself. It is an expression, moreover, directed to man for his conformity. But this is not the only way that the law is related to personality. Although it comes as a judgment upon man, as the revelation of that which he is not but should be, it also comes to him as the explicit statement of what his conscience urges, all too ineffectively, from within. Thus the external form of

(1) Ibid

the law corresponds to the internal form or nature, both of God and "man's better self" (as long as this is understood as God's maintenance of a contact through a conscience he has implanted in man). It is because of this awareness in man of the need for conformity, that the law is relevant to him, but it is because of the inability of this awareness to bring about an inward reformation according to the law, that the relevance of the law is the relevance of judgment.

When Calvin proceeds to show what the law should teach us (1), he gives his prescription for all that men who would be righteous should know and be. We should learn that we are in a completely dependent relation upon our Creator, that therefore we owe an absolute obedience to him, that our whole life should be in strict conformity to his will. We must, indeed, prefer his will to our own, and therefore only that righteousness, sanctity and purity which is perfect in his sight can count as worship of him. Our inability is no excuse, because the law, as descriptive of God's righteousness, cannot be altered for the convenience or on the demand of that which is, itself, a creation or formation of God, "...for whatever be our characters, he ever remains like himself, the friend of righteousness, the enemy of iniquity." (2) Whatever he requires of us, since he can require nothing but what is right, we are under a natural obligation to obey; but our inability is our own fault. For if we are bound by our own passions, which are under the government of sin, so that we are not at liberty to obey our Father, there is no reason why we should plead this necessity in our defense, the criminality of which is within ourselves, and must be imputed to us. The only one capable of determining the demands of the law is its author,

(1) II, 8, II
(2) Ibid

whose character it expresses, and since he remains unchanged, it cannot be altered. Since the law is given for our conformity, we are kept by it under the judgement of God's righteousness. This should, as we have previously seen, make sure that the sinner who sees himself in the light of the law "...feeling nothing but despair in himself,...implores and expects assistance from another quarter." (1)

The sanctions of promises of reward for obedience are added as a spur, - they are not the earned reward of merit. They are not something to be claimed by one who has successfully conformed to the demands of the law, for no conformation could claim for itself the reward of merit. The rewards and punishments were only the expressions of the sovereign good pleasure of God, and in order to lead men to desire what they should. They were external aids to seal men in more complete spiritual obedience. (2)

The fact that the Lord is the author of the law means not only that it must be obeyed, but that no other system of commands or good works can be pleasing in his sight. Man, in his creaturehood and depravity, is not in a position to invent a new species of good works, for any system or form can only witness to the mind which originated it. As God, alone, is the fountain of all goodness, so his law, alone is good. Thus when the Lord first delivered the law "foreseeing that the Israelites would not rest, but, even after the reception of the law, would labour to produce new species of righteousness foreign from what the law requires, unless they should be rigorously restrained, God pronounces that his word comprehends the perfection of righteousness." (3) This was not only so for the Israelites, but is true even for us. There can only be one righteousness in the sight of God, and

(1) II, 8, III

(2) II, 8, IV

(3) II, 8, V

therefore it must remain perpetually the same.

Not only does the exclusive authority of the law derive from the exclusive mandate of the will of the Lord, but it is a matter of the personality in yet another way. As we have seen, it is external form demanding spiritual conformity. "First, let it be understood, that the law inclucates a conformity of life, not only to external probity, but also to internal and spiritual righteousness." (1) Why is this? "This arises from their not considering the Legislator, by whose nature we ought to estimate also the nature of the law. ...But God, whose eye nothing escapes, and who esteems not so much the external appearance as the purity of heart, in the prohibition of adultery, murder, and theft, comprises a prohibition of lust, wrath, hatred, coveting what belongs to another, fraud and every similar vice." (2) Calvin proceeds to say that "human laws therefore are satisfied, when a man abstains from external transgression. But, on the contrary, the Divine law being given to our minds, the proper regulation of them is the principal requisite to a righteous observance of it." (3) Many men, so Calvin insists, maintain an outward conformity, but inwardly are lusting after evil. "Whence arises such gross stupidity, but from discarding the Legislator, and accomodating a righteousness to their own inclination? These persons Paul strongly opposes, when he affirms that 'the law is spiritual;' signifying that it requires not only the obedience of the soul, the understanding, and the will, but even an angelic purity, which, being cleansed from all the pollution of the flesh, may savour entirely of the Spirit." (4)

(1) II, 8, VI
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) Ibid

Thus the law must always be interpreted spiritually. It must, therefore, be interpreted not merely according to the literal meaning, but also according to the implication of the words. Lest this result in wild allegorizing, we should be quite strict and sober in determining how the true spiritual meaning is to be extracted. That this search for the spiritual meaning be carried out in the proper way, we must try to establish the end for which each commandment was given. In order to do this, we must "first examine the subject of it; in the next place we should inquire the end of it, till we discover what the legislator really declares in it to be either pleasing or displeasing to him. Lastly, we must draw an argument from this commandment to its opposite, in this manner:-- If this please God, the contrary must displease him; if this displease him, the contrary must please him; if he enjoin this, he forbids the contrary; if he forbid this he enjoins the contrary." (1) God has given us these "incomplete precepts" in order to point out the ultimate form of every vice. By forbidding murder he is showing with what detestation he views all anger and hatred that leads up to it. The intermediary stages are to be judged by the ultimate form of the sin. (2)

We must also remember, in interpreting the law, that it is divided into two tables. The first has to do with religion which peculiarly belongs to the worship of his majesty, and the second to those duties of charity which respect men. (3) "This double aspect of the law must always be remembered, for it must never be considered as merely a rule for action within society. It is in vain, therefore, to boast of righteousness without religion; as well might the trunk of a body be exhibited as a beautiful object, after the head has been cut off. Nor is religion only the head of righteousness, but the very soul of it, constituting all its life and vigour, for without the fear of

(1) II, 8, VIII
(2) II, 8, X
(3) II, 8, XI

God, men preserve no equity and love among themselves." (1)

Here we see that the vertical, the inner, the spiritual is the motivating and undergirding force and strength of the "horizontal" outward form. Piety produces and gives power to charity. The law is more than law, or at least more than the usual conception of law as a fixed code of behaviour. It is, first of all, the formal descriptive expression of the will and nature of God, and secondly a set form to which our nature and relationship to God must conform.

We especially see Calvin's understanding of the spirituality of the law as we see his interpretation of each of the precepts. The will of God has not been expressed in a haphazard fashion, but has been given to us in ten definite precepts "disposed in the most beautiful order." (2) Calvin, in these words, betrays his appreciation for the orderly and the definite in the moral and religious life.

Including the preface "I am the Lord", etc. (3) as part of the first commandment (4), he sees that God, in this commandment, "provides that the majesty of the law which he is about to deliver may never fall into contempt." (5) Asserting his authority, promising grace "to allure them by its charms to the pursuit of holiness," and reminding the Israelites of his past favors - having thus pre-disposed the people to obey the law, having affirmed its authority, Calvin states that the end of the first commandment which states "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," (6) is that "God chooses to have the sole preeminence, and to enjoy undiminished his authority among his people!" (7) After commenting on the nature and need for

(1) Ibid
(2) II, 8, XII
(3) Exodus XX, 2
(4) II, 8, XIII-XVI

(5) II, 8, XIII
(6) Exodus XX, 3
(7) II, 8, XVI

monotheism which should include exclusive adoration of, trust in, invocation and thanksgiving to God, he concludes that God "...requires from us the glory due to his Divinity, undiminished and uncorrupted, not only in external confession, but in his own eyes, which penetrate the inmost recesses of our hearts." (1) The emphasis upon the law, then, is not at odds with a truly spiritual religion.

The second commandment (2) forbids the making of any graven image. Although it is actual idolatry that is forbidden, Calvin extends the prohibition. God "...calls us off and wholly abstracts us from carnal observances, which our foolish minds are accustomed to devise, when they conceive of God according to the grossness of their own apprehensions;... He marks what is the grossest transgression of this kind; that is external idolatry. (3) We have already discussed Calvin's opposition to the visible representation of God. He again affirms that we are restrained "from licentiously daring to make God, who is incomprehensible, the subject of our senses or to represent him under any visible form." (4)

The end of the third precept (5) is "...that the Lord will have the majesty of his name to be held inviolably sacred by us. The substance of that command therefore is, that we ought not to profane that name by a contemptuous or irreverent use of it." (6) The subject of this commandment is, then, the words we use to describe God, or more principally our use of his name in oaths. These oaths must not "be rash, or inconsiderate, wanton, or frivolous, but used in cases of real necessity, as for vindicating the glory of the Lord, or promoting the edification of our brother, which is the end of this commandment of the law." (7) There is reference made not only to

(1) Ibid

(2) Ex. XX, 4

(3) II, 8, XVII

(4) Ibid

(5) Ex. XX, 7

(6) II, 8, XXII

(7) II, 8, XXVII

the spoken word alone, for it is whatever we think, as well as whatever we say, which is the concern of the commandment. The spoken word, however, is very seriously regarded as the subject of moral concern, not only in conversation and oaths, but also where there are "such nefarious uses as they do who make it subservient to the superstitions of necromancy, to horrible imprecations, to unlawful exorcisms, and to other impious incantations." (1) Thus we see how the law is concerned both with the heart and mind of man and with the words which he speaks.

Aside from the fourth commandment, it is not necessary to go into great detail with the remaining commandments. All are concerned, basically, with a delineation of spiritual righteousness as well as with definite actions, spiritual principles of behavior, rather than specific commands or prohibitions.

The fifth commandment (2) not only entails respect to one's father and mother, but involves the principle "...that since the Lord God desires the preservation of the order he has appointed, the degrees of preeminence fixed by him ought to be preserved." (3) This should involve reverence and respect for those to whom God has given to rule over us. Such obedience will be rewarded with "possession of the land" (4) not as a reward, but as a sign of God's gracious favor. "...As the whole earth is blessed to the faithful, we justly place the present life among the blessings we receive from God. ...For neither is it promised to us, nor was it promised to the Jews, as though it contained any blessedness in itself, but because to the pious it is generally a token of Divine favour." (5) The submission exercised to

(1) II, 8, XXII

(2) Ex. XX, 12

(3) II, 8, XXXV

(4) II, 8, XXXVII

(5) Ibid

parents, rulers, etc. is not unqualified. We respect them because "the submission exercised towards them ought to be a step towards honoring the Supreme Father. Therefore, if they instigate us to any transgression of the law, we may justly consider them not as parents but as strangers...." (1)

As for the sixth commandment, (2) we see here not merely a prohibition of murder, but we are shown a whole principle of life and thought, of spiritual concern. Not only must we refrain from actual murder and hate, but also we are enjoined to a positive concern for our neighbor's welfare. Calvin points to "...two reasons on which this precept is founded; the first, that man is the image of God; the second, that he is our own flesh. Wherefore, unless we would violate the image of God, we ought to hold the personal safety of our neighbor inviolably sacred; and unless we would divest ourselves of humanity, we ought to cherish him as our own flesh." (3) Here we see a principle of social ethics which is much more than mere legalism. It is not the external act per se in which Calvin is interested, but the spirit behind it.

In forbidding adultery, (4) there is given a command for us to depart from all uncleanness, carnal impurity, or libidinous intemperance. "To this prohibition corresponds the affirmative injunction that every part of our lives ought to be regulated by chastity and continence." (5) He continues by showing that God has not given to all the power to maintain their virginity and for these marriage is a God-given means to maintain the chastity, for true married love is as much chastity as is virginity. (6) Thus, by taking the law as basis for understanding the commands of God for men, Calvin is able, on the one hand, to expound spiritual righteousness and, on the other, to

(1) II, 8, XXXVIII

(2) Ex. XX., 13

(3) II, 8, XL

(4) Ex. XX, 14

(5) II, 8, XLI

(6) II, 8, XLII

have what he felt to be an adequate guide for making decisions on the institutions of practical life.

In the commandment against stealing, (1) Calvin sees much more than merely a prohibition of pilfering. "The end of this precept is, that, as injustice is an abomination to God, every man may possess what belongs to him. The sum of it, then, is that we are forbidden to covet the property of others, and are therefore enjoined faithfully to use our endeavors to preserve to every man what justly belongs to him." (2) If the essential spiritual bent of this commandment, as Calvin envisaged it, needed any underscoring, then we need but hear him say that we should always keep our attention on the Legislator "to remind us that this law is ordained for our hearts as much as for our hands, in order that men may study both to protect the property and to promote the interests of others." (3)

In the ninth commandment, (4) we are told not only to refrain from acts of false witness, but "...we ought to preserve the truth without the least disguise. The sum of it, therefore, is that we neither violate the character of any man, either by calumnies or by false accusations, or impertinence." (5) We should not even "inadvertently attend to unfavorable suspicions; but that, putting fair constructions on every man's words and actions, we regulate our hearts, our ears and our tongues with a view to preserve the reputation of all around us." (6)

In the tenth commandment, (7) the full force of the spirituality of the law is revealed. For Calvin this means not so much a separate commandment, but rather a summary of the sense of the other precepts.

(1) Ex. XX, 15
(2) II, 8, XLV
(3) II, 8, XLVI
(4) Ex. XX, 16

(5) II, 8, XLVII
(6) II, 8, XLVIII
(7) Ex. XX, 17

"The end of this precept is that, since it is the will of God that our whole soul should be under the power of love, every desire inconsistent with charity ought to be expelled from our minds. The sum, then, will be that no thought should obtrude itself upon us, which would excite in our minds any desire that is noxious, and tends to the detriment of another." (1) So interpreted, it is easy to see how the law is fulfilled in the command to love God and our neighbor.

Before summarizing the law, however, it would be well to view, in particular detail, the fourth commandment (2) as interpreted by Calvin. In his doctrine on this commandment, Calvin is distinguished even from his own followers of later centuries. Even these staunch followers of Calvin, The Nineteenth Century Presbyterian Church in United States of America, mentioned their disagreement with Calvin on this matter. While admitting that "...the 'Institutes', considering the times and circumstances in which they were written, form an invaluable body of divinity,..." still they find certain doctrines insufficiently illuminated, and "the most decidedly objectionable feature in the 'Christian Institutes', is to be found in the explanation of the Fourth Commandment, where the author asserts the abrogation of the Sabbath. ...In this opinion there can be no doubt that he greatly erred, and so universal is the conviction of the Church on the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath as a moral institution, that no danger is to be apprehended from a contrary view, even under the sanction of so great a name as that of Calvin." (3)

What, then, is his interpretation that shocked later Calvinists? First we find him stating that "the end of this precept is, that, being dead to our own affections and works, we should meditate on the Kingdom of God, and be exercised in that meditation in the observance of his

(1) II, 8, XLIX

(2) Ex. XX, 8

(3) "Advertisement" to the edition of the Institutes published by the Presbyterian Board of Education. (Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication - date not given.)

institutions... The fathers frequently call it a shadowy commandment because it contains the external/^{observance} of the day, which was abolished with the rest of the figures at the advent of Christ." (1) The design of God in giving this commandment was, first, to prefigure the spiritual rest from their own works which was given by Christ to believers. Secondly, it was given as a stated day for the Jewish ceremonies and meditation on God's works. Thirdly, it was given because servants and workers need a day of rest.

It is, then, that there is a spiritual truth behind the Sabbath. "If our sanctification consists properly in the mortification of our own will, there is a very natural analogy between the external sign and the internal thing which it represents. We must rest altogether, that God may operate within us; we must recede from our own will, resign our own heart, and renounce all carnal affections; in short, we must cease from all the efforts of our own understanding, that having God operating within us, we may enjoy rest in him, as we are also taught by the apostle." (2) Furthermore "this perpetual cessation was represented to the Jews by the observance of one day in seven,..." (3) Thus the outward performance of requirements for keeping the Sabbath was an external sign of a spiritual reality. It was not the delineation of the righteousness demanded by God, rather it foreshadowed the coming of the spiritual religion which would replace the religion of good works. As such, it foreshadowed Christ's coming, but did not survive it. For Christ "...is the truth, at whose presence all figures disappear, the body, at the sight of which all the shadows are relinquished. He, I say, is the true fulfillment of the Sabbath." (4)

(1) II, 8, XXVIII
(2) II, 8, XXIX
(3) II, 8, XXX
(4) II, 8, XXXI

Thus the Sabbath, as a figure of Christ, is no more, but there still remain the other two reasons for a day of rest:- a day set apart for the Divine worship and meditation, and a time for the weary toilers to rest. (1) These are as necessary as they ever were. "...Though the Sabbath is abrogated, yet it is still customary among us to assemble on stated days for hearing the word, for breaking the mystic bread, and for public prayers; and also to allow servants and labourers a remission from their labour." (2) The regular rest and worship, however, is not to be taken as the Sabbath. It is a means to the end of preserving "order and decorum" because, without this regulation, "the Church would be in imminent danger of immediate convulsion and ruin." (3) It is a means of doing things "decently and in order"! "...We celebrate it not with scrupulous rigour, as a ceremony which we conceive to be a figure of some spiritual mystery, but only use it as a remedy necessary to the preservation of order in the Church." (4)

We must not esteem one day above another, as Paul warns us, for "this preposterous distinction of days the Apostle strenuously opposes; and not that legitimate difference which promotes the peace of the Christian Church." (5) Calvin sums up the whole problem in the following manner. "As the truth was delivered to the Jews under a figure, so it is given to us without any shadows; first, in order that during our whole life we should meditate on a perpetual rest from our works, that the Lord may operate within us by his Spirit; secondly, that every man, whenever he has leisure, should diligently exercise himself in private in pious reflections on the works of God, and also that we should at the same time observe ^{the} legitimate order of the Church, appointed for the

(1) II, 8, XXXII
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

(4) II, 8, XXXIII
(5) Ibid

hearing of the word, for the administration of the sacraments, and for public prayer; thirdly, that we should not unkindly oppress those who are subject to us."(1)

Here we have Calvin revealing to us, in a particularly crucial way, his view of the place of external observance in the Christian life. As a result of the coming of Christ in the flesh, there is abolished all external observance which claims to be, by its very nature, the analogy of Divine truth. The sacraments, alone, are legitimate as external symbols and we shall examine them later. We are in a direct relation to the spiritual realm through the incarnate Christ. If we retain these vestiges, we are explaining the light in terms of the shadow, the clear by the obscure. In the body of Christ, is truth incarnate, - is external form in its fulfillment. Rather must we rest from such dependence on the external world, - rest upon the inner working of the Spirit of Christ, in us. The need for regularity and order, and for rest, remain, but as practical affairs, not as symbols anticipating an event, for this event has been accomplished. We rest from our works.

We see, then, that Calvin, unlike his followers, refused to bind men to an external legalism. We rest from the works of the law. The Sabbath is abolished, or rather is now extended to include, not one special day, but the whole life of the believer, - of the church. We are held to the proper external regulation of our common affairs, but this is fundamentally a means of implementing our internal faith by which we have freedom.

It is not surprising that Calvin, having stressed the spirituality of the law throughout, feels it proper to summarize the law in terms

(1) II, 8, XXXIV

of the imitation of God's character. "But what is the tendency of the whole law, will not now be difficult to judge: it is to a perfection of righteousness that it may form the life of man after the example of the Divine purity. For God has so delineated his own character in it, that the man who exemplifies in his actions the precepts it contains, will exhibit in his life, as it were, an image of God." (1)

Calvin thus answers the objections of the Antinomians who see in any continuing respect for the law, a bondage to the flesh, a submission of the spiritual to the carnal. Calvin gladly recognized Jesus' summary of the law in the Great Commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (2) For him, this summary did not make the more extended version of the law unnecessary, but rather expressed its purpose and provided the basis for its interpretation. (3) It was not that the law was abrogated by Christ's command to love, for the essence of the law was always love. If the law is the schoolmaster which leads us to Christ, for Calvin it continues its educative function through all our earthly life. It is the expression of the spiritual righteousness of God, and, with the internal assistance of the Holy Spirit, it will cause us increasingly to "exhibit...an image of God" in our lives. The written law is an external form unable to save. The spiritual nature it expresses is the very essence of the Christian life.

Although the moral law has a strong spiritual emphasis, in so far as it remains a form of words and commands, it is external to the

(1) II, 8, LI
(2) Mat. 22, 37-39
(3) II, 8, LIII

person of man. Together with the ceremonial law, it is only of use when it is related to Christ. It is the end of the law to elevate men's minds above itself to Christ. Yet Christ, as saviour, is not proclaimed merely by the law. Not only in the Old Testament, but even more in the gospel of the New Testament, he is proclaimed. In both law and gospel, the same Christ is shown forth. What, then, is the difference? Calvin asserts "...when mention is made of the whole law, the gospel differs from it only with respect to a clear manifestation; but on account of the inestimable plenitude of grace, which has been displayed to us in Christ, the celestial kingdom of God is justly said to have been erected in the earth at his advent." (1) Thus there is at once a basic similarity between the Old and New Testament, and a real distinction. An examination of the similarity and differences between the two testaments is revealing for an understanding of the relation of external form to the spiritual element.

The **similarity** of the Old Testament to the New Testament may be simply put. They both reveal Christ; they are the same covenant and differ only in the administration. The Jews were not merely rewarded by physical blessing, but were taught to look to immortality by both law and prophets, they were not rewarded for their merit but from the grace of God; they "both possessed and knew Christ as the Mediator by whom they were united to God." (2) Thus no effective religion, even in the Old Testament, could depend upon mere physical concerns, without the offering of spiritual reward, without spiritual initiative, without a spiritual Redeemer. We cannot feel ourselves above the Israelites, for they are said, by Paul in I Cor. X 1, to have had, in their experience, the same symbols of Christ's presence that we have in ours. "They were baptized in their passage through the sea, and in the cloud by which they were protected from the fervour of

(1) II, 9, IV

(2) II, 9, II

the sun." (1) He argues that the manna was, to the Jews, what the sacramental bread is to us, and he concludes "...the same promises of an external and heavenly life with which the Lord now favors us, were not only communicated to the Jews, but even sealed and confirmed by sacraments truly spiritual." (2) Calvin proceeds through the Old Testament, showing example after example of how the external form, - the physical institutions of the Old Testament, were really confirming true believers in the same hope that we have. He shows that it was the hope of eternal blessing that does not and cannot receive the full promises of God in this life. The physical blessings fixed the believer in the hope and assurance of spiritual and eternal life.

Despite the basic similarity between the Old and New Testaments, there are important differences. In the New Testament, Christ, himself, appeared to men and they had a direct vision and relation to God, who was truly with them, that his presence was in the person of Jesus Christ, his son. Calvin lists differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament. (3) He immediately adds, however, before enumerating them, that they are not differences in the substance of faith, but in the mode of administration.

The first difference is that in the Old Testament, believers might raise their hearts to the "celestial inheritance," and that they might be "better encouraged to hope for it, he anciently exhibited it for their contemplation and partial enjoyment under the figures of terrestrial blessings. Now, having by the gospel, more clearly and explicitly revealed the grace of the future life, he leaves the inferior mode of instruction which he used with the Israelites, and directs our minds to the immediate contemplation of it." (4) Here is expressed

(1) II, 10, V

(2) II, 10, VI

(3) Book II, Chap. 11, Passim

(4) II, 11, I

for us in sharp outline, the ruling principle in Calvin's use of form in the practice of religion. In the Christian era, God's elect look directly to God in Christ, for the real blessings we receive from Christ, himself, are clearer and brighter than any external reward or analogy that can be employed to represent them. Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, in human flesh is himself the reward for those who seek him. Our reward, under the New Testament, is spiritual and is directly communicated to us through the incarnate person of our Lord.

Another important distinction between the Old and New Testament can be deduced from the first. This is that "the former in absence of truth, displayed merely an image and shadow instead of the body; but the latter exhibits the present truth and substantial body." (1) Not only in the matter of reward, but in the whole revelation and practice of religion, was this true. In the Old Testament, the observance of ceremonies was "shadowy and inefficacious, and...therefore temporary, because it remained as it were in suspense, till it was supported by a firm and substantial confirmation; but...it was made new and eternal, when it was consecrated and established by the blood of Christ." (2) Thus the impersonal external forms of religion are temporary and ineffectual unless they be taken as fore-tokens of Christ who, in the New Testament, underwrites religion by his personal presence and thus supersedes these objects. The person of Christ, as a means of Grace is eternal, whereas even the most sacred external form is temporary.

As a result of the spiritual disclosure of God in Christ, the New Testament emphasizes a different kind of religious outlook, a different variety of religious experience, - a different cultus. As means of promulgating the gospel in the New Testament were more purely

(1) II, 11, IV
(2) Ibid

spiritual, so the gospel was more spiritually received by believers. As the shadowy external form of the Old Testament was replaced by the more effective spiritual representation in the person of the incarnate Christ, so was a religion of outward ceremonial observance supplanted by one which was inner and heartfelt. Calvin lists several contrasts under this general head of the greater spirituality of the New Testament. "In the first place, the Old Testament is literal, because it was promulgated without the efficacy of the Spirit; the New is spiritual, because the Lord has engraven it in a spiritual manner on the hearts of men. The Old Testament is the revelation of death, because it can only involve all mankind in a curse; the New is the instrument of life, with God. The former is the ministry of condemnation, because it convicts all the children of Adam of unrighteousness; the latter is the ministry of righteousness, because it reveals the mercy of God by which we are made righteous. The law having an image of things that were at a distance, it was necessary that in time it should be abolished and disappear. The gospel exhibiting the body itself, retains a firm and perpetual stability." (1) Thus are nobly presented the differences, from the point of view of the faithful. A religion that is intenal, that is "engraven on the hearts of men" is an instrument of life, whereas mere externals cannot penetrate to effect a life-giving transformation. Also, because it is spiritual, it delivers us from the curse as no mere external religion could. As righteousness is basically spiritual, the New Testament is the ministry of righteousness, for it penetrates to the spirit of man and makes possible, through the mercy of God, a righteousness that the Old Testament can not duplicate by means of its external sanctions. If New Testament religion is basically spiritual in a new way, it means that the

(1) II, 11, VIII

dependence upon the symbolic and predicting forms of the Old Testament cease to exist as soon as the new eternal spiritual way of righteousness was promulgated.

The Old Testament believer was confronted by the external demands of the law demanding ceremonies not efficacious in themselves, and demanding a righteousness to which the unaided soul could not aspire. The demands of the Old Testament were foreign to man's heart and they bound it from without. The fourth difference, then "...arises out of the third. For the Scripture calls the Old Testament a covenant of bondage, because it produces fear in the mind; but the New it describes as a covenant of liberty, because it leads the heart to confidence and security." (1)

The fifth difference requires no special comment except to say that the New Testament is universal, whereas the Old Testament was confined "within the limits of the Jewish Church." (2) The revelation of God was now not in the forms of a particular cultus that set off a people from their neighbors, but in the person of his Son who came to save even those who were at a distance. The person can reach farther than could the dead form.

Calvin concludes the enumeration of the differences between the Old Testament and the New, with the reminder of the basic similarity which he has already stressed. The similarity is a result of the constancy of God, for "...he has delivered the same doctrine in all ages, and perseveres in requiring the same worship of his name which he commanded from the beginning. By changing the external form and mode, he has discovered no mutability in himself to the capacity of men, which is various and mutable." (3) External form is, then, to be understood not only in relation to its spiritual source, but also in relation to persons to which it is addressed, and the time in which it is used.

(1) II, 11, IX
(2) II, 11, XI
(3) II, 11, XIII

Thus the forms must change drastically from the Old Testament to the New. "...It was necessary, before the appearance of Christ, that he should be prefigured, and his future advent announced by one kind of emblems; since he has been manifested, it is right that he should be represented by others." (1) External form as an emblem, as a prefigurement and announcement, has one nature. As the representation of a Person already manifested, it must have nother nature. We have already seen the nature of the form as it foreshadowed Christ. We shall, in the next chapters, see the relation of form to the life of faith subsequent to Christ. We shall now consider the role played by form in the meaning of the actual incarnation, itself.

"It was of great importance to our interests that he, who was to be our Mediator, should be both true God and true man." (2) Thus Calvin begins his discussion of the significance of the incarnation. He asserts that man, even before his fall, needed a Mediator in order to approach God. Even the angels need "...a head, by connection with whom they might be confirmed in a perfect and unvarying adherence to their God." (3) Presumably, then, man and all spiritual creatures have always needed a Mediator, and by a process of elimination, only the Son of God can be that Mediator. In any case, only God himself, can bring salvation to man in his present condition of depravity. "Our situation was truly deplorable, unless Divine majesty itself would descend to us; for we could not ascend to it. Thus it was necessary that the Son of God should become Immanuel, that is, God with us; and this in order that there might be a mutual union and colaition between his Divinity and the nature of man; for otherwise the proximity could not be sufficiently near, nor could the affinity be sufficiently strong to authorize us to hope that God would dwell with us." (4)

(1) II, 11, XIV
(2) II, 12, I
(3) Ibid
(4) Ibid

Why was there a necessity for Christ, the divine Mediator, to partake of our flesh? Granted that the Mediator must be God, himself, why must he have this "proximity" to the extent of becoming man? We have seen, in the description of Adam's sin, how the blessings of obedience were lost not only for Adam, but for those descending by the process of natural generation. We have seen that the believer, as long as he is within "the body of this death" cannot soar to perfection, and his nature retains remnants of depravity until loosed by death. He remains, by virtue of his bodily existence, not only imperfect, but by the process of natural generation, transmits only his depravity to his children. It is not that there is anything intrinsically evil about the body, as such. The evil is from the action of the first man, Adam, which has been sealed in the body, for it is from him that we derive, bodily. Our spirits cannot act independently of the body. The body witnesses to and renders irrevocable the nature of the soul. Once sin has entered the soul, as it did with Adam, the body can only maintain the soul and the soul of descendants in the same condition. Thus the Mediator could not deal merely with the spirit of man, for the spirit of man is not a detached entity. He had to deal with "the spirit-in-flesh," with man as he was. Righteousness had to defeat unrighteousness, not only in the spiritual field, but he had to sanctify the whole human nature which is spirit and flesh.

As the body had sealed the guilt and power of Adam's sin for himself and his descendants, so must it seal any redemption that is to come to man. As sin has occurred in the flesh, so must redemption occur in the flesh. Christ offered up the flesh he received from us in expiation for our sins. In his purity he could "lay down our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the justice of God." It is because of

our sins that he had to become incarnate. He was "made under the law." (1) His incarnation not only meant that he joined divinity to humanity, but that he underwent all the external formal limitations of humanity. He accepted the limitations of a finite body. His life was directed by the service of God. He was "made under the law", as a man subject to it; he was obedient to it and to the holy institutions and regular customs of his people. He was subject to the laws of human government. Finally he was subject to the final limitation of man's temporal bodily existence. He underwent death.

Not only did he, in his life and death, undergo all the limitations with which man is involved in the world of external form,- in the temporal world of body and the subordination to God, but he was also subject to the punishment due to our disobedience. It was necessary for Christ "...to lay down our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the justice of God; and to suffer the punishment which we had deserved in the same nature in which the offense had been committed." (2) This God had not promised to do "...in a heavenly seed, nor a phantom of a man, but in the seed of Abraham and Jacob; nor is the eternal throne promised to an aerial man, but to the Son of David and the fruit of his loins." (3) Not that the Word "was transmuted into flesh or blended with flesh. Choosing from the womb of the Virgin a temple for his residence, he who was the Son of God, became also the Son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person." (4) Just as man is composed of body and soul, yet is one person, so with the divinity and humanity of Christ. By this unity of humanity and divinity, we are connected to God. Not that there is mingling of Deity with a physical body. The relation established by the Son of God's taking a human body can be illuminated by the term "temple." (5)

(1) II, 12, III
(2) II, 13, I
(3) II, 14, I

(4) Ibid
(5) II, 14, III

Christ would not have called his body his temple, had it not been the residence of the Divinity and, at the same time, distinct from it.

Thus we have the holiness of God, which alone is able to purify us, being brought into our flesh, which was the realm that had to be conquered if we were to be truly free from the guilt and power of sin. Merely the proper external forms of salvation could not penetrate the internal soul of man. Merely spiritual influence could not transform man in his body. Thus, that man might be saved in body and soul, God became man in Christ.

Despite the fact that Christ came to save man in the flesh, Christ's work had to do with the spiritual, not the temporal, realm. Let us look briefly, now, at that characteristic doctrine of Calvin, the threefold office. We see "...that faith may find in Christ a solid ground of salvation, and so may rely on him, it is proper for us to establish this principle, that the office which was assigned to him by the Father consists in three parts. For he was given as a Prophet, a King and a Priest,..." (1) The title of "Messiah," i.e. "The Anointed," was appropriate in relation to all three of these offices, because "...not only priests and kings, but prophets also were anointed with holy oil." (2)

Christ's prophetic office assures us that "...all branches of perfect wisdom are included in the system of doctrine which he has given us." (3) As for Christ's regal office, Calvin wishes to make clear that this, in no sense, is meant to give believers the idea that their bodily desires or needs will be automatically taken care of. The kingdom of Christ is of a spiritual nature. "...Whatever felicity is promised us in Christ, consists not in external accommodations, such as a life of joy and tranquility, abundant wealth, security from every injury, and numerous delights suited to our carnal desires, but is peculiar to

(1) II, 15, I
(2) II, 15, II
(3) Ibid

the heavenly state. ...But to prevent them who had otherwise too great a propensity to the world, from directing their attention to external pomp, he commands them to enter into their own consciences, for the Kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (1)

Christ's office of Priest is "that he may be a Mediator pure from every stain, and by his holiness may render us acceptable to God." (2) The point which Calvin emphasizes in connection with Christ's priestly office is that the sacrifice of Christ's body was once and for all accomplished at Calvary and it is not for us to perform the sacrifice of him. Thus the office of Christ as priest does not institute a continuing visible priesthood, but it is spiritually and invisibly beneficial to us.

It is in Jesus, alone, that we find salvation, for we are displeasing in God's sight without him. (3) Yet it is not to be understood that Jesus caused God to love those whom he previously had hated. The love of God for us preceded (4) Christ's incarnation; indeed he loved us from the foundation of the world. He loved us, yet there is an irreconcilable opposition between righteousness and iniquity. Although we remain his creatures and he loves his work in us, he hates our sin. "The love of God the Father therefore precedes our reconciliation in Christ; or rather it is because he first loves, that he afterwards reconciles us to himself. But because, till Christ relieves us by his death, we are not freed from that iniquity which deserves the indignation of God and is accursed and condemned in his sight, we have not a complete and solid union with God, before we are united to him

(1) II, 15, IV
(2) II, 15, VI
(3) II, 16, I & II
(4) II, 16, III

by Christ." (1) Thus the decree of the transcendent God to love us, preceded the manifestation of that love in Christ, in the form of an external body. Christ's coming was not the initiation of our redemption; it was rather the implementation of it.

Purely "spiritual" or transcendent good will is insufficient in this creation, unless it is sealed, confirmed and effected by external form. Yet this form does not originate spiritual reality, but is always secondary to it. The manner in which Christ was made manifest in the flesh is not to be disjoined from the fact of his manifestation. He had to be man. He could not merely live as a man; he had to die a particular form of death. He had to submit to the form of condemnation as a criminal. "...To supersede our condemnation it was not sufficient for him to suffer any death; but, to accomplish our redemption, that kind of death was to be chosen, by which, both sustaining our condemnation and atoning for our sins, he might deliver us from both. Had he been assassinated by robbers or murdered in a popular tumult, in such a death there might be some satisfaction. But when he is placed as a criminal before the tribunal, -- when he is accused and overpowered by testimony of witnesses and by the mouth of the judge is condemned to die, we understand from these circumstances, that he sustained the character of malefactor." (2) Moreover, he could not merely die, but "...it was necessary for him to contend with the powers of hell and the horror of eternal death." (3)

Christ's death defeated the power of death, yet the victory was only complete when he rose. When he defeated death in his dying body, so he manifested new and eternal life in his risen body. By his resurrection he "...displayed his heavenly power, which is both a lucid mirror of his Divinity, and a firm support of our faith." (4)

(1) Ibid

(2) II, 16, V

(3) II, 16, X

(4) II, 16, XIII

The body which was external form, which was the seal of our condemnation, became, with Christ's flesh, the seal of our forgiveness. With the resurrection of his body, the flesh has now become the seal and testimony of eternal life. In this bodily presence he conversed with his disciples for forty days, "...and while they were attending him, seen but not followed by them, he ascended into heaven; and he is not here, for he sits there at the right hand of the Father; and yet he is here, for he has not withdrawn the presence of his majesty." (1) The ascension of Christ's resurrected body means ^{that} his presence among us is essentially spiritual.

This was to be an important element in the Calvinistic interpretation of the Lord's Supper. No external form, not even the body of Christ, can be taken as a thing in itself, - can be taken as physical assurance of the spiritual presence. The body of Christ is in heaven. While it was necessary for spiritual salvation to be purchased by it, it cannot remain physically with us, for our spiritual eyes must be directed to heaven, from whence Christ reigns in spiritual power. We are able to know him only spiritually. "He...sits on high, that from thence he may shed forth his power upon us, that he may animate us with spiritual life..." (2) His power extends to all that is necessary for the defense of his church on earth, but this is fundamentally spiritual. This must not be taken to mean that Christ's body is no longer important to us, for amidst all our perils on earth, we may confidently look forward to his coming again. We do have "...unequivocal tokens of the presence of his power; but because on earth his kingdom is in some measure concealed under the meanness of the flesh, faith is, for a very good reason, called to meditate on that visible presence which will manifest ^{at} the last day. For he will descend from ^{Heaven}

(1) II, 16, XIV

(2) II, 16, XVI

heaven in a visible form; in the same manner in which he was seen to ascend; and will appear to all with the ineffable majesty of his kingdom, with the splendour of immortality, with the infinite power of Deity, and with a host of angels." (1)

Calvin concludes his discussion of Christ's salvation of man by showing that Christ truly and properly may be said to have merited salvation for us. He was not a mere instrument, but the Author, or Leader, and "Prince of life." Yet "when we speak of the merit of Christ, therefore, we do not consider him as the origin of it, but we ascend to the ordination of God, which is the first cause; because it was of his mere good pleasure, that God appointed him Mediator to procure salvation for us. ...Since the merit of Christ depends solely upon the grace of God which appointed this method of salvation for us, therefore his merit and that grace are with equal propriety opposed to all the righteousness of men." (2)

What, then, is the place of external form in the drama of redemption? Expressing it negatively, we may say that no external form, no impersonal thing can, in itself, offer salvation to men who are lost. Only mediation on the part of the Creator, himself, can bridge the terrible gap between man and God. Only in a Mediator can redemption be found.

This mediation which was accomplished by Christ, has far from ignored the realm of external form. While salvation could not proceed from external form, it had to utilize it in order to reach effectively men who are so much a part of the physical creation. Preceding the full personal manifestation of the Mediator in the flesh, there was given, to prepare his way, the external form of the law. As long as this law was accepted in its main function of pointing to the coming

(1) II, 16, XVII

(2) II, 17, I

Christ, it was the agent of redemption. When taken in its intrinsic nature, however, the ceremonial law was, on one level, ridiculous, and, on another, incriminating, for it witnessed to a guilt it could not absolve. The moral law, while outlining the good life, remained, apart from Christ, impossibly above the attainments of depraved human nature.

With the Mediator, however, the condemnation of the law was removed. As the external form of the law predicted salvation, so the gospel proclamation of the Mediator, who had come in the flesh, presented a redemption already attained. The coming of the full mediation in Jesus Christ thus made the foreshadowing ceremonies obsolete. The moral law remained, as the despair of the depraved, the bridle of the impenitent and the goal of the elect. While this moral law was not removed, it was not the agent of the salvation purchased by Christ, alone. The New Testament, then, presents the same Christ and the same salvation under the new form of the preached gospel, a form appropriate for the fullness of the new manifestation.

Christ sealed salvation in the very flesh which we inhabit. External form is not something abolished with the ceremonial law; rather it has been made effective in a new way, for now man is redeemed even in his flesh. This is not to say that the remnants of depravity can be removed, for man is, according to physical generation, descended from Adam. The new salvation-in-the-flesh meant, however, that now a new and effective regeneration can begin to work in man, even as imperfect as he remains. The new man Adam can inhabit and grow in the old man Adam.

Christ not only took on himself our flesh. He took on the form of the condemnation which we deserve. He was accused and convicted in a criminal trial, scourged and crucified as a common criminal. He

died as a criminal to identify himself with our condemned condition. Thus it was not only the flesh which was assumed by Christ. He assumed, without sin, the condemnation in the flesh which man's sin deserved.

Concluding the place of external form in the drama of redemption is the resurrection to eternal life of the Incarnate Christ. The body by which Christ identified himself with us, now witnesses and seals for us Christ's victory over death. Immortality has been brought to humanity. Man has not escaped his body, but is redeemed in it.

The ascension of the risen Christ means that direct physical access to the body of Christ has been withdrawn. Man is not left with the power to manipulate or control the body of Christ, for the body is not effective apart from the spirit. Even when we affirm the universality of the Spirit, we cannot say that the body is infinite, for finitude is not coextensive with the infinite. Here Calvinist and Lutheran part company. Here we see the nature of Calvin's subordination of external form. We have the full benefits of the body of Christ, but this is applied to us through the Spirit. The spirit, indeed, had to be free from the body, which was only locally present on earth, in order to be universally effective.

When, in God's own counsel, ^{in His} it is proper time, Christ will descend in his body, even as he has ascended in it. In the final resurrection and judgment, the external form of the physical world of our bodies, will be brought before the throne of God, and its final subordination and redemption will be complete. The whole action of the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension will be seen on its completion, as the expression of the eternal intention of God for the redemption of man.

CHAPTER III

FORM AND THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

"Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked come to thee for dress,
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me Saviour, or I die.

"...Rock of Ages cleft for me
Let me hide myself in thee."

Augustus M. Toplady

For any theological system to be well rounded, it must apply its principles to the world of individual and social life. Having discoursed upon the creation and the need for an accomplishment of the redemption of mankind, it is now Calvin's task to show how these cosmic truths are related to the practical needs of the individual and society. This opens up the practical application of Calvin's attitude toward external form. The application of religion to the heart of the individual is, of course, primarily a matter of the internal world, - the world of the spirit, but even here there is an insistent awareness of the continuing relation of the personality to external form. When the application extends to the group, then institutional, symbolic and sociological form is the very center of the discussion, for external form is the sine qua non of regular application of religion to group life as such.

Our concern, in this chapter, is with the Christian life of the individual. The problem here, is how the manifestation of God's Son in the form of man can transform individual men. The Redemption, having been achieved in principle for humanity by Christ's coming in the flesh, it must now be brought particularly to bear upon those whom God has elected for salvation. This is so because until a person has appropriated the gospel message for himself, the "holy history" of the Old Testament and of the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, is merely an external manifestation of the Word in history; it is merely external form. On the other hand, with the operation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, Christ's achievement becomes our salvation.

We have seen that, while the personality expresses itself in the

external world, the external world never can, by its own power, bring a personal transformation. Thus, to the individual, the external form of the Incarnation is unavailing unless his heart be internally transformed. Just as the external words of Scripture are unavailing until the heart and mind are moved by the Holy Spirit to accept them, so is the Incarnate Word unprofitable, until the Spirit has moved the heart to accept him. The Spirit, when it transforms the heart, impresses the form of the word upon it, presents in a fresh way, the Person of Christ to the mind and heart of the believer. In this book (1) of the Institutes, the same relation to external form obtains. While the spirit or heart must first be transformed, its connection with the external world is never severed. The heart and life of the redeemed are changed, but they are not removed from the world of space and time. Thus, while we are primarily confronted, in the third book of the Institutes, with the spiritual concern of religion which we discussed in the introduction to the thesis, we cannot, even here in the spiritual life of the individual, avoid the problem of external form.

The Holy Spirit which operates in the heart of the believer, receives various designations in the Scriptures, so Calvin maintains, in order to describe his various operations. He is described as "the Spirit of Holiness" for the manner in which he works in the hearts of the elect, being the "seed and root of a heavenly life within us." (2) "He is said to be 'the earnest' and 'seal' of our inheritance; because while we are pilgrims and strangers in the world, and as persons dead, he infuses into us such life from heaven, that we are certain of our salvation being secured by the Divine faithfulness and care." (3) For these and similar reasons, Calvin cites his many scriptural titles and adds: "Lastly, he is described to us as a 'fountain,' whence we

(1) Institutes Book III "On the manner of Receiving the Grace of Christ, the Benefits which We Derive from It, and the Effects which Follow It."

(2) III, 1, II

(3) III, 1, III (see II Cor. I, 22.)

receive all the emanation of heavenly riches; and as 'the hand of God,' by which he exerts his power; because by the breath of his power he inspires us with Divine life, so that we are not now actuated from ourselves, but directed by his agency and influence; so that if there be any good in us, it is the fruit of his grace, whereas our characters without him are darkness of mind and perverseness of heart." (1)

We see the meaning of all this for an understanding of external form when we look to the part which the Spirit plays in bringing the advantages of the incarnation to bear upon our life. The entrance of Christ into history, into human flesh, taking a specific external, historical form is profitless to the individual who is not influenced by the spirit. Calvin adds, in this connection that ". . . till our minds are fixed on the Spirit, Christ remains of no value to us; because we look at him as an object of cold speculation without us and therefore at a great distance from us It is only by his Spirit that he unites himself with us; and by the grace and power of the same spirit we are made his members; that he may keep us under himself, and we may mutually enjoy him." (2) It is because of the Holy Spirit that the promise of the gospel does not merely "strike the air, or at least our ears," (3) but penetrates into our minds. External religion, its form of words and promises is merely cold and profitless unless its meaning is applied to our hearts. Without the Spirit we are blind to the meaning of a gospel which is external to us. "For in vain would the light present itself to the blind, unless this Spirit of understanding would open their mental eyes." (4) Thus we see "that complete salvation is found in the person of Christ; so, to make us partakers of it, he 'baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and with fire,' (5) enlightening us so that we become new creatures, and, purging us from profane iniquities, consecrates us holy temples to God." (6)

(1) Ibid
(2) III, 1, III

(3) III, 1, IV
(4) Ibid

(5) Luke III, 16
(6) III, 1, IV

Since faith is the way by which we are in our hearts united to Christ, it is of crucial importance that it be defined and described. Faith alone can save us because we have disobeyed the law. Even the smallest transgression would render us liable to death, and our whole lives are full of great transgressions. The law is not only difficult, it is entirely above our strength. Only through God's redeeming action in Christ do we have reason for hope. Only as we have true faith do we appropriate that hope as our own. Thus ". . . we must now examine the nature of this faith, by which all who are the adopted sons of God enter on the possession of the heavenly kingdom; since it is certain that not every opinion, nor even every persuasion, is equal to the accomplishment of so great a work." (1) He warns that there is much wrong thinking about the nature of faith.

"For a great part of the world, when they hear the word faith, conceive it to be nothing more than a common assent to evangelical history." (2) Others say that God is the object of faith, whereas ". . . there is a necessity for the interposition of Christ, as the medium of access to him. Only through Christ do we know and have faith in God, it is only by him we believe in God." (3)

Not only do the schoolmen conceal Christ as the reference of faith, they not only, by their "obscure definition, diminish, and almost annihilate, all the importance of faith, but have fabricated the notion of implicit faith, a term with which they have honoured the grossest ignorance, and most perniciously deluded the miserable multitude." (4) He asserts the inadequacy of "implicit faith" and affirms in contradiction the nature of true faith: "Is this faith -- to understand nothing but obediently to submit our understanding to the Church?

(1) III, 2, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid (I Pet. I, 21)
(4) III, 2, II

Faith consists not in ignorance, but in knowledge; and that not only of God, but of the Divine will. For we do not obtain salvation by our promptitude to embrace as truth whatever the Church may have prescribed, or by our transferring to her the province of inquiry and of knowledge. But when we know God to be a propitious Father to us, through the reconciliation effected by Christ, and that Christ is given us for righteousness, sanctification, and life, — by this knowledge, I say, not by renouncing our understanding, we obtain an entrance to the kingdom of heaven." (1) Not by submitting to the external form of an institution, and its teaching, but only when we are directly related to God through Christ by faith, do we attain salvation. Faith in Christ, since he is the Word made Flesh, involves the acceptance of external form. But external form is not to be taken as a thing in itself, by its own authority, even though this authority claim to be delegated from God. The trust with which we accept any such form can only come when a direct knowledge of the character of God is vouchsafed through it.

Does this mean that Calvin dismisses the idea of implicit acceptance of certain truth? Does faith have to include a full knowledge of God before it can be allowed? Such could hardly be the case, inasmuch as absolute knowledge is not granted to us during the course of this life. " . . . Many things are obscure to us at present, and will continue to be so, till we shall have cast off the burden of the flesh and arrived nearer to the presence of God. On such subjects, nothing would be more proper than a suspension of judgement, and a firm resolution to maintain unity with the Church. But that ignorance combined with humility should under this pretext be dignified with

(1) Ibid

the appellation of faith is extremely absurd. For faith consists in a knowledge of God and of Christ, not in a reverence for the Church."(1) There is, also, a kind of docility which believes enough to listen to the gospel, a docility which because it precedes the hearing of the gospel is by definition implicit, yet here ignorance is temporary and is eager to be replaced by knowledge. This is not the case of the ignorance which is deliberately cultivated and entertained.

Any true faith involves knowledge, and knowledge involves no mere submission to the doctrinal form enforced by external authority. It means the reception of a Person. This does not imply a mystical rapture or purely internal spiritual feeling. It is necessary for us to have our knowledge of Christ " . . . -- to receive him as he is offered by the Father, that is, invested with his gospel." (2) True, there was faith on the part of Moses and the prophets before the gospel was proclaimed in the New Testament, yet " . . . because the gospel exhibits a fuller manifestation of Christ, it is justly styled by Paul, 'the words of faith and of good doctrine.'" (3) The important point is that faith must be connected to God's word, the declaration of his will. " . . . Faith has a perpetual relation to the word, and can no more be separated from it than the rays from the sun whence they proceed." (4) As faith must spring from the word, so must it be directed towards it. " . . . If faith decline in the smallest degree from this object, towards which it ought to be directed, it no longer retains its own nature, but becomes an uncertain credulity, and an erroneous excursion of the mind." (5) This dependence upon the word is no enslavement to external form as something in itself. We need the word for faith, because it reveals

(1) III, 2, III
(2) III, 2, VI
(3) Ibid. (I Tim. IV, 6)

(4) Ibid
(5) Ibid

God to us. It is as it discovers God to us that it benefits us. ". . . The word . . . is like a mirror, in which faith may behold God. Whether . . . God . . . use the agency of men, or whether he operate solely by his own power, he always discovers himself by his word to those whom he designs to draw to himself." (1) It is not sufficient, as has been repeatedly affirmed, to believe merely in the existence of God. "For the apprehension of faith is not confined to our knowing that there is a God, but chiefly consists in our understanding what is his disposition towards us. For it is not of so much importance to us to know what he is in himself, as what he is willing to be to us. We find, therefore, that faith is a knowledge of the will of God respecting us, received from his word." (2) If we trust the veracity of God we have in his word an adequate and necessary foundation for faith. If external form, in the Scriptures, in the Incarnation, in the ministry of men, have a place in our faith it is as a testimony to and revelation of the nature of God's personal attitude toward us.

Our mind is too feeble and our soul is too perverted to attain a certain knowledge of God's goodness. "Therefore our mind must be illumined, and our heart established by some exterior power, that the word of God may obtain full credit with us. Now, we shall have a complete definition of faith, if we say that it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which, being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit." (3)

This, then, is Calvin's definition of faith. We see how it at the same time rests upon the accomplishment and promise of Christ which is

(1) Ibid. (Rom. I, 5)
(2) Ibid.
(3) III, 2, VII

external to it and the confirmation of the promises in the heart. It rests ultimately upon an inwardness that responds to the spoken promise of God in Christ. It can not exist as uninformed enthusiasm or feeling. It must be informed by the Word, declaring God's disposition toward us. This word is conveyed by Scripture, Incarnation, and the ministry of men. Yet faith cannot begin by merely intellectual assent to doctrine to which pious emotion is later added. (1) Faith involves at its very beginning a reconciliation by which man draws near to God. The original assent, " . . . is from the heart rather than the head, and from the affections rather than the understanding." (2) Calvin thus defends the inwardness of faith at its very beginning. It must be a firm conviction from the depth of the personality and not merely a subscription to an external formula. It is an internal persuasion which is grounded on the objective manifestation of God in the Incarnate Christ. It is not produced simply by a cold, objective perception of that manifestation, however, but rather by the internal quickening of the heart which receives the true spiritual meaning.

The need for faith's beginning in the heart calls Calvin's attention to discuss the various subjective qualities of the life of faith. He discusses the problem of the simulated faith of some unbelievers. Simulation of the hypocrites may deceive men, even themselves, but it cannot claim the same depth or permanence as true faith. While faith is knowledge, it is not " . . . such comprehension as men commonly have of those things which fall under the notice of their senses. For it is so superior that the human mind must exceed and rise above itself, in order to attain it. Nor does the mind which attains it comprehend what it perceives, but being persuaded of that which it cannot comprehend,

(1) III, 2, VIII
(2) Ibid

it understands more by the certainty of its persuasion than it would comprehend of any human object by the exercise of its natural capacity."

(1) The grasp of faith exceeds all earthly confidence. We are so surrounded by our own imperfections indeed that we can put no confidence in ourselves. We rely solely upon the grace of God. While many fear God, it is rather the fear of offending him than the fear of his wrath and punishment. For the elect it is not simply that we are afraid of what he can do to us, but we revere his holy nature and rest in his promises. (2) Here we see how faith or "fear of God" is not grounded on merely external sanctions. It is a matter of thoroughly spiritual concern. It comes from a respect for the righteous nature of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

Our faith, which is always related to the promises of God, is strengthened by a consideration of the power of God. We can scarcely be said to have faith as long as we worry at the slightest obstacle instead of trusting in the power of God to accomplish what he has promised. This awareness of God's power to fulfill his promises is strengthened by viewing his might that is displayed in nature. This is why Isaiah discourses so extensively upon the "wonders of the Divine government of nature." (3) Thus external might can strengthen and confirm the inward inclination of belief, although mere fear of God's might can not accomplish this transformation. External exhibition of the divine power and the divine word should transform us. "This simple and external demonstration of the Divine word ought, indeed, to be fully sufficient for the production of faith, if it were not obstructed by our blindness and perverseness. But . . . nothing is effected by the word without the illumination of the Holy Spirit." (4) The mind is thus led beyond

(1) III, 2, XIV
(2) III, 2, XXIX

(3) III, 2, XXXI
(4) III, 2, XXXIII

itself in belief. But as we have seen faith is not a matter of the mind alone. It is necessary " . . . that what the mind has imbibed, be transfused into the heart. For the word of God is not received by faith if it floats on the surface of the brain; but when it has taken deep root in the heart, so as to become an impregnable fortress to sustain and repel all the assaults of temptation." (1) Even more evidently than for the mind, it is necessary for the spirit to undergird the heart in a way that no impersonal, external object or our own moral attainments would be able to do. Our spirit-possessed heart provides ample certainty of our election which cannot be obtained in any other way. Such faith " . . . must necessarily be attended with the hope of eternal salvation as its inseparable concomitant, or rather must originate and produce it." (2) Our faith gives us hope, not in ourselves but in the blessings of the heavenly kingdom which are the gifts of God's grace. (3)

Here we have had described for us Calvin's doctrine of faith. We have seen that there is a definite inwardness about faith. It is not a mere obedience to external form or acceptance of certain formula. It is made possible by the external manifestation of God in history, in his word declared to our ears, in the promises which came from the mouth of Jesus of Nazareth and are relayed to us through the Scriptures and the ministry of men. Yet faith ultimately is founded on the disposition of God towards us, and consists of our own internal spiritual appropriation of these promises. Faith is not, however, mere intellectual assent to the evangelical history that made it possible. Far less is it an implicit trust in whatever the visible Church might declare. It is not founded upon man's detached observation of the world around

(1) III, 2, XXXVI
(2) III, 2, XLIII
(3) III, 2, XLIII

him. Faith is ultimately founded on the disposition of God towards us, and consists of our own internal spiritual appropriation of his promises. The external manifestation of God in history has made these promises available, but only for those who have the internal persuasion to lay hold of them.

The evangelical inwardness which we have seen characterising the nature of faith determines the significance of the external form appropriate for faith. Gospel history, creed, and intellectual assent to doctrinal standards are necessary for, yet are not the cause of, faith. A similar evangelical inwardness or spirituality is to be noted when we proceed to discuss the nature of repentance. It is also basically an internal transformation of the heart, but like faith it has outward conditions and effects. It is fundamentally a mortification of self and a turning of the whole life to God. No external form can bring about what is basically an internal change, but this transformation does not exist apart from the necessary accompanying form.

If faith be true, repentance and forgiveness must follow as its effects which we experience. "The substance of the gospel is, not without reason, said to be comprised in 'repentance and remission of sins.' ... Now ... both are conferred on us by Christ, and we obtain both by faith — that is, newness of life and gratuitous reconciliation ... repentance not only immediately follows faith, but is produced by it." (1) As the discussion of these effects of faith progresses we see that like faith, repentance is made possible in part by external form and must issue in "works worthy of repentance," but just as it is basically an inner persuasion, so its effects are of a fundamentally internal nature.

(1) III, 3, I

Looking at the nature of repentance we see in it a much broader meaning than is often associated with it. It is "... a true conversion of our life to God, proceeding from a sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit." (1) Giving further elucidation, Calvin adds "... when we call repentance 'a conversion of the life to God,' we require a transformation not only in the external actions, but in the soul itself; which after having put off its old nature, should produce the fruits of actions corresponding to its renovation." (2) Not only must it be spiritual in respect to the person's own heart but, Calvin asserts "... we represented repentance as proceeding from a serious fear of God. For before the mind of the sinner can be inclined to repentance it must be excited by a knowledge of the Divine judgment." (3) Thus repentance, like faith depends ultimately upon the spiritual state of the subject and the spiritual knowledge of God's nature and will.

Repentance is not simply regret concerning the past. It is a total renewal of the mind, a continual turning from death to life. We die with the crucified to our common sinful nature and rise with him to a newness of life "which corresponds with the righteousness of God." (4) In other words "I apprehend repentance to be regeneration, the end of which is the restoration of the Divine image within us; which was defaced, and almost obliterated by the transgression of Adam." (5)

Our depravity, as we have seen before, is part of our very nature, yet not by the fact of creation, but by perversion. Sin is ineradicable in this life, but we must continually oppose it and turn

(1) III, 3, V
(2) III, 3, VI
(3) III, 3, VII

(4) III, 3, IX
(5) Ibid

from it. Even our most unpremeditated wrong desires are sinful because they spring from a core of evil, from a heart that does not love God fully enough. Even in the elect the desires must be disciplined by the word. Any argument that because we have the Holy Spirit and hence can allow our desires free reign is contrary to the very nature of the Spirit and his gifts. For the Spirit is recognized by his fruits. (1) Summarizing the repentant life, Calvin asserts " ... that the life of the Christian is perpetually employed in the mortification of the flesh, till it is utterly destroyed, and the Spirit of God obtains the sole empire within us. Wherefore I think that he has made a very considerable proficiency who has learned to be exceedingly displeased with himself: not that he should remain in this distress, and advance no further, but rather hasten and aspire towards God; ... No man ever hated sin, without having been previously captivated with the love of righteousness." (2)

Thus repentance is primarily of the heart, and is not merely a matter of ceremonies. Calvin refers to the testimonies from the prophets " ... in which they partly ridicule the follies of those who attempt to appease God by ceremonies, and demonstrate them to be mere mockeries; and partly inculcate that external integrity of life is not the principal branch of repentance, because God looks at the heart." (3) It seems to Calvin that this is precisely the mistake of the schoolmen. "They are so obstinately riveted to external exercises, that one can collect nothing else from immense volumes, but that repentance is an austere discipline ... but concerning the internal renovation which is attended with a real reformation of the life, they observe a wonderful silence ... they torment souls with a

(1) III, 3, XIV
(2) III, 3, XX

(3) III, 3, XVI
(4) III, 4, I

multitude of scruples, and drive them to extreme trouble and anxiety; but when they appear to have thoroughly wounded the heart, they heal all the bitterness by a slight sprinkling of ceremonies." He further maintains: "We have taught the sinner not to look on his compunction or on his tears, but to fix both his eyes solely on the mercy of God." (1) The heart is only trustworthy when it acts in response to God's mercy. Nor is the act of external confession to a priest a proper substitute for true repentance. Hearty repentance and a confession to God will lead us to oral confession. "Whoever from the heart makes this confession before God, will also, without doubt, have a tongue prepared for confession, as often as it shall be necessary to proclaim the Divine mercy among men; and not only to whisper the secret of his ^{an/} mind once into the ear of individual, but frequently and publicly, and in the hearing of the whole world, ingenuously to declare, both his own ignominy, and the magnificence and glory of God." (2) Proper public worship should also provide a chance for confession of the whole congregation. The laws of penances, etc. are of human imposition and therefore against the will of God " ... who binds the consciences of men by his word, and whose will it is that they should be free from the authority of men." (3) If God be propitious to our person then we need not lose heart even though he chastizes us for our crimes. 8?

Our assurance of pardon that follows true repentance comes from our fellowship with Christ which is offered to our enjoyment in the gospel. "Indulgences, on the contrary, produce a certain allowance of grace from the Pope's repository, fix it to lead and parchment, and even to particular place, and separate it from the word of God." (4)

(1) III, 4, III
(2) III, 4, X

(3) III, 4, XXIV
(4) III, 5, V

When we have thus seen the absurdity of indulgences and satisfactions we are freed from the delusion of purgatory, for "... what is their purgatory, but a satisfaction for sins paid after death by the souls of the deceased."(1) The whole practices of praying for the dead which are associated with it are not supported by God's word and are thus to be opposed.

External form is involved in true repentance, but in a very subordinate way. The "external integrity" of life is the less important branch of true repentance. Ceremonies and oral confession cannot produce it, but once there has been true penitance, oral confession both private and public will follow. Forgiveness is not at all contingent upon external form except insofar as that external form witnesses to a previously changed spiritual state. Repentance is fundamentally a change in the inner man.

Calvinism has often been accused both by Catholics and humanists of engendering a hatred for the good things of this life, of clamping down senseless rules and regulations on the normal, spontaneous way of living. We come now to examine Calvin's idea of the good life to see how the heart and spirit are related to the formal discipline.

When Calvin turns to describing the life of a Christian and presenting the reasons for pursuing it, we see his strict emphasis upon the spiritual as opposed to the external elements of religion. The life of the believers, he maintains, should "... exhibit a symmetry and agreement between the righteousness of God and their obedience; . . ."(2) He feels that though the law of God "... contains in it that newness of life by which his image is restored in us ..."(3) it is useful to collect from Scripture a basic life philosophy or as

(1) III, 5, VI
(2) III, 6, I
(3) Ibid

he says "a rule for the reformation of life, that they who cordially repent may not be bewildered in their pursuits." (1) He is not going to present a detailed exposition of the various virtues, but he merely points out "a method by which a pious man may be conducted to the right end in the regulation of his life."(2) Calvin maintains the opinion that Christianity affirms a basic principle from which can be deduced other particular requirements. "As the philosophers have certain principles of rectitude and honour, whence they deduce particular duties and the whole circle of virtues, so the Scripture is not without its order in this respect, but maintains an economy superlatively beautiful and far more certain, than all the systems of the philosophers."(3)

The scriptural plan consists of two parts. The first is ".... that a love of righteousness, to which we have otherwise no natural propensity, be instilled and introduced into our hearts; the second, that a rule be prescribed to us, to prevent our taking any devious steps in the race of righteousness."(4) It seeks to instill a love of righteousness into our hearts, then, first of all. We should be holy, it maintains, because as our God is holy, so must we, in order to be united with him. Holiness is the bond by which we are united to a holy God. " ... Not that we attain communion with him by the merit of holiness, (since it is rather necessary for us, in the first place, to adhere to him, in order that, being endued with his holiness, we may follow whither he calls;) but because it is a peculiar property of his glory not to have any intercourse with unrighteousness."(5) It is by the power of God that we are delivered from the pollution of the world, but we are not delivered in order to continue in it.

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

(4) III, 6, II
(5) Ibid

A further principle is provided for the Christian life by the fact that " ... as God the Father has reconciled us to himself in Christ, so he has exhibited to us in him a pattern, to which it is his will that we should be conformed." Calvin challenges any one to compare the systems of philosophers to the "excellent economy" (1) which is presented in such a system. "When they intend to exhort us to the sublimest virtue, they advance no argument but that we ought to live agreeably to nature; but the Scripture deduces its exhortation from the true source, when it not only enjoins us to refer our lives to God the author of it, to whom it belongs, but ... adds that Christ, by whom we have been reconciled to God, is proposed to us as an example, whose character we should exhibit in our lives." (2)

Here we see the strong personal, spiritual source for the Christian life. No mere impersonal "nature" or even more impersonal code based on nature can act as the foundation and pattern for our lives. Our very desire to act aright only comes when we are in personal relation with God through his Son, and the very "pattern" for our conformity is essentially spiritual, the example of a holy God and the even more plainly revealed pattern of the character of Jesus Christ. Yet if this spiritual source of salvation is really possessed the pattern of Christ's righteousness will pervade our lives. By living an unrighteous life we not only "perfidiously revolt from our Creator, but also abjure him as our Saviour." (3) Thus by a wrong pattern of life we declare our refusal to admit Christ as our Redeemer.

By the terms "righteous" and "unrighteous" life we already know that Calvin intends an attitude of heart, but we must remember

(1) III, 6, III
(2) Ibid

(3) Ibid

that such an attitude is not unconnected to the external world.

"... Since Christ has purified us in the laver of his blood, and has communicated this purification by baptism, it does not become us to be defiled with fresh pollution."(1) Thus the actual physical blood of Christ, signifying the reality of his death was in some sense the means of purifying us, while the sacrament of baptism, also involving a physical sign is the means of communicating this to us. We must also remember "... that since both soul and body are destined to heavenly incorruption and a never-fading crown, we ought to exert our most strenuous efforts to preserve them pure and uncorrupt till the day of the Lord."(2) Our standard, then, is the character of a Person whom we know by faith. Christ thus includes the use of externals in his communication of righteousness to us, and we must exhibit in body as well as in soul the pattern of our Lord's righteousness.

Calvin is quick to dismiss a merely external claim to the name of Christ. As for "... those who have nothing but the name and the symbol of Christ, and yet would be denominated Christians," he maintains that their knowledge is a "false and injurious pretense, with whatever eloquence and volubility they may talk concerning the gospel."

(3) This is so because none can claim Christ unless they put off the old man. It must not be a doctrine of the tongue, but of the life "... and is not apprehended merely with the understanding and memory, like other sciences, but is then only received, when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and residence in the inmost affection of the heart."(4) While religion, the worship of God is important, "... it must be transfused into our breast, pervade our manners, and thus transform us into itself." (5) It is the whole man that must be transformed. The key to that transformation is the heart which is the seat

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) III, 6, IV

(4) Ibid
(5) Ibid

of the personality. Any transformation of the heart will ipso facto mean a transformation of the "manners" or outward appearance and action. The outwardness, the externalism which can not be allowed is the confession which is only made by the lips, while the outwardness which is valid is the outwardness of the heart, the whole personality expressing itself in the proper actions.

This demand for a conversion of the whole self to a Christ-like life does not mean that only those who have attained it perfectly can be called Christians, " ... for then all would be excluded from the Church; since no man can be found who is not still a great distance from it;..."(1) Even those who seem to have made very little progress should not be excluded from the name and company of Christians, but, on the other hand, nothing less than the perfection of the Christian life can be our goal. We can not be satisfied with any compromise, nor any selection of which commands we desire to obey.

Even though we seem to make only a little progress we should not forsake our calling. We must remember " ... that the beginning of a life of uprightness is spiritual, when the internal affection of the mind is unfeignedly devoted to God in the cultivation of holiness and righteousness. But since no man in this terrestrial and corporeal prison has strength sufficient to press forward in his course with a due degree of alacrity, and the majority are oppressed with such great debility, that they stagger and halt, and even creep on the ground, and so make very inconsiderable advances, - let us every one proceed according to our small ability, and prosecute the journey we have begun."(2)

The Christian life, so Calvin maintains, can be summarized as "self-denial." It is a matter of giving ourselves to God, so that we

(1) III, 6, V

(2) Ibid

may know " ... that we are consecrated and dedicated to God; that we may not hereafter think, speak, meditate, or do anything but with a view to his glory."(1) We are not our own, we are his. We shall resign the government of our lives to his direction, and our minds to his instruction. The eternal felicity which God promises to the faithful should make us realize that we are pilgrims. Our good fortune, our talents are to be used not for ourselves alone but in service to our fellow men, according to the law of love. We need such discipline, of self-denial, of bearing our cross if we are to be restrained from breaking out in self-indulgence and even petulance against our Creator for not fulfilling all our whims.(2) We must be so unreserved in our obedience that we may overcome "...all contrary affections, and make them submit to his appointments ... Even in the greatest distresses of mind, we shall constantly retain our patience."(3) We must remember that "...even in afflicting us with the cross, he promotes our salvation. But if it be evident that tribulations are salutary for us, why should we not endure them with grateful and placid hearts? ...the bitterness of the cross should be tempered with spiritual joy."(4)

This self-denial is, of course, a spiritual matter, an attitude of mind. We see, however, that it does lead to a particular approach to the external form of the advantageous or adverse occurrences in the world of space and time. In the case of the blessings of life, the Christian must deny himself of any undue attachment. In the case of misfortunes the believer must patiently accept the circumstances as discipline. In either case he must accept his lot as from the hand of God.

(1) III, 7, I
(2) III, 8, V

(3) III, 8, X
(4) III, 8, XI

This call to self-denial and the bearing of the cross establishes an attitude of mind which can be seen to determine Calvin's treatment of the earthly, external world as a whole. The external form of physical supports for this life, as we have seen, are to be considered as bounties from the hand of our benevolent Father in heaven. Man, being what he is, however, has attached his whole hope on these earthly blessings. The splendor of riches, pomp and circumstance, power and honor divert the eyes of men from heavenly pursuits into ways of avarice and ambition. The Christian cannot hope to be true to his calling unless he develop a contempt for this world. To this end the faithful are often visited with disease, with the sterility of their lands, etc. (1) They are educated to realize the transitory nature of the blessings of this life. "If a funeral pass by, or we walk among the tombs, because the image of death is then presented to our eyes, we philosophize, I confess, in an admirable manner concerning the vanity of the present life;.." but such an attitude does not remain even among confessing Christians. We attempt to erect for ourselves "an immortality on this earth." (2)

Calvin is careful to reiterate that this life is, indeed, a blessing. "... Believers should accustom themselves to such a contempt of the present life, as may not generate either hatred of life, or ingratitude towards God." (3) To believers, especially, this life is a blessing, and yet it is far inferior to that which is to come. Many evils do attend it, and we must never completely be at home in it. Nevertheless it is given to us by God, and it is our "post" which we must not forsake. We may long for the heavenly estate, but we must remain where God has placed us until he calls us home. Death is an

(1) III, 9, I
(2) III, 9, II

(3) III, 9, III

improvement of our condition. Yet we see that such an attitude does not imply a contempt for the physical world as such, but rather for the world in its fallen condition. (1) Even the other creatures are aware of this fallen state. "Shall brute animals, and even inanimate creatures, down to stocks and stones, conscious of the present vanity, be looking forward to the resurrection at the last day, that they may be delivered from vanity, together with the children of God; and shall we, endued with the light of understanding, and, what is superior to the natural understanding, illuminated by the Spirit of God, when the question respects our own existence, not raise our minds above the corruption of this world?" (2)

We should endure this life, thanking God for it and for such blessings as he gives us, but our minds and hearts should reach beyond it to the heavenly state, and especially to the resurrection for then the world of external form will be fulfilled in a new spiritual manner, no longer estranged but redeemed by the "spirit," by God himself.

"... The cross of Christ triumphs in the hearts of believers . . . over the devil and the flesh . . . only when their eyes are directed to the power of the resurrection." (3)

While we should put our most earnest attention on the heavenly estate, we cannot ignore the present physical world in which we must live yet awhile. We must hearken to the Scripture which "... fully instructs us in the right use of terrestrial blessings - a thing that ought not to be neglected in a plan for the regulation of life. For if we must live, we must also use the necessary supports of life; nor can we avoid even those things which appear to subserve our pleasures rather than our necessities. It behooves us, therefore, to observe moderation, that we may use them with a pure conscience, whether for

(1) Ibid
(2) III, 9, v

(3) III, 9, VI

necessity or for pleasure." (1) In this statement Calvin gives us his teaching on the use of the physical blessings, the external form which enables us to live, and to live well. In dealing with the supports of this earthly life, Calvin avoids two extremes. On the one hand he asserts that those who have been "... in other respects good and holy men ..." are wrong in "... permitting to men to use corporeal blessings no further than their necessity should absolutely require." (2) He believes that they were "far too austere." On the opposite extreme he condemns those who assume that no restriction can be placed on one's liberty to do what one wants. While admitting that "fixed and precise rules of law" are not to be had, he still maintains that "... since Scripture delivers general rules for the lawful use of earthly things, our practice ought certainly to be regulated by them." (3)

We are not misusing the gifts of God when the use of them is "...directed to the same end for which the Creator himself created them for us; since he has created them for our benefit, not our injury."

(4) Food, for instance, is not merely meant for our preservation, but "likewise for our pleasure and delight." Clothing is meant not merely for necessity, but for "propriety and decency." "In herbs, trees, and fruits, beside their various uses, his design has been to gratify us by graceful forms and pleasant odours." Then arguing from the natural properties of things themselves, he shows that they are to be enjoyed.

(5)

"But shall the Lord have endued flowers with such beauty, to present itself to our eyes, with such sweetness of smell, to impress our sense of smelling; and shall it be unlawful for our eyes to be affected with the beautiful sight, or our olifactory nerves with the agreeable odour; What! has he not made such a distinction of colours

(1) III, 10, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

(4) III, 10, II
(5) Ibid

as to render some more agreeable than others? Has he not given to gold and silver, to ivory and marble, a beauty which makes them more precious than other metals or stones? In a word, has he not made many things worthy of our estimation, independently of any necessary use?" Any point of view that takes all pleasure out of life is "inhuman," it denies man the enjoyment which God offers, it reduces man to "a senseless block." (1) There is nothing intrinsically evil about the attractions of the world of external form. It has been created by a person for the use of personality. It can with certainty be used toward the ends for which it was created. To deny the proper use of external form for the purposes of pleasure, of enjoying the physical world, is to thwart spiritual growth. The life of the spirit, of longing for the other world, must in this world, be supported by externals, must make proper and full use of them or else it itself will atrophy.

While failure to make full use of the material blessings of this world will stultify the spirit of man, an over strong attachment will produce the same effect. All things are given us "...in order that we may know and acknowledge their Author, and celebrate his goodness towards us by giving him thanks." (2) If one overindulges in food or drink his spiritual powers, his sense of personal gratitude to the Author of the things he enjoys, is dimmed or effaced, for those gifts are used to lead to "the vilest passions," and to "...infect the mind with ... impurity." (3) This overindulgence makes it impossible to distinguish between right and wrong. Too sumptuous apparel causes vanity and disdain, or envy and impatience, it incites to unchastity. The spiritual life of men is also dulled or destroyed by a too strong attachment to the delights of marble, gold, and pictures "...that they

(1) Ibid

(2) III, 10, III

(3) Ibid

become like statues, are, as it were metamorphosed into metal, and resemble painted images."(1) Thus we are not only "de-spiritualized" by a too strong attachment to objects of sense, but we are dehumanized as well. License in the enjoyment of the "good things of life" is to be protested against in the name of that proper use of these same things, which enriches our spirituality, and our humanity. The good gifts of God cannot for the good of one's soul be either abused by contempt or over-indulgence. The goodly form of the external world must be used, enjoyed, but not with undue attachment.

For avoiding the two extremes of austerity and overindulgence and for making proper use of the supports of our life, Calvin suggests the following rules. We should use this world as though we used it not. Not only intemperance, but any "care and affection which would either seduce or disturb us from thoughts of the heavenly life, and ^{From} attention to the improvement of our souls." Thus, though there are no "certain rules" to regulate our liberty in external things, yet we should indulge ourselves as little as possible, we should "retrench all superfluties and . . . restrain luxury . . ." (2) The second rule is that " . . . we should learn to bear penury with tranquility and patience, as well as to enjoy abundance with moderation."(3) This ability to restrain one's desire for wealth when one is poor is similar to the ability to restrain the enjoyment of abundance when one is wealthy. "...One who is ashamed of a mean garment will be proud of a splendid one." (4) These two rules, are thus really one. The goodliness of the external world should not lead us to indulge in what we have or to covet what we have not. Calvin points to the apostolic example which is "both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."(5)

(1) Ibid

(2) III, 10, IV

(3) Ibid

(4) III, 10, V

(5) Ibid (Phil. IV, 12)

The third rule is that, as was discussed in the treatment of charity, we should realize that we are stewards of earthly things, and that we shall be called to give account. We can hardly use his gifts for "profusion, pride, ostentation, and vanity," when we know we are accountable to him for their use. (1) Thus there is a three-fold rule for our use of earthly blessings: not overly to indulge in what we have, not to covet what we do not have, and not to forget our accountability for all we have been given.

There is a fourth rule which involves a fresh consideration. A man should "...in all the actions of life...regard his vocation." (2) Hitherto we have seen that the main guide to the use of external form in the Christian life is to attain the right degree of detachment. The rule of following one's vocation involves the submission to a positive plan, a form of behaviour for the entire course of one's life. We are not called to be simply Christians in this world, each one is called to do his particular task. The human mind is afflicted with a "desultory levity" by which it is "...hurried hither and thither, and how insatiable is its ambition to grasp different things at once." (3) It is for this reason that we should accept as a divine vocation the particular field in which we find ourselves. We are not led to our life's work by merely consulting the whims of our hearts or the nature of the external world. "Every individual's line of life, therefore, is, as it were, a post assigned him by the Lord..." Furthermore, he says "...The principle and foundation of right conduct in every case is the vocation of the Lord, and ... he who disregards it will never keep the right way of duties of his station." To illustrate he states, "The magistrate ... the father of a family ... and all, in their

(1) Ibid
(2) III, 10, VI

(3) Ibid

respective spheres of life, will bear and surmount the inconveniences, cares, disappointments, and anxieties which befall them, when they shall be persuaded that every individual has his burden laid upon him by God. Hence also will arise peculiar consolation, since there will be no employment so mean and sordid (provided we follow our vocation) as not to appear truly respectable, and be deemed highly important in the sight of God."(1)

What then is the place of external form in the Christian philosophy of life? It is, first of all, subordinate to the spiritual element, the sense of the will of God, which must underlie all the actions and decisions of our lives. We must however, hold the external world, and its form as something which God gives to us to use for his glory and our eternal good. We look forward to fellowship with him, we must follow his direction. Our eternal life with him must be our chief ambition, yet we must not try to escape but rather to use the things of this life which we find about us. Our use of the things of this world, our whole course of life must ever be in accordance with the expressed will of God, and must be done by the call of God to us. Thus the responsibility to and direct faith-relation with a personal God frees us from servitude to a rigid law in external things, even in our enjoyment of them. On the other hand by reason of this faith-relation we are involved in a positive responsibility for using the things of the external world aright, and we are called to a course, pattern, and definite form of life, in our vocation. God calls us not only to give our hearts to him, but in giving our hearts we must dedicate our whole life in the world. We must seal our decision with the commitment by the form of the right occupation.

(1) Ibid

The Christian who seeks the right principles for a godly life must, therefore, come to terms with external form. While his motivating principles must be spiritual, he must see to it that these are expressed in proper external behavior. He must look beyond and above this temporal life which is lived in the physical body, but in so doing he must not neglect or despise the physical support for this earthly existence. External form in the life of a Christian must be accepted and used as a sign and seal of the spiritual intentions of the heart.

Having thus sketched out the practical application of religion in the life of the individual, Calvin enlarges on various topics. He treats justification by faith, prayer, election and the final resurrection. When he speaks of justification by faith he enlarges on the basic reason why no form of action, no work in the external world can propitiate God. The ground for maintaining justification by faith alone is the great disparity between the moral natures of man and God. From this basic disparity arises the inability of the external form of good works to bring justification.

In this discussion he reemphasizes the inwardness of true faith, and the inability of any external form of observance or activity to produce the justification that comes from faith. The source of justification is in the will and disposition of God himself. Man can not look to his own actions or achievements. It is a imputation of righteousness, not a discovery of it. The righteousness is of Christ, he is the cause while faith is the instrument. (1) Since human works are the expression of depraved human nature, they can have no value in redeeming human nature.

(1) III, 11, II

Not only the sinfulness of man, but also the real holiness of God, and the strict righteousness which he requires of man destroy justification by works. True righteousness comes from God alone, and it is this divine righteousness which alone stands before him. God's righteousness is to ours as the light of the sun is to all reflected brightness. (1) What is more, we no more produce what righteousness we exhibit than a wall produces the sunbeams that come through it. (2) Only the holy Lord himself can exhibit such righteousness as will be suitable before him. Only a failure to have a vision of God in all his holiness could let anyone forget that no form produced by man could stand on its own merits before him.

There are two things to be observed in gratuitous justification. Not only must we remember to leave unimpaired the glory of the Lord, but we must seek to preserve our consciences in "tranquility" and "placid composure" before the Divine Judgment. (3) This composure can come only through a Christ who has already suffered our punishment. We can seek our peace only "in the terrors of Christ our redeemer." (4) No external conformity can bring this about. As we have seen, despite divine endowments and natural virtues which are necessary for order in the world, man is of himself totally depraved. (5) Moral worth is estimated, not by external act but by the end for which the action was done. No work can bring the internal change which comes alone from the progress of sanctification, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in us which alone brings good works, and even after justification the good works do not earn merit, but are to be attributed solely to Him. Only perfect obedience suffices, and even one sin is sufficient to bring condemnation to all. Thus only Christ's obedience is sufficient for justification. (6)

(1) III, 12, II
(2) III, 12, VIII

(3) III, 13, I, II
(4) III, 13, IV

(5) III, 14, III
(6) III, 14, VII

We are not to glory or trust in our own works. It is not by them that we are justified, but on the other hand we can know and rejoice in whatever progress we are making, for good works and moral progress are a sign of the spirit of justification working in us. We are not justified by good works, but we can count the blessings which the Spirit showers upon us. (1) Merit is a bad term, for all credit is to be given to God, and comes from God. (2) We do not merit, but only partake in Christ's righteousness. Our forsaking of sin and turning to righteousness must be real and effective if our justification be valid. (3) We are not justified by works, but not without them.

Calvin "does not dream" of faith or justification without good works, but justification results from faith, not works. In this way Calvin counters those who insist upon the "injurious calumny" that justification by faith alone denies the necessity for the performance of good works. (4) By denying merit for good works, it is also claimed, the motivation for good works is destroyed. To this, Calvin retorts that only that "righteousness" is destroyed which was pursued in the hope of a reward. (5) This is the righteousness of hirelings bribed to be good. The value of any external form, whether of good works or not, is only maintained by the proper personal source. When external form is maintained for itself or merely some other external reward it loses all its spiritual value. The truly Christian motives for good works are those of gratitude for God's merciful goodness, fear of polluting ourselves with sin, looking to the hope of communion with God, the desire to follow in the steps of Christ. The fundamental Biblical reason, however, is "that God may be glorified in us." We should keep as motives a remembrance of his goodness, and the knowledge of the costliness of the crucifixion. (6)

(1) III, 14, XVIII

(3) III, 15, VI

(5) III, 16, II

(2) III, 15, I

(4) III, 16, I

(6) III, 16, III

If there is no merit for works, how do we explain the promises of the law? Calvin affirms that these promises are vain unless we have a deliverer. (1) A personal salvation could not be achieved by a sinful man who merely tries to fulfill the conditions of the law.

The fundamental requirement of the law, as we have seen, is to purify that sinful heart which is the unfortunate possession of every son of Adam. We have seen that the law is insufficient to do this and thus we are lost without a Mediator. (2) By the same token, the promises of the law are vain without a deliverer. But, as the law still remains as a guide to the believer, so the rewards still play a role in encouraging obedience. This is not to say that they earn merit, but that God uses reward for his own purpose, as an incentive for the spiritual welfare of the elect. (3) The works, while not earning merit, are still favored by God only as they are received through Christ, by virtue of faith alone. Only in that personal attitude of self-abasement, of humility which attributes all power and puts all confidence in Christ alone, can works be received. (4)

As a result of accepting in Christ the works of the elect, God "indulgently overlooks" what they are in themselves. He pardons them as he receives them. Observance of God's will as shown by his law is the goal of our calling, the "design of our vocation." While the pursuit of this goal is involved in our election, yet in so far as any rewards are forthcoming they are not given for those actions of which we are the authors but for those which can be termed the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us. These works are not a foundation for our confidence before God, but simply fulfill the terms prescribed for any life with him. Whenever works are counted for righteousness, it is not upon their intrinsic value, although they may achieve a relative righteousness, but it is only recognized by virtue of the

(1) III, 17, I

(3) III, 17, V

(2) III, 17, II

(4) III, 17, VI

the unmerited grace of God. (1) When the Apostle James speaks of faith as insufficient without works, it is the superficial intellectual acceptance of doctrine which is involved, not true faith for that ipso facto involves good works. Thus it is upon faith and faith alone that we must put our trust. (2) Any reward that God gives us for our comparative progress must not be thought of as earned by the external form of good works. It is true that rewards are offered for good works, but these are part of God's way of ordering the world, they are not the inevitable result caused by the goodness of our work. (3) Our rewards are inheritances from an indulgent Father rather than merited wages. There is no crown of reward without previous grace. (4) Yet we can be sure that however poor our service may be, yet in the Lord it is not in vain. (5)

It can be seen by now that the Christian is no longer "under the law." The Christian is free. Yet what is the nature of that Christian Liberty? In the first place we are free from the law because we know that our justification is not dependent upon our fulfillment of it. It remains as an incentive because what was "adumbrated" by the law is illuminated by the gospel. (6)

In our state of gratuitous justification we offer a voluntary obedience to the will of God. We are not under legal bondage. This voluntary obedience is all-demanding. (7) We should love God with all the heart. This demands that "...our soul must be previously divested of every other perception and thought..." so "...that our heart must be freed from all desires, and our might must be collected and contracted to this one point" (8) Any deviation from this rule is a transgression. This means that if we hope to have confidence before God, it must be as children cheerfully and voluntarily trying to do

(1) Ibid
(2) III, 17, XI (James XI-14)
(3) III, 18, I
(4) III, 18, II

(5) III, 18, VII
(6) III, 19, I
(7) III, 19, III
(8) III, 19, IV

his will, and not as servants, hoping for a reward.

We are, moreover, freed from obligation in regard to external things, which in themselves are indifferent. We avoid scrupulosity over minutiae. When conscience submits to strict rules concerning these things it "enters a long and inextricable labyrinth, from which it is afterwards difficult to escape." Calvin illustrates this by saying: "If a man begin to doubt the lawfulness of using flax in sheets, shirts, handkerchiefs, napkins, and table cloths, neither will he be certain respecting hemp...If any one imagine delicate food to be unlawful, he will ere long have no tranquillity before God in eating brown bread and common viands, while he remembers that he might support his body with meat of a quality still inferior. If he hesitate respecting good wines he will afterwards be unable with any peace of conscience to drink the most vapid; and at last he will not presume even to touch water purer and sweeter than others. In short, he will come to think it criminal to step over a twig that lies across his path. (1)

Thus we are free in regard to external things. This freedom must not be abused by sensuality. Such use of things which would be otherwise indifferent, pollutes them and makes these same innocent objects agents of damnation. "Ivory and gold, and riches of all kinds, are certainly blessings of Divine Providence, not only permitted but expressly designed for the use of men; nor are we any where prohibited to laugh, or to be satiated with food ..." We are, however, forbidden "...amidst an abundance of all things, to be immersed in sensual delights, to inebriate the heart and mind with present pleasures, and perpetually to grasp at new ones." (2) We must not make otherwise legitimate use of our liberty that might offend our weaker brethren. (3)

(1) III, 19, VII

(2) III, 19, IX

(3) III, 19, XIII

This Christian liberty does not negate the duties to our temporal rulers. Temporal rulers still have domain over our actions. (1) ^{dominion?} As works have regard to men, so does conscience have respect to God. The indulgence of the Christian in external things of indifference is a matter to be decided by the conscience, not enforced by external authority. (2) We see here strikingly shown how the use and significance of external form is judged, first of all, by the direct bearing of that form on personal spiritual life.

Thus we see the basic foundation of justification by faith alone. Man is fundamentally unable to produce works that will procure justification, because any and all works proceeding from his corrupt nature are themselves corrupt. Since only God is truly holy, only works proceeding from Christ, God the Son, can stand in his sight. It is in the righteousness of Christ that we are able to stand before God. As the Holy Spirit works in us, we can see in our lives, works worthy of God's approval; but this righteousness is to be attributed solely to Christ. We are promised rewards not for the intrinsic nature of our works, but for Christ's goodness showing in us and to spur our efforts to conform to the law. Thus there is no justification in any external form to which we put our hand; but these works are blessed and salutary when proceeding from Christ's power in us. On the other hand, the inability of the external form to procure righteousness for us also means the inability of external form to bind the conscience freed by Christ. We are not caught up in a superstitious concern for the minutiae of external observance. Even where we must conform to the external institutions and authority of civil government, we are not bound in matters of conscience, in matters of faith. Our justification liberates us from bondage to the external form, but it does not deny the significance of the proper formal expression in

(1) III, 19, XV
(2) III, 19, XVI

good works, of the justified believer.

From the times of the New Testament, the problem of true prayer has been a concern among Christian men. Jesus contrasted the ostentatious prayers of the Pharisees to the private, earnest, spiritual prayer of the true Christian. (1) One of the most unshakable convictions of the Reformers was that prayer had to be genuine and heartfelt, rather than the muttering of formal incantations. Prayer, for the Reformers, was a personal communion with the Heavenly Father in faith. We should pray, Calvin maintains, seeking all our good in God, alone. Prayer is for our good, but even more importantly, for the glory of God. We should pray with concentration. (2) We should know that the Holy Spirit working in our hearts alone makes our prayers effective, not by impeding our efforts, but by working in the formation of them in our hearts. (3)

Prayer does not have to do merely with the internal state of the believer's heart. He should take into consideration the particular situation in which he finds himself, both spiritual and temporal. We should know where we stand, and the issues and needs of our situation. Only through the incarnate Christ are we able to pray, and then only in conformity to the word. Prayer is related to the external world by practicing and maintaining the proper forms. (4) The practice of public prayer must be kept decent and orderly, for true spiritual effectiveness as well as for propriety. We are to sing our praises to God as congregations, and for this to be done at all, it should be done properly and with decorum, not for pleasing the ear, but as a means of true worship. (5) The corporeal gestures in prayer, - kneeling, uncovering the head, etc., are customs designed to increase our reverence toward God. (6) Of particular importance, however, is the fact that we need a form to guide the spirit in its

(1) III, 20, VI
(2) III, 20, XXI
(3) III, 20, V

(4) III, 20, XXXIV
(5) III, 20, XXX, XXXII
(6) III, 20, XXXIII

prayer. We should not pray simply in the way we might desire, but our very desires must be directed by the form God gives us. (1) This form for true prayer is contained in what is known as the "Lord's Prayer." We need not trace Calvin's splendid exposition of it at this place. (2) Throughout, he emphasizes man's direct dependence upon the ever-present God, and the demands which God makes upon man. In praying "Thy Kingdom come," for instance, we are speaking of the formation of all our powers in accordance to God's word. Thus we are reminded of the importance of the proper spiritual and external form in our relation to God. We must pray to be re-formed in accordance with the rules of God's Kingdom. (3) We are also reminded of the limitation upon any creaturely form taken by itself when, praying for God to forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, we are told by Calvin that our forgiving others is not a good work which God rewards by forgiving us, but rather an accompanying sign which the Holy Spirit works in our hearts as we are being forgiven by God. (4)

Summarizing the practice of prayer, Calvin maintains that it should be practiced at regular hours, not that such regular practice has a virtue in itself, or that we are thereby discharging an obligation for the remaining hours, but that we might be disciplined in regard to this spiritual relation we have with God. (5) Effective prayer is basically a matter of the fundamental bent of our spirits. It is a sincere attitude of our hearts toward God, completely looking to him for help. Even in prayer, however, the vital importance of the proper external form is emphasized as discipline and worthy expression of what our hearts should feel.

(1) III, 20, XXXIV
(2) The Lord's Prayer is expounded from XXXV to XLVIII of this Chapter.
(3) III, 20, XLII
(4) III, 20, XLV
(5) III, 20, I

Calvin proceeds from his discussion of prayer to an exposition of his doctrine of predestination. This is not of primary concern to the subject of this thesis, although certain matters of interest do emerge. His discussion is not at all based upon natural reason, so he maintains, but rather upon what God has revealed in the word. (1) God shows himself to be sovereign. His decisions are not conditioned by any external consideration, nor by the foreknowledge which he has, but they are rather the results of his own good pleasure. (2) That this implies not merely God's power, but the primacy of personal will, is shown by the further proof which Calvin adduces, from the fact that an inner transformation of the human heart must take place, purely from the operation of Grace and not from the influence of environment. Thus the universal offer of salvation is nevertheless effective only where hearts have, according to the decree of God, been prepared to receive it. (3) About this there can be no complaint, for there is no abstract system of justice over and above the just and righteous will of God. His will is, itself, the standard by which all things must be judged. (4) In this connection, it may be well to remember that Calvin has said that God could not cease to be good without ceasing to be God. God remains true to himself as he has revealed himself; - holy, righteous and just. (5) Yet we can not hail him before some bar of justice superior to him, for as his creatures we can only accept his will as our final criterion. (6) Thus protest is meaningless. As for the condemnation to which God predestines most men, it is not unjust, so Calvin argues. It is abundantly earned by men themselves. On the other hand, the election is what is unmerited, and comes only from the indulgent good pleasure of God. (7)

(1) III, 21, II
(2) III, 21, V
(3) III, 21, X
(4) III, 23, II

(5) II, 3, V
(6) III, 23, II
(7) III, 23, III

Is one to be resigned to the process, being uncertain of one's own election? Does the impossibility of earning election imply a hopeless apathy? Not at all, for the very desire, when it is genuine, to seek after God and his favor, is a sign that this favor is already bestowed. We only seek him when he has moved us so to do. (1)

He gives us definite signs and seals of our election. These are largely spiritual, yet the most certain "mirror to behold our election" is Christ, who is both the image of the Lord God himself, and also flesh of our flesh. In him, when we are led to lay hold on him, we find our certainty. The external actions of our lives, however, when motivated by good intentions, are real signs of God's favor.

The fundamental confirmation, however, remains the call, the vocation. God does actually call those whom he has elected to salvation. The certainty of the call is spiritual and can never be identified with any external guarantee, yet in Christ and in the scriptures we have a mirror in which to behold our election. (2) This certainty does ^{not} come from mere membership in the visible Church. There are hypocrites in the visible church who cannot purchase salvation by outward conformity to even the best religious custom. On the other hand, and by the same token, election cannot be closed to any group because of its external condition. (3) The external forms of human individual or social life have no inherent power, however advisable it is to have the proper form.

Calvin concludes the third book of the Institutes by a meditation on the Resurrection.⁽⁴⁾ The glories of the resurrection must provide the culmination of the earthly pilgrimage (5). We should

(1) III, 23, XII
(2) III, 24, V
(3) III, 23, X
(4) III, 25, Passim
(5) III, 25, I

realize not only that the elect are to be transported to the presence of God at the hour of death, but that both soul and body shall be glorified in the resurrection. This insistence upon the fulfillment of the body throws the whole of our life into new perspective.

Religion, however spiritual, is not an escape from the body, as such. While the body is subservient to the spirit, yet it must be rejoined to the spirit and rendered accountable at the last day. The future glory to which the Christian can look forward must not draw his mind away from the problems he faces in his own present life. The anticipation must not become a fixation, however glorious we know our future state to be. We are to govern our minds not by mere impatient anticipation for a thing or state, however exalted it be, but rather by the will of God for us in our present condition. Thus, even in this regard we are to respect an immediate personal externally-expressed direction, rather than setting our minds on some event as viewed in itself. (1)

It is here that our duty now lies, and it is here, may the Lord be praised, that Christ begins the glory of his body, the Church. As long as we remain in the creation corrupted by Adam's and our sin, this glorification cannot be complete. On the other hand, the full process is not consummated even by our liberation from the body, our external form, but only by the resurrection when the body is, by the power of God, not destroyed but redeemed and renewed. External form, though subordinate, has a great celestial significance and destiny.

Thus external form plays a part in the spiritual transformation of the heart of man. First of all, the external manifestation of God in history to obtain redemption, is the presupposition for the regeneration of the heart of the individual. The faith which appropriates this salvation, and the repentance which is the fundamental

(1) III, 25, X

characteristic of it, are fundamentally internal matters. They are, if genuine, to be sharply contrasted to mere consent to doctrinal formulae and prescribed duties. The Christian life is fundamentally an attitude of mind, - a conformity of spirit to the holiness of God revealed in Jesus Christ. While the Christian puts his fundamental hope in the spiritual, he does not neglect or unduly despise the physical supports for this life. He is even able to enjoy them in moderation. The Christian realizes, however, that no work he can do will bring blessedness, but that only the Spirit working faith in him can bring a trans^{form}eration. Only in Christ are we justified. In prayer the principal support for the spiritual life is to be found. Prayer must, above all, be heartfelt and spiritual, but it must be disciplined by proper formal observance, both public and private. Election, also, is a matter between God's will and man's, but even here there is the external sign of God's good will which is given by Jesus Christ, the word made flesh. In him we have the "mirror of our election."

Finally, though the spirit leave the external form which is our body at death, the body is not finally destroyed but is transformed to be the worthy vehicle of the spirit at the resurrection.

Thus the external form of the gospel history as a witness to God's will, is the presupposition of the renewed individual. The external form of the proper behaviour remains as a discipline for our faith. We must live properly in the midst of a world of external form and must, in the end, recognize it as it takes part in the resurrection which is the climax of its significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXTERNAL AIDS FOR FAITH.

The Church
The Sacraments
Civil Society

"Thy hand, O God, has guided
Thy flock from age to age;

* * *

"Thy heralds brought glad tidings
To greatest as to least;
They bade men rise and hasten
To share the great King's feast;

* * * *

"Through many a day of darkness,
Through many a scene of strife,
The faithful few fought bravely
To guard the nation's life."

* * * *

Edward Hayes Plumptre.

Calvin begins the fourth book of the Institutes by explaining that religion is in need of external form, or what he calls "external aids in order to the production of faith in our hearts." (1) Here we see his theology coming to grips with the crucial problem of external form. No longer must the category of external form be traced as it is more or less involved in this or that theological problem. We have come to the point where it, itself, is close to the center of the stage, - is something consciously utilized. The reason for this is that Calvin must, before concluding his theology, determine how the theological principles to which he has appealed are to be expressed and maintained in the external world. Were men not full of "various imperfections and limitations", the problem of external form would be quite different. Were we able to arise by our own spiritual efforts, to a pure spiritual knowledge of God, the use of external aids would not be as crucial as it is. God has compassion on our infirmities, however, and thus accomodates himself to our capacities. The external aids of organized religion are to effect a holy unity and good order. God provides suitably for us, so that even when we are in the prison house of our sinful flesh, we can approach unto him despite our immense distance from him. For this purpose, he has instituted the Church, Sacraments and Civil Society. Our first concern will be the Church, for God has provided the Church with its external organization, for the nurture of his people. (2)

In the Apostles' Creed, belief in the Church is affirmed. Calvin would prefer, however, the term "believe the Church" to "believe in the Church," for the church is not so much itself an

(1) Iv, 1, I

(2) Ibid.

object of faith as it is a messenger whose message we believe. In order to know how properly to believe the Church, we must face the fact that there is both the Church Visible and the Church Invisible. The invisible church includes the elect of all nations and ages. This number no man can judge, for they are known only to God. They are his elect, his sheep who hear his voice. (1) Yet we are not left with an invisible church alone. We are also to believe "the visible, external church!" Why do we believe it? We do so in order that we may conduct ourselves as members of the flock, as a part of the communion of saints. It is this latter term which characterizes the visible church in Calvin's estimation. The external church allows a tangible means for Christians to maintain their fellowship, that there may be a "brotherly agreement with the Children of God." (2)

We believe the Church, not because of any inherent authority, for external form never possesses inherent authority, but because it is the means by which Christians are able to share the blessing of true belief. We believe it, not for its own sake, but because it communicates God's will to us. We are fortified by knowing, through its voice, our election by God, the "stability of Christ who is our saviour and who is from eternity to eternity." We also are reassured by God's promise to stay with the Church and to deliver it. Its message is with us to encourage us, and our knowledge of our communion with other Christians is maintained even when the visible church seems to have been destroyed. Even though at all times we are not able to comprehend all the mysteries of the heavenly doctrine, yet we can have confidence in the Church's

(1) IV, 1, II
(2) IV, 1, III

doctrine, for it is the doctrine of God speaking to his people. (1)

The visible church, then, as an external form of social organization is not, itself, an object of our belief. It is, however, the object of our respect and our obedience. The visible church is our mother. We must obey and learn from her. It is fatally dangerous to be separated from her. While the external form has no inherent authority, it does function as God's agent to which we are bound, not as bondservants to the external form, but as children who are given the means of maintaining spiritual communion with their heavenly father. (2) We are placed under pastors, for this is what God has ordained for our instruction in his doctrine. He could have continually instructed the Church from heaven itself, without the use of men, but he has willed that we hear the gospel through the preaching of men. "Faith cometh by hearing." (3) We must honor this institution of mortal men because God is present in it. While it is not on the authority of man, but of God alone, that we are led to worship, yet it is through men that God speaks. While we must avoid any superstitious attitude toward the external forms of Church organization and life, we must also be assured that God does not leave us without prophets who truly convey his voice. We learn his will through the teaching and preaching of the Church. Thus we listen to the ministers as to the voice of God, himself.

This spiritual authority of ministers is both their claim to respect and their limitation, for it is not to them, as mere men, that we listen, but we are to place our confidence in the Lord who speaks through them. He "sweetly allures us." He does not overawe

(1) Ibid

(2) IV, 1, IV

(3) IV, 1, IV - Rom. X,17

us by Sinai-like thunderings from heaven. It also calls for an exercise of piety and humility to make men pay reverent attention to the words of fellow mortals, for thus they must respect the gospel for what it is in itself, rather than accepting it because of external recommendations. There is, furthermore, the fact that the necessity of the external organization of the Church brings believers into working fellowship with each other.

It is to God, not men, however, that we must ever hearken in the teaching of the Church. The efficacy of preaching is due to God alone. God was "exhibited to the Holy Fathers in the mirror of his doctrine in such a manner that that knowledge of him was spiritual." (1) The temple was not only spoken of as God's face, but also, that supersititious attachment might not be formed, as the footstool of God. This latter phrase, to Calvin's mind, balances the identification of God with his institution by stressing his transcendence to any earthly organization or structure. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands."⁽²⁾ Thus man, the temple-builder, cannot insure the presence of the transcendent God in his structures. But this is not to say that God is equally aloof from all temples. He does sanctify and bless by his presence temples "...by his word, that they may legitimately be used for his worship." (3) If this seems to involve a contradiction, we should remember that God, in his being, cannot be included by human formulations; but he is not unable to condescend to our needs. "As if it were not in the power of God to descend in any way to us, and yet at the same time not to make any change of place, or to confine us to earthly means, but rather to use them as vehicles, to elevate us towards celestial glory." (4) While God connects His Spirit with preaching, and promises that it will be followed by success, he also separates himself from all external aids and attributes "the

(1) IV, 1, V

(2) Ibid - Acts VII, 49

(3) IV, 1, V

(4) IBID

Commencement of faith, as well as its subsequent progress, exclusively to himself." (1) Man does not "share" the work of God, and the ministers do not, in the strictest sense, have any share in the results of preaching, yet everyone "...who attends with docility of mind to the ministers whom God has appointed, will learn from the beneficial effect, that this mode of teaching has not in vain been pleasing to God..." (2)

Thus God works through the visible organization and requires our obedience to it, even though we must not ascribe to it or to its ministers the power of salvation and sanctification which belongs exclusively to God. It is true that Calvin's ultimate confidence is placed in that Church which is invisible. Yet God's work is done by a church which must be visible to be true to its function of bringing salvation directly before the eyes of men. How are we told to recognize this church to which we must give qualified obedience? How are we to know what is the visible Church and what is not? The fundamental definition of the visible Church must consist, of course, of tangible or external elements. It is at this point that Calvin brings forth his classic definition. He maintains that the word "Church" in scripture, often means the company of the elect. It is also "...frequently used in Scriptures to designate the whole multitude dispersed all over the world, who profess to worship one God and Jesus Christ, who are initiated into his faith by baptism, who testify their unity in true doctrine and charity by a participation of the sacred supper, who consent to the word of the Lord, and preserve the ministry which Christ has instituted for the purpose of preaching it." (3)

Such a visible institution is involved in many defects and

(1) IV, 1, VI
(2) Ibid
(3) IV, 1, VII

evils. Many of its members are not of it in spirit. Calvin quotes Augustine's dictum that "there are many sheep without the pale of the Church and many wolves within." (1) He thus admits that of the many "...who externally bear his /God's/ seal, his eyes alone can discern who are unfeignedly holy, and will persevere to the end which is the completion of salvation." (2) The fact remains that we must deal with members of the Church according to the external pattern of their lives. So, also, we must respect that institution which has the external marks of the church. "For wherever the word of God is truly preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a Church of God." (3)

No private opinion we might hold of any person or any group which has the true signs of the church, should make us cut ourselves off as though such a person or body was un-Christian. (4) Calvin does not assert that "wherever the word is preached, that the good effects immediately appear; but that it is never received so as to obtain a permanent establishment, without displaying some efficacy. It is the act of a traitor and apostate perversely to withdraw from a Christian society that preserves the true ministry of the word and sacraments. As the Church is spoken of as the body and spouse of Christ, any separation from it is a renunciation of God and Christ." (5)

Calvin again shows his healthy respect for the subtlety of his Adversary by explaining Satan's strategy of attacking the Church. He first of all tries, says Calvin, to obliterate the signs of the true Church, to destroy the pure preaching of the word, and make the visible institution something that is not the church. If he is unsuccessful in this, he tries to cause people to hold the marks in contempt. Thus the

(1) IV, 1, VIII

(2) Ibid

(3) IV, 1, IX

(4) Ibid

(5) IV, 1, X

believer must exercise a double caution. He should not submit to any religious organization where the Word and Sacraments are corrupted; yet he dare not neglect or disdain, for some merely human reason, any body where, despite other imperfections, the Word is truly preached and the Sacraments purely administered. (1) Even certain non-essential doctrinal faults in a Church do not constitute a sufficient reason for leaving it. Much less do the personal imperfections of the minister or members of the congregation constitute sufficient ground for leaving the Church. (2) One of Satan's most subtle devices is to give believers "...a false notion of perfect sanctity, as if they were already become disembodied spirits," and thus they despise "...the society of men in whom they could discover any remains of human infirmity." (3) Since the Church is an institution involved in human imperfection, it is vain to seek a Church free from every blot or even one in which there are no hypocrites. We should maintain our fellowship with the Church as it is. (4) Our Christian duty is to stay with the Church and seek for its edification. Paul maintained his relation with the hugely imperfect Corinthian Church and, in his advice to those who come to the Lord's Supper, he told "...not one to examine another, or every one to examine the whole Church, but each individual to prove himself." (5) To break with the true, if imperfect, visible Church reflects self-righteousness instead of true holiness and real concern for the good of the church. (6)

Thus we must remain in unity with the visible Church and not be offended by this or that imperfection that it possesses, but only by our own faults. We should strive for the upbuilding of the whole, but our primary responsibility is our own obedience to the will of God. (7) The visible Church, or even what Calvin calls "the heavenly Jerusalem"

(1) IV, 1, XI
(2) IV, 1, XIII
(3) IV, 1, XIII

(4) Ibid
(5) IV, 1, XV
(6) IV, 1, XVI

(7) IV, 1, XIX

must be the foundation for the forgiveness of sins. Not that there can be a Church without the remission of sins, but that the "communion of saints" exists in order that the "forgiveness of sins" may be implemented and effected. The Church exists as a group of sinners who are being forgiven not only past sins, but the sin of which they are guilty after their ingrafting into the body of Christ. We enter the Church only by the fact of our being forgiven, and we are kept therein by the same mercy. (1) This is the meaning of the doctrine of the keys of the kingdom which are in the Church's possession. Sins are continually remitted to us by the ministry of the Church, when "the presbyters or bishops, to whom this office is committed, confirm pious consciences by the promises of the gospel, in the hope of pardon and remission." (2) Thus we see the mutual necessity that there is between the visible church and the forgiveness of sins. Unless there is the forgiveness of sins, there can be no forgiven body of Christians which is what constitutes the Church. On the other hand, the worshipping fellowship of the Church is the fundamental means of implementing the forgiveness of sins; it is to and through the Church that the promises are given. (3)

As with any Christian theology of the Church, Calvin sees the visible Church as a means of bringing invisible grace to men. Unlike "higher church" conceptions, however, his understanding of Scripture is that the marks which distinguish the Church are not such things as an historical episcopate or the presence of a bishop or priest with valid and regular orders from the successor of Peter, but rather the true preaching of the word and pure administration of the sacraments. The basic qualification is continuous conformity to and expression of

(1) IV, 1, XX
(2) IV, 1, XXII
(3) Ibid

the will of God. This is only possible where his word is faithfully expounded and where the sacraments are administered strictly according to his will. Thus, while there are external marks by which the true visible Church may be recognized, these have significance because they imply that God is constantly being made known in the Church. All the historical continuity in the world is insufficient if there has been a basic alteration or addition to the doctrine of the Word of God.

What, then, is the significance of external form in the discussion of "believing the Church?" In the first place, Calvin's subordination of external form to the spiritual realm, leads him to avoid identifying the visible and invisible Church. Membership in God's elect can not be determined precisely by membership in the visible, external Church. Moreover, in defining the visible Church, Calvin uses marks which indicate spirituality, rather than physical continuity. On the other hand, Calvin's real concern for proper formal expression and for order in the external world made him see the crucial importance of having a visible Church. He was eager to see that the visible Church was granted sufficient respect. While the marks of the visible Church are connected with the spiritual truth which it is the Church's function to make known, nevertheless individual believers are not free to leave a church that maintains the proper doctrinal standards and sacramental observance. If one can be satisfied that both doctrine and practice conform to the right external standards, one is conscience-bound to remain with the church, even if there are many faults in its members. Thus, external form must not be believed in on its own authority. When it is seen as the expression of the will of God, however, it must be respected, adhered to and believed. A break with the ordained form is a break with its

Author. Adherence to the institution, when maintained in proper faith, is implied in any adherence to the Lord who has ordained this external form.

It is with this position that Calvin proceeds to discuss "The True and False Church Compared." (1) He is as anxious to avoid any superstitious attachment to the false church as he is a schismatic rupture from the true church. Thus he warns against the qualities of the false church, most particularly, of the Papacy. (2) Instead of the true preaching of the Word, "there reigns a corrupt government composed of falsehoods," and "an execrable sacrilege has been substituted for the Supper of the Lord." (3) Superstitions have invaded the worship of God. Idolatry is rife. Although they claim continuity from the Apostles (and cannot the Eastern Church do the same?) we face no danger of breaking with the true apostolic Church because the continuity they claim has no value apart from the true gospel which it is the duty of the Church to transmit pure and uncorrupted to posterity. They have not kept the purity of the gospel, therefore they are not the true Church. They think in terms of the external form of the Church that they possess. (4) They should remember that although the Hebrews had an even better claim to the Church by reason of their possession of its external form, yet it was the Christians, and not they, who were counted as the true spiritual succession. Thus, in Hebrew history, had it occasionally been the younger son, such as Isaac or Jacob, who had been the chief line of succession. Thus, mere external, physical succession is without significance if there is not also a spiritual succession, - a continual imitation and conformity. It is senseless to place importance upon

(1) IV, 2, Title
(2) IV, 2, I
(3) IV, 2, II
(4) Ibid

succession of persons at the expense of doctrine. (1)

The text which explains the reason for the Church is "My sheep hear my voice." (2) Where there is no response to the clearly spoken voice of the Lord, there is no Church. Thus the communion of the Church is preserved by two bonds - agreement in sound doctrine and brotherly love. All union which is formed without the Word of the Lord is a "faction of the impious," and not an association of believers. (3) To despise a true Church or to submit to a false Church are equally wrong. The prophets kept in union with the true temple of God whose abuses they condemned, but they never submitted to the false, unauthorized religion of Bethel. This was because the temple, despite much impiety and superstition, was still a tolerable form of the Church. Bethel, however, like the Papacy at Rome, was not of Divine institution, for the bond of union and basis of its existence was impious profanation of the ordained worship of God. As in Bethel its separation from the appointed temple was the offense, so in Rome the sacrilege of the Mass is the principal bond of union. (4) Thus to remain in communion with the Roman See would be to consent to what amount to "conspiracies against God." (5) The "...form of the legitimate Church is not to be found either in any one of their congregations, or in the body at large." (6)

The significance of the category of external form in the church is thus shown in the discussion of the signs of the false church. The true church is marked by the spiritual propriety of the forms it uses. The false church is marked by the use of forms which, like the Mass, claim an inherent effectiveness not given to any form. A false church claims to itself and its forms the power to determine

(1) IV, 2, III
(2) IV, 2, IV
(3) IV, 2, V

(4) IV, 2, VIII, IX, X
(5) IV, 2, X
(6) IV, 2, XII

and regulate spirituality, and does not submit to the conditions of God's word. Whenever forms are of human invention, they conflict with God's word and thus signify the false church. The true form is determined by its conformity to the will of God as expressed in ^{with} his word. The false form is one which promises man independence from God's word. It is a humanly originated substitute for, rather than exemplification of God's will.

Of all the matters of external form which are involved in the construction of a doctrine of the visible Church, perhaps the most crucial is the place and significance of the ministry. The broader problems of the visible fellowship of believers in relation to the invisible company of the elect and to the signs of the true Church, are headed up in the doctrine of the ministry. The criticism of the hierarchical structure and various pretensions of the Papacy are simply extensions of a doctrine of what the true ministry of the Word is and what it is not. There is involved in the doctrine of the sacraments, itself, a very vital concern that only those duly set apart be allowed to administer them. The fact that to mortal man is entrusted the office of the ministry, involves also a definite stand on the significance of the category of external form. While the inner spiritual attitudes and gifts are extremely important, nevertheless, to separate certain individuals from the body of believers and to ordain them with a special office, involves a real external formal expression of the faith. On a particular individual there is placed the office of speaking for God to men. The conception of the office, itself, involved the necessity of a definite form of action and a definite place within an external organization.

Such a use of the means of the visible and audible ministry

of men, is an act which God has made from his own gracious good pleasure, and is not a necessity laid upon him. He could instruct us himself or use the ministry of angels. By using the ministry of men, he honors them as his temples. We realize the eternal significance of human life by realizing that to human lips are given the mysteries of heaven, that men can be appointed ministers of God. It is not only to elevate us, however, that God uses human beings to carry out the task of bearing witness to him. We are trained in humility by hearing the gospel from men like ourselves, or even from those of inferior rank. We are also forced to accept the gospel for its own sake, rather than because we are overpowered by the might and majesty of God or by the awe-inspiring activity of some supernatural agency. As a third reason, we are given such heavenly treasure in earthen vessels because the necessity of congregating, of sharing the good news through personal contact and group fellowship, brings about a real promotion of brotherly love. Men are connected together by the bond of the gospel which a man like themselves speaks to them.

When men must depend on each other, they learn a lesson in mutual regard. It is in this light that we should read Ephesians IV, 11-12. "...He gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The fact of having ministers separated to their calling, allows for great spiritual advantage and constructive effort for the visible Church. (1) By respecting the visible office we are able to maintain that discipline and common life which enable spiritual advance and growth in grace. The apostolic and pastoral

(1) IV, 3, 1

office guarantee the continued existence of the Church in the world, for by their existence they form a visible rallying point for Church. (1)

It is not hard to see why Calvin feels that there is nothing more glorious in the world than the ministry of the gospel in the Church. Even angels, as we see in the New Testament, must ask men to preach the gospel. (2) He distinguishes between the offices of Apostle and Evangelist, on the one hand, and those of Pastor and Teacher, on the other. The former were limited to the first ages of the Church, while the latter two are permanent. The pastor is equivalent to the apostle, while the teacher continues the role previously filled by the prophet in the Old Testament. (3) This is an illuminating comparison. It reveals to what extent Calvin saw the task of Old Testament revelation as the teaching of a law which was to be understood and obeyed. Calvin, as opposed to many of his modern followers,⁽⁴⁾ highly values the formulated doctrine, spiritual truth which has been expressed in the definite form of words and precepts, in the communication of God's will to man.

Calvin states, more fully, the nature of the Pastor's office. He must preach the gospel, administer the sacraments and he must preside over the Church by exercising and maintaining proper discipline. What the Apostles did in supervising the whole Church, that is what the pastor does for the particular congregation. (5) That decency and order may prevail, however, the pastor's duties are limited to his own parish, rather than directed to the church at large. One pastor is not to invade the province of another. A pastor is not to transfer his

(1) IV, 3, II

(2) IV, 3, III

(3) IV, 3, IV, V

(4) This is in specific contrast to modern "Crisis Theology" with its stress on the existential "truth of revelation" versus the "truths of revelation." Professor Karl Barth, despite his allegiance to the essentials of Calvinistic Theology, expressed definite disagreement with this passage in his Seminar. "Die Lehre von der Kirche nach dem Reformierten Bekenntniss," Jan.-Mar. 1948.

(5) IV, 3, VI

labors in accordance with his own whim, but only with due public authorization. Here we see Calvin's stress on proper external order in the Church. Charismatic gifts and inspiration are not to be unchecked in determining where a pastor shall serve. All must proceed with proper deliberation, keeping intact the set procedure of the external institution. (1)

The manner in which one is called to the office of pastor is very important for the proper regulation of the Church. There must be decency and order in the whole life of the Church so that there must be strict supervision of the call to ^{the} ministry. (2) The call to the ministry has two aspects. There is the secret call, which should come first. This is an internal persuasion on the part of a man that he is called to preach the gospel. The external solemn call of the Church should then follow.

There is nothing of more crucial importance to the order of the Church than the proper supervision of calling of the ministry. Restless and turbulent persons must be prevented from entering into the sacred calling, lest the entire public order of the Church be undermined. The minister must be called, and he must properly answer the call. This latter is a personal matter, which cannot properly be included in the public aspects of the call. The secret call and the person's response to it is indispensable to every one of us if we would approve our ministry in the sight of God. In the view of the Church, however, he who enters on his office with an evil conscience, is nevertheless duly called, provided his iniquity be not discovered. (3)

Here we see the two-fold problem that confronts Calvin's theology when it faces the doctrine of the visible Church. The primacy of the spiritual, internal relation to God must be maintained,

(1) IV, 3, VII
(2) IV, 3, X
(3) IV, 3, XI

but it is impossible, from any purely external indication, to proceed with absolute certainty to a judgment of the internal spiritual reality. On the other hand, the proper external order is a necessary expression of and a very important assistance to the internal spiritual life. How to construct the external Church when it is impossible to say, with certainty, that this or that member or even this or that candidate for the ministry is truly of the elect, is a fundamental problem of Reformed churchmanship. Because the marks of the visible Church are themselves visible, however, Christians can, within the limits of the external realm, take confident action for the upbuilding of the church. What is forbidden is the confident projection of the external certainties into the invisible realm to produce false spiritual security. While the visible does witness to the invisible, one cannot infallibly attach spiritual effectiveness to this or that visible object. The person to be ordained, then, should properly have the divine call previous to his ordination, but the society of men cannot infallibly ascertain this fact. This must not prevent ordination when what external evidence there is does point to the true vocation of the applicant.

Although the ministry is of divine origin, it has depended upon men to select the regular ministers of the Church. Paul says that he was not "an apostle of men, neither by man." While no pious minister is "of men," yet when Paul adds that he is not an apostle "by man", he is showing that his ordination is extraordinary and unlike that of regular ministers. He has not been subjected to the need for human approval. By saying "not by man", he was not showing what was required of all ministers, but rather, differentiating his

call from that of most. (1) Indeed, except for the apostles themselves, "...the election and appointment of bishops by men is necessary to constitute a legitimate call to the office..." (2) Here, again, Calvin speaks as the practical organizer, the man who is intent on maintaining the proper order and external form. Even in the case of Paul, God directed him to be designated by the Church to the work to which God had called him. This shows the sanction which God gives to the regular procedure and external order of the Church. (3)

It is important that no one man or hierarchy arrogate to themselves the right to appoint bishops apart from the approval of the people. Summarizing this view, Calvin maintains "...It is a legitimate ministry according to the word of God, when those who appear suitable persons are appointed with the consent and approbation of the people; but that other pastors ought to preside over the election, to guard the multitude from falling into any improprieties, through inconstancy, intrigue, or confusion." (4) The desires of Christian believers must be consulted, but even this must be channeled by the discipline of the external form of the ministry.

The sole ceremony for setting apart of men to the ministry in the New Testament was the laying on of hands, as a sign that the person being ordained was offered to God. Though it is not commanded explicitly, yet, because it was always practised by the apostles, "such a punctual observance of it by them ought to have the force of precept with us." (5) It has real educational value for us, besides, "...to recommend to the people the dignity of the ministry, and to admonish the person ordained that he is no longer his own master, but devoted to the service of God and the Church." (6) It does not, however,

(1) IV, 3, XIII
(2) IV, 3, XIV
(3) Ibid

(4) IV, 3, XV
(5) IV, 3, XVI
(6) Ibid

have an inherent effectiveness,- does not automatically bestow grace.

While Calvin does not use, as a norm, anything but the word of God, he is very ready to call upon the practice of the early Church to buttress his views. Believers in the early Church, so he maintains, "...were so cautious in framing the whole economy according to the sole standard of the word of God, that in this respect hardly anything can be detected among them inconsistent with that word." (1) The main function of the ministry was to proclaim the word, to instruct the people. Wealth was used primarily for charity rather than amassing splendor for the externals of formal worship and display. Ordination was solemn and was performed in connection with the congregation, where the minister was to labor, rather than as a favor dispensed to favorites in the big centers of church power. The external form of church life, in other words, subserved the purposes of the spiritual dissemination of God's word. (2)

With the rise of papal tyranny, however, Calvin maintained this ancient form of government was entirely subverted. Looking at the bishops of the contemporary Roman Church, Calvin maintained "...for a hundred years, scarcely one in a hundred that has been chosen had any knowledge of the Holy Scripture." (3) All popular voice in the election of a bishop has been lost. (4) As for the bishops, in turn, "...by their ordination they create, not presbyters to rule and feed the people, but priests to offer sacrifice." (5) Deacons are ordained only to certain offices in relation to the sacrament, and not to the task of caring for the poor. Presbyters are ordained without assigning them to any station. It is so corrupt that "...the end for which

(1) IV, 4, I

(2) IV, 4, Passim

(3) IV, 5, I

(4) IV, 5, II

(5) IV, 5, IV

sacerdotal offices are conferred, is not to provide for the Churches, but for the persons to whom they are given." (1) It is so corrupt that "...nothing remains to them but the altar upon which to offer up Christ in sacrifice, and this is not sacrificing to God, but to demons..." (2) Furthermore, "they have discarded the preaching of the word, the superintendence of discipline, and the administration of the sacraments." (3) Their so-called "sacerdotal order" they have not received from Christ, from his apostles or from the ancient Church. (4)

What defense can be offered for these corruptions and for the tremendous self-enrichment of the Roman Church? They say that "the princely state of the priesthood constitutes the only fulfillment of those predictions in which the ancient prophets describe the splendor of the kingdom of Christ." (5) If a Jew were to make a similar mistake, "there is no doubt that they would reprove his stupidity, in transferring to the world of flesh and blood things which are spiritually of the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah." (6) Furthermore, "...they are so far from feeling any just concern for the living temples, that they would suffer thousands of the poor to perish with hunger, rather than convert the smallest chalice or silver pitcher into money to relieve their wants." (7)

Having thus surveyed the various corruptions of the contemporary Roman Church, Calvin comes to the basic issue of the Papacy, itself. He asks the central question "whether it be necessary to the true system of what they call the hierarchy or government of the Church, that one See should have the preeminence above the rest in dignity and

(1) IV, 5, VI
(2) IV, 5, IX
(3) IV, 5, X
(4) IV, 5, XIV

(5) IV, 5, XVII
(6) Ibid
(7) IV, 5, XVIII

power, so as to be the head of the whole body." (1) Although the Romanists maintain that adherence to the See of Rome is "...the principal and almost only bond of the unity of the Church..." (2) Calvin feels that "...it originated neither in the institution of Christ nor in the usage of the ancient Church..." (3) It is vain to argue that the Jewish high-priesthood at Jerusalem was the precedent for the power of the Popes at Rome. The high priest was merely a type for Christ. (4) As for Christ's commission to Peter, it was no more than that given to any other of the Apostles. (5) Having proved this contention from Scripture, Calvin then maintains that even if Peter were the leader, that is a far cry from establishing a permanent visible head over the entire Church. (6) The only head of the Church is Christ, himself, and all men, without exception, are the body. Nor has Christ deputized any man to act in his stead. (7) Christ, at his ascension, withdrew his visible presence. "He ascended that he might fill all things." (8) Christ, then, himself is present in the Church as its head. To fix on and to exalt one particular man and one particular place to Christ's place as unique head of the Church, is blasphemous. (9) But in any case, having denied that Peter was the head of the Church or that Rome could have been the Christian capitol, Calvin concludes "...that the unity of the Church requires the supremacy of some earthly head, was altogether unknown to the ancients." (10)

Spiritual prophecy is not fulfilled by carnal splendor, nor does the spiritual sovereignty of Christ necessitate the carnal sovereignty of a human ruler. External form witnesses to, and in some measure, signifies spiritual nature, but should never become the substitute for

(1) IV, 6, II	(6) IV, 6, VIII
(2) IV, 6, I	(7) IV, 6, IX
(3) Ibid	(8) IV, 6, X
(4) IV, 6, II	(9) IV, 6, XII
(5) IV, 6, III, IV	(10) IV, 6, XVII

spiritual promise or spiritual unity. The symbol must never itself obscure or replace the spiritual reality to which it points. The splendor of visible symbols and the world-wide government of a human organization of the Church are not the prerequisites for belief in the spiritual glory and the spiritual rule of Christ. Temporal, external form, in religion, must not presume to stand on its own merit.

After describing the rise and progress of the papacy, (1) Calvin then turns to the power of the Church in regard to articles of faith. The Church has no power, in itself, to promulgate articles of faith. "The power of the Church, therefore, is not unlimited, but subject to the word of the Lord, and, as it were, included in it." (2) The Patriarchs beheld God, as it were, in the Son, as in a mirror. The prophets, themselves, received from the Lord the heavenly doctrine they proclaimed. (3) "But when it pleased God to raise up a more visible form of a church, it was his will that his word should be committed to writing..." (4) The priests, in turn, derived all they taught the people from this written word, "...that all the doctrine which should be delivered might be examined by that rule." (5) With the advent of Christ, "The Sun of Righteousness", we have "the full splendour of Divine truth." God has "completed all the branches of instruction in his Son." (6) All that there is that man can or should know of God has been declared in Christ. The full gospel has been revealed. "We may learn neither to invent anything new or beyond it, ourselves, nor to receive any such thing from the invention of others." (7) Thus we are brought to the basic doctrine of Reformed Theology, which is that all faith must be measured by the word of God

(1) IV, 7, Passim
(2) IV, 8, IV
(3) IV, 8, V
(4) IV, 8, VI

(5) Ibid
(6) Ibid
(7) IV, 8, VII

which "...is contained first in the law and the prophets, and secondly in the writings of the apostles, and that there is no other method of teaching aright in the Church than according to direction and standard of that word." (1) When armed with that word, the Church can declare what is true faith firmly "with the noble confidence which becomes a servant of God furnished with his certain commission." (2) All the authority of the pastors of the Church is in their submission to the word of the Lord. In it they "may govern all mankind...may reprove, rebuke, and restrain the rebellious and obstinate; may bind and loose; may discharge their lightnings and thunders, if necessary, but all in the word of God." (3)

Thus Calvin describes and limits the power of the visible Church,- the church of external organization and visible form. When it is the vehicle of God's word, it cannot be stopped or conditioned. When it departs from the word and speaks in its own right, it has no divine authority. Councils cannot declare articles that were not in the original gospel. (4) True, the "whole society of believers...possesses a more ample and precious treasure of heavenly wisdom, than each particular individual believer." (5) Calvin "freely acknowledges" that "the Lord is continually present with his servants, and that he guides them by his Spirit..." (6) But the Holy Spirit has not made the Church perfect and all-wise; rather it is working in it to improve it and finally, at Christ's coming - but not until then - to make it perfect. (7) The Romanists, maintains Calvin, "...ascribe to the Church an authority independent of the word; we maintain it to be annexed to the word, and inseparable from it." (8)

It is thus with councils (9) and with the legislation of the

(1) IV, 8, VIII
(2) IV, 8, IX
(3) Ibid
(4) IV, 8, X
(5) IV, 8, XI

(6) Ibid
(7) IV, 8, XII
(8) IV, 8, XIII
(9) IV, 9, Passim

Church. The Church is free to make regulations necessary to its proper functioning. Calvin opposes, however, "constitutions which tend to bind souls internally before God, and to fill them with scruples as if they enjoined things necessary to salvation." (1)

Here is a good example of Calvin's distinction between the internal, spiritual realm, and external form. Because conscience is an internal awareness of God, it cannot be subjected to the demands of the world. "...It is something between God and man which permits not a man to suppress what he knows within himself, but pursues him till it brings him to a sense of his guilt." (2) Such an internal awareness cannot be compelled by human legislation. Demands for this or that good work cannot be laid upon it. Conditions cannot be placed by man on the salvation which God offers, nor can the conscience be allowed to worship God in any but God's own way. This condition for true worship is a part of Calvin's sense of being conscience-bound only to God. Since our conscience is bound only to God, we can be bound and led in our relations with God only by his Word. (3) To bring human traditions into the worship of God is to pollute it. Such human novelties, proceeding from warped human minds, are "impure corruptions of it." (4) This is because the external form bears the nature of its spiritual source, and "...what could proceed from the minds of men, but things carnal, foolish and truly expressive of their authors?" (5) The soul cannot be subjected to such inappropriate modes of worship. God's will, alone, should inform man's conscience as to the requirements for salvation and as to the proper mode of worship. God, alone, is the Lord of the conscience.

To affirm the independence of conscience from man-made regulations, for salvation or worship, is not to deny the need for polity in the

(1) IV, 10, II
(2) IV, 10, III
(3) IV, 10, VIII

(4) IV, 10, XXIII
(5) IV, 10, XXIV

Church to preserve the common peace and to maintain concord. Man must make those laws and take those measures that will maintain the proper existence of the visible Church. "Churches are best supported by well-ordered regulation... No polity will be sufficiently steady unless it be established by certain laws; nor can any order be preserved without some settled form." (1) The affairs of the Church must be conducted with decorum and dignity that "the community may be kept together by the firm bonds of courtesy and moderation." (2) There are two particular goals of good regulation. The first is proper decorum, that proper respect be maintained for sacred things in worship, and that "modesty and gravity of virtuous actions"(3) be found in the Church. The second goal of proper regulation is the maintenance of order. The affairs of the Church should not be conducted in tumult. Orderly procedure insures the preservation of peace and tranquillity. (4)

In contrast to such goals of Church procedure, Calvin points to the useless splendor and elegance of the Roman mass. The form of worship should not be itself an exhibition, but should exercise piety or at least provide "an ornament corresponding to the act;" (5) it should show the proper modesty, fear and reverence for sacred services. Order is the maintenance of the proper external form which excludes all "confusion, incivility, obstinacy, clamors and dissensions." (6) Such proper external form in worship involves such proper procedures as kneeling with head uncovered when in prayer, avoiding slovenliness in the administration of the sacraments, maintaining the proper order in the burial of the dead. Regular hours of worship should be maintained, as well as decorous behavior in public service. The proper

(1) IV, 10, XXVII
(2) IV, 10, XXVIII
(3) Ibid

(4) Ibid
(5) IV, 10, XXIX
(6) Ibid

order of the church is only upheld when true discipline is maintained, when there are catechizings, holy fasts and censures and excommunication, where necessary. The proper spiritual life is only maintained when good form is maintained in rites, ceremonies and discipline for the peace and edification of the body of Christ. (1)

It is important for these ends, that no constitutions be accepted for the Church but those "founded on the authority of God, and deduced from the Scripture." (2) But when we face the practical task of maintaining order, we realize that God has given only general rules. Places and times differ, so these rules must be applied in different ways. While this introduces the human element, Calvin holds that "...if we submit to the dictates of charity, all will be well." (3) In this connection "...the customs and laws of the country..., the dictates of modesty and even humanity, itself, will direct us what to do, what to avoid." (4) If all these are joined with the restraints of charity, the health of the church will be maintained. Charity should also teach us that one church should not despise another on account of differences in this external discipline. (5) The basic government of the church is the word of God, but in a changing world in which man lives, varied expressions in church government can and must be formed, but all must still be united by a mutual charity. Proper external order and form is everywhere needed, but the criterion for determining its propriety is spiritual utility.

Calvin proceeds to discuss the jurisdiction of the Church. The Church's responsibility is entirely for maintaining a spiritual polity. It is to keep its own spiritual house in order. The keys of the kingdom were a symbol to the apostles that God was on their side. The power of opening heaven to men is not, strictly speaking, given to men

(1) Ibid
(2) IV, 10, XXX
(3) Ibid

(4) IV, 10, XXXI
(5) IV, 10, XXXII

at all, however, but to God's word, of which men have been appointed to be the ministers. (1) The misguided Papists, however, attempt to show that the gift of the keys establishes auricular confession, excommunication, jurisdiction in civil affairs, legislation of new law, indulgences. "They are so expert in fitting their keys to any locks and doors they please, that it should seem as if they had followed the business of locksmiths all their lifetime." (2) They have seen in the keys, not so much the description of the spiritual results of the Church's ministry, as a definite authority handed over to the visible Church, giving it the power of external, temporal compulsion.

The church and the state, however, each has its respective sphere. The state must punish by coercing and restraining evil doers. Such civil discipline is not for the church. The church disciplines and exhorts the internal conscience of men, with the purpose of convincing them of sin and leading them to salvation and growth in grace. The external compulsion of the state is necessary to the proper conduct of the church, while the church creates in people a new spirit that prevents the multiplication of civil offenders. (3) The secular power of the Roman Church, the rule of popes over territories, and bishops over cities, clearly departs from the example of the early Church and is a violation of the proper relation between Church and state. (4) The power of the Church is exclusively spiritual. (5) "...As the Church neither possesses, nor ought to desire, the power to constrain, - I speak of civil coercion, - it is the part of pious kings and princes to support religion by laws, edicts, and judicial sentences." (6)

(1) IV, 11, I
(2) IV, 11, II
(3) IV, 11, III

(4) IV, 11, VIII
(5) IV, 11, XI
(6) IV, 11, XVI

Having thus differentiated between civil and spiritual polity, Calvin explains how the spiritual polity or discipline is to be exercised. In this discussion, of course, the structure of Church government previously delineated is presupposed. He begins by stating the thesis that "...if no society, and even no house, though containing only a small family, can be preserved in a proper state without discipline, this is far more necessary in the Church, the state of which ought to be the most orderly of all." (1) Calvin maintains that "discipline forms the ligaments which connect the members together, and keep each in its proper place." (2) It is a bridle to curb and restrain the refractory, or a spur to stimulate the inactive. It is the "...father's rod with which those who have grievously fallen may be chastised in mercy,..." (3) The actual application of discipline should be determined by the nature of the offense. Where there are private sins, admonish first privately; if there is no change, the correction should be with witnesses. If this fails to produce reformation, then the correction should be made before the Church, and if this fails to produce results, the offender should be cut off from the communion of believers until he is brought to repentance. Where there is public scandal, however, the "solemn correction of the Church" should take place immediately. (4) Such discipline is necessary for the health of the Church, lest scandalous livers be numbered among believers, especially that the Lord's Supper may not be profaned. It is necessary, furthermore, for the Church to disassociate itself from the impenitent doers of evil, that its good members may not be corrupted. The final, and perhaps the most important reason, is that those who are thus censured or excommunicated may, through their shame, be brought to repentance and eventual

(1) IV, 12, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) IV, 12, III

readmission to the Church. (1) The purpose is not to exasperate or confound the offender. (2) Indeed, when the offender has given sufficient evidence of his repentance, and has, as far as in him lies, obliterated the offense, "he is by no means to be pressed any further." (3) "And to comprehend all in a word, let us not condemn to eternal death the person himself, who is in the hand and power of God alone, but let us content ourselves with judging the nature of his works according to the law of the Lord." (4) We should not account him as an enemy but treat him as a brother. We have power only over the external realm of actions; God alone can bind the conscience. (5)

When a common sin has infected the whole people, the method of public fasting is recommended, provided the correction be done "...with such moderation as to be salutary rather than injurious to the body." (6) The extent and form of fasting is not prescribed in the Word of God, but is left to the judgment of the Church. (7) Its goal is threefold: the restraint on the flesh to prevent licentiousness, as a preparation for prayers or as "a testimony of our humiliation in the presence of God." (8) Thus Calvin looks to the spiritual utility of the formal practice, whether for its negative restraint, its positive inspiration or as the symbolic expression of a spiritual relation we have with God. (9) He is, on the other hand, very suspicious of any attempt to make it an act of merit. "...It is a thing indifferent in itself, and possesses no other value than it derives from those ends to which it ought to be directed..." It has no value unless it be accompanied "with a correspondent disposition of the heart." (10) Rather than be corrupted into an act of merit, the whole practice might better be discontinued. The fasting at Lent should not, for instance, be

(1) IV, 12, V	(6) IV, 12, XIII
(2) IV, 12, VI	(7) IV, 12, XIV
(3) IV, 12, VIII	(8) IV, 12, XV
(4) IV, 12, IX	(9) IV, 12, XVI
(5) IV, 12, X	(10) IV, 12, XIX

elevated to the position of being an especially meritorious imitation of Christ. (1)

A similar view of the discipline of the clergy is next presented. The ecclesiastic should not engage in worldly pursuits or carnal practices. The clergyman should not spend his time hunting, gambling, feasting or attending dissolute dances. (2) While the Roman Clergy is overlax in such respects, it is overstrict in requiring celibacy. They strictly forbid marriage to their priests but, so Calvin feels, do not close the door sufficiently on the sexual immorality of the clergy. They forbid the godly institution of the Christian home to the priest, but make it possible for the priest to misbehave in a truly scandalous manner. (3) They attach merit to the form of celibacy, and reject the spiritual benefits which can result from married life. (4)

Calvin next turns his attention to the religious vow. In the contemporary Church he saw men and women seek to gain God's approval by making vows of more or less severity. In the first place, Calvin objects, God's favor is won not by the "contrivance of new works," but by the hearty obedience to his clearly declared will. As he has done frequently before, he again condemns "all the services which we invent for the purpose of gaining the favour of God..." (5) The humanly invented vow is more of a religious amusement to him who makes it, than the obedient response of man to his Maker. No vow should be made except by a conscience clearly directed by God's word. We should contemplate our calling and not sacrifice the liberty which God has conferred upon us. (6) "...We have no reason to hope that we should perform a service acceptable to God, by making ourselves slaves to

(1) IV, 12, XX
(2) IV, 12, XXII
(3) IV, 12, XXIII

(4) IV, 12, XXVIII
(5) IV, 13, I
(6) Ibid

external things, which ought to be subservient to our assistance." (1)
We ought to make vows only for the proper purpose. They can be made from gratitude or as humiliation for our sins. When made to include the future, they should be partly to render us more cautious of danger, partly to stimulate us to the performance of duty. (2)
"Now the form, or at least the sum of the vow is that, renouncing Satan, we devote ourselves to the service of God, to obey his holy commands, and not to follow the corrupt inclinations of the flesh!" (3)
Vows made from the fickle imaginings of the human mind are abominations. (4) It is true that the monastic vow was originated in the ancient Church, but, while even then it was something done over and above God's word, the intention and the nature of ancient monasticism were generally good. The ancient monks truly led the simple life. The monastery was a spiritual training ground for eventual service in the government of the Church. Their mode of life did not impose restrictions not found in the word of God. (5) They did not live in idleness at the expense of others. The main purpose of monasticism for Augustine, was "no other than an exercise and assistance in the duties of piety which are enjoined on all Christians." (6) Charity was the principal bond of it, not a conspiracy of a few men closely bound together and separated from the whole body of the Church. (7)
Modern monasticism, however, exalts a mere human invention, an artificial perfection above "...all the kinds of life which he has appointed and celebrated by his own testimony." (8) When vows such as these are made illegitimately, they are an abomination, for "...all vows, not legitimate or rightly made, as they are of no value with God, so they ought to have no force with us." (9)

(1) IV, 13, III
(2) IV, 13, IV
(3) IV, 13, VI
(4) IV, 13, VII
(5) IV, 13, VIII

(6) IV, 13, X
(7) Ibid
(8) IV, 13, XI
(9) IV, 13, XX

What, then, is the significance of the category of external form in the doctrine of the Church? External form is presented as the vehicle which God has been pleased to use to reach the spirits of men who are themselves both body and soul. As the Incarnation shows that God saw fit to seal spiritual redemption by assuming human flesh, so the institution of the Church shows he is willing to speak to us according to our earthly condition. We are not lifted above the world of space and time, but are redeemed within it, by the temporal agency of the visible Church. While the true visible Church may contain unworthy elements, its form is founded on the word of God and is conformable to his will. We cannot cut ourselves off from the external form of such an institution. Where the church arrogantly substitutes human invention for divine institution, however, it must be rejected. Its power is spiritual, its constitution and ability to lay down doctrine, impose oaths, etc., is dependent on its obedience to the word of God. When it assumes temporal and coercive authority, it has deviated from its true function. Its unity and splendor are spiritually discoverable only in Christ and must not be identified with external recommendations. All the external form of the visible Church, therefore, must be tried on the grounds of divine institution and spiritual utility. All external form in the Church must, at the same time, be authorized by God and help us in understanding and obeying his revealed will. Heaven must descend to the external world in which we live, in order to keep our eyes looking up. When an external ecclesiastical form does not lift our eyes above itself, it is false. When it does so lift our eyes, it has fulfilled its true reason for being.

THE SACRAMENTS

After Calvin has thus delineated the doctrine of the Church and contrasted it to the various false doctrines, he turns to the Sacraments. The external form of the Church, as we remember, is to be determined by the true preaching of the word and the pure administration of the sacraments. True preaching, of course, can be readily discerned by its doctrinal content. How, then, are we to determine the purity of the sacraments? In the first place, their external form is not to be thought of as something in itself, for their ceremonies are "connected with the preaching of the gospel," as "another assistance and support of our faith..." (1) In order to judge the purity of the sacraments, we must first determine what, essentially, a sacrament is. The sacrament "...is an outward sign, by which the Lord seals in our consciences the promises of his good-will towards us, to support the weakness of our faith; and we, on our part, testify our piety towards him in his presence and that of angels, as well as before men." (2) While this is a "simple and appropriate definition", Calvin is able, even more briefly, to define the sacraments as "a testimony of the grace of God towards us, confirmed by an outward sign with a reciprocal attestation of our piety towards him." (3)

On viewing these definitions, we can find new insight into Calvin's attitude toward external form. The sacrament is perhaps the occasion, in the life of the Church, at which the visible is most intimately concerned with the invisible. A visible, external element is separated from the rest of the visible external world

(1) IV, 14, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

and becomes a sign and symbol of the invisible; it becomes the means of communion with the invisible world. What a theology holds to be the relation between the spiritual, personal realm and the physical, outward realm, will largely determine its view of the sacrament. Calvin's definition, in agreement with his underlying attitude toward external form, avoids both the Catholic tendency to identify the grace with the sign of the grace, and also the Quaker conviction that the spirit must function without the use of visible symbol.

There is yet another position from which Calvin's definition differs. This is the view often associated with Protestantism. It is the doctrine that the Sacrament is without objective significance except as an exercise of religious feeling or a bringing to memory of a past event. Calvin takes seriously the need for an external, outward sign for the exercise of religious faith. Man is not a disembodied spirit, and thus needs all the legitimate external, visible assistance possible to quicken his spiritual life. The sacramental sign itself, however, must not be confused with the spiritual basis for the sacrament. The actual performance of the sacrament does not change the nature of bread, wine, water or oil, nor does it, by and of itself, change the relation between the individual and God. It is more than merely an act of religious feeling. The Lord actually uses it to seal "...in our consciences the promises of his good-will to us." (1) Thus the reason for the sacraments is their influence on the heart of the believer, but they are God-given signs and assurances of the good-will of God towards us. The word "seal" has the sense of "visible guarantee." (2) There are definite legal overtones to such a word. While the sacrament is the

(1) Ibid
(2) Signum

external, visible guarantee and seal of God's benevolence, it is, for those who partake, an external testimony of our piety "in his presence and that of angels as well as before men." (1) For a man to take part in a sacrament is to make a definite commitment witnessed by heaven and earth. The sacrament, then, is taken seriously, not just as an inspiring ceremony, but as a very real and binding transaction between heaven and earth.

The basic meaning of the word sacramentum (literally "oath") is understood when we find that it is a translation of the Greek mysterion. While Calvin, in his definition above, is involved in the legal aspect of the sacrament, it is interesting that he is also insistent upon the transcendent, literally "mysterious" aspect of the sacrament. The Western Church, according to Calvin, used the Latin sacramentum, then, not in the mere legalistic sense of contract or oath. The word "...came to be applied to these signs which contained a representation of sublime and spiritual things." (2)

There is no sacrament without an "antecedent promise of God." Any true sacrament is given only to "confirm and seal" such a promise. Not that the sacred word of God is in need of being further confirmed, but rather that we be established in the faith of it. The sacraments are a support for our feeble, earth-bound faith, for "...our merciful Lord, in his infinite indulgence, accomodates himself to our capacity, condescending to lead us to himself even by these earthly elements, and in the flesh itself to present to us a mirror of spiritual blessings." (3) Thus, in the Sacrament, there is the word and the visible sign. By the word, Calvin means not "a murmur without any meaning or faith, a mere whisper like a magical incantation supposed to possess the power of consecrating the elements, but of the

(1) Ibid
(2) IV, 14, II
(3) IV, 14, III

gospel preached, which instructs us in the signification of the visible sign." (1) A spiritual faith-relationship must be established on the basis of God's word if the sacrament is to be proper. The word of God must not only be repeated, but believed. It is not the mere transient sound of the words, but the permanent virtue of it. God has never given a sign without connecting it with a definite doctrine, for otherwise "...our senses would only be astonished with the mere view of it." (2) In any sacrament, there must be audible and intelligible preaching of the word, instructing the people in the meaning and tendency of the sign. (3)

Why, then, have the sacrament at all? If people know the preached word to be the will of God, why add the sacramental sign? If they do not grasp the word, how can they be assisted by the sacrament, when the virtue lies entirely within the word? To this Calvin replies that while seals appended to a document are nothing, taken by themselves, yet they "confirm and authenticate what is written on the instruments to which they are annexed." (4) The sacraments "...have this peculiarity beyond the word, that they give us a lively representation of .../the promises/ as in a picture." (5) Nor should there be any confusion because frail and transitory elements are used to certify the eternal and spiritual. "For the believer, when the sacraments are placed before his eyes, does not confine himself to that carnal spectacle, but by...steps of analogy...rises in pious contemplation to the sublime mysteries which are concealed under the sacramental symbols." (6) A symbol such as a handshake can be the conclusion of a covenant, the substance of which has been made with words. Thus, the sacrament is the sealing of our covenant with God; it is a "visible word." (7)

(1) IV, 14, IV
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid
(4) IV, 14, V

(5) Ibid
(6) Ibid
(7) IV, 14, VI

Built upon the foundation of word of God, the sacraments are ^{the} pillars to reinforce our faith. They are "...like mirrors in which we may contemplate the riches of grace which God imparts to us; for in the sacraments, as we have already observed, he manifests himself to us...and testifies his benevolence and love towards us more expressly than he does by his word." (1) The fact that the sacraments do not aid the wicked who may receive them, does not invalidate them. They still remain, and "wherever God pleases, they afford a true testimony of the communion of Christ, and the Spirit of God himself exhibits and performs the very thing which they promise." (2) It is dangerous conceit to feel, on the other hand, that our faith is ever so perfect as not to be able to be improved by any such God-given aid. The sacraments are a great aid as long as we remember that their efficacy does not inhere in them, but is made possible by the work of the Holy Spirit. As in every other instance where Calvin deals with external form, it is dependent on the internal working of the Holy Spirit. (3) "For first the Lord teaches and instructs us by his word; secondly, he confirms us by his sacraments; lastly, he illuminates our minds by the light of his Holy Spirit, and opens an entrance into our hearts for the word and sacraments, which otherwise would only strike the ears and present themselves to the eyes, without producing the least effect upon the mind." (4) As light cannot benefit the blind eye, so the external symbols of the sacraments do not benefit one whose heart is not opened by the Holy Spirit. It is by him that we are prepared to receive the sacraments; it is by him our faith is confirmed and increased through them. (5) Not that any power is placed in the creatures, but rather they are the means and instruments used as the Lord has seen suitable "in order that all things may be subservient to his glory, as he is the

(1) Ibid

(2) IV, 14, VII

(3) Ibid

(4) IV, 14, VIII

(5) IV, 14, IX

Lord and Ruler of all." (1)

Thus we should neither "disparage or diminish" the "secret significations" of the sacraments as though they were given in vain and were not of great advantage to us. On the other hand, we should beware "of not elevating our minds beyond the visible sign," and so of transferring "...to the sacraments the praise of those benefits, which are only conferred upon us by Christ alone...by the agency of the Holy Spirit." (2) Although God may give us visible signs of his good pleasure, he, in no way, resigns the true effectiveness of his working in our hearts to mere external symbols. "God accomplishes within, that which the minister represents and testifies by the external act." (3)

Calvin has been describing the essential meaning of the term "sacrament." This term applies to any sign "which God has ever given to men, to certify and assure them of the truth of his promises." (4) The tree of life, and the "bow in the cloud" are examples of the earliest sacrament, natural objects used as signs and seals of his covenant. Ceremonies such as circumcision, ablutions, sacrifices were "the sacraments of the Jews" till the coming of Christ. These had "the same object towards which ours are now directed, their design being to point and lead to Christ, or rather, as images, to make him known." (5) He adds, "there is only one difference between those sacraments and ours: they prefigured Christ as promised and still expected; ours represent him as already come and manifested." (6) Thus the basic nature of the sacraments remains the same, although they were adapted to a different era. "If we consider the visible form, there was a difference; if we regard the intelligible signification they drank the same spiritual drink!..." (7)

(1) IV, 14, XII
(2) IV, 14, XVI
(3) IV, 14, XVII
(4) IV, 14, XVIII

(5) Ibid
(6) IV, 14, XX
(7) IV, 14, XXI

In concluding his discussion of the sacraments, as such, Calvin cautions against all talk about the work wrought (opus operatum) by them, for the action in the reception of the sacraments does not constitute meritorious action, and the "action itself being, as far as they are concerned, merely passive", believers should not think of anything being accomplished by them. The sacraments should be a spur to the earnest approach to God, himself, to supply all our needs. Though the sacramental sign is physical, its purpose is to lift our eyes above it to its Author, and thus from him we can receive our spiritual aid. (1)

Baptism is the first Christian sacrament discussed. Calvin defines it as "...a sign of initiation, by which we are admitted into the society of the Church, in order that, being incorporated into Christ, we may be numbered among the children of God." (2) Those who view it as a mere mark signifying our religion before men, forget "...the principal thing in baptism, which is, that we ought to receive it with this promise, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'" (3) On the other hand, we must not attach undue power to the performance of baptism. Although Paul spoke about being saved by the washing of regeneration, and Peter said "baptism doth save us", it was not their intention to imply that water contains, in itself, the virtue to regenerate, or that the act of baptism causes salvation. Rather does baptism offer us only the purification of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. Indeed, the best corrective against a superstitious view of baptism, is simply "the signification of baptism, itself, for it testifies and symbolizes the blood of Christ as our only ablution." (4) Baptism signifies the washing away not only of past

(1) IV, 14, XXVI
(2) IV, 15, I

(3) Ibid
(4) IV, 15, II

sins, but it is the seal of our life-long repentance, (1) and therefore, "if repentance be enjoined upon us as long as we live, the virtue of baptism ought to be extended to the same period." (2) Baptism is truly a sign before men, of our loyalty to Christ, but it is more than a merely human symbol. (3) "...It requires to be received as from the hand of the Author himself; we ought to consider it as beyond all doubt, that it is he who speaks to us by this sign." For Christ "truly and certainly performs these things internally on our souls, as we see that our bodies are externally washed, immersed, and enclosed in water." (4) This leads Calvin to a very revealing description of the sacraments, and of the relation of spiritual grace to external form. "For this analogy or similitude is a most certain rule of sacraments; that in corporeal things we contemplate spiritual things, just as if they were placed before our eyes, as it has pleased God to represent them to us by such figures: not that such blessings are bound or enclosed in the sacrament, or that it has the power to impart them to us; but only because it is a sign by which the Lord testifies his will, that he is determined to give us all these things: nor does it merely feed our eyes with a bare prospect of the symbols, but conducts us at the same time to the thing signified, and efficaciously accomplishes that which it represents." (5)

The fact that we need an external symbol of baptism should not lead us to feel that one particular form is alone to be allowed. Whether the person who is baptized be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, or whether water be only poured or sprinkled upon him, is of no importance" and although the early Church used immersion, "Churches ought to be left at liberty in this respect..." (6)

(1) IV, 15, III
(2) IV, 15, IV
(3) IV, 15, XIII

(4) IV, 15, XIV
(5) Ibid
(6) IV, 15, XIX

Laymen should not baptize.⁽¹⁾ Children should be baptized by a minister of the Church, and even if there is danger of imminent death, layman's baptism should not be resorted to, for it is not necessary for salvation; "God pronounces that he adopts our infants as his Children, before they are born, when he promises that he will be a God to us, and to our seed after us." (2)

When children are mentioned in relation to baptism, the question can be raised as to whether the sacrament of baptism is to be extended to them. There are what Calvin calls "some turbulent spirits" who deny the validity of infant baptism. They claim it is a human invention not originating with Christ. (3) The right approach to the sacramental sign is to view not the "external ceremonies" but "the promise and spiritual mysteries which the Lord has appointed those ceremonies to represent." (4) Once the spiritual purpose is understood, an appreciation of the "reason and use of the external sprinkling" will follow naturally. The first thing represented by baptism is "the remission and purgation of sins;" the second is the "mortification of the flesh which consists in the participation of his death"; it is also a "sign by which we testify our religion before men." (5) Circumcision was a sign of the ancient Hebrews similar to baptism. It symbolized the extension of the covenant to the children, for Abraham received the promise for himself and for his seed after him. It was expressly given as a sign of the "remission of sins and the mortification of the flesh." Like all signs of the Old Testament, moreover, it had reference to Christ alone. (6) Thus the promise of circumcision and baptism is both remission of sins and eternal life, and the thing signified is, in each case, regeneration. Thus the only difference is between the

(1) IV, 15, XX
(2) Ibid
(3) IV, 16, I

(4) IV, 16, II
(5) Ibid
(6) IV, 16, III

external signs. (1)

Circumcision was the seal of a covenant into which the infant was received. If the covenant remains firm and unmoved, it belongs to the children of Christians now, as much as it did to the Jews under the Old Testament. If the substantial spiritual element of the covenant extends to infants, why should not also the sign? (2) "...This sign of God, communicated to a child like the impress of a seal, ratifies and confirms the promise given to the pious parent." (3) It also signifies the acceptance of the infant as a true child of God. "...God is so kind and liberal to his servants, as, for their sakes, to appoint even the children who shall descend from them to be enrolled among his people." (4) For children to receive baptism signifies that they experience regeneration. To deny baptism to children is to deny the possibility of that regeneration which alone brings salvation, for regeneration is accomplished as much in children as in adults, for God is "...able to sanctify whom he pleases," (5) and it is unreasonable not to think that God cannot reveal himself in any way so as to make himself known to them. Though infant psychology differs from adult, yet we cannot deny that there can be a faith appropriate to any particular stage of development. (6) "Wherefore, unless we are obstinately determined to obscure the goodness of God, let us present to him our children, to whom he assigns a place in his family, that is, among the members of his Church." (7)

Infant baptism illustrates the real significance of external form in Calvin's doctrine of the sacraments. All external sacramental form has significance only in relation to faith. One would therefore suppose that only when a person is old enough to claim to be a believer,

(1) IV, 16, IV
(2) IV, 16, V
(3) IV, 16, IX
(4) IV, 16, XV

(5) IV, 16, XVII
(6) Ibid
(7) IV, 16, XXXII

could he be a candidate for baptism. The fact is, however, that for Calvin the sacraments have a validity, not only on the basis of human faith, but also on divine promise, and the divine promise is to believers and their children. The sacraments do not simply signify the individual's faith, but they declare the promise of God. On the other hand, external form has no intrinsic power, and no effectiveness except as it seals previous faith. The water does not have an inherent power to save the soul. The faith, however, is primarily on the part of the parents who have accepted God's covenant. The act of setting apart the infant by the sign of baptism, is the seal of the promise God has made to the believer concerning his children. The external form signifies God's promise, and thus enrolls the child of the believer in the Church.

We have seen how baptism marks the entrance of the believer into the kingdom of Christ. The Lord does not cease to support us, however, after our original introduction. He provides for our continued nourishment in another sacrament, "a spiritual banquet, in which Christ testifies himself to be the bread of life, to feed our souls for a true and blessed immortality." (1) In it the signs of bread and wine represent to us the spiritual nourishment which we receive from the body and blood of Christ. (2) Thus pious souls have a constant source of satisfaction and confidence because they have a testimony that they are incorporated into one body with Christ. (3) We have as much certainty of our union with Christ in the sacrament "...as if Christ himself, were presented to our eyes and touched by our hands." (4)

We do not have confidence merely in the fact that the body and blood are distributed to us, but also, in the words "which is given for you"; "which is shed for you." (5) Thus the sacrament of the Lord's

(1) IV, 17, I
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

(4) IV, 17, III
(5) Ibid

Supper is the seal of a promise, and "...by the corporeal objects which are presented in the sacrament, we are conducted, by a kind of analogy, to those which are spiritual." (1) As bread nourishes and sustains us physically, so does the body of Christ, offered to us, nourish and sustain us spiritually. As wine "nourishes, refreshes, strengthens and exhilarates" the body, so does the blood of Christ serve our spirits. (2) "The principal object of the sacrament, therefore, is not to present us the body of Christ, simply and without any ulterior considerations, but rather to seal and confirm that promise, where he declares that his 'flesh is meat indeed' and his 'blood drink indeed,' by which we are nourished to eternal life...to seal that promise, ...it sends us to the cross of Christ, where the promise has been fully verified and entirely accomplished." (3)

There are two opposite mistakes into which one can fall in the approach to the Lord's Supper. The one is to "disjoin the sign from the mystery," and the other to "extoll" (4) the symbols, themselves, beyond all measure. As to the first, we should not think that "eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood" is merely an expression indicating belief in him. It is true we participate in him only as we believe, but we must have a true and complete participation of Christ that is more than intellectual apprehension. While Christ "dwelleth in our hearts by faith," the inhabitation is something more than merely faith itself. "We embrace Christ by faith not as appearing at a distance, but as uniting himself with us, to become our head, and to make us his members." (5) The faithful observation of the sacrament enables us to be thus knit to Christ, to eat his flesh and drink his blood through faith. It is not a mere stimulation of our religious senses, nor a mere external exhibition before men.

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) IV, 17, IV

(4) IV, 17, V
(5) Ibid

Before beginning his extended argument against "the contrary error of carrying it /the full communion of Christ/ to excess," Calvin feels called upon to present his own view of the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper. He confesses that no words he can use do justice to "unfold so great a mystery which I find myself incapable of properly comprehending, even in my mind; and this I am ready to acknowledge, that no person may measure the sublimity of the subject by my inadequate representation of it." (1) While he is unable to comprehend, he feels he can state the substance of his opinion.

While Christ has been the universal Lord from the beginning of the world, yet this has not been of sufficient comfort to a humanity alienated from him by sin. Only when the Word became flesh was there hope for those who were alienated from him. Only then could he be claimed as their saviour when he became "visible and palpable," when he has brought life to our flesh. As a result of his incarnation, all that we must do to receive the life of the word into our own flesh, is to open our hearts and to participate in his flesh, unite and knit ourselves to him. (2) This is not because his body has life, in itself, but rather because it receives life from the Divinity and conveys it to us. (3) Thus, if we are to have the life of the Son of Man, we must receive life from participation in his body. It is the Spirit that unites us to the body of Christ, despite our "immense local distance" from him. (4) It is true that the body of Christ is in heaven, but this, in no way, minimizes our true union with him. Testifying and seeking our actual communion with Christ, the Lord's Supper is no ineffectual sign, but the exertion of the energy of his Spirit. While the visible sacrament itself makes a universal declaration of the possibility of communion with Christ, the

(1) IV, 17, VII
(2) IV, 17, VIII

(3) IV, 17, IX
(4) IV, 17, X

actual communion is realized only by believers.⁽¹⁾ The visible sign seals donation of invisible substance; thus, receiving the symbol of his body, we receive the benefits of the body itself.

Having outlined the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, Calvin proceeds to oppose the conclusions of those who are overzealous in maintaining the reality of Christ's presence at the Supper. The first mistake is to maintain that Christ is attached to the elements of the bread and wine, "...as if the body of Christ were exhibited, by a local presence, to be felt by the hand, bruised by the teeth, and swallowed by the throat." (2) Calvin asserts, on the contrary, that Christ's body is finite "according to the invariable condition of a human body, and is contained in heaven." (3) It is by the Spirit, alone, that we are united to Christ's body. "For, if we behold the sun darting his rays and transmitting his substance, as it were, in them, to generate, nourish, and mature the roots of the earth, why should the irradiation of the Spirit of Christ be less effectual to convey to us the communication of his body and blood?" (4) To state the carnal presence of the body of Christ veiled by the form of the bread is, however subtly it be defended, to have taken bread for God. The truth of this mystery is lost unless the true body of Christ be represented by real bread. (5) The consecration is of value only to those who accept the elements in true faith; it is not a magical incantation which changes what the bread and wine are in themselves. (6)

Calvin also opposed those who explained the reality of Christ's presence by claiming that Christ's body was infinite, thus being "under the bread." This group, he feels, fails to realize the true spiritual descent which Christ makes to us because they cannot

(1) Ibid
(2) IV, 17, XII
(3) Ibid

(4) Ibid
(5) IV, 17, XIV
(6) IV, 17, XV

"conceive of any other participation of his flesh and blood except what would consist in local conjunction and contact or in some gross enclosure." (1)

Calvin thus outlines what to him is a truly spiritual view of the Lord's Supper. While not weighted down with superstition, it is profoundly supernatural. Though thoroughly aware of the greatness of the mystery, it calls for the activity of a clearly informed faith. It issues in the rules for the conduct of the sacrament which, in large part, have been the distinctive quality of the Reformed Faith. There is to be no reservation of the sacrament, (2) nor any adoration of the elements, for the elements have meaning only with the hearing of the words of institution. The sacrament, itself, is to be conducted with great sobriety and with a stress on clearly preached doctrine, understandable prayers and scriptural promises and words of institution. (3) In one particular, however, Calvin's view has failed to be generally practiced in the Reformed Church. He felt that it should be celebrated "at least once in every week." (4)

Having opposed the doctrine of transubstantiation, it is little wonder that Calvin also attacks the whole institution of the mass, which ceremony is so utterly different from the simplicity of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as envisaged by Calvin. The general idolatrous practices are monstrous, but the "mass, considered in its choicest and most estimable purity, without any of its appendages, from beginning to the end, is full of every species of impiety, blasphemy, idolatry and sacrilege." (5) By claiming to be priests capable of repeating Calvary, the Romanists deny Christ his true and sole priesthood. (6) By claiming that the mass repeats Calvary, they deny the sufficiency of the one and original Calvary; they deny

(1) IV, 17, XVI

(2) IV, 17, XXXIX

(3) IV, 17, XLIII

(4) Ibid

(5) IV, 18, XVIII

(6) IV, 18, II

the uniqueness of the cross. (1) The mass is not only an insult to Christ; it prevents believers from reflecting properly upon the death of Christ and its meaning for them. (2) How can one "consider himself redeemed by the death of Christ, when he sees a new redemption in the mass?" (3) The true commemoration of the Lord's death is therefore neglected and abolished. Man forgets that man cannot propitiate God, and that the only sacrifice^{he} which man can make to God since Christ's final propitiation, which are not vain, are the sacrifices of praise, thanksgiving and of a contrite heart that issues in good works. (4) 87 ?

When he proceeds to discuss the other "ceremonies falsely called sacraments" (5) of the Roman Church, Calvin objects that they are without the divine promise of grace attached to them. It is not that such ceremonies as confirmation, ordination and marriage should not be worthy ceremonies and part of well-regulated church life. The fact is that "the power to institute sacraments belongs to God alone," (6) and that these have not been instituted as sacraments. "A sacrament is a seal by which the testament or promise of God is sealed." (7) The word of God must precede it. Grace, then, cannot be claimed by any ceremony of human origin. The laying on of hands is a good form of benediction for those entering the Church, but no special dispensation of grace is promised in regard to it. (8) The laying on of hands, in cases of repentance, is "to be placed among indifferent things and external exercises, such as are not to be despised, but ought to hold a station far below the sacraments, which are enjoined upon us by the word of God." (9) As for extreme unction, the Romanists have confused the worthy practice of visiting and anointing the sick, "bedaubing"

(1) IV, 18, III
(2) IV, 18, IV
(3) IV, 18, VI
(4) IV, 18, XVI
(5) IV, 19, from Title

(6) IV, 19, II
(7) Ibid
(8) IV, 19, IV
(9) IV, 19, XIV

with oil "not sick persons but half-dead corpses, when their souls are at the point of departing from them." (1) Of ordination we have already seen the proper significance and use. (2) The so-called "ecclesiastical orders" are nothing which give special grace to those ordained. The ideal that men are separated to the sacrificing priesthood, is to return to the Old Testament dispensation. We have seen what injury they do to the priesthood of Christ when they claim priesthood for themselves. As for such orders as the deacons, their duties are too frivolous. The main objection to the acceptance of ordination as a sacrament seems to be that special grace would then be said to be automatically granted by man-made ceremonies. (3) As for matrimony, Calvin admits that it is instituted by God, but it is not what a sacrament must be, namely "an external ceremony appointed by God for the confirmation of a promise." (4)

Thus the significance of the category of external form in the sacraments is shown to be as a seal of an antecedent promise, a symbol of a preceding spiritual disposition. When the form is the product of human ingenuity, it has no effective saving power. When it comes with divine promise of grace, it can be taken as a tangible token of that grace itself. Water, bread or wine may be confidently used as symbols that seal in our hearts the promise which God offers us. When taken in themselves, the external elements or forms of the sacrament are powerless and meaningless. No special quality has been imparted to them as they are in themselves, but they have been used in a great spiritual intercourse. External form makes it possible for man to be united with God.

(1) IV, 19, XXI

(2) See IV, 3 Passim

(3) IV, 19, XXII, XXXIII

(4) IV, 19, XXXIV

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

Calvin now turns from the spiritual realm to secular society. From one point of view, the external form involved in this new area is of quite a different nature from that involved in the sacraments. There the external form was the direct symbolical expression of spiritual truth, and was of immediate concern to the believers' most intimate spiritual life. Civil government, on the other hand, is not even solely concerned with Christians, but is an institution involving all men, irrespective of their spiritual intention. While the external forms previously discussed had to do with the soul or inner man, civil government relates to the regulation of the external conduct. It is fundamentally a matter of external form and procedure. It is true that any social institution is made up of people, but its pattern and structure, the laws and customs of which it is made, exist independently of the feeling of the individuals of which it is composed. Civil institutions, therefore, like the ecclesiastical, are examples of external form.

The question arose for Calvin, as to the significance of the external forms of civil society for a treatise on Christian doctrine. To one school of thought, indeed, any social concern on the part of Christianity is irrelevant. Christianity, for this group, is solely concerned with preparing individual Christians for heaven. The Church is to have no concern with any matter of social significance. But Calvin felt called upon to treat the problem of the state because "...on the one hand, infatuated and barbarous men madly endeavor to subvert this ordinance established by God; and, on the other hand, the flatterers of princes, extolling their power beyond all just bounds, hesitate not to oppose it to the authority of God, himself." (1) It is necessary to give man a Christian understanding of

(1) IV, 20, I

the civil government lest he despise it or overly exalt it, for "unless both these errors be resisted the purity of the faith will be destroyed." (1) It is also well to be able to know how kind God has been in providing man with the blessings that civil government can bestow. Thus, we should not mistakenly consider an understanding of civil government as being irrelevant to Christian doctrine.

On the other hand, there are those who feel that Christian liberty sets man free from all restraints of civil society. But those who can distinguish between the body and the soul, between the present and future life, should know that "the spiritual kingdom of Christ and civil government are things very different and remote from each other." (2) We must respect the need for the existing external forms, knowing that "spiritual liberty may very well consist with civil servitude." (3)

"Yet this distinction does not lead us to consider the whole system of government as a polluted thing which has nothing to do with Christian men." (4) It is necessary that man, as long as he exists in the earthly body, have his temporal life ministered to by the civil government. We need it "to cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of men, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and tranquillity." (5) Calvin then summarizes the reasons by saying we need civil government "that there may be a public form of religion among Christians, and that humanity may be maintained among men." (6)

(1) Ibid
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

(4) IV, 20, II
(5) Ibid
(6) IV, 20, III

It is necessary for civil government to have magistrates, individuals with authority. The magistrate has the dignity of filling a God-given office. He is a minister of divine justice, whatever the form of government be, under which he functions. (1) We give hearty respect to the magistrate and his government, even though no one form of government is God-given. The best government is "...where liberty is regulated with becoming moderation, and properly established on a durable basis." (2) The particular external form of civil government is to be judged, therefore, by its utility in serving humanity, rather than by any inherent "divine right." Even if the maintenance of such good government were to involve war or capital punishment, the magistrate must not flinch from his duty. (3) Calvin recommends, therefore, the deepest respect for the magistrate under whom the Christian finds himself; but he is still able to present criteria by which the magistrate and the form of government itself are to be judged. We must give unwavering allegiance to the form, but know that this form is not something absolute, but rather an authorized means to the end of human welfare.

The foundation for civil law is the moral law. (4) The Hebrew judicial law, like the ceremonial law, has been abrogated by Christ, and is not, itself, the foundation for our present civil law. Thus "...all nations are left at liberty to enact such laws as they shall find to be respectively expedient for them; provided they be framed according to that perpetual rule of love, so that, though they vary in form, they may have the same end." (5) The foundation of all law, then, is the moral law. The moral law, however, is itself "...no other than a declaration of natural law, and of that conscience

(1) IV, 20, VII
(2) IV, 20, VIII
(3) IV, 20, X

(4) IV, 20, XIV
(5) IV, 20, XV

which has been engraven by God on the minds of men; the whole rule of this equity...is prescribed in it. This equity, therefore, must alone be the scope, and rule, and end of all laws." (1) Calvin thus was far from the dislike of the lex naturalis which characterizes many of his present-day disciples. There was a solid, natural foundation for all the civil, and religious law on this earth. It was part of the very life of man, and came from the will of God. It was not, therefore, an abstract collection of principles governed by the mind of man from an impersonal "nature," but rather the universal, undergirding formal expression of the will of God. The Christian, as Christian, therefore, can make full use of the civil law with clear conscience, even resorting, if he holds no malice, to the processes of litigation. (2) God's will for man has issued in the form of the natural law, and this external form can be confidently utilized by man in maintaining justice among men.

We are, then, to respect civil government, its magistrates and laws. As to any particular form of government, Calvin is a relativist. There is no absolute sanction for one form as opposed to another. When it comes to moral issues being involved in government, however, Calvin is an absolutist. There is an absolute standard by which all human life must be judged, which is the will of God expressed in the law of God.

Even to an unjust ruler, we owe unwavering obedience, for he is placed over us by the will of God. (3) Where there is a legitimate and constitutional means of popular control over the magistrate, as with the Roman Tribune, however, it can and must be used. (4) And where the magistrate so far departs from the very basis of his power as to command a form of worship not agreeable to the will of God,

(1) IV, 20, XVI
(2) IV, 20, XVII

(3) IV, 20, XXX
(4) IV, 20, XXXI

he is not to be obeyed. A ruler has no authority to "...seduce us from obedience to him, to whose will the desires of all kings ought to be subject." Indeed "...we truly perform the obedience which God requires of us when we suffer anything rather than deviate from piety." (1) Calvin here illustrates both his absolutism as to the standards for government, and his relativism in regard to the particular form of government actually existing. Any one government must be obeyed "for conscience sake" only when it does not seek to cause disobedience to the absolute standards for all human life, - the law of God. Civil government is an external form and must be restricted to the authority of any external form. When it is expressive of the will of a person, it has the nature of that person, but it never has inherent power. When civil government is concerned with ordering (perhaps even cruelly or oppressively) our secular lives, it is functioning under the mandate of God and therefore must be granted that respect which we owe to God. When it opposes God, it loses its authority. The significance of external form here, as throughout Calvin's Theology, is as a witness and seal to a previous spiritual reality, but not as a substitute for that reality. Only spirit can ultimately command spirit, and while forms may be used, they can only be seen as tokens of spirit. The spiritual never, even in civil society, surrenders its supremacy over the forms that express it.

(1) IV, 20, XXXI

CHAPTER FIVE

Concluding....

FORM IN AN APOLOGY FOR THE FAITH

SUMMARY OF THESIS.

CONCLUSION.

...Confirm thy soul
In self-control,
Thy liberty in law.

from "America, the Beautiful"
by Katharine Lee Bates

After having examined the significance of the category of form in the various sections of Calvin's theology, it might assist us if we consider the attitude revealed by Calvin when not presenting systematically this or that doctrine, but rather appealing to a king for an understanding of the Protestant cause. (1) His attitude toward external form in such a defense, should provide a basis for summarizing its significance for his theology as a whole. Another element to recommend the letter to Francis I, is that it comes at the beginning of Calvin's ministry, when his call was fresh in his mind. Here is a vital and impassioned defense of the evangelical position, written by a man in the midst of a life-situation, not an academician spinning out abstractions. He is not arguing with a theologian on a particular point, but addressing a ruler whose concern is largely with the practical impact of the evangelical faith on his kingdom. The issue turns largely on whether the external forms of social behavior and institution are undermined by the evangelical teaching; whether the Protestants are simply doing away with the church and with all ecclesiastical order. Calvin here wishes to show that the new movement is not merely a fanatical, irresponsible enthusiasm, but a proper appeal to the word of God which issues in well-ordered social, political and ecclesiastical form. He is moved by the persecution of his co-religionists, to speak on their behalf, to show that they are orderly citizens. Accusations to the contrary are false. It is a calumny to say that "...its only tendency is to wrest the sceptres of kings from their hands, to overturn all the

(1) Opera Vol. I, pp. 9-26. Also before each edition of Institutes in Opera. Our reference will be to the French version before the edition of 1561 Opera Vol. III, pp. 9-36. See Bibliography for full reference.

tribunals and judicial proceedings, to subvert all order and government, to disturb the peace and tranquillity of the people, to abrogate all laws, to scatter all properties and possessions, and, in a word, to involve everything in total confusion." (1) He is quite ready to admit that if these accusations were true, the evangelicals would merit the persecutions they have received. His defense consists in an attempt to show that such subversion does not proceed from the faith he defends. In fact it is the persecution, despite its well-established hold on popular opinion, that is subverting the proper judicial order. (2) No civil order can claim any authority except from God. The fabric of government has its support from the divine mandate. Where the glory of God is not made the end of government, therefore, only a usurped authority is maintained. (3)

The Protestants do not claim to be anything in themselves, but are ready to admit their lowliness. What they are not willing to belittle, is their doctrine which "...must stand, exalted above all the glory, and invincible by all the power of the world; because it is not ours, but the doctrine of the living God, and of his Christ, whom the Father hath constituted King, that he may have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth, and that he may rule in such a manner, that the whole earth, with its strength of iron and with its splendour of gold and silver, smitten by the rod of his mouth, may be broken to pieces like a potter's vessel; (4) for thus do the prophets foretell the magnificence of his kingdom." (5) Here we find Calvin appealing from visible order to invisible order, but the order to which he appeals is of God. The splendor of the world is shattered, but the magnificence of God is maintained.

(1) Opera III, p. 11

(2) Ibid

(3) III, pp. 12-13

(4) Dan II, 34; Isaiah XI, 4; Psalm II, 9

(5) III, p. 13

The special claim of the Protestants to the Word of God, - to divine approval, is established by their adherence to the analogy of faith (*fidei analogia*) which is the only proper response to the expression of the Divine Will. This analogy demands that men abase themselves before God so that He may be all in all. This analogy is the "standard (amussis) by which all interpretation of Scripture ought to be tried." (1) If their principles be examined according to this rule (regula), Calvin professes confidence that theirs will be the victory. "For what is more consistent with faith than to acknowledge ourselves naked of all virtue, that we may be clothed by God; empty of all good, that we may be filled by him; slaves to sin, that we may be liberated by him; blind, that we may be enlightened by him; ...to divest ourselves of all ground of glorying, that he alone may be eminently glorious, and that we may glory in him?" (2) Such would seem the ordinary language of faith, but Calvin asserts that it has roused opposition because, as its enemies assert, "...this is a way to overturn, I know not what blind light of nature, pretended preparations, free will and works meritorious of eternal salvation, together with all their supererogations;...but we read of none being reprov'd for having drawn too freely from the fountain of living waters; on the contrary, they are severely upbraided who have 'hewed them out of cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'" (3) Thus all attempts to contain the divine within forms proceeding from the mind or activity of men, are as useless as broken cisterns, the content of true religion escapes them. The only proper form of religion is a constant dependence upon God, where the vital force of true religion finds the God-given form and remains unconditioned by the forms of men. Believers can have absolute confidence in the validity of their own form of doctrine and

(1) III, p. 14
(2) Ibid
(3) Ibid

I don't know how this sentence was got here
Am

life if they can be certain that it is not their own, but the expression of the will of God. Calvinistic theology might be described as the attempt to find how the will of God can be expressed formally in doctrine and applied in life. It allows no consideration of the nature of being in itself, or of the relation between Absolute Being and derived being, to be the basis of some kind of analogia entis. (1) Form must have the sanction of the will of God for its initiation, and must remain continually subservient to and expressive of his will for a valid continuation. It is this transcendent significance of form which, instead of making form of no consequence, makes the proper form so necessary for the thought of Calvin.

Even where his attack upon the Romanists is characterized by strong invective, he is actually revealing that a different attitude toward the forms of religion, - the church, sacraments, good works, etc. - lies at the basis of his criticism of the Church of Rome. He seems to be indulging in irresponsible name-calling when he sums up the Roman persecution of the Protestants by saying that the reason for it was that they had made their "...belly their God, and their kitchen their religion." He proceeds to the rather puzzling qualification that "For though some feast themselves in splendour, and other subsist on slender fare, yet all live on the same pot." (2) The answer to the question of how those who "subsist on slender fare" could be termed as living with their stomach as their God, may be explained by his previous assertion that "the true religion, which is taught in Scriptures, and ought to be universally maintained, they readily permit both themselves and others to be ignorant of, and to treat with neglect and contempt.

(1) Contrast Etienne Gilson "The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy."
p. 88 ff

(2) III, p. 16

They think it unimportant what any one holds or denies concerning God and Christ, provided he submits his mind with an implicit faith (as they call it) to the judgment of the Church. Nor are they much affected if the glory of God happens to be violated with open blasphemies, provided no one lift a finger against the primacy of the Apostolic See, and the authority of their holy Mother Church."⁽¹⁾

Calvin opposes unconditional commitment even to those forms which attempt to represent Christ and the gospel. He even objects to saying "we believe in the church;" prefers saying "we believe the church."⁽²⁾ Such commitment is the grossest form of earthly-mindedness. It is a denial of that immediate and constant dependence upon God, alone, which is the only valid basis for true religion. To feel that the forms of church order and discipline have any merit or efficacy on their own account, would be to worship a mess of pottage and make one's kitchen one's religion. Thus it is not the Protestants who are presumptuous in their certainty, as they resist the mighty and venerable Roman See, but the Romanists who presume to use, in an impious way, earthly forms to transmit divine grace, claiming to be the arbiters of the Christian religion.

Thereupon Calvin answers the other accusations which are hurled against the evangelical doctrine, on all its major points. It was accused of novelty, of uncertainty, of having no miraculous confirmation, of being in contradiction to the early fathers and to the custom of highest antiquity, of being schismatical in stirring up opposition against the Church, of implying that the Church had not existed for centuries, and finally of producing "such a multitude of sects, so many factious tumults, and such great licentiousness of vices." ⁽³⁾ While many of these are criticisms of the substance

(1) III, p. 15-16

(2) Institutes IV, 1, II

(3) III, pp. 16-17

of Reformed Doctrine, it is not difficult to see an underlying criticism of what it would do to the form and order of ecclesiastical and social structures. The faith was attacked for this reason, just as surely as it was attacked for being false in its teaching. In defending his doctrine, we find Calvin affirming that, as it was true, it was the only valid basis for true order. It was, therefore, consistent with all good order of church and state. We find him appealing beyond the current forms of opinion and custom to the expressed will of God which is the only confirmation of true order and proper external form.

Calvin answers the charge that the gospel he preaches is novel and uncertain, by appealing to the expressed will of God in the Gospel. The will of God is more certain than all positive Church tradition and order,--all established form of doctrine which is maintained among men. Departure from the established forms, therefore, does not involve one in novelty or uncertainty, if these forms be not themselves founded upon the eternal and sure revelation of God's will. Indeed, all forms not so founded are themselves intrinsically uncertain and novel, though they be well established by long usage. (1)

If his gospel does not depend upon the sanction of the common order of opinion to make it valid, neither does it depend upon the sanction of the extraordinary. Since Protestants hold no new or unconfirmed gospel, why should it demand miraculous confirmation? A miraculous break in the order of things does not prove anything in itself, and, apart from the direct testimony of God through the preaching of the gospel, it is frivolous and ridiculous, since "...the name of God ought to be sanctified in all places and at all times, whether by

(1) III, p. 17

miraculous events, or by the common order of nature." (1) The New Testament used miracles only as signs, as seals of the gospel. Thus they have no inherent confirming power apart from the gospel they seal. If they undermine true spiritual religion, if they pervert the faith of the Gospel, they are worse than useless. It is not the miracles in themselves, but the spiritual use to which the miracles are put, which determines their spiritual significance. Indeed "...it is wrong to esteem those as miracles which are directed to any other end than the glorification of the name of God alone. And we should remember that Satan has his wonders, which, though they are juggling tricks rather than real miracles, are such as to delude the ignorant and inexperienced." (2) Performance of miracles might then be a real sign of true doctrine, but the doctrine must first be true before the sign is valid.

Does the Reformed Faith involve a shattering of the form of doctrine delivered by the fathers? Is there a harmony of opinion in the fathers, which is a practical safeguard in the formulation of proper doctrine, a consensus which can only be of benefit to those thinkers who maintain their submission to the Roman See? As Calvin himself quotes his adversaries' use of a text from Scripture, does the Reformed Faith mean "...to transgress or remove the ancient landmarks, which our fathers have set." (3) For the sake of argument, he maintains the allegory in his answer by claiming that it is the doctrine of the Apostles which ought to be the landmarks for the faith of the Church, for these are formulations assured by the word and Spirit of God. That his doctrine is apostolic, he has no doubt. As for the opinion of the fathers, he feels that it is, on the whole, on the side of the Reformers. It is merely human and therefore is, itself, to be judged

(1) III, p. 18

(2) III, p. 18-19

(3) III, p. 20-21 Prov. XXII, 28

by the Word of God. These writings contain many "wise and excellent things, yet in some respect they have suffered the common fate of mankind." (1) When he begins to state the things which appeal to him as "wise and excellent", he obviously warms to the task. Landmark after landmark is shown to be transgressed not by the Reformed Faith, but by the overconfident Roman opponents. He quotes Jerome, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Gelasius, Acacius, Augustine, Apollinaris, Cyprian, to oppose everything from transubstantiation, and the use of images in the churches, to the celibacy of the clergy. (2) In all this, he shows himself ready to use the testimony of the fathers as helpful where it agrees with his understanding of the Word of God, the only ultimate judge of the truth of any form of doctrine. Where God has expressed his will and truth, all form of doctrine must conform to this expression. Thus, apart from his will, no formulation is valid, yet when in subordination to the Word, the formulation of the proper doctrine is most lawful and profitable, and its witness to the will of God has real authority.

He is less concerned with the objection that the Reformed Faith departs from well-established custom. He insists that custom is a very unreliable standard, indeed. Custom is often wrong, and indeed it would seem that Calvin almost implies that it is usually wrong. What is practised among some for a while, achieves a definite form and becomes accepted custom. But Evangelical truth cannot be altered in the slightest to harmonize with the customs of men. He asserts that "From the private vices of multitudes, therefore, has arisen public error, or rather a common agreement of vices, which these good men, /the Romanists/ would now have to be received as law. ...Everything is fast verging to ruin, so that we must altogether despair of human affairs, or vigorously and even violently oppose such immense evils." (3)

(1) III, p. 20

(2) III, Pp. 21-24

(3) III, p. 25

Whatever we may think of the justice in attributing to adversaries the doctrine that custom must, on its own account, be accepted, whether it agree with the gospel or not, (and of course this would be a misrepresentation of Roman theology), nevertheless here are revealed two different approaches. The Romanist glories in the ability of his Church to absorb and appropriate the culture in which it finds itself, while the Calvinist tends to emphasize the transcendence of the Word to which he bears witness. This is an oversimplification, of course, as both elements are present in both traditions, but here Calvin himself shows which element he feels to be more important. Human forms of opinion and custom must come under the judgment of the Word of God, and no compromise, or no attempted coordination can be allowed between the Word of God and the false customs of men.

That in appealing beyond the forms of general custom and of Church tradition he does not oppose definite order and form, as such, he makes clear at once. That it is merely wrongly derived and maintained form that he opposes, he reveals in his attitude toward the Church. It has been argued against his party, that a necessary implication of the Reformers' position is either opposition to the Church or the denial of its existence for whole centuries. This he refuses to admit, claiming that his party unites with "...all the company of the faithful in worshipping and adoring the one God and Christ the Lord, as he has been adored by all the pious in all ages." (1) To this, a Romanist might reply that it is impossible to worship and adore God properly unless one submit to the form of worship and discipline of the visible community headed in the See of Peter, the visible guarantee of the unity of the Church. We find a modern Roman Catholic stating for us the position of his tradition in regard to the unity of the Church.

(1) III, p. 26

"...Because the Church is the Body of Christ, she is essentially an organism,...a visible organism." (1)

"...The visibility of the Church does not consist merely in the visibility of its individual members, but in the visibility of its compact unity, of its community." (2)

"...Since the community and not the individual, is the bearer of the Spirit of Jesus, and since its visibility consists especially in the manifestation of this essential unity, therefore the visible organism of the Church postulates for its visibility a real principle of unity in which the supra-personal unity of all the faithful obtains perceptible expression and which supports, maintains and protects this unity. The pope as the Rock of the Church is the visible expression and the abiding guarantee of this unity." (3)

Thus the unity of the Church must be a visible unity, and for the form of the Church to be valid, it must be a visible form. Calvin summarizes the Roman position by saying that "Our controversy turns on the following two points:- first, they contend that the form of the Church is always apparent and visible; secondly, they place that form in the See of the Roman Church and her order of prelates. We assert, on the contrary, first, that the Church may exist without any visible form; secondly, that its form is not contained in that external splendour which they foolishly admire, but is distinguished by a very different criterion, viz. the pure preaching of God's word, and the legitimate administration of the sacraments. They are not satisfied unless the Church can always be pointed out with the finger." (4)

The identification of the form of true religion with a fixed form in the physical world, as though this form has some inherent merit, is for

(1) Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, trans. Dom. J. McCann, O.S.B., (New York, 1946, MacMillan), p. 34.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 40

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 42

(4) III, pp. 26-27

Calvin a severing of the immediate dependent relation to the Word of God which alone maintains the propriety of any form to be used in religion.

This is not to say that visibility is some kind of pollution that resists the fulfillment of the proper form. Calvin objects to those who insist that the form of the Church must always be visible, which is to say that its form must be deposited, given over to, incorporated, embodied in space and time, and that without this fixedness it cannot exist. It is as though a certain formation of stones, mortar, vestments, an "apostolic succession" or a hierarchical arrangement of clergy could claim on its own merit, the form of the Church, the necessary and authoritative bond of fellowship among those whose common characteristic is a direct reliance upon God's good pleasure alone. Quite to the contrary, it is not faith which must conform to some kind of "supra-personal" visible order of the Church, in order to be counted true, but rather the Church which must conform to the marks of a properly expressed communal, yet personal faith, - true preaching, and purely administered sacraments.

Although maintaining certain forms of Church observance is no guarantee of piety, proper form is not a thing to be dismissed as unnecessary. Calvin, preeminently among the Reformers, insisted upon the necessity for maintaining in all strictness, the true form of the Church. But the marks of the true Church are a continual explaining by true preaching, what is the Will of God, and a regular signifying, by the pure administration of the sacraments, of the continual personal relation of the faithful to God. It is the form of the Word which must regulate the spiritual life of the Church, but he maintains that the Word is the declaration of God of his will for the church, and must have the testimony of the Holy Spirit, its Author, for the proper understanding

of it. Word and Spirit must witness together. Thus we find Calvin maintaining that spiritual religion never exists apart from form. Religion springs from the personal faith-relationship with God, but it is communicated and sealed by external form and, as he maintains in his treatment of the moral witness of Reformed Christians, it expresses itself in the form of obedience to the law. It is, nevertheless, only as a spiritual communication, seal and expression, that external form has its meaning and justification.

Calvin buttresses his argument by asking what splendid form did the Church have when its true life was in the testimony of the outcast prophets, and what was its external form during the first years after the ministry of Jesus. He feels that in both these cases its true form was not visible, that the visible institutions were not witnesses to the Word and Will of God, and therefore could not claim the title of Church. (1) Would not the pious, during the persecution of the prophets or of the early Church, have despaired, had they sought a form evident to their senses? As for the early Church, he quotes Hilary as saying "...!Your veneration for the Church of God is misplaced on houses and buildings; you wrongly introduce under them the name of peace. ...I think mountains, woods, and lakes, prisons and whirlpools, less dangerous; for these were the scenes of retirement or banishment in which the prophets prophesied.'" (2) Indeed, rather than leave his people in their undue attachment to the visible Church, taking "horned bishops...presiding over great cities," let us "...rather leave it to the Lord, since he alone 'knoweth them that are his,' (3) sometimes to remove from human observation all external knowledge of his Church. I admit this to be a dreadful judgment of God on the earth;

(1) III, p. 29

(2) III, p. 27-28

(3) II Tim. II, 19.

but if it be deserved by the impiety of men, why do we attempt to resist the righteous vengeance of God?" (1) Thus for visibility to be taken away from the form of the Church, is a real deprivation, as the Church should have visible expression. But more important than the need for visible formal expression is the necessity that the external form be a real and true witness to the Will of God. Thus, since the time of Christ, the Will of God has always maintained the form of the Church, but has not always granted visibility to that form. Thus, where that form has become visible, it cannot claim permanent validity, for it then would be claiming something on its own merit, and not be completely and continually dependent upon the good favor of God. Where men allow the visible form of the Church to lull them into a false sense of security, they rise to a false pride in their own power, whereas the forming and maintaining power of the Church is the action of the Spirit and Word of God. Indeed, he can rally the Church whenever he wills, and he can let its visible leaders blind themselves "...by sense, delude themselves by absurd falsehoods, and be immersed in profound darkness so that there be no appearance of the true Church left; yet at the same time, in the midst of darkness and errors, he preserved his scattered and concealed people from total destruction." (2) If true witness to the Will of God, which is the essential mark of the true Church, left the successors of Aaron, and if the prophets who opposed Elijah could be opposed to the work of God, how can a Church which has failed in its witness, and even, so Calvin maintained by citing what he felt to be cases of discontinuity in the Apostolic Succession, failed in its historic continuity, claim for its trappings and hierarchy the title of the true Church?

(1) III, p. 28
(2) Ibid

Did the preachings of Reformed Doctrine imply continual tumult? Their enemies maintained that wherever the Reformers penetrated, the preaching of their doctrine was accompanied by "commotions, tumults, and contentions," and it tended to disrupt the ordered moral restraint in the lives of those people who were affected by it. (1) It is not difficult for us to anticipate Calvin's answer, even when he admits that disorder often accompanied the preaching of the Word. He glories in the fact that true preaching does raise opposition. Were preaching in accord with the will of the Prince of this World, and were it to flatter the pride of men, it would arouse no dissension. On the contrary, Calvin asserts, "It is the native property of the Divine Word, never to make its appearance without disturbing Satan, and rousing his opposition. This is the most certain and unequivocal criterion by which it is distinguished from false doctrines, which are easily broached when they are heard with general attention and received with applause by the world."⁽²⁾ There have been ages when no such disorder and tumult was apparent, but where this accompanied the preaching of the false gospel, it was a sign that the Prince of this World was enjoying his rule in placid security. It was quite different when "the light shining from above dissipated a portion of his darkness; - when that Mighty One alarmed and assaulted his kingdom - then he began to shake off his wonted torpor, and to hurry on his armour." (3) Satan's strategy (for which Calvin evinced a healthy respect) was first to try the frontal attack of directly suppressing it with violence. When that failed, he made the "Catabaptists and other infamous characters, the instruments of inciting dissensions and doctrinal controversies, with a view to obscure and finally to extinguish" the gospel. Thus, some unrestrained violence was to be attributed to the direct offense which the gospel offered to its entrenched adversaries, while other

(1) III, p. 30-31
(2) III, p. 31
(3) Ibid

disorderliness was to be attributed to those revolting from authority with unworthy motives. Thus, both official injustice and popular tumultuousness has a common source, and is morally the same. The one clings to the order of behavior conformable to the will and character of Satan, while others embrace a reckless abandonment of all order, also following the dictates of Satan. This latter was the more grievous threat, for it allowed the Word to be stigmatized as disorderly, whereas the Word is the only basis for equitable and lasting order. It is as outrageous, however, to think that the Word produced disorder, as for Ahab to claim that Elijah was the one who troubled Israel, or for the Apostles to be accused of the turmoil that surrounded them as they proclaimed the gospel. The real source of such tumult, then, is not the Reformed preaching, but rather its malicious opposition. As "unlearned and unstable" men, in the days of the apostles, had wrested the apostles' words to mean that they could sin that grace should abound, so they were the Libertines and the Anabaptists casting away not only the sovereignty of the Scriptural order in their own religious life, but the stability of society as a whole. (1)

He concludes his letter by appealing to the actual example of the lives of the Protestants. They are surpassed by none in the practice of virtue, although they humbly confess many shortcomings. Their prayers are for the preservation of the state, and their whole worship is governed by a sincere desire to render to God the glory due to his name. "Envy itself is constrained to bear testimony to the innocence and civil integrity of some of us, who have suffered the punishment of death for that very thing which ought to be accounted their highest praise." (2) He trusts the king will read it with "calmness and

(1) III, pp. 31-32

(2) III, p. 34

composure," and that a more appropriate treatment may follow, but in any case the Protestants will stand firm in the patience of the Lord. He ends with the wish, - "May the Lord, the King of Kings, establish your throne with righteousness, and your kingdom with equity." (1)

Thus Calvin ends on a note that is both deferential and firm. He is aware of the authority of the king, but he is also aware that this authority rests upon a higher mandate, and that if the king seek to oppose true religion in his ordering of the affairs of state, he is departing from the form of his authority. Even in the civil sphere, external form has its justification only in the spiritual realm, and unless it continually bear witness to the spiritual, unless it continually conform to the will of God and serve the continual communication of that will by allowing the true worship of God and the preaching of His Word, then the formal conduct of civil government is not legitimate.

Thus, throughout this defense of reformed faith found in the Dedication to Francis I, there has been a strong emphasis upon the formal implications of the gospel. True religion can be defended upon the level of its external formal expression and influence. The significance of this expression and influence, however, cannot be estimated by any standard but that of its conformity to the will of God, and of its appropriateness to the declaration of the gospel. When any form interferes with this evangelical task, even though it may, at one time, have served a purpose, it must now be opposed or corrected. The spiritual understanding of the Word of God, of his gospel, is the constant source and criterion of all proper form. The spiritual, then, expresses itself in its proper form, and the achievement of the appropriate form is of crucial importance to it; but the formal remains continually subservient to and reformable by the demands of the spiritual worship and service of God.

(1) III, p. 36

SUMMARY OF THESIS

The dedicatory epistle has revealed what we may consider the summary of the significance of the category of form in the theology of John Calvin. Calvin's emphasis is upon what we may call "informed spirituality." Spirit and external form are not incompatible and opposite, because even in the spiritual world form is emphasized. As we saw in the opening chapters of the Institutes, the world of the spirit is definitely describable in terms of moral nature. While God is transcendent and his holiness all but confounds sinful man, nevertheless he is not to be thought of as "totally other", and indescribable. His nature is revealed. The very "fear and trembling" which overcomes the man who is confronted by God, occurs because man is shown a righteousness to which he should be conformed.

The understanding of the fact that spirit has form or definite nature, must underly any attempt to appreciate the significance of external form in Calvin's theology. External form, which is what is generally thought of when the word "form" is used, has its significance for the spiritual life because spiritual form does express itself in external form. The nature of God is revealed by the nature of the world which he has created. The evil nature of fallen man is alone expressed in the forms of natural religion and of the conduct of the unregenerate. God's holiness is described by the form of the law. The converted soul must bring forth fruits in conduct worthy of the faith and repentance within. It must place its ultimate hope on a body redeemed by the resurrection. The Church is a visible, concrete institution that employs the lips of men to speak to us for God. The Sacraments are visible and expressive signs and seals for the promises of Grace. Civil government and the political and social forms are to be piously received as

ordained by God. Reformed Christianity preserves the public order, both civil and religious. Spiritual form or nature expresses itself in external, temporal form.

To men living in the world of space and time, men who belong to a fallen race, external form is not only spiritually expressive but also necessary and proper for the life of the spirit. Unredeemed personality needs to be restrained, and redeemed personality needs to be disciplined and assisted by the external form of the law, the church, sacraments and civil society. Finite and depraved personality in this world needs the help of external form, for man is body, as well as soul. Regeneration must be sealed by the external form of incarnation and sacraments as surely as his mind is disciplined by Word and law. Civil government is necessary to maintain "humanity among men." External form not only is the expression of spirit; - it is also the necessary support for the spirit in this life. X

It is the spiritual source of all external form that determines its significance. While external form does witness to the spiritual form, quality, ^{and} nature of its source, and while it upholds and assists spirit, it is not sufficient to contain or convey spiritual quality by its own merit. There can be no inherent spiritual quality or effectiveness in any external form. The external forms of natural religion do not elevate the mind to God, nor does the revelation of God in the structure of the world, reveal him sufficiently to man. Even the external forms of special revelation, - the Scriptures and the law, - are insufficient when taken by themselves. Mere assent to evangelical history is not faith, nor are elaborate ceremonies of penance what is meant by repentance. Although the good things of this world are blessings of God, we must free ourselves from undue fixation on them. While good works issue from faith, they do not bring justification. Prayer

is not to be merely repetition of words. The visible form of the church is not identical with the invisible. Indeed, the invisible church could continue to exist if the visible church were destroyed. The external symbols of the sacraments do not transmit grace to the unbeliever by their own power. When the civil magistrate seeks to falsify the worship he must not be obeyed. Temporal forms do not control the spiritual realm.

Informed spirituality thus calls for a proper mutual relationship between spirit and external form. Because the spirit has definite nature, and because this nature is expressed in the external world, external form is not foreign to spirit. External form, when it is taken together with the spirit that originated it, fulfills the spiritual blessing. Word and Spirit must be joined, or each is unprofitable. Inner intention and outer law and sanction must supplement each other. Belief in the events of evangelical history must accompany and be accompanied by the spiritual reception of Christ. Repentance, the Christian life, justification, prayer, must all witness the union of the inner spiritual form or transformation with the corresponding, significant external form. The wrong external form, as with the use of images in worship, can vitiate the spiritual intention. Any form of behavior or worship which does not issue from a pious heart, is unavailing. Even the best of forms is meaningless and profitless if the proper spirit is not joined to it. Spirit and external form must be conjoined if the spirit is to maintain its proper nature and the form its significance.

While, within creation, spirit and external form must be joined, we must never forget the Sovereignty of God and thus the world of spirit. The spiritual is never without form, but it can be without external form. The physical world depends upon God, not God on the physical world.

The spiritual word spoken to the patriarchs could exist without the scriptures. The righteousness of the patriarchs preceded that of the written law. Faith, repentance, and the life with Christ ultimately find their ground in the invisible world of God, just as man must first of all be defined in his subordination to God. The Church is an invisible fellowship of God's elect, even were the visible church to disappear. Our communion with Christ is through the Spirit, above and beyond the physical, sacramental elements taken by themselves. It is God, alone, who grants the king his power. In all these things, the discipline of form, even external form, is not escaped, but attachment to the physical is transcended. To God, alone, is given the glory.

eluded/

CONCLUSION

The Institutes are, of course, the most extended presentation of Calvin's theology. It would be a mistake, however, to think of Calvin as withdrawing from the world in order to formulate them in seclusion. The Institutes were first written with a practical purpose in mind of instructing a confused generation in the fundamentals of the evangelical faith. They were expanded from one edition to the next. (1) The enlargement was largely the result of Calvin's constant debates and the need to defend various facets of his doctrine against Catholic, Unitarian, Anabaptist and even Lutheran objections. An analysis of the full range of his tracts and correspondence would be beyond the scope of this thesis, especially as the doctrinal conclusions which were underlined for Calvin in the rest of his life, were thereupon entered into the systematic whole of the Institutes. A large proportion of his intellectual effort was in connection with his commenting upon or preaching from Scripture. In this area, too, the doctrine exhibited in the Institutes is very evident. To Calvin's mind there was little difference between systematic theology and the exegesis of Scripture. The Institutes were simply presenting that doctrine contained in Scripture, and Scripture presented in various ways one, and only one, doctrinal system.⁽²⁾ The sermons applied this scriptural doctrine to the lives of the congregation. Calvin spread his doctrine also in the form of catechisms and a thorough school system. Even the laws of the city of Geneva were intended to defend the purity of the doctrine. The life of the city and the discipline and worship of the Church were all vehicles for instilling true

(1) Karl Barth, Calvin, (Munich 1936), pp. 3,4.

(2) See the conclusions of Francois Wendel, Calvin, Sources et Evolution de sa Pensée Religieuse. (Paris, Universitaires de France 1950) Presses

integral part of the curriculum. Pagan authors were to serve as models for style. (1)

Too high-flown a style was to be shunned if it, like the opposite extreme of the Anabaptists' garrulity, obscured the truth. The Pre-Reformation preaching of the priests was "sophisticen". It was "...contortam, implicitam, sinuosam, perplexam, ut merito dici posset scholastica theologia quaedam arcanae magiae species." (2) Scholastic theology and preaching by their hairsplitting and involved explanations, no less than the writings of the Anabaptists, obscured the spiritual intent. Style, like any other form, should not call attention to itself, but rather subordinate itself to its spiritual purpose. This is not a call to crudity, however, or a protest against beauty; it is an insistence that the canons for good style be not so much intrinsic elegance as appropriateness for the effective and even eloquent transmission of spiritual truth. Calvin's style was the product, of course, of his humanistic education. He retained an appreciation of the well-turned phrase throughout his life. His chief concern, however, was that it subserve spiritual communication.

Calvin's respect for language made it the sole adequate, formal means of spiritual communication and expression. For instance, the Psalms provide a real mirror of David's soul. We can perceive the innermost heart of the psalmist who struggled with temptation, the sense of guilt, and who rejoiced at the divine clemency. (3) The scripture is to be taken, as we have seen, as though we heard its words spoken by the mouth of God. (4) While scripture is not a "repository of proof texts," this is not as far from the truth as certain later

(1) Ibid
(2) C.R. V, 395

(3) C.R. XXXI, 13-36
(4) I, 7, I

apologists have maintained. Calvin would not quite have used the words of Alan Richardson when he says that "God's message to the world was spoken in its finished and final form through a Person rather than a book, and it is the Person (and not the book) who is Himself the Word of God." (1) The book is the word of God in a "final" sense. Our appreciation of the person of God is not something we have distinct from the words and doctrinal statements. The scriptures are not to be contrasted to the person, but rather are *with* organically connected as the utterance of God's wisdom and nature. Calvin does affirm that "therefore, as all Divine revelations are justly entitled the word of God, so we ought chiefly to esteem that substantial Word the source of all revelations, who is liable to no variation, who remains with God perpetually one and the same, and who is God himself." (2) The "Person" is indeed the "source" of the revelations and, therefore, chiefly to be esteemed, but there is not the sharp contrast between "mere words" and the Word. It is not that God has merely "appointed" scripture, as a revelation of him, (3) any more than it is that the words commend themselves on their intrinsic merit. The words, as an external form, delineate the character, the nature of God and his disposition towards us. This is not a deification of the means of revelation, - a bibliolatry. It is not personality *versus* words, but rather personality expressed through and with words. In all this, of course, the Holy Spirit must accompany and undergird the formal expressions - must infuse it into the heart. Without the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, the words are not effective as the utterance of God. With the Spirit they are able to be the real declaration of God's will for man. It is in this sense

(1) Alan Richardson, Preface to Bible-Study (Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1944) p. II

(2) I, 13, VII

(3) Richardson, p. 10.

that Calvin stressed the "spiritual" interpretation of scripture as opposed to the allegorical or other approach. The words form a delineation of divine truth, and of God's character itself, and we are only thus brought into a spiritual "faith relation" with him.

This attitude toward scripture is reflected in the doctrine of preaching. (1) Luther had linked God objectively to the word as preached, so that believer and unbeliever were both confronted with God when his word was proclaimed. Zwingli, on the other hand, differentiated between the verbum Dei externum and the verbum Dei internum. The preaching of the word was, to a certain degree, merely an assistance to faith. The Spirit came with, but not through, the word. While Calvin's position was not unlike this latter, he tended to steer a middle course. God's own voice is heard in man's, and God speaks through human words; but this can not be automatically assured. Without the Spirit, preaching is not effective, and the words are meaningless to the unbeliever. It is more than a purely subjective appreciation, however, that makes the scriptures, both as read and preached, effective in the conversion of man. God has spoken, and still speaks, through his word. The external form of the written and spoken word bears out, delineates and conveys, when joined by the Spirit, the very nature and will of God.

In Calvin's view, the spoken and written word,--the forms of speech and literature,--were in a different category from other forms. They were the most direct formal means of communication between spirit and spirit. Other external forms could not transmit spiritual nature to the same degree, as we have seen in the discussion of the revelation of God in the structure of creation. The plastic and graphic arts

(1) The following analysis is from T.H.L.Parker, The Oracles of God, An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin (London, Lutterworth Press, 1947), pp. 48-55.

were not trusted to provide symbols in worship. Literary art and rhetoric were much more directly employed. By the use of words man could use the same form of communication as had the Holy Spirit in Scripture. (1) Calvin never grasped that the forms of the graphic or dramatic arts might embody and communicate "universals" in the Aristotelian sense of conveying, in a powerful way, eternal spiritual truth. Where painting or sculpture depicted historical events, they were of some use, but where they simply portrayed corporeal forms they were good only for amusement. (2) It is quite true that Calvin did not condemn sculpture and painting, but rather saw them as gifts of God. It is also true that Calvinism was a force which helped inspire the Dutch school of painting. (3) Calvin definitely severed, however, the direct link between religion, on the one hand, and painting and sculpture, on the other. As for drama and the dance, the separation was much more emphatic, as each had for Calvin strongly carnal associations. Wencelius is perhaps right when he says that there was no intrinsic objection to them, but rather a concern for their results. (4) The result was the same, however, and strict Calvinism has remained suspicious of both media, down to our own generation.

A form of art which was more appropriate to spiritual communication was music that was joined to the proper words. Calvin saw the musical chanting of the psalms as a custom originating with the apostolic Church. "...Le chant a grand force et vigueur d'esmouvoir et enflamber le coeur des hommes, pour invoquer et louer Dieu d'un zèle plus vehement et ardent." It should be "legier et volôge;

(1) M. P. Ramsay, Calvin and Art Considered in Relation to Scotland, (Edinburgh, Moray Press, 1938)

(2) I, 11, XII

(3) Abraham Kuyper, Calvinism, (Amsterdam, Hoveker and Wormser, 1898), the chapter on Calvinism and culture. Leon Wencelius, Calvin et Rembrandt, as well as his monumental L'Esthétique de Calvin. (Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1937).

(4) L'Esthétique, chapters on the theater and the dance.

mais ait pois et majeste..." (1) One should remember that in Church we sing before God and his angels. Although the music in the worship should be effective and moving, it should not be enjoyed for its own delightfulness. Music can also move our hearts to impure and unholy desires. Where the proper music is joined to the right words, however, the aesthetic form of congregational singing, without organ, is a great and pure means of grace. It is not the intrinsic power of music that renders it blessed, but rather its ability to stir up hearts already transformed by the Word and Spirit of God.

The question of Calvin's influence on art and culture is a constantly debated one. On the one hand, a popular verdict on Calvinism finds expression in Voltaire's description of Geneva:

∫ Noble cité, riche, fiere et sournoise.
On y calculé et jamais on n'y rit,
L'art de Barème est le seul qui fleurit.
On hait le bal, on hait la comédie...
Pour tout plaisir Genève psalmodie,
Du bon David les antiqués concerts,
Croyant que Dieu se plait aux mauvais vers.
Des predicans la morne et dure espece
Sur tous les front a gravé la tristesse. (2)

On the opposite extreme, we have Leon Wencelius writing a book entitled "L'Esthétique de Calvin", assuring us, on the basis of a mass of documentation, that Calvin and Calvinism was a strong positive cultural and aesthetic influence. (3)

From what we have already shown, Calvin could hardly have been a hater of beauty. The strong sense of the beauty of nature and of proper style runs through all his works. On the other hand, too much should not be made of his role as an aesthetician, as he was not primarily interested in the beauty of any form, but rather of its direct spiritual significance. The beauty of a form was to be rejoiced

(1) C. R. VI 167 ff.

(2) Emile Doumergue, *Jean Calvin, les hommes et les choses de son temps*, (Lausanne, G. Bridel & Cie. 1899-1927) vol. II, p. 480. He quotes here from Voltaire's "La guerre civile de Genève" detached pieces from vol. III, edit de 1775.

(3) See Note 3 - page 245.

in, but never made the primary consideration. Although the Persons of God and ^{the souls} of the saints were spoken of in terms of their splendor, harmony and even beauty, to see these as primarily aesthetic judgments is to miss their significance. The sense of the beauty of form was far outweighed by its moral and spiritual significance. Beauty is perhaps too much of a judgment of the intrinsic nature of form to be the primary concern of Calvin's overwhelming spiritual interest. Only where beauty made ^{external} form more spiritually effective, as with music and style, or significant, as in nature, was it very seriously valued.

We have no intention of tracing the intricacies of the cultural impact and influence of Calvinism. A general emphasis upon the arts and disciplines of language as opposed to the plastic and graphic arts can be noted where Calvinism extended. While images were broken in the cathedrals, schools were being organized in the towns. Calvin took great pains to organize the academy at Geneva, Knox in Scotland urged, although unsuccessfully, the creation of school systems supported from expropriated church property. The Reformation went hand in hand with literacy and education. Only nine years after the Puritans landed as pioneers in the wilderness of Massachusetts, they established Harvard College. Although images were refused as the "books of the poor," the poor were taught to read books for themselves. As the external form of words was the means of the communication of the spirit,--as the spoken and written word were the most effective external forms for the transmission of spiritual will and intention, the literary disciplines flourished.

Perhaps the major influence of the Calvinistic view of external form is in the high regard it engendered for the law. (1) We have

(1) J. Bohatec, Calvin und das Recht (Fendigen i. Westfalen, 1934)

seen that Calvin saw nothing "unspiritual" about the decalogue. He even saw the conscience of the natural man to be a weak reflection and indication of the natural law. This latter was not to be contrasted to the moral law which was, as we have seen, the plainest of revelations of the law of nature. A law for Calvin, however, was valid only as the expression of the will and nature of God. It was to be directly referred to his pleasure. The principles of the law, as they were contained in a final authoritative revelation addressed to all believers, were evident to all men, and were not to be the esoteric possession of a particular class. Calvin not only made each believer a priest, as had Luther, but one might almost say that he made each believer a lawyer, or at least a legally conscious citizen. Law was co-extensive with Spirit, not as a fetter, but as a discipline and protector and guide of the Spirit, for law was, itself, an expression of a spiritual Ruler. Although he had an undoubted affinity to nominalist doctrine of the supremacy of the will, he was equally sure that the will of God was no unpredictable or indescribable thing where goodness was concerned. While God's will is our only definition of the good, it proceeds from the eternal nature and disposition of God. "...There is such a close connection between the goodness of God and his Deity, that his being God is not more necessary than his being good. ...His inability to do evil arises from his infinite goodness, and not from any violence." (1) Furthermore, his will not only proceeds from his good nature, but it issues in a definite pattern of conduct and of spiritual life which "...discovers the righteousness of God, that is the only righteousness which is acceptable to God..." (2) The law

(1) II, 3, V

(2) II, 7, VI

and all external form are subordinate to the will of God, but the will of God is everlastingly righteous. God is not subordinate to a goodness above him. Rather is he good and ever abides unchanging and true to himself.

The consciousness that all men are answerable to a plainly revealed set of standards has had a strong influence on western democracy. While the only immediate democratic result was the right of insubordination to the king in matters of religion, the tendency to test authority by its submission to plainly revealed natural and moral law, spread to other fields than the purely religious. (1) With Grotius⁽²⁾ and then with the secularism of the Eighteenth-Century philosophes, the underlying natural law to which all men could directly appeal, became detached from the law-giver. Thus much of later democratic thought has denied the Source of its freedom, the Law-giver who reveals his will to all men. One wonders how long such a detached law can survive if its spiritual undergirding remain absent. It was the personal spiritual source of law that made it vital and helpful for the spirit of man. A "detached" legalism can become increasingly foreign to the spirit of both man and God. The western concept of the infinite worth of the individual, of the sacredness of personality, might very well wither if the spiritual, personal, divine source for the external form of law be forgotten. Davies may feel that Calvin's doctrine of the need for spiritual confirmation of the authority of the Bible, and thus of the external form of the law, vitiates what might otherwise be a stronger position. (3) It is also possible that precisely this sense of the close and dependent relation of external form to spiritual life, - to the spiritual nature of God that must be

(1) Doumerge, Jean Calvin, Vol. 5. *La pensée ecclésiastique et la pensée politique de Calvin.* p. 513 ff.

(2) *Ibid* p. 579

(3) Rupert E. Davies, *The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers, A Study in Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin.* (London, Epworth Press, 1946)

spiritually perceived, offers us, above all, the possibility of that peculiarly Calvinist concept of "liberty in law." Being captive of God, and of his will delineated in his law, being a co-worker of a personally-known Lord, the Christian and the citizen can be both responsible and free.

Calvin has left, in the theological realm, a two-fold legacy. As we have seen in the Church at large, so has there been in the Reformed Tradition a two-fold tendency. There has been, on the one hand, a tendency to identify the forms of orthodoxy with the spiritual content of the faith. While we have seen that Calvin, himself, stressed the integral and necessary relation between spirit and external form, this school has tended to stress as the "fundamentals" of the faith, strict adherence to such doctrines as the literal inspiration of the Scriptures. Such men as Francis Turretin or later Charles Hodge and the so-called "Princeton School" have represented this emphasis upon conformity to all points of "received" doctrine. While such a group would be in technical agreement with Calvin, they could be accused of failing to see the subordination of the formal to the direct spiritual relation to God which was emphasized in the Reformers by such doctrines as the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit.

Opposing this school, and still claiming to speak for the spirit of the Reformed Faith, has been a more "liberal" group. Reacting against what is often described as the "scholasticism" of the Seventeenth Century, it was, to a certain degree, responsive to the rationalism of the Eighteenth. Paradoxically such a stalwart as Jonathan Edwards must be linked to the tendency of this school. This group emphasized the primacy of the direct appeal to the spiritual understanding of God. Edwards used theocentric idealism to justify the Puritan insistence on

the sovereignty of God. The sense of external form as a thing distinct from, if important for, spirit, gave way to the inclusion of all reality into the mind of God.

A later, modified idealism has provided, like Edwards, an apology for Christian doctrine in the face of rationalistic attacks. These attacks have seemed to undermine various external, historical supports for the older orthodoxy, such as the literal inspiration of Scripture or the historicity of the miracles. The Christian faith is defended on the basis of its ethical ideals or on its value for the personal, spiritual growth. The willingness of such thinkers to "surrender" the "fundamentals" has brought a constant friction with the orthodox. While many liberals would not care to appeal to Calvin, not a few moderate thinkers have defended themselves on the grounds that they represent the true intention of the Reformers. Calvin, they maintain, was fundamentally concerned with the personal message which God was addressing to the heart of man in Scripture. The Scriptures were not believed because of their historical exactness, but for their religious value in providing a source of spiritual assistance in the knowledge of God's concern for man. (1) Even Crisis and Neo-Calvinist Theology has tended to "liberate" a religion based on the transcendence of God from some of the external disciplines of orthodox Calvinism. Barth has not maintained the Calvinistic emphasis on the revelation of God in nature, while the doctrine of the Law, in Calvin's sense, is hardly popular with many a Neo-Calvinist.

The movement to rediscover Calvin, to appeal beyond "Calvinism" to Calvin, himself, has undoubtedly done much to counteract both a superficial modern disdain for the great Genevan and the opposite

(1) T. M. Lindsay, History of the Reformation (2 vols.) (Edinburgh 1906) upholds this thesis as does Charles A. Briggs in his famous Three Sources of Morality and Religion.

error of clamping the dead forms of a later "Calvinistic scholasticism" upon a vital spirit. It should be cautioned, however, that Calvin was not only a proponent of an exalted spiritual and ethical religion, but was also strongly insistent on the reality and significance of the discipline of external form. The literal accuracy of evangelical history, even to its miraculous details, was not lightly held, nor can we think of Calvin lightly dismissing it, even were he to be confronted with modern evidence and arguments. The discipline of the external form of the moral law was not a thing that Calvin saw to be in the slightest contrast to his high concept of the spirituality of religion. The structure of nature and of the Church,--the reality of the sacraments, are integral parts of his thought. Calvin's thought is a vastly enriching discipline, even for those of us who do not absolutely agree with him, but it is a consistent whole. He highly valued the significance of the category of external form. Calvin saw "external aids" not as afterthoughts or as matters of indifference, but as means of knowing God. "For as, during our confinement in the prison of our flesh, we have not yet attained to the state of angels, God has, in his wonderful providence, accommodated himself to our capacity, by prescribing a way in which we might approach him, notwithstanding our immense distance from him." (1) This is the significance of external form. The right use of the proper form is the only way we, here below, attain the fullness of Christian life and lift our eyes above this earth to heaven itself. An appeal beyond and above history does not invalidate the value of the constructive endeavor with which we, in the practical affairs of church and society, are concerned.

(1) IV, 1, I



SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

The primary sources on which this thesis is based are the writings of John Calvin which are contained in the Corpus Reformatorum, vol. XXIX-LXXXVI, Ioannis Calvin:- Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia, vol. I-LVIII, ed. G. Baum, E. Cunitz, E. Reuss, (Brunswick, C. A. Schwetschke & Son, 1863-97). The volume numbers given in the footnotes are those which start with volume I at Calvin's writings, rather than follow the over-all numbers of the series. The English translation of the Institutes used is John Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Religion, sixth American Edition, trans. John Allen, 1813, (Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication). While there are certain technical advantages in the Beveridge translation, it is the Allen translation which is here referred to because of its almost universal use in the United States. While, like the King James Version of the Bible, certain improvements in translation could be made, its terminology has woven itself into the common idiom of American theological discussion. An interesting new insight into the essence of the Calvinistic theology is to be found in the new translation of John Calvin's much briefer Instruction in Faith, 1537, trans. Paul T. Fuhrmann, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1949).

The secondary source material available on Calvin is vast. Of the writing biographies of Calvin there is no end. For the purposes of this thesis we need only mention a few volumes that give us the background of the life of the Church and the age.

Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, (New York, Scribner's, 1943).

Philip Schaff, Creeds of Christendom, vol. I, (New York, Harper, 1881).

T. M. Lindsay, History of the Reformation (2 vols.), (Edinburgh, 1906).

Preserved Smith, The Age of the Reformation, (New York, Henry Holt, 1920). This work gives, in addition to the specifically Church history above, a vast and stimulating presentation of the world in which the Reformers moved.

BIOGRAPHIES

Emile Doumergue, Jean Calvin, Les Hommes et les Choses de son Temps, vols. I-V, (Lausanne, G. Bridel, 1899-1927). Although Doumergue is criticized for his hero worship, the sheer mass of information about Calvin and his age is unsurpassed, and the author displays no little insight into Calvin's personality.

Williston Walker, John Calvin, The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism, 1509-1564, (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906). A solid, sane approach that covers every essential point.

R. M. Carew Hunt, Calvin, (London, The centenary Press, 1933).
A bright and well-written interpretation.

Paul Henry, Life and Times of John Calvin, the Great Reformer, trans. Henry Stebbing, 2 vols. (New York Robert Carter & Bros. 1851).

- Hugh Reyburn, John Calvin, His Life, Letters and Work. (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1914)
- G. Harkness, John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics, (New York, Henry Holt, 1931)
- James MacKinnon, Calvin and the Reformation, (London, Longmans Green, 1936).

As suggested by the subtitles of many of the above works, they include critiques of Calvin's thought. The fourth and fifth large volumes of Doumergue, for instance, are devoted to Calvin's religious, ecclesiastical and political thought. The following books deal primarily with Calvin's theology or with his ideological influence:

- François Wendel, Calvin, Sources et Evolution de sa Pensée Religieuse, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1950). Concise and clear.
- Paul Wernle, Der Evangelische Glaube: nach den Hauptschriften der Reformatoren, v. 3, Calvin, (Tubingen, 1918-19). Thorough and authoritative.
- Eugene Choisy, Calvin, Educateur des Consciences, (Neully, "Editions de la Cause," 1925).
- A. Mitchell Hunter, The Teaching of Calvin, A Modern Interpretation, Glasgow, Maclehose, Jackson, 1920). Emphasizes "moralization" of all life by religion" as essence of Calvinism.
- B. Warfield, Calvin and Calvinism, (London, 1931). A clever exposition and firm defense of traditional Calvinism.
- Arthur Dakin, Calvinism (Philadelphia, Westminster, 1946). Not startlingly original, but well-rounded.
- Abraham Kuyper, Calvinism, (Amsterdam, Hoveker and Wormser, 1898). Combines firm grasp of Orthodox Calvinism with an imaginative application of its principles to society and culture.
- Emile Doumergue and others, Calvin and the Reformation: Four Studies, (New York, Flem. H. Revell & Co. 1909).
- "Un Group de Professeurs de la Théologie Protestants d'Aix-en-Provence" Calvin et la Reforme en France, (Aix-en-Provence, Libraire Dragon, 1944)

The above references deal with the over-all nature and effects of Calvinism. The following works, not taking the whole range of Calvinism as their major theme, deal with some section of Calvinistic influence in the course of their treatment.

- Rupert E. Davies, The Problem of Authority in the Continental Reformers, A Study of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, (London, The Epworth Press, 1946). This includes a thoughtful study of the theories and practices of Calvin in regard to religious and political authority.
- T. F. Torrance, "The Word of God and the Nature of Man," from Reformation, Old and New, A Tribute to Karl Barth. F. W. Canfield, ed. (London, Lutterworth Press, 1947). An exposition of the Calvinist view of man from the Barthian perspective.
- A. Bossert, Calvin, in the series "Les Grands Écrivains Français", (Paris, Libraire Hachette et Cie., 1906).

- Jacques Pannier, Calvin Écrivain, Sa Place et son Rôle dans l'Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française, (Paris, Libraire Fischbacher, 1930).
- Abel Lefranc, Calvin et l'Eloquence Française, (Paris, Libraire Fischbacher, 1934.)
- Quirinus Breen, John Calvin: A Study in French Humanism, (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1931).
- A. J. Baumgartner, Calvin Hébraïsant et Interprète de l'Ancien Testament, (Paris, Libraire Fischbacher, 1889).
- T. H. L. Parker, The Oracles of God, An Introduction to the Preaching of John Calvin, (London, Lutterworth Press, 1947). Clear and very helpful.
- Erwin Mülhaupt, Die Predigt Calvins, ihre Geschichte, ihre Form, und Ihre religiösen Grundgedanken, (Berlin, W. de Gruyter & Co. 1931).

Some works on the aesthetic aspect of Calvinism:

- Leon Wencelius, Calvin et Rembrandt (Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres.")
- L'Esthétique de Calvin, (Paris, Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1937.) Vastly documented, tries too hard to prove Calvin was an aesthete.
- M. P. Ramsay, Calvin and Art, Considered in Relation to Scotland, (Edinburgh, Moray Press, 1938).

Works on political, social or economic aspects:

- J. Bohatec, Calvin und das Recht, (Ferdigen i. Westfalen, 1934)
- Richard H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism, (New York, Harcourt Brace, 1926). Upholder of theory that Calvinism paved the way for capitalistic outlook.
- Edw. J. Tanis, Calvinism and Social Problems, (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1935). Expresses the social concern of conservative Calvinism.

No theological problem can be limited to one thinker and system of thought, or to one generation. A study of other systems of thought provides helpful parallels and contrasts. Plato, "the most religious and judicious of them all" (Institutes I, 5, XI), provides an interesting parallel with his emphasis upon the eternity of ideas, and the inherent imperfection of any physical "copy" of them, although, of course, the personality of God and the primacy of his will in Calvin is quite non-Platonic. The references I used particularly were

Plato, The Republic of Plato, trans. J. L. Davies and D. J. Vaughan, (London, MacMillan, 1935)

and

Plato, Selections, ed. Raphael Demos, (New York, Scribners, 1927)

Aristotle provides a sharper contrast to the Calvinist understanding by finding the universals embodied in the particulars. For a general background in Aristotle, I referred to

Aristotle, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. Richard McKean, (New York, Random House, 1941).

Augustine, with his understanding of the Neo-Platonist ideas and his emphasis upon the transcendence and initiative of God, provides many points of contact with Calvin. Calvin himself approvingly quotes Augustine in almost every section of the Institutes, but there is a real divergence in regard to analogy between the visible and invisible, and in regard to allegory in the interpretation of Scripture. In order to provide myself with a measure of Augustinianism with which to contrast Calvin, I carefully studied

Aurelius Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, trans. J. G. Pilkington, (Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1886)

To gain some understanding of the scholastic background for Calvin's thought, I referred to

Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy, (Gifford Lectures, 1936)
and

Jacques Maritain, Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays, (London, Sheed and Ward, 1946).

When one is seeking to gain an insight into Calvin, every thinker offers some insight into the problem, although not specifically dealing with Calvinism. Hereunder listed, with occasional comments, are theological works that have helped me think through the problem of external form:

John A. MacKay, A Preface to Christian Theology, (New York, MacMillan, 1943). Establishes an approach to all fields which is most helpful, especially for those who have studied under him.

William Temple, Nature, Man and God. (London, MacMillan, 1940) This provided a general background from a contrasting point of view.

Karl Barth, Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, vols. I-III, (Munich, G. Kaiser, 1932-48). Strong affinity to Calvinism, together with significant differences from Calvin.

Epistemology, revelation, rule of faith. Particular theological problems follow:

Alan Richardson, Preface to Bible Study, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1944).

A. G. Hebert, The Form of the Church, (London, Faber and Faber, 1945). This book, with that of Jenkins below, provides an interesting example of a modern theological conversation centering around the significance of the category of external form.

World Council of Churches 1st Assembly, Amsterdam, 1948, Man's Disorder and God's Design, the Amsterdam Assembly Series, (New York, Harper, 1949)

Daniel T. Jenkins, The Nature of Catholicity (London, Faber and Faber, 1942).

Karl Adam, The Spirit of Catholicism, trans. Dom
Justin McCann, (New York, MacMillan, 1946)

Hugh Thompson Kerr, The Christian Sacraments, A Source
Book for Ministers, (Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1944)

Otto Piper, God In History, (New York, MacMillan, 1939)

John MacMurray, The Clue to History, (London, S.C.M. Press, 1938)