

THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST
IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN CALVIN

by
WILLIAM J. KLEMPA

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PREFACE

As a general rule, the less a writer says in the preface to his work, the better. A few words, however, are permissible in order to indicate the line of argument to be pursued and also to express one's debt of gratitude to those persons to whom it is due.

In the history of dogma, Calvin's doctrine of the Atonement has been described as "a penal substitutionary theory." This judgement calls for a critical re-appraisal. If it is the case, as it surely is, that in his theology, Calvin sought nothing more than to be faithful to the Biblical witness, then we should expect that his presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement, will not confine itself to two concepts - penalty and substitution - but will reflect something of the variety and comprehensiveness of the Biblical picture of the Work of Christ. The Biblical character of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation - its manifoldness and richness - can be seen if we take the notion of obedience as the key category. Perhaps this can be made clear in the following way. If we compare Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation to a large mansion in which there are many rooms, then the notion of obedience is like the spacious central hall, on to which all the rooms of the house open. To enter this hall and to explore it, is both to become aware of the different rooms and to gain access to them. Thus, to investigate the

notion of the obedience of Christ is to see the numerous other images which comprise Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement: recapitulation, sacrifice, penalty, satisfaction, substitution, representation, and Christus Victor. Calvin employs all these notions and combines them into a concrete whole; but what we are left with is not so much a theory of the Atonement as a rich and comprehensive picture of it.

The thesis is divided into three parts. Part One is introductory. To deal properly with Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation, it was necessary to orient his teaching about the Work of Christ, first, to his doctrine of the covenant; and secondly, to his understanding of the concept of Mediator. Chapter One is devoted to a discussion of the relation of the notion of obedience to such concepts as the covenant of gratuitous adoption, the law of the covenant, the sacrifices of the covenant, and the expectation of the new covenant. This investigation prepares the ground for what is argued in Part Two. If the notion of the covenant is fundamental for a right understanding of his doctrine of reconciliation, Calvin's notion of the 'Mediatorship' of Christ is even more important. What Calvin means by this concept is investigated in Chapter Two, and his doctrine of the Person of the Mediator is also considered.

Part Two contains the main argument of the thesis.

The work of reconciliation, according to Calvin, cannot be limited to the death of Christ, but rather belongs to the whole course of His obedience from His birth to His death. Chapter Three considers the obedience of Christ in assuming the form of a servant; Chapters Four and Five, the different aspects of the obedience of Christ's life. Chapter Six is devoted to a lengthy discussion of the obedience of Christ's death. Here we consider the different images which Calvin used to speak of the death of Christ and also attempt to show how they are related to one another. The final chapter in Part Two is devoted to a consideration of the exaltation of the obedient Servant of God and of His heavenly ministry for us.

It is impossible to discuss Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation without also considering how the grace which Christ acquired for us by His obedience becomes ours. Part Three is devoted to this subject. Chapter Eight considers Calvin's doctrine of participatio Christi^{at} and the fruits of that participation, justification and sanctification. The final chapter is devoted to a discussion of the obedience of the Christian as grounded upon and proceeding from the obedience of Christ.

The other task which I have before me - a far happier and more pleasant one - is as follows. First, it is necessary to acknowledge a number of awards which I have received. Without this financial assistance it would not have been possible to undertake and to continue post-graduate studies.

I am very happy therefore to express my gratitude: to the Canada Council, for a Pre-Doctoral Fellowship to study at Harvard University; to Knox College, for the Knox College Travelling Scholarship; to the University of Edinburgh, for a research grant to read some of Calvin's unpublished sermons in the University of Geneva Library; and to the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, for a 'stipendium' to study at the University of Göttingen and to complete this work.

My sincere thanks are also due to Professors T. F. Torrance and J. McIntyre, who supervised this work. I count it a very great privilege indeed to have studied under them and to have profited from their wise instruction. The valuable suggestions they have given me and the criticisms which they have made of this work, have been of the greatest assistance. I am also grateful to Professor Otto Weber of Göttingen University for his kindness and the opportunity to discuss a number of aspects of Calvin's theology with him.

The one person who deserves the rest of my gratitude, and more besides, is my wife. Not only has she typed this manuscript, but in countless other ways, encouraged and assisted me in the production of this work. Appropriately, the thesis is dedicated to her.

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER ONE: THE COVENANT AND OBEDIENCE

A common weakness of many discussions of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation is a failure to orient his teaching about the work of Christ to his understanding of the covenant and Old Testament background. This failure is regrettable for it has meant not only that a great deal of the Christological material in Calvin's Commentaries and Sermons on the Old Testament has been passed by and ignored but, more importantly, that Calvin's teaching about the law and the cult, obedience, expectation and fulfilment, has not been seen as the proper background against which to view the work of Christ. By the very nature of the case we would expect that the Old Testament would play a very important role in Calvin's understanding of the Atonement. Calvin was able to give the Old Testament preparation for Christ its proper place in the work of salvation by his notion of the covenant. In his view there is one covenant of free adoption, embracing both Israel and the Church, which has two dispensations or modes of administration, one called the Old Testament and the other the New Testament. It is not claiming too much when we say that only when we see the relation between the covenant and the work of reconciliation in Calvin's thought, that we shall be able to see how Calvin understands the Old Testament as a preparation for Christ and how for him the institution and establishment of the covenant between God and the race of Abraham is the

presupposition of the work of reconciliation.

As with Zwingli and Bucer, so also with Calvin, the covenant is a basic redemptive idea. In what almost amounts to a definition, Calvin describes the covenant as the "source of salvation" and the "way of God" whereby He "found Himself in the character of a Father to His ancient people, and afterwards more clearly under the Gospel, when the Spirit of adoption was poured out in greater abundance."¹ The New Covenant which was accomplished in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ proceeds from and is the fulfilment of the covenant concluded originally with Abraham. This one covenant, which is summed up in the words, 'I will be your God and you will be my people' comprehends "life and salvation and the whole of blessedness."²

1. The Covenant of Gratuitous Adoption

In the preface to Olivétan's New Testament, where he sums up in brief scope the message of Scripture, Calvin states that God began His redemptive work by revealing Himself to a particular people, Israel, whom He chose by His goodwill and free grace from among the nations of the earth.³ By the "sacred bond" (sacrum vinculum)⁴ of a covenant God

1. Comm. on Psalm 67:2, CO 31, 618.

2. Inst. II, 10, 8.

3. "Christ is the End of the Law," CO 9, 795-6.

4. Comm. on Genesis 28:13 & 49:1, CO 23, 392, 591; and Inst. II, 10, 7 where Calvin speaks of hoc sacro vinculo. The French ed. has ce lien sacre et indissoluble.

bound this people to Himself in fellowship and obedience. He gave Himself to them as their God and thereby made them His people. Calvin points out that in ordinary usage a covenant is an agreement entered into by companions or equals, which ordinarily takes the form of a mutual promise to have the same enemies and the same friends.¹ When God makes a covenant with Abraham and his race we witness an amazing act of condescending love. The institution of the covenant reveals the ineffable condescension of God to redeem mankind. "This certainly is an inestimable pledge of special love," Calvin says, commenting on Genesis 12:3, "that God should so greatly condescend for our sake."² The extent of this condescension for Calvin is shown when he says: "In a word, He is joined to us in such a manner that He wishes all that belongs to Him and to us to be in common."³

A new relationship is set up by the covenant which Calvin describes as a relationship of gratuitous adoption.⁴ First of all, the substance of the covenant is the free and gracious adoption of sinful man into a life of fellowship with God.⁵ The covenant is not based on the worthiness or

1. Comm. on Genesis 12:3, CO 23, 177.

2. *ibid.* CO 23, 177.

3. Comm. on Isaiah 37:23, CO 36, 631: In summa sic nobiscum coniunctionis est, ut omnia simul communia habere velit.

4. Calvin uses the expression foedus gratuita adoptionis, Comm. on Genesis 17:7, CO 23, 237; on Exodus 19:5, CO 24, 196; on Malachi 1:2-6, CO 44, 396; Inst. II, 7, 2, etc.

5. Comm. on Deut. 9:4, 5, CO 24, 235; on Exodus 6:4, CO 24, 78; on Isaiah 55:3, CO 37, 285; on Hosea 1:6, CO 42, 211; Luke 1:73, CO 45, 49; Inst. II, 10, 2 and innumerable other places.

merits of man but "has its cause and stability and effect and completion solely in the grace of God."¹ If we were to inquire into the reason for God's entering into a covenant with Israel, Calvin would reply that it has no other cause than the gratuitous goodness of God. "There is no other reason why God should choose them except His mere choice of them."² These quotations make it perfectly clear that for Calvin the new relationship which is established between God and man in the covenant has its sole foundation in the infinite mercy and kindness of God.

If Calvin has spoken of the covenant as the "sacred bond" between God and man, it is, properly speaking, Jesus Christ who, in his view, is the true sacrum vinculum between God and His people. From the beginning of creation Christ was always "the bond of connection between God and man."³ As this vinculum coniunctionis Christ is the foundation of the covenant. He is both "the foundation of the covenant and the bond of the mutual relation between God and the people."⁴ The covenant was founded on Christ, the Eternal Image of the Father,⁵ and established with a view to His

1. Comm. on Daniel 9:4, CO 41, 133.

2. Comm. on Daniel 9:4, CO 41, 134: Non alia est euis causa vel origo quam gratuita Dei bonitas.

3. Comm. on Genesis 48:16, CO 23, 584: semper vinculum fuit coniunctionis hominum cum Deo.

4. Preface to Comm. on Isaiah, CO 36, 22: Qui et foederis erat fundamentum et vinculum mutuae inter Deum et populum coniunctionis.

5. Comm. on Genesis 28:12, CO 23, 391.

coming. It is important to note that Calvin does not have in mind an abstract logos asarkos but the Mediator; for in his view, Christ the Eternal Image of the Father had undertaken the office of Mediator before His assumption of human flesh.¹ It is in this capacity as the One who is appointed to the office of Mediator that Christ is the foundation of the covenant:- "The covenant which was made with Abraham and his descendants had its foundation in Christ; for the words of the covenant are these, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'. And the covenant is ratified in no other way than in the seed of Abraham, by whose coming, though it had been previously made, it was confirmed and actually sanctioned."²

The whole argument hinges on the Christological interpretation of "seed" in the Genesis passage (22:18). The early Christian interpreters had concluded from what they thought was the singular use of the word "seed" that one individual, namely Christ, was intended and they believed that this was Paul's argument in Galatians 3:16. Calvin was not disposed to accept the traditional Christological interpretation of the Genesis passage without correcting it in face of certain valid Jewish objections. He pointed out that Paul's Christological interpretation in Galatians 3:16 is not based on the dubious semantic fact that the word "seed" occurs in the

1. Comm. on Hosea 12:3-5, CO 42, 455.
2. Comm. on Isaiah 42:6, CO 37, 64.

singular rather than in the plural. Clearly the word "seed" in this instance is a collective noun as the Jewish commentators have rightly shown,¹ but it refers primarily to a body and a body presupposes a Head. Christ is this Head under whom the people of God are united into one body and therefore the promise can be interpreted as referring to Christ. "When Paul refers it to Christ, he does not insist on the word 'seed' but has something higher in mind; namely that it cannot be one seed unless it is united and knit together in Christ as in the Head. For although Ishmael and Isaac are both sons of Abraham they do not make one seed, because they are divided into two people. Therefore, though many are estranged from the family of Abraham, which comes of him according to the flesh, yet Moses notes one certain body when he promises the blessing to the seed of Abraham. And from where does this unity come except only from the Head who is Christ."²

Accordingly, for Calvin, Christ is the root of the calling of the people of God and upon Him alone the grace of adoption is founded.³ The substance of the covenant rests on Christ alone for it was established in Him or in reference to Him.⁴ Here Calvin lays particular emphasis on St. Paul's

1. Comm. on Galatians 3:16, CO 50, 211-12.

2. Comm. on Acts 3:25, CO 48, 77. Cf. also Comm. on Luke 24:27, CO 45, 806-7. Cf. also Hosea 11:1, CO 42, 433 & Inst. II, 6,2.

3. Comm. on Exodus 4:22, CO 24, 63; and Comm. on 2 Cor. 1:20, CO 50, 23; Comm. on Isaiah 49:1, CO 37, 191.

4. Comm. on Galatians 3:16, CO 50, 212-213, pactum fuisse initum, vel respectu Christi.

words in 2 Corinthians 1:20, that in Christ all the promises of God are Yea and Amen. He explains what it means when it is said that the covenant is founded on Christ and yet its accomplishment does not take place until His coming in His life, death and resurrection:- "All the promises that were given to believers from the beginning of the world were founded upon Christ. Therefore, Moses and the Prophets, whenever they speak of reconciliation with God, of the hope of salvation, or of any other favour, mention Him and speak at the same time concerning His coming and His kingdom..... the promises under the Old Testament were fulfilled to the faithful, in so far as was advantageous for their welfare; and yet it is not less true, that they were in a manner suspended until the coming of Christ, through whom they obtained their true accomplishment."¹ To this accomplishment of salvation in the death and resurrection of Christ both the faith of the fathers and ours looks with one accord.² For this reason Christ is the foundation of the one covenant embracing both Israel and the Church.

Secondly, the covenant signifies the adoption of a particular people into a life of fellowship with God. It is characteristic of Calvin that he usually speaks of God making a covenant with the people of Israel as a whole even though the covenant was actually concluded with certain individuals,

1. Comm. on 2 Corinthians 1:20, CO 50, 23.
 2. Comm. on 2 Timothy 1:10, CO 52, 353-4.

Abraham, Jacob and Isaac. The act of adoption is a corporate act and thus Calvin speaks constantly of God choosing a people and founding a Church. Israel was separated from among the nations of the world to be God's peculiar people and heritage:- "In the beginning, before the covenant, the condition of the whole world was one and the same. But as soon as it was said, 'I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee' the Church was separated from other nations; just as in the creation of the world, the light emerged out of the darkness."¹ Though all men, inasmuch as they are created in the image of God are children of God, to be accounted His special children was the privilege of the children of Abraham.² God chose Abraham and his descendants as a people peculiar to Himself and adopted them as His children. This was not due to any worthiness or merit which they possessed or any work which they had performed. They did not obtain this privilege of adoption by any other means than that God had called them to it and thereby separated them from the other nations of the earth.

In Calvin's view, the sign and symbol of this adoption of Israel and of its separation from the other nations of the world was the rite of circumcision. Circumcision was the seal of adoption and the symbol of the covenant.³ By it the people of Israel "were initiated into the worship of God and true

1. Comm. on Genesis 17:7, CO 23, 237; on Jeremiah 31:9, CO 38, 657.
2. Comm. on Deut. 32:6, CO 25, 360.
3. Comm. on Genesis 17:9, CO 23; on Joshua 5:2, CO 25, 458; on Ezekiel 16:21, CO 40, 355; on Romans 4:11, CO 47, 75.

piety and at the same time were separated from heathen nations to be His holy and peculiar people."¹ It was customary for covenants to be committed to public records or to be engraved in brass or sculptured on stones. Therefore, God inscribed His covenant in the flesh of Abraham.² God's choice of Israel was, as it were, sealed in their flesh,³ and by the external symbol they were reminded that God requires integrity and holiness of life and that this could be attained by spiritually cutting off the corruption of the flesh.⁴ Circumcision was a sacrament of the old covenant in which word and faith were conjoined. Israel was promised salvation in the seed of Abraham and gratuitous reconciliation was included in the symbol that the faithful might look forward to the promised seed.⁵

According to Calvin, there are two parts to the covenant which God made with Abraham and his descendants. The first part was the revelation of God's infinite mercy and kindness in entering into a covenant with the people of Israel. "Let us note this as the principal part of the covenant" Calvin says, "that He who is the God of the living not of the dead promises to be a God to the children of Abraham."⁶ The second part was

1. Comm. on Deut. 10:16, CO 24, 222; on Exodus 6:7, CO 24, 79-80, 12:43, CO 24, 291.
2. Comm. on Genesis 17:9, CO 23, 239: Deus in carne Abrahae foedus suum inculpit. Fuit enim circumcisio quasi solenne monumentum eius adoptionis qua genus Abrahae electum fuerat in peculiarem Dei populum.
3. Comm. on Joshua 5:9, CO 25, 460.
4. Comm. on Rom. 2:28 & 4:11, CO 47, 45, 75; on Gen. 17:11, CO 23, 241; on Deut. 10:16, CO 24, 222.
5. Comm. on Romans 4:11, CO 47, 75; on Exodus 12:43, CO 24, 291.
6. Comm. on Genesis 17:7, CO 23, 239.

the requirement of a complete and grateful loyalty to God, for the covenant not only reveals God's infinite grace and favour but also contains an exhortation to seek integrity and purity of life:- "God ... anticipates us in His promises by His grace; but when He has of His own accord, conferred upon us His favour, He immediately requires from us gratitude in return. Thus what He said to Abraham, 'I am thy God' was an offer of undeserved goodness, yet at the same time added what He required from him - Walk before me and be perfect."¹ The covenant involves a mutual stipulation.² God promises Abraham that He will be his God and the God of his descendants and He places him under the obligation to form his whole life and mind to His service. There is therefore a mutual relation and correspondence between the covenant of God and the obedience of faith so that the response of the latter answers to the faithfulness of the former.³ In offering His grace to Abraham God lays on him the obligation to live a just and holy life. The covenant is sealed when Abraham receives both the promise of grace and the commandment to yield a perfect and entire obedience.⁴ Obedience is the grateful response of man to God which corresponds to the self-giving of God to man in the covenant.

God justly demands obedience of man as His Creator and Redeemer. While Calvin understands the duty of obedience

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 7:1, CO 50, 83.

2. Comm. on Romans 9:4, CO 49, 340; Comm. on Gen. 17:1, CO 23, 234.

3. Cf. Comm. on Psalm 78:37, CO 31,

4. Comm. on Genesis 17:7, CO 23, 235.

primarily in the context of the covenant of grace made with Abraham, he also speaks of the obligation of obedience which God laid upon man when He created him. Adam was placed on the earth "as in a theatre, that he beholding above him and beneath the wonderful works of God, might reverently adore their Author (and) all things were ordained for the use of man, that he, being under a deeper obligation, might devote and dedicate himself entirely to obedience towards God."¹ The whole of man's life was to be a perpetual course of obedience,² in which man would cleave to God alone and render to Him a free and joyous service. Although Calvin recognized the obligation of obedience which God had laid upon man when He created him, he refused to turn it into a principle, as the Federal theologians were guilty of doing, and to speak as they did of a "covenant of works" between God and the first man.³ Calvin knows of only one covenant, the foedus gratuita adoptionis which embraces the faithful under both the Old and the New Testament, and of which Christ is the one and only true Mediator.⁴ There are not two covenants, one a covenant of works and the other a covenant of grace, but only one covenant which from beginning to end is free and unconditional. To admit two covenants would be to rend asunder

1. omnia in usum hominis esse destinata, quo magis illi obstrictus, totum se in eius obsequium addiceret ac dicaret, Preface to Comm. on Genesis, CO 23, 11-12.
2. perpetuus obedientiae tenor in tota vita esse debuerat, Inst. I, 4, 4.
3. Heinrich Heppe, Reformed Dogmatics, E.T. by G.T. Thomson, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950. Chapter XIII, pp. 281 ff.
4. It is interesting that Cocceius held that Christ was not included in this covenant of works, ibid., p. 291.

creation and redemption, basing a covenant of works on the one and a covenant of grace on the other. Calvin refuses to view the matter in this way because for him creation and redemption are indissolubly connected.

But if there is no "covenant of works", for Calvin there is a law of obedience which has been written on the heart of man and which makes him inexcusable before God. Thus in one place he writes:- "natural light was sufficient to teach the Jews that it was their duty to obey God; for the law of obedience is so written on our hearts, as a testimony, that no one can plead ignorance as an excuse."¹ It would be a mistake, however, to interpret this as a principle of obedience which is innate to man, like the Federal theologians' view of a covenant of nature which had been inscribed from the beginning on men's hearts.² Although Calvin does work with the concept of a lumen naturale, in his view natural light is insufficient to be the basis of a perfect obedience to God. As a result of the fall, man has lost the knowledge of God and the ability to perform what God requires of him.³ Man may feel an obligation to obey but the "natural light" is not sufficient to enable him to submit himself to God but only such as to render him inexcusable before the Creator.⁴ "Even if man had remained free from all stain, his condition

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 35:12, CO 39, 111.

2. Heppe, op. cit., p. 283 f.

3. Sermon on Deut. 4:1-2, CO 26, 99-111.

4. Comm. on Jeremiah 35:12-15, CO 39, 109-112.

would have been too lowly for him to reach God without a Mediator."¹

It still remains to inquire how Calvin understood the character of this obedience which God requires of man. Critics of Calvin have made much of the severity of discipline which was imposed in Geneva and have represented Calvin's view of obedience as a joyless and constrained act. Whatever may be the true interpretation of Calvin's conception of Church discipline (and there is something, although definitely not everything, to be said in favour of the need for a radical reformation and supervision of the morals of an extremely decadent city), there is nothing more striking in Calvin's discussion of obedience than his insistence on the fact that true obedience must be a spontaneous, grateful and joyful act. Only such a response on man's part can answer adequately to God's grace and mercy.² The grace of God in His covenant evokes love and gratitude in man that he may devote himself entirely to the worship and obedience of God. Thus God's gratuita adoptio is described as the primary cause (prima obedientiae causa) of obedience.³ God is not a despot who forces us to obey and serve Him but He is a gracious God who admits us by adoption into the family of God that we on our part may yield

1. Inst. II, 12, 1.

2. Cf. K. Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV-1. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh: 1956, p. 41: "Χάρις always demands the answer of εὐχαριστία."

3. Comm. on Hebrews 2:13, CO 55, 31.

the loving obedience of children to a gracious Father.¹ God requires from His people a reciprocal love "for nothing could be more base than not to testify their gratitude by a pious and righteous life."² The kind of obedience which God requires is a free and willing one; a forced and servile obedience is not at all acceptable to Him.³

If we wish to interpret Calvin's understanding of obedience rightly then we must see it in relation to such concepts as faith, love, and gratitude. These four terms are used almost synonymously by Calvin to express the character of man's response to God and they help to interpret one another. At one time faith is spoken of as the source of true piety, at another time love, and still at another time obedience.⁴ Faith is said to have its source in obedience and again it is said that obedience flows from faith and has faith as its true teacher.⁵ At another time obedience is described as springing from love.⁶ Still at another time obedience is spoken of as a testimony of gratitude. "Nothing

1. Comm. on Luke 1:74, CO 45, 49.

2. Exigit ergo mutuum amorem. Nihil enim turpius quam non testari gratitudinem pie justeque vivendo. Comm. on Deut. 10:16, CO 24, 222.

3. Comm. on Psalm 1:1, CO 31, 39; Comm. on Deut. 5:9, CO 24, 379; Psalm 40:8, CO 31, 411; Psalm 18:2, CO 31, 170 and Sermons on Abraham, CO

4. Comm. on Psalm 78:21, CO 31, 729: Fides ergo verae pietatis radix est; Comm. on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 692, 694.

5. Inst. I, 6, 2. Neque enim perfecta solum, vel numeris suis completa fides, sed omnis recta Dei cognitio ab obedientia nascitur; and Comm. on Hebrews 11:4, CO 55, 146.

6. Thirty-second Sermon on Deut. 5:8-10, CO 26, 267; Comm. on Deut. 7:9, CO 25, 20: fontem et causam obedientiae, amorem esse quo Deum ut patrem amplectimur; and Comm. on Matt. 22:37, CO 45, 611.

is more grateful to Him than obedience."¹ This constant interplay between these concepts indicates that they are intimately related in Calvin's mind. Taken together they express the true character of man's duty to God. Gratitude, faith and love fill out the content of obedience just as gratitude, love and obedience fill out the content of faith. Moreover, faith, love and obedience proceed from a sincere and grateful heart. A motto which Calvin was fond of using shows an outstretched hand holding a flaming heart with the words "prompte et sincere" written underneath. This grateful offering of ourselves to God in faith, love and obedience is a complete and absolute one. Again, as Calvin was fond of saying, "God has not bound us to Himself by halves."²

But, in Calvin's view, the covenant does not depend on the faithfulness and integrity of man even though a mutual stipulation is part of the covenant. Man cannot destroy the covenant by his shameful ingratitude and disobedience:- "The covenant of God did not depend on the people's faithfulness or integrity. There was, as it may be said, a mutual stipulation; for God made a covenant with Abraham on this condition that he should walk perfectly with Him; this is quite true, and the same stipulation was valid under the Prophets. Yet the grace of God cannot be wholly obliterated, for He

1. Inst. III, 20, 4; Comm. on Deut. 11:1, CO 24, 237; and Comm. on Psalm 110:3, CO 32, 162: 'prompt and cheerful obedience.
2. Sermon on Deut. 30:15-20, CO 28, 587.

had chosen the race of Abraham from whom the Redeemer was at length to be born."¹ God is the eternally faithful partner of the covenant who is always truthful and consistent with Himself, and who, therefore, never violates nor departs from His agreement. In so far then as the covenant is gratuitous it is everlasting and inviolable.² Neither the faithlessness nor perfidy of man can abolish it.³ "That it should fail through any perfidiousness of men, was wholly unreasonable; ... since adoption is gratuitous and based on God alone and not on men, it stands firm and inviolable, howsoever great the unfaithfulness of men may be, which may tend to abolish it."⁴ The covenant is firm and stable and not just of a temporary or transitory nature.⁵ Its eternal character is based on God's eternal and gracious purpose to send a Redeemer who will spring from the race of Abraham and who, in His life, death and resurrection will confirm and fulfill from both the side of God and the side of man the covenant concluded originally with Abraham.

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 14:21, CO 37, 202. See also Comm. on Psalm 132:12, CO 32, 348, "the terms of this agreement would seem to suggest that God's covenant would not be ratified unless men faithfully performed their part and that thus the effect of the grace promised was suspended upon obedience. We must remember ... that the covenant was perfectly gratuitous, so far as related to God's promise of sending a Saviour and Redeemer because this stood connected with the original adoption of those to whom the promise was made which was itself free."
2. Comm. on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 192; on Genesis 17:7, CO 23, 238; on Isaiah 24:5, CO 36, 402.
3. Comm. on Numbers 16:21, CO 25, 222; on Ezekiel 16:62, CO 40, 396.
4. Comm. on Romans 11:1, CO 49, 211.
5. Comm. on Psalm 105:8, CO 32, 101.

2. The Law and Obedience

God had deposited His covenant with Abraham and transmitted it through him to his posterity. But Scripture speaks not only of God making a covenant with Abraham but also with Jacob and with Isaac, and of the delivering of the covenant of the law to Moses at Mount Sinai. These covenants, according to Calvin, are simply the renewal of the one covenant which had been concluded once and for all time with Abraham. All other covenants, the law and all religion, depend upon this foedus gratuita adoptionis and Calvin uses such words as "strengthening", "confirmation", and "repetition" to describe the renewal of this one covenant.¹

The Law of God cannot be viewed by itself but must be seen as essentially related to the covenant; that is, as covenantal law. This understanding of the law is of fundamental importance for Calvin as it determines everything he has to say about the law. The giving of the law is another 'moment' or event in the history of the covenant. When the original covenant had almost disappeared through the forgetfulness and disobedience of the race of Abraham, God had renewed and confirmed it by delivering the law to Moses at Mount Sinai:-

1. Cf. H.H. Wolf, Die Einheit des Bundes, Verlag der Buchhandlung des Erziehungsvereins Neukirchen Kreis Moers, 1958, p. 25; Renewal: Comm. on Genesis 48:1; 50:24, CO 23, 579, 621; on Exodus 3:1, CO 24, 35; on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 192; on Ezekiel 16:8, CO 40, 342; Confirmation: on Exodus 23:31, CO 24, 254; Repetition: on Deut. 1:1, CO 24, 260.

"... although God had long ago made a covenant with Abraham and the adoption of the people was founded upon it, yet that favour on the people's part had almost vanished away therefore God pronounces that He had, as it were, adopted the people afresh. It was like the renewal of the covenant when God bound the people to himself by a fixed law and prescribed a fixed method of worship."¹ Calvin makes it perfectly clear that the law is the law of the covenant. The appointment of Moses as a Lawgiver does not do away with the promises which were made to the race of Abraham but rather serves to remind the people of the covenant of grace and helps to renew this covenant in their memory.² The law is a testimonium gratuita adoptionis.³ It contains a promise of salvation and eternal life.⁴ So intimate is this relationship between the covenant and the law that Calvin, commenting on Hosea 8:1, "they have transgressed my covenant and trespassed against my law", says, the prophet "repeats the same thing twice, for the covenant and the law are synonymous; only the word law ... is added as explanatory, as though he had said, that they had violated the covenant of the Lord,

1. Comm. on Ezekiel 16:8, CO 40, 342. See also Comm. on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 192: God "had made with Abraham an eternal and inviolable covenant; but because it had grown into disregard from the lapse of time, and the carelessness of mankind, it became needful that it should again be renewed. To this end, then, it was engraved upon the tables of stone, and written in a book, that the marvellous grace, which God had conferred on the race of Abraham, should never sink into oblivion."
2. Inst. II, 7, 1.
3. Comm. on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 192.
4. Preface to Comm. on Hosea, CO 42, 198.

which had been sanctioned or sealed by the Law."¹

The giving of the law to Moses is therefore to be understood in the context of the covenant and as the bestowal of a further favour on the people of Israel. God had united this people to Himself by His covenant and to this act of gracious adoption He added the special benefit of the law to retain the people in obedience to Himself:- "... since the main principle of righteousness is to obey God it was by special privilege that He deposited with His elect people the rule of living aright as a pledge of His adoption."² The law was not given indiscriminately to all men but only to Israel as their peculiar inheritance and treasure,³ to provide them with a more certain and intimate knowledge of His majesty.⁴ Thus Calvin describes the law as a sacrum vinculum by which He had bound the Jews to Himself in order that they might yield obedience with a more prompt and joyful affection.⁵

While the relationship between the covenant and the law is an intimate one, Calvin notes that there is this difference between them, namely, that the law is a conditional covenant.⁶

1. Comm. on Hosea 8:1, CO 42, 362; & on Psalm 78:10, CO 31, 726.
2. Finis et usus Legis, CO 24, 725; See also Comm. on Hosea 8:12, CO 42, 376; Comm. on Malachi 4:4, CO 44, 493.
3. Comm. on Psalm 19:7, CO 31, 199.
4. Comm. on Hosea 8:12, CO 42, 377; on Psalm 78:5, CO 31, 723; on Malachi 4:4, CO 44, 493.
5. Comm. on Psalm 19:7, CO 31, 199.
6. Comm. on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 193; Comm. on Habakkuk 2:4, CO 43, 531.
"the law promises life to those who serve God and the promise is conditional, dependent on merits of work."

The law promises a reward to those who observe it perfectly and denounces vengeance against those who transgress it in the least respect. That is, in Calvin's view, the law is a compact in which there is a strict correspondence between obedience and salvation and disobedience and death. "It is certain that the same covenant, of which Abraham had been the minister and keeper was repeated to his descendants by the hand of Moses. Nevertheless Paul says (Gal. 3:19) that the law was added because of transgressions, and opposes it to the promises given to Abraham; because as he is dealing with the particular office, power and end of the law, he separates it from the promises of grace. In the same sense, he calls it elsewhere 'the ministration of death', and 'the letter that kills' (2 Cor. 3:6, 7). Again in another place, he states that it works wrath, (Rom. 4:15) as if by its arraignment it inflicted a deadly wound on the human race and left them no hope of salvation."¹ When the law is viewed by itself apart from the promises of grace, there is a distinct difference between it and the Gospel. Commenting on 2 Corinthians 3:7 Calvin sets forward Paul's argument of the way in which the law is distinguished from the Gospel as follows:- "In the first place he calls the law the ministry of death. Secondly, he says, that its doctrine was written in letters and with ink. Thirdly, that it was engraved on stones. Fourthly, that it was not to last forever, but instead its condition was

1. Comm. on Exodus 19:1, CO 24, 193.

temporary and fading. And fifthly, once again he calls it the ministry of condemnation."¹ We shall have to return to this distinction of Law and Gospel later but here we must confine our attention to Calvin's understanding of the conditional nature of the law.

There are two problems which arise out of Calvin's discussion of the law as a conditional covenant. The first may be stated in the following way: Is it consistent that a law should be given to men, in which life is promised in return for obedience and death is threatened for disobedience, when men are devoid of strength to keep the law? Does not the law then weigh men down as a great burden and lead them to despair? Calvin seems to be aware of this objection. First of all, he finds it necessary to distinguish between the character of the law and our wickedness. Thus, he says, the law "is not in its own nature hurtful to us, but it is so because our corruption provokes and draws upon it its curse."² That is, the fault does not lie in the law but in ourselves:- "Since the law is the perfect rule of a godly and holy life, and sets forth the righteousness of God, it is rightly thought of as the doctrine of life and salvation ... the law, therefore, contains life in itself ... when Paul calls the law the minister of death, he speaks of a characteristic which it has contingently, because of the corrupt

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 3:7, CO 50, 41.

2. Comm. on Romans 7:10, CO 49, 126.

nature of man. The law itself does not produce sin; it finds sin in us. It offers life to us; but we, being evil, derive nothing but death from it. Hence the law works death only in relation to man."¹ Man can blame neither God nor the law. The law is just and when men transgress it voluntarily they are deservedly condemned. The law ministers death to all those who transgress it. But according to Calvin this is only an accidental and not the true work of the law. This accidental property, namely, the ministering of death, now belongs inseparably to the law because of man's sinfulness.²

The second problem is related to the first and may be expressed as follows:- In which way then does Calvin conceive the conditional character of the law? Is it contingent from both the side of God and the side of man or just from the side of man? It is clear from what has been said so far that Calvin regards the law as being conditional only from the side of man. Therefore, he can speak of the law as containing the highest righteousness and being the doctrine of life and salvation.³ This positive evaluation of the law will be exceedingly important later for the right understanding of Calvin's teaching of Christ's fulfilment of the law. In his view, Christ does not simply break the power of the law and thus deliver men from its bondage but He perfectly

1. Comm. on Acts 7:38, CO 48, 151-2.

2. Comm. on 2 Corinthians 3:7, CO 50:42, on Acts 7:38, CO 48, 151.

3. Comm. on Luke 10:26, CO 45, 610; on Acts 7:38, CO 48, 151-2, and on Hebrews 7:12, CO 55, 167: "... the law contains the rule of life, and the gratuitous covenant of life."

obeys it and thus frees men from its bondage and procures for them a perfect righteousness which they themselves could not achieve. But we shall return to this discussion later.

It is in virtue of its conditional character that the law, for Calvin, has its theological use (legis usus theologicus).¹ Following Melancthon and Bucer,² Calvin distinguishes three different functions of the law: a pedagogical, a civil and a more permanent use for believers.

But before we turn to the discussion of the three-fold office of the law, it will be useful to see how Calvin relates the law to Christ. For Calvin the proper scopus of the law is Jesus Christ and therefore its true function in all its parts is to lead men to Him. Perhaps this is best expressed in the title which Calvin gave to the chapter on the law in the Institutes:- "The law, given not to retain a people for itself but to keep alive the hope of salvation in Christ until His advent." The law must therefore be understood in relation to Christ. "God did not speak through Moses and the prophets for nothing. His only purpose in speaking to Moses was that he might call everyone to Christ."³ Just as Christ is the foundation of the

1. CO 24, 725, Finis et usus Legis.

2. See F. Wendel, Calvin. Sources et évolution de sa pensée religieuse. Paris: Presses Univers. de France 1950, p. 147.

3. Comm. on John 5:38, CO 47, 124.

covenant so is He the soul, the end, and the very life of the law. "Without Christ the law is empty and insubstantial."¹ And again, "Whatever the law teaches, whatever it commands, whatever it promises has always a reference to Christ as its main object."² The three uses of the law must be seen in the light of the relation of the law to Christ.

The first use of the moral law is stated by Calvin as follows: "First, by showing the righteousness of God, that is, the righteousness which alone is acceptable to God, it warns, informs, convicts and finally condemns everyone of his own unrighteousness... Thus the law is a kind of mirror. As in a mirror we discover any stains upon our face, so in the law we behold, first our impotence; then, in consequence of it, our iniquity; and finally, the curse, as the consequence of both."³ The pedagogic function of the law then is to make men aware of their own unrighteousness so that they may flee to Christ in whom alone can be found a perfect righteousness.

The second use of the law is "to curb those who, unless forced, have no regard for rectitude and justice."⁴ This is the civil or political use of the law; that is, in

1. ibid.

2. Comm. on Romans 10:4, CO 49, 196.

3. Inst. II, 7, 6 & 7.

4. Inst. II, 7, 10.

restraining men's wickedness which otherwise would burst all bounds. In this capacity the law serves also to bring men to Christ: "Those therefore, whom he has destined to the inheritance of his kingdom, if he does not immediately regenerate, He, through the works of the law, preserves in fear, against the time of His visitation, not indeed, that pure and chaste fear which His children ought to have, but a fear useful to the extent of instructing them in true piety according to their capacity."¹

The third function of the law, which Calvin calls its principal use, applies specifically to believers. For the faithful the law "is the best instrument for enabling them daily to learn with greater truth and certainty what the will of the Lord is which they aspire to follow, and to confirm them in this knowledge."² Though the law in Calvin's view has this positive and normative function for believers under both the Old and the New Covenants we shall confine our attention to its normative use for the Old Testament fathers.

We have already noted that Calvin held that the giving of the law to the children of Israel was an additional grace and a special privilege. This is so because the law is the perfect expression of God's will: "The Lord in

1. Inst. II, 7, 11.

2. Inst. II, 7, 12.

delivering a perfect rule of righteousness has reduced it in all its parts to his mere will, and in this way has shown that there is nothing more acceptable to him than obedience."¹ The law is the direct and essential expression of God's will and "the true and eternal rule of righteousness."² That is, in Calvin's view the law was given to Israel as an unerring standard to which they were to conform their lives in a perpetual course of obedience. When God called Israel to be His children He did not call them to a neutral position where they could do as they pleased but He called them to obedience.³ Since the obedience which is required of man is not merely a general piety but a concrete devotion to His service, God gave His chosen people the law and demanded of them a perfect observance of His statutes. For Calvin there is nothing more acceptable to God than obedience and therefore he defines obedience as the keeping of the covenant of the law.⁴ This way of defining obedience as the keeping of the commandments of the law may lead to the suspicion of legalism but such a suspicion is unwarranted. It is because the gratuitous covenant in Calvin's teaching is anterior to the law that he does not regard the law legalistically. Obedience

1. Inst. II, 8, 5.

2. Inst. IV, 20, 15.

3. Cf. Comm. on Deut. 7:6, CO 24, 220; on 1 Thess. 4:7, CO 52, 162; and on 1 Peter 2:9, CO 55, 240-1.

4. Comm. on Exodus 19:5, CO 24, 196; additur obedientiae definitio, nempe ut foedus observent. on Psalm 132:12, CO 32, 349.

is demanded of Israel on the basis of God's goodness and grace and, as we have already had occasion to observe, this obedience is a grateful, spontaneous, and joyful act.

Moreover, Calvin teaches that the law was given to a holy people, a people which had been united to God by the covenant and sanctified by the grace of adoption. The requirement of obedience and sanctification is dependent on this primary sanctification, that is, upon their being set apart as God's peculiar people.¹ God's adoption of the race of Abraham is the first act of sanctification and of preparing a people for obedience. Their holiness does not consist in a legalistic piety but in being the object of God's choice. At the same time, God's gratuitous adoption carries with it the demand of holiness. Israel is called to be a "royal priesthood."² The primary end of their adoption is that God "might acquire for Himself a people pure from all pollutions."³ The law is given to instruct Israel in true piety so that she might be holy even as God is holy. The people are to strive after holiness and in proportion to the abundance of grace which they had received they are to endeavour to live obediently. It would be shameful ingratitude on their part not to submit themselves entirely to God who in His goodness had both created and redeemed them.

1. Comm. on Exodus 19:6, CO 24, 197.

2. ibid., 196.

3. Comm. on Deut. 7:6, CO 24, 220.

Although a perfect obedience is demanded by the law, Calvin is also careful to point out that it is not "the proper office of the law to incline men's hearts to the obedience of righteousness."¹ Or, as he says elsewhere, "The law even though it prescribes the rule of a good life, does not change the heart for a righteous obedience."² No person can attain to the perfection which the law requires, "for, however anyone may study to obey God, yet he will still be far from perfection; and therefore it is necessary to come to the Gospel, wherein that rigorous requirement is relaxed, because through the interposition of pardon, the will to obey is pleasing to God instead of perfect obedience."³ God will not reject this imperfect obedience but will overlook its defects and accept it as perfect and on this account grant all the good which He has promised in His law.⁴ To anticipate what will be said later, God does this on the basis of Christ's perfect obedience to the law: "Because we cannot attain to righteousness except by fulfilling the law in all points, and being discharged before God: it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to be subject to the law, so that His obedience might now be imputed to us, and God accepts it as though we brought a similar obedience of our own."⁵

1. Comm. on Exodus 24:5, CO 25, 76.

2. Comm. on 2 Cor. 3:7, CO 50, 42.

3. Comm. on Deut. 30:11, CO 24, 258.

4. Inst. II, 7, 4.

5. Sermon on Deut. 21:22-23, CO 27, 693.

3. Sacrifice and Obedience

In the law, God had not only bound the race of Abraham more intimately to Himself but He had also prescribed a rule for worshipping Him in accordance with His will. Calvin thus speaks of "legal worship" and he defines the law as "not only the Ten Commandments which contain a complete rule of life, but the whole system of religion delivered by the hand of Moses."¹ Along with the law, God had instituted the priesthood and sacrifices to provide Israel with a true form of worship and a means of expiation when it sinned and disobeyed His gracious commandments.

Accordingly, for Calvin, the law and the cult belong inseparably together. The ceremonies and observances of the cult have their meaning and function solely in the sphere of the covenant and the law. Rightly understood they are "only helps, which as it were lead us by the hand to the due Worship of God and to the promotion of justice towards men." and therefore, "neither change nor detract from the rule laid down in the Ten Commandments."² They do not comprise a separate order or rule which can be divorced from the law and observed apart from a true obedience to it. Calvin comes to the heart of the matter when he describes them as "appendages" (accessiones):- "They are not, to speak correctly, of the substance of the law nor are they profitable

1. Inst. II, 7, 1.

2. Preface to Comm. on the Harmony of the Pentateuch, CO 24,
7-8.

of themselves in the worship of God, nor are required by the Lawgiver Himself as necessary, or as useful unless they assumed this inferior position. In fine, they are appendages, which do not add one mark to the law but whose purpose is to keep the faithful in the spiritual worship of God, which consists of faith and repentance, of praises whereby their gratitude is shown and even of the endurance of the Cross."¹ The cult does not stand by itself with an independent validity of its own or as a separate means by which man can render obedience to God. In Calvin's view it is subordinated to the Law of the covenant and inseparable from it.

It goes without saying that for Calvin the custom of sacrificing was not invented by men but rather divinely delivered to them. Calvin traces this divine institution of sacrifices back to earliest times before the giving of the covenant and the law. "Before the delivery of the law" Calvin says, "religion was always sanctioned by sacrifices."² When man had yet only been deprived of life, the hope of

1. ibid: Itaque negat Deus se quidquam de sacrificiis praecepisse: ac omnes externos ritus pro inutilibus nugis ducit, si illis vel minimum pretii seorsum a decem praeceptis tribuitur. Unde certius colligimus quod attigi, non esse ex substantia legis, (ut loquenter) nec per se ad Dei cultum valere, nec eas a legislatore ipso exigi quasi necessarias, vel etiam utiles, nisi in gradu inferiore subsidant. In summa, accessiones sunt, non quae legi vel unum apicem addant, sed quae pietatis cultores retineant in spirituali cultu, qui fide poenitentia, Dei invocatione, et laudibus quae gratitudinem demonstrant, crucis etiam tolerantia continetur."
2. Comm. on Exodus 29, CO 24, 490: ante legem latam semper victimis sancita fuit religio.

salvation was held out to him in sacrifices which God commanded.¹ These sacrifices were suggested by what Calvin calls the secret inspiration of God's Spirit (arcano spiritus Dei instinctu) for as yet there was no written law.² From the beginning mankind was taught that there could be no access to God without sacrifice.³ When they were performed in obedience to God's Word they were acceptable and pleasing to Him. All this can be deduced, Calvin holds, from the fact that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews spoke of Abel's sacrifice as one offered through faith and therefore acceptable:- "For since the Apostle refers the dignity of Abel's accepted sacrifice to faith, it follows, first that he had not offered it without the command of God. (Hebrews 11:4). Secondly, it has been true from the beginning of the world that obedience is better than any sacrifices and the mother of all virtues (1 Sam. 15:22). Therefore, it also follows that man had been commanded by God what was pleasing to Him. Thirdly, since God has always been like Himself, we cannot say that he was ever delighted with purely carnal and external worship. Yet He deemed those sacrifices of the first age acceptable. It follows therefore that they had been spiritually offered to Him: that is, that the holy fathers did not mock Him with empty

1. Comm. on Genesis 4:2, CO 23, 84.

2. Comm. on Exodus 27:1, CO 24, 418. The same phrase is used in the exposition of Exodus 29, CO 24, 490: arcano spiritus instinctu.

3. Comm. on Genesis 12:7, CO 23, 181.

ceremonies but comprehended something higher and more secret, which they could not have done without the (divine) word."¹ Calvin accounts for the existence and practice of sacrificing among the heathen nations as an adulterated imitation of the divinely instituted sacrifices of the ancient fathers.² Accordingly, he says that the sacrifices of the Gentiles were unacceptable to God for two reasons: First, they were not based on God's Word; and secondly, they were divorced from their proper end and purpose:- "All heathendom was ignorant why God should be appeased by blood. Therefore they shed the blood of their victims unreasonably, inasmuch as they did not know themselves to be guilty before God, so as humbly to seek for pardon; and much less did they apply their minds to embrace the atonement, which was not only predestinated in God's secret counsels, but likewise promised to men."³ At the same time Calvin is careful to point out that the very use of the custom of sacrifice by the heathen, even though it was rejected by God, was sufficient to convict the Gentiles of their unworthiness, "so that they should have acknowledged that God can only be propitiated towards the human race through the medium of reconciliation."⁴ Although the custom of sacrificing was practised by both the ancient fathers and the Gentiles, it was not until the giving of the

1. Comm. on Genesis 4:2, CO 23, 84.

2. Comm. on Genesis 4:2, CO 23, 84.

3. Comm. on Exodus 29, CO 24, 489.

4. ibid.

law that a clearer revelation of the nature and purpose of sacrifices was given to the people of Israel.

According to Calvin the many different sacrifices both before and after the giving of the law can be grouped in two main classes: sacrifices of thanksgiving and expiatory sacrifices. The sacrifices of thanksgiving were "testimonies of gratitude in celebration of God's blessings."¹ Calvin calls these "ΛΑΤΡΕΥΤΙΚΟΝ or ΣΕΒΑΣΤΙΚΟΝ", as consisting of the veneration and worship which believers both owe and render to God; or Εὐχαριστικόν since it is exhibited to God by none but those who, enriched with his boundless benefits, offer themselves and all their actions to Him in return."² The other class of sacrifices, Calvin calls propitiatory or expiatory and says:- "A sacrifice of expiation is one whose object is to appease the wrath of God, to satisfy His justice, and thereby wipe and wash away the sins, by which the sinner being cleansed and restored to purity, may return to favour with God. Hence the name which was given in the law to the victims which were offered in expiation of sin (Exod. 29:36); not that they were adequate to regain the favour of God, and wipe away guilt, but because they typified the true sacrifice of this nature which was at length performed in reality by Christ alone."³ Apart from

1. Comm. on Lev. 3:1, CO 24, 512.

2. Inst. IV, 18, 13.

3. ibid.

such expiatory sacrifices, Calvin holds, there can never be any intercourse between God and man.¹ Under this class are included the daily or continual sacrifice and the great yearly atonement performed at the end of the year to ratify all others, when the High Priest entered the inner sanctuary to make the appointed expiation, which typified the once and for all sacrifice of Christ.² We shall return to this in more fullness later. Suffice it to say, that in the expiatory sacrifice, the expiation is founded on the priesthood (in sacerdotio fundatam esse expiationem) so that the victim is not in itself the price of redemption. "The oblation, therefore properly speaking, is passive rather than active as regards man."³ God is not acted upon but instead He acts through the priest.

In his treatment of the purpose of sacrifices, we can distinguish at least four ends for which Calvin thinks they were instituted: First, to instruct the people in the spiritual worship of God; secondly, to bind them to Himself in love and obedience; thirdly, to bring them to a true understanding of sin and forgiveness; and finally, to hold before them the promise of reconciliation and salvation in the coming of the true Mediator.

The first purpose of the ceremonies and sacrifices

1. Comm. on Lev. 4, CO 24, 516.
2. Comm. on Lev. 16, CO 24, 500 f.
3. Comm. on Lev. 6, 7, CO 24, 529.

was to raise the people's minds to the spiritual worship of God. Since God is a Spirit it follows that He is pleased only with spiritual worship.¹ Accordingly, Calvin says that the law instructed the people in the spiritual worship of God but in keeping with the requirements of the age it was, as it were, clothed in ceremonies.² Here Calvin makes use of the notion of the childhood of the Church (pueritia ecclesiae).³ God accommodated Himself to the capacities of men by using earthly elements as aids in order to train them in spiritual worship and to retain them in obedience to Himself. "The ceremonial law of the Jews," Calvin says, "was a tutelage by which the Lord was pleased to exercise, as it were, the childhood of that people until the fulness of the time should come when He was fully to manifest His wisdom to the world, and exhibit the reality of those things which were then adumbrated by figures."⁴ This notion might lead to the suspicion of spiritualizing on Calvin's part. On the contrary, Calvin will not permit any easy distinction between the spiritual and material. As he teaches in one place, "God demands also external worship; for the Prophet does not separate an external profession of religion from the inward feelings of the heart ... the worship of the heart ought also

1. Inst. II, 7, 1.

2. Comm. on Exodus 25:8, CO 24, 404.

3. ibid.: Comm. on Psalm 129:1, CO 32, 330; Comm. on Galatians 3:24, CO 50, 220 where he says lex fuit quasi grammatica; Sermon on Gal. 3:21-25, CO 50, 553.

4. Inst. IV, 20, 15.

to be accompanied by an external profession."¹ At the same time, the ceremonies, as Calvin says, are not empty but rather from the very beginning included something higher and more secret and therefore were acceptable to God as constituting spiritual worship.² Their function was to train Israel in the service of God and to lead the people step by step to true spiritual worship, and therefore they are described by Calvin as "exercises to spiritual worship", "disciplines to accustom Israel to study purity", "temporary aids" and "exercises of faith and obedience."³

The second purpose of sacrifices is to bind the people more intimately to God in faith and obedience. Just as for Calvin the law and the cult are inseparable so sacrifice and obedience belong indissolubly together. Calvin's whole thought

1. Comm. on Isaiah 45:23, CO 37, 149; Cf. also on Genesis 12:7, CO 23, 180-1: "the inward worship of the heart is not sufficient unless external profession before men be added." and Comm. on Matthew 4:10, CO 45, 136.
2. Comm. on Gen. 4:2, CO 23, 84; on Isaiah 1:13, CO 36, 40; on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 690; and on John 4:24, CO 90; also Preface to Comm. on Isaiah, CO 36, 19.
3. Comm. on Exodus 19:10, CO 24, 199: sed dum externi ritus ad legitimum finem referuntur, nempe ut spiritualis cultus sint exercitia, utiliter pietatem adjuvant; Cf. Comm. on Isaiah 1:11, CO 36, 38; on Lev. 11:13, CO 24, 350: exercitia haec fuisse, quibus se assuefacerent ad puritatis studium; Comm. on Deut. 18:19, CO 24, 354: Caeremoniis autem usus est Deus olim, tanquam temporalibus adminiculis, quarum etsi usus cessavit, manet adhuc tamen utilitas, quia inde melius apparet quomodo rite colatur Deus: et ipsa vis pietatis illic relucet. Ergo in praecepto continetur tota substantia, in externis vero exercitiis est veluti forma, cui nonnisi veterem populum Deus addixit; and Comm. on Isaiah 43:24, CO 37, 98.

on this matter is dominated by the words of 1 Samuel 15:22, which keep recurring throughout the Institutio, Commentaries and Sermons: "Obedience is better than sacrifice." Simply and briefly stated, Calvin's position is that sacrifices are subordinate to obedience. This follows from his fundamental conviction that obedience is the basis of true religion (nempe pietatum fundatum esse in obedientia)¹ and therefore is the primary demand which God lays upon man. The custom of sacrificing in virtue of its being commanded by God, is also an obligation which God places upon man. But, and here Calvin endeavours to give point to his contention, obedience holds the chief place and sacrifices are subordinated to it:² "The main part of true and right worship and service is to hear God speaking and to regard obedience of more account than all offerings and sacrifices."³ Still, and we cannot emphasize this too strongly, in Calvin's view, there is no conflict between true obedience and true sacrifice when the latter is completely subordinated to the former.⁴ The cult, though it does not belong

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 692, 684.

2. ibid., 692

3. Comm. on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 693.

4. Professor Paul Lehmann gives a somewhat different interpretation in his article on "The Servant Image in Reformed Theology", Theology Today, Vol. 15/3 (October, 1958), pp. 333 ff. He contrasts and sees a tension between two biblical styles of life, "which express ... two forms or ways of God's action among his people and of man's response in action to what God has done and is doing. The one is the 'ark-Temple style of life'; the other, the 'covenant-remnant style of life'. (p. 334). Both, in Professor Lehmann's view, are forms of obedience which "express not easily (cont'd)

to the substance of the law, is a form of religion¹ to which God bound the people of Israel and as long as the law remains in effect sacrifices are tied up with obedience but in such a way that they never hold the chief place but are always subordinated to obedience. The sacrifice of Christ makes the practice of sacrificing superfluous but at the same time it confirms and commends their effect for His death was typified by these Old Testament sacrifices.² Once the

reconcilable, yet authentic aspects of the relations between God and men." (ibid.) He then goes on to speak of the displacement of the sacrifice form by the servant form in the New Testament (pp. 334-7) and he professes to see the confirmation of these views in the teaching of both Calvin and Luther. This is basically misleading. There is no suggestion in the Institutes, much less in the Commentaries, that Calvin thinks of two such styles of life. For him there is only one biblical style of life, the covenant relationship to God, to which the sacrificial system is a kind of appendage and an aid to assist the Old Testament Church in its childhood. Obedience is the requirement of the covenant and sacrifices are a part of this obedience. Calvin acknowledges a tension between sacrifice and obedience when sacrifice is not subordinated to obedience but he will not start from a contrast between them. To admit such a contrast as Professor Lehmann does is to fall into the error of those who regarded the sacrificial system as an independent means of obtaining pardon apart from a strict obedience to God. Professor Lehmann also speaks of the displacement in the New Testament of sacrifice by obedience and he is inclined to see this displacement in terms of a triumph of one style of life over the other. Would it not be better to speak of the fulfilment of the sacrificial system of the Old Testament by the sacrificial obedience of Christ; that is, that Christ by His sacrificial obedience fulfills what was only typified in the Old Testament sacrifices and therefore makes the sacrificial system superfluous? In Calvin's understanding of the matter, the practice of sacrificing is abrogated by the perfect sacrifice of Christ. At the same time it is Christ's sacrifice which establishes and confirms the effect of the Old Testament sacrifices.

1. Comm. on Deut. 18:19, CO 24, 354.
2. Inst. II, 7, 16.

law is abrogated by the death of Christ there can be an obedience to God apart from sacrifices.¹

It is not accidental but entirely in keeping with his position that Calvin regards the prophetic protest against sacrifices as essentially a criticism of the separation of sacrifices from a true obedience to the law. Sacrifices were misused and corrupted when they became purely mechanical acts carried out without any genuine concern for true obedience and piety. Thus Calvin remarks in the Preface to the Harmony of the Pentateuch:- "We are aware that of old there was a constant controversy of the prophets against the Jewish people because while they strenuously devoted themselves to ceremonies, as if true religion were included in them, they neglected real righteousness."² In Calvin's view a sacramental relationship obtains between the ceremonies and the thing which they signify:- "the observance of ceremonies depends wholly on the word, and ... it is as idle and unprofitable to separate them from the word as it would be for the soul to be parted from the body."³ The Jewish corruption of sacrifices is the source of the Roman Catholic error of opus operatum, namely that the efficacy of the ceremony belongs to the mere performance of the outward act. The prophetic protest was directed against this illegitimate divorce of word and sign. At the same time

1. Comm. on Hebrews 10:5, CO 55, 124.
2. CO 24, 7-8.
3. Comm. on Isaiah 1, 11, CO 36, 39.

Calvin does not interpret the prophetic attack as signifying God's rejection of the whole sacrificial system. Commenting on Hosea's words which were repeated by Christ, "Mercy I desire and not sacrifices", Calvin says:- "God does not simply reject sacrifices, as far as he has commanded them, but only condemns the abuse of them. Therefore, ... the Prophet sets external rites in opposition to piety and faith, because hypocrites tear asunder things which are, as it were, inseparable: it is an impious divorce when anyone only presents ceremonies to God, while he himself is void of piety."¹

Perhaps Calvin's position in regard to this matter is most clearly set forth in his exposition of Jeremiah's words that God had never commanded sacrifices. He begins by stating that Jeremiah seems to have condemned sacrifices too much and even to have exceeded due limits by saying that God had never commanded them, when very clearly God had commanded that sacrifices should be offered to Him. To account for this very difficult statement, Calvin puts forward the ingenious explanation that the Jews had so corrupted the sacrifices which God had instituted that God would not acknowledge what they did as having been commanded by Him. That is, Jeremiah's words that God never commanded sacrifices mean that "God had commanded nothing in regard to mere sacrifices, or sacrifices for their own sake."² While

1. Comm. on Hosea 6:6,7, CO 42, 330-1; and on Matthew 9:13, CO 45, 251; and on Matthew 12:7, CO 45, 325.
2. Comm. on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 691.

Calvin's explanation is not entirely convincing, it sets forth his basic position: namely, that the prophetic protest does not signify God's rejection of sacrifices but His condemnation of the abuse of them. Under the old Covenant sacrifices were valid when they were used for the end for which they were designed and not as substitutes for a true observance of all that God requires of man.

The third purpose of sacrifices was to teach Israel the true meaning of sin and to lead them to faith and repentance:- "God had instituted sacrifices for this end, that whoever sinned, being reminded of his guilt might mourn for his sin and further that by witnessing that sad spectacle, his conscience might be more wounded."¹ Accordingly, Calvin describes sacrifices as "exercises to faith and repentance."² They were a kind of mirror in which the people could see in the death of the animal their own guilt and the dread judgment of God.³ The people were taught by them that God is not reconciled to them except through a sacrifice.⁴ Therefore, the practice of sacrificing assured them that God would be "propitious and appeasable to them, even though they could not satisfy the law."⁵ Calvin sees the element of substitution in the one bloodless sacrifice

1. Comm. on Hosea 4:6, CO 42, 278.

2. Comm. on Lev. 1:1, CO 24, 507; on Micah 6:6-8, CO 43, 393.

3. Comm. on Jeremiah 7:21-24, CO 37, 690.

4. Comm. on Exodus 12:21, CO 24, 136.

5. Comm. on Jeremiah 11:1-5, CO 38, 98-103.

in which the sins of the people were put on the head of an animal and borne away into the wilderness. The animal was substituted, Calvin says, in the place of men and exposed to the curse of God so that the people might be instructed, that they are unable to endure His judgment or be delivered from it except their guilt be transferred.¹

Finally, the purpose of the ceremonies and sacrifices was to hold before the people the promise of reconciliation and salvation in the coming of the true Mediator. The cult, like the law, retained the people in their expectation of the Mediator.² There was an expiation of sin under the Old Covenant, but it was what Calvin calls "typical"; that is, it only shadowed forth what was to be accomplished in Christ. Sacrifices exercised the faith of the people that they might look to the expiation which was to be made by the promised Redeemer. Accordingly, Calvin says that the faithful knew the end and purpose of the sacrifices; namely, "That the sinner being reminded by the sight of the victim might confess himself to be worthy of eternal death and thus flee to God's mercy and look to Christ and his sacrifice; for in him and nowhere else is to be found true and effectual expiation. God had instituted sacrifices for this end so that the faithful, while offering sacrifices, did not imagine any satisfaction to be done by the external work, nor even

1. Comm. on Lev. 16:20, CO 24, 504; See also Inst. II, 16,6; and Comm. on Isaiah 53:10, CO 37, 263.
2. Comm. on Hebrews 8:5, CO 55, 99.

imagined it to be the price of redemption; but they exercised themselves in these rites in faith and repentance."¹ The sacrifices under the Old Testament pointed to Christ and shadowed forth in an obscure way the reconciliation which would be accomplished in His one sacrifice upon the Cross. Thus for Calvin these sacrifices must be referred to Christ who is the end of the law, for "If Christ be put out of sight, all the sacrifices that may be offered differ in no respect from mere profane butchery."²

4. Expectation and Obedience

In his Commentary on the Harmony of the Pentateuch, Calvin devotes a separate section to what he calls, "The Sanctions of the Law Contained in the Promises and Threats"; - "the authority of the law was confirmed by the promises; but because we are not only indolent but also refractory, He added on the other side threats which might inspire terror, both to subdue the obstinancy of the flesh and to correct the security in which we are too apt to indulge."³ Certain promises were contained in the law to arouse and entice Israel to obedience and to keep them in expectation of the coming of the Redeemer. At the same time threats were added so that the people might devote themselves entirely to the keeping of the law. Though Calvin regards the latter as

1. Comm. on Hosea 5:6, CO 42, 303.

2. Comm. on Exodus 29, CO 24, 490.

3. CO 25, 5-7: Sanctiones A Promissionibus et Minis. Fr. - Les confirmations tendantes à ratifier la loy tant par promesses que par menaces.

necessary to check man's sloth and indolence, he gives first place to the promises, for in his view, God always seeks to attract men to obedience first and only when this fails does He threaten with punishments.

Simply and briefly stated, the purpose of the promises for Calvin is to lead men "to embrace God's covenant of grace and to flee to Christ who is the end of the law."¹ As the most important part of the law, the promises serve to retain Israel in obedience and to keep alive the hope of salvation in Christ until His coming. This for instance, is the meaning of the promise of eternal life which was given to the people in order to encourage them to obedience and to keep them in expectation of salvation.² In the Institutio, Calvin devotes a large part of the chapter on "The Resemblance between the Old Testament and the New" to showing that the Old Testament contained a promise of spiritual and eternal life: - "... temporal opulence and felicity was not the goal to which the Jews were invited to aspire, but ... they were admitted to the hope of immortality and ... (the) assurance of this adoption was given by immediate communications, by the law and the prophets."³ Calvin goes on to give examples of the Old Testament patriarchs, Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and others under the law

1. Preface to Harmony of the Pentateuch, CO 24, 7-8.

2. CO 25, 6.

3. Inst. II, 10, 2. Cf. also 10, 23.

who looked for the fulfilment of the divine promises not on earth but in heaven.¹ Those who lived under the Old Covenant lived in expectation, having the hope of eternal life and looking forward to the redemption which was to be accomplished in the coming of the Mediator. Their possession of the Land of Canaan, Calvin holds, was a kind of mirror in which they could behold the future inheritance which they believed was reserved for them in heaven.²

We have quoted above Calvin's statement that not only the law but also the prophets confirmed the hope of eternal life. According to Calvin, the teaching of the prophets must be understood as essentially related to the law:- "the prophetic office was not separated from the law, for all the prophecies which followed the law were as it were appendages; so that they included nothing new, but were given that the people might be more fully retained in their obedience to the law."³ The prophets derived their teaching from the law as "streams from a fountain" and their task was to "keep up the people's obedience to the law."⁴ At the same time, all their prophecies were directed to Christ and with one consent they pointed forward to the accomplishment of redemption in His Person and Work.⁵

1. Inst. II, 10, 5-23.

2. Inst. II, 11, 1.

3. Comm. on Malachi 4:4, CO 44, 493.

4. Preface to Comm. on Isaiah, CO 36, 21.

5. Preface to Comm. on Isaiah, CO 36, 20 and Comm. on Acts 3:22, CO 48, 74.

The chief promise which God made to the people of Israel is the promise of a new and better covenant. According to Calvin, this promise is first given by Moses, when he says, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart (Deut. 30:6)."¹ Although it is mentioned in this place, Calvin holds that it is not until we come to the prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel that it is fully and clearly stated. The promise is most explicit in Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Calvin comments as follows:- "Here then he sets before them a new covenant ... Now as to the new covenant, it is not so called, because it is contrary to the first covenant; for God is never inconsistent with Himself, nor is He unlike Himself. He then who once made a covenant with His chosen people, had not changed His purpose, as though He had forgotten His faithfulness. It then follows, that the first covenant was inviolable; besides, He had already made His covenant with Abraham and the law was a confirmation of that covenant. As then the law depended on that covenant which God made with His servant Abraham, it follows that God could never have made a new, that is, a contrary or a different covenant. For whence do we derive our hope of salvation, except from that blessed seed promised to Abraham? Further, why are we called the children of Abraham, except on account of the common bond of faith? ... These things no doubt ... show that God has never made any other covenant than that

1. Comm. on Deut. 30:6, CO 25, 54-55.

which He made formerly with Abraham and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses. Let us now see why he promises to the people a new covenant. It being new, no doubt refers to what they call the form; ... But the substance remains the same. By substance I understand the doctrine; for God in the Gospel brings forward nothing but what the law contains. We therefore see that God has not so spoken from the beginning, that He has not changed, no not a syllable, with regard to the substance of doctrine."¹ The above quotation contains Calvin's important teaching that the substance of the Old and New Covenants is the same even though there is a difference in economy or administration.² First of all, there is a unity or identity between the Old and the New Covenants in virtue of the fact that both covenants rest solely on the mercy of God and not on the merits of men, that the hope of eternal life is common to both the Old Testament fathers and Christian believers, and that Christ, who is the perpetual bond of union between God and man, is the Mediator under both Testaments.³ But there is also a difference between them in respect to the mode of administration. Under the old economy the covenant is in the form of promise and under the new economy we have the fulfilment in Christ. That we may apprehend Calvin's teaching on this matter more clearly we shall examine again the contrast

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 31:31, CO 38, 688.

2. Inst. II, 10, 2.

3. ibid.

which he draws between the Law and the Gospel. We have had occasion already to refer to one or two of these differences earlier. It will now be necessary to draw this out a little more in detail.

In the Institutio Calvin sets forward the difference between the Law and the Gospel under three heads. First, the Law and the Gospel are distinguished as shadow and substance. Here Calvin makes use of the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. What is only shadowed forth in the Law is fully revealed in the Gospel:- "the covenant of the Lord was old, because veiled by the shadowy and ineffectual observance of ceremonies; and it was therefore temporary, being as it were, in suspense until it received a firm and substantial confirmation. Then only did it become new when it was consecrated in the blood of Christ."¹

We have already referred to the second main difference between the Law and the Gospel. This according to Calvin is clearly set forward by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:5-7, where he calls one a doctrine of the letter, the other a doctrine of the spirit; one as written on tables of stone, the other written on the heart; the one the preaching of death, the other of life; the one of condemnation, the other of justification; the one made void, the other permanent.²

1. Inst. II, 11, 4.

2. Inst. II, 11, 7, 8; Cf. also Comm. on 2 Cor. 3:5-7, CO 50, 39-42.

The first two differences referred to above are related. Calvin states them as follows: "the Gospel brings with it the grace of regeneration; its doctrine therefore is not that of the letter, but penetrates into the heart and reforms all the inward faculties, so that obedience is rendered to the righteousness of God."¹ What the Law has been unable to accomplish is promised in the Gospel, namely, the writing of the law on the hearts of men by the Spirit of regeneration so that their lives may be in perfect accord with the will of God. Herein lies the superiority of the Gospel over the Law:- "The Law was a temporary covenant for it had no stability as it was that of the letter; but ... the Gospel is a perpetual covenant for it is inscribed on the heart."² The weakness and failure of the Old Testament dispensation makes a new one necessary.

The third difference between the Law and the Gospel is in terms of servitude and freedom. The Law holds men's consciences in bondage; the Gospel frees them and inspires them with gladness.³ At the same time Calvin does not overlook the fact that the Old Testament fathers participated in the same liberty and joy as Christian believers but he holds that they did not receive this from the Law but from the Gospel to which they fled for refuge.⁴

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 31:33, CO 38, 690-91.

2. Comm. on Jeremiah 32:40, CO 39, 42.

3. Inst. II, 11, 9.

4. ibid.

Finally, it is necessary to note that whereas the Old Covenant was confined to one nation, the New Covenant would include all the nations of the world. In the beginning God had revealed Himself to only one nation, Israel, whom He chose out from among the other nations; but with the coming of the Mediator the covenant would extend as far and wide as the Kingdom of Christ.¹

While for Calvin the substance of both the Old and New Covenants is the same, he recognizes that a difference obtains between them. Old is still old; and new is still new. "For although even under the Law the fathers were associates and partakers of the same life, we know that they were shut up under the hope that was to be revealed. It was necessary for them to seek life from Christ's death and resurrection. But this event was not only far distant from their eyes but also hidden from their minds."² Still it must be said that Calvin emphasized the unity more than the difference of the two covenants. While the unity of old and new comes through very clearly, this is not always the case with regard to their difference. The reason for this may be that Calvin felt it was necessary to establish the similitude of old and new against Anabaptists and others who were inclined to sever them. We therefore have an overwhelming impression of the one covenant of grace embracing the Old Testament

1. Inst. II, 11, 11 & 12.

2. Comm. on 1 John 1:2, CO 55, 302.

fathers and the New Testament Church. This is to Calvin's credit. One often feels, however, that the difference between old and new should also be set out more clearly. For example, Calvin's Sermons on Isaiah 53 read as if Calvin were dealing with a New Testament passage. While we must maintain the unity, we must also be careful to bring out the difference between old and new.

The promise of the New Covenant was to be "a most powerful motive to obedience."¹ The Law though requiring perfect righteousness had been unable to change men to the obedience of righteousness. A new and better covenant was therefore promised in which the law would be written on men's hearts. Israel was also given the promise that the righteousness which the law and sacrifices had been unable to inculcate would be accomplished in the sacrificial obedience of the Servant of God. Therefore, as Calvin says, "God will then at length have respect to our obedience when he looks upon us in Christ."²



1. Comm. on Jeremiah 31:31, CO 38, 690.
2. Comm. on Genesis 4:4-5, CO 23, 86: "Ergo tunc demum ad nostra obsequia respiciet Deus, ubi nos in Christo respexerit."

CHAPTER TWO: JESUS CHRIST THE MEDIATOR

In attempting to show the importance of the covenant notion for the doctrine of reconciliation, we noted that while for Calvin the covenant is the form of the bond of union between God and man, it is Jesus Christ who, properly speaking, is the true bond of connection. He is the true and perfect Mediator between God and man. Not only is the covenant founded and concluded with reference to Him, but it also receives its complete fulfilment through His mediation and sacrificial obedience. In Him the covenant of gratuitous adoption is renewed and fulfilled from both the side of God and the side of man. The renewal and fulfilment of the covenant, according to Calvin, is the work of reconciliation.

Out of His gracious love and mercy God appointed Christ to be the Mediator to obtain salvation for sinful humanity. The love of God is "the highest cause or origin" (summa causa vel origo) of our reconciliation.¹ Calvin makes this point eminently clear in the whole of his writings. It is God who takes the initiative for our salvation and He does so solely of His own good pleasure and not as a result of any necessity in His own nature or as a result of anything in man which could merit this gracious condescension. The love of God is absolutely free and undetermined and the appointment of Christ to the office of Mediator for our salvation is to be traced

1. Inst. II, 17, 2.

to this love. The work of reconciliation is the work of the Trinity. Calvin sets this forth by using the Aristotelian notion of causes: "the efficient cause of our salvation consists in God the Father's love; the material cause in God the Son's obedience; the instrumental cause in the Spirit's illumination, that is, faith; the final cause in the glory of God's great generosity."¹ The love of God the Father is the efficient and operative cause of our salvation. The work of reconciliation which is accomplished by the obedience of God the Son is grounded in the eternal love of the Father, which precedes our reconciliation in Christ. God "is moved by pure and freely given love of us to receive us into grace Therefore, by His love God the Father goes before and anticipates our reconciliation in Christ. Indeed, 'because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19), He afterwards reconciles us to Himself."² As we shall have further occasion to see, for Calvin there is no opposition between the Father and the Son in the work of salvation. The work of Christ is the realization of the eternal love and purpose of God for our salvation. "It was from God's goodness alone as from a fountain that Christ with all His benefits has come to us, and as it is necessary to know, that we have salvation in Christ, because our heavenly Father has freely loved us; so when a real and full certainty of divine love towards us is

1. Inst. III, 14, 21. (cf. 11.14.17) .
 2. Inst. II, 16, 3.

sought for, we must look nowhere else but to Christ. Hence all who inquire, apart from Christ, what is settled respecting them in God's secret counsel, are mad to their own ruin."¹

The work of salvation also, in Calvin's view, is no afterthought or change of plan. Christ was appointed to the office of Mediator from the very beginning. "... Before the fall of Adam, before the creation of the world, even from all eternity God had elected our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Head of all creatures and the One by whom we should be called to salvation."² There is a discernible supralapsarian emphasis in all of Calvin's statements in this connection. God anticipated the fall of man. He "foresaw that he would not stand long in his integrity. Hence He ordained, according to His wonderful wisdom and goodness, that Christ should be the Redeemer, to deliver the lost race of man from ruin. For herein shines forth more fully the unspeakable goodness of God that He anticipated our disease by the remedy of His grace, and provided a restoration to life before the first man had fallen into death."³ Christ therefore did not arrive unexpectedly on the scene. Commenting on Micah's prophecy

1. Comm. on 1 John 4:10, CO 55, 353.

2. Sermon on Isaiah 49:1-4, Calvin's Sermons on Isaiah in Geneva Library. Dieu devant la chute d'Adam, devant la creation du monde, memes de toute eternite avoit eleu nostre Se. Jesus Christ pour estre chef de toutes creatures et celui par lequel nous devrions estre appellees a salut. See also Comm. on Exodus 3:2, CO 24, 35 where Calvin speaks of the predestination of Christ to the office of Mediator.

3. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:20, CO 55, 225-6.

that Christ will come out of Bethlehem, Calvin says: "The going forth of Christ is from eternity; for He will not go forth suddenly from Bethlehem as one who rises unexpectedly to bring help when things are in a hopeless state, and so rises when nothing had been foreseen ... God from the beginning determined to give His people an eternal King."¹ Christ's appearance for our salvation was "not because the power of saving has been recently given to Him but because this grace was laid up in Him for us before the creation of the world."² God had determined from all eternity that Christ should come for our redemption. When He appeared it was not because the fall had obstructed God's original purpose for man and had forced Him to contrive a new course of action. Christ's coming was in accordance with God's eternal and original purpose. "His goings forth have been from all eternity ... they have been already decreed, even from the beginning; for with God there is nothing new, so that He should stand in need of holding any unlooked-for-consultation; as is the case with us when anything happens which we in no degree apprehended; we then find it necessary to devise some new measures ... Nothing of this kind can happen to God; but all this - that the people are reduced to nothing - and that they are

1. Comm. on Micah 5:1, 2, CO 43, 368; and on 1 Peter 1:20, CO 55, 225. "It was no new or sudden thing that Christ appeared as Saviour.... For in addition to this that novelty is always suspicious, what would be the stability of our faith if we believed that a remedy for mankind had suddenly occurred at length to God after some thousands of years."

2. Comm. on 2 Tim. 1:10, CO 52, 353.

again restored by Christ - all this is overruled by His secret and incomprehensible providence."¹

With equal insistence, Calvin holds that Christ's appointment and His coming as Mediator was not a necessary event arising out of the nature of God. If we inquire about the kind of necessity, it was neither an absolute nor a simple one. It stemmed from a divine decree on which the salvation of men depended.² That is, it is the result of a free and gracious decision on the part of God who is not determined by anything either within or without His nature. "For God solely of His own good pleasure appointed Him Mediator to obtain salvation for us."³

Calvin sees a twofold reason for the interposition of a Mediator between God and man. The first reason is the great distance which exists between God, the Creator, and man, the creature. Calvin's writings abound in statements to this effect. "How wide is the difference between God and man."⁴ "The naked majesty of God is too great a distance from us."⁵ "The greatness of the divine glory must be taken into account and at the same time the littleness of our capacity."⁶ This is expressed in another way in the Institutio,

1. Comm. on Micah 5:1-2, CO 43, 368-9.

2. Inst. II, 12, 1.

3. Inst. II, 17, 1.

4. Comm. on 1 Tim. 3:16, CO 52, 290.

5. Comm. on John 14:1, CO 47, 321.

6. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:21, CO 55, 226.

where Calvin says that even if man had been able to remain sinless he was of too humble a condition to penetrate to God without a Mediator.¹ God's majesty is so high and incomprehensible that it is necessary that the Son of God should come in between so that we may not be swallowed up by God's greatness. It is important to note that Calvin's statements in regard to the greatness of God's majesty and the weakness of men are almost without exception in connection with His discussion of the role of the Mediator. This would lead us to think that this is not so much a tenet of philosophy - the infinite qualitative difference between God and man - as an attempt to magnify the grace of God and to think out revelation and reconciliation christologically. A redemptive rather than a metaphysical concern is predominant. Thus Calvin speaks of the incomparabilis Dei clementia in revealing Himself in such a way that man should not be absorbed or reduced to nothing. And he remarks that it is a wonderful instance of divine grace that God should condescend to our littleness and accommodate Himself to our weakness.²

The second reason for the interposition of a Mediator, which is inseparable from the first, is man's sinful condition. An infinite gulf has been created by the fall of man so that

1. Inst. II, 12, 1; See also Inst. II, 6, 4; and Comm. on Daniel 7:14, CO 41, 63.
2. Sermons on Deut. 4:36-8, CO 26, 212 quoted by R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1953, p. 3.

man dreads and fears the perfect holiness of God. Our sin makes us hateful to God and Him to us.¹ Unless someone should overcome the obstacle of sin and reconcile us to God we remain totally alienated from Him. "Our iniquities, like a cloud intervening between Him and us, having utterly alienated us from the Kingdom of God, none but a person reaching to Him could be the medium (interpres) of restoring peace."²

Man's plight is a desperate one. Not only is he unable to penetrate to God without the grace of a Mediator, but also as a consequence of his sin, he is entirely alienated from God. It is therefore necessary that someone should interpose and remove this twofold obstacle. This can only be accomplished through a Mediator "in whom God in a manner makes Himself little, that He might accommodate Himself to our comprehension" and who "can tranquillize consciences so that we may dare to come in confidence to God."³

It is interesting to note in connection with Christ's office as Mediator that Calvin believes that angels also need a Mediator to join them perfectly to God. Even though there was no revolt and therefore no sin or separation from God, angels need to be reconciled through a Mediator for two reasons. First, "it was necessary that angels also should be made to be at peace with God for, being creatures, they

1. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:21, CO 55, 226-7.
2. Inst. II, 12, 1.
3. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:21, CO 55, 227.

were not beyond the risk of falling, had they not been confirmed by the grace of Christ."¹ Their consecration to the service of God must be made perfect and eternal. Secondly, even though angels are sinless and do not require to be ransomed, yet "in that obedience which they render to God, there is not such absolute perfection as to give satisfaction to God in every respect, and without the need of pardon."² Their union with God is made more complete through the grace of the Mediator. Christ is the perpetual bond of union between the Creator and the creature. "It is through Christ alone that all creatures who have any connection at all with God, cleave to Him."³

Christ is the true and perfect Mediator. In Calvin's view, His mediation between God and man takes the very concrete form of the covenant. It was through Him alone that the people of Israel were separated from among the nations of the world and united to God. The covenant was founded on Christ and concluded with reference to Him. We have already noted this. What we must consider here is how, in Calvin's view, Christ performed His office as Mediator under the Old Covenant.

We can preface our discussion of this matter with the

1. Comm. on Col. 1:20, CO 52, 89.
2. Comm. on Col. 1:20, CO 52, 89.
3. *ibid.* See also Comm. on Ephesians 1:10, CO 51, 151 and Sermon on Job 4:18, CO 33, 206-8; on Matthew 3:17, CO 45, 127; and on Ephesians 1:21-2, CO 51, 159.

following remarks: Calvin did not find Christ on every page of the Old Testament. His honest and careful attention to the exact meaning of the text made him resist a mechanical christological interpretation of the Old Testament. Thus we find him often taking issue with previous attempts to establish a christological interpretation of this or that event or saying. At the same time, for him, Christ was both present and active under the Old Covenant and he believed that the Old Testament bore witness to this presence and activity. It goes without saying that to the modern sophisticated reader who has learned to be even more suspicious of an easy christological exposition of the Old Testament, a great deal of Calvin's christological interpretation is unsatisfactory. While contemporary Old Testament theology has not solved the difficult problem of the presence of Christ in the Old Testament, it does not find itself in agreement with Calvin's way of stating the matter. Here a distinction between a truth and our statement of it is helpful. There may be agreement about the truth of Christ's presence in the Old Testament, but there may not always be agreement about how we should state this truth. Calvin's way of stating it is inadequate to us because he was unaware of a host of textual, critical and historical problems about which we have learned from two centuries of vigorous Old Testament research. Yet this research has often been faulty and erring because it has not always kept clearly in mind some of Calvin's major concerns which are also fundamentally Christian concerns. Calvin was motivated by the

conviction that the God who spoke by Moses and the prophets is the same God who came in Jesus Christ, lived, suffered and died for man's salvation. Therefore for him, Christ was present and active as Mediator under both dispensations or modes of administration of the one covenant of grace. We may not be able to follow Calvin in many details. Yet if we are to answer the problem of the presence of Christ in the Old Testament aright, then we must come to grips with his fundamental concern to preserve the unity of the Old and New Testaments. For this reason Calvin still has something to teach us.†

Calvin's view of the presence and activity of Christ under the Old Covenant is determined by the Pauline idea that the Rock which followed the people of Israel through the wilderness was Christ. Christ was the Leader and Guide of His Church from the very beginning. "It is not at all strange that Christ is called the Leader of the Israelites; for just as God has never shown His graciousness to His people except through Him as Mediator, in the same way He has conferred no benefit except at His hand. Again, the angel who first appeared to Moses and then was always with the people on their journey is often called Jahweh (יהוה). We should conclude, then, that that angel was the Son of God, and that even then He was already the Guide of the Church, of which He was the Head."¹ The rule which Calvin follows is that all passages

1. Comm. on 1 Cor. 10:9, CO 49, 459. See also Comm. on 1 Cor. 10:4, CO 49, 455; on Acts 7:30, CO 48, 144-5; and on Exodus 3:2 and 14:19, CO 24, 35-6, 153.

which speak of the appearance of Jahweh or the Angel of God to the Israelites, are to be interpreted as meaning Christ. Such an identification of the Angel with Christ is possible because the Angel is called Jahweh and also claims the glory of the eternal and only God. Here Calvin found himself in agreement with patristic teaching. Justin, Tertullian and Irenaeus were three of the Fathers who held this view. "The orthodox doctors of the Church have rightly and prudently interpreted the chief Angel to be God's Word, who already at that time, as a sort of foretaste, began to fulfil the office of Mediator. For though He was not yet clothed with flesh, He came down so to speak, as an intermediary, in order to approach believers more intimately."¹ Christ is called indiscriminately Angel and Jehovah because He is the Mediator of the Church and also God. "He is God, being of the same essence with the Father; and Mediator, having already undertaken the office of Mediator, though not then clothed in our flesh, so as to become our brother; for the Church could not exist nor be united to her God without a Head. We therefore see that Christ, as to His eternal essence, is said to be God, and that He is called an Angel on account of His office, that is of a Mediator."²

The presupposition of this identification of the Angel with Christ is, as the last quotation suggests, that

1. Inst. I, 13, 10.

2. Comm. on Zech. 1:18-21, CO 44, 152.

Christ undertook the office of Mediator before He became Incarnate. "Christ the Eternal Wisdom of God put on the character of a Mediator, before He put on our flesh."¹ In Calvin's view, Christ fulfilled the office of Mediator under the Old Covenant by anticipation. While not yet the Incarnate Mediator, He presented Himself to the view of the Old Testament fathers and gave them a kind of foretaste of His future mission. Calvin sets this forward very clearly when he says, since it is obvious "that there is one Head and Chief of the Angels who commands the others, the ancient teachers of the Church have rightly understood that the Eternal Son of God is so called in respect to His office as Mediator, which He figuratively bore from the beginning, although He really took it upon Himself only at His Incarnation. And Paul sufficiently expounds this mystery to us, when he plainly asserts that Christ was the Leader of His people in the desert (1 Cor. 10:4). Therefore, although at that time, properly speaking, He was not yet the Messenger of His Father, still His predestinated appointment to the office even then had this effect, that He manifested Himself to the patriarchs, and was known in this character. Nor, indeed, had the saints ever any communication with God except through the promised Mediator. It is not then to be wondered at, if the Eternal Word of God, of one Godhead and essence with the Father assumed the name of the Angel on the ground of His

1. Comm. on Hosea 12:5, CO 42, 455.

future mission."¹

Christ manifested Himself to the Old Testament Church as her Leader and Guide. He was truly present and active and in anticipation of His future mission, He appeared to the ancient fathers and gave them an indication of His future coming. The Angel who struggled with Jacob, who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, who was seen in visions by the Old Testament prophets was no other person than Christ Himself. For Calvin this does not take anything away from the uniqueness of the Incarnation. For Christ's manifestation in these instances is figurative, an anticipation and a foretaste. Nevertheless, it was a real presence and a real manifestation. Christ is present in the Old Testament not only in virtue of His eternal Godhead but also in His capacity as Mediator. He is the Mediator or Messenger of the covenant.² As Mediator His office is to confirm and seal the covenant which God established through Him with the nation of Israel. Under the Old Covenant Christ performed this office in anticipation of His future mission. He was the Leader and Guide of His Church, the Deliverer of His people from the beginning.³ The Old and New Covenants are one because Christ is present and active in both. But they are also distinguished because of Him. Under the Old Covenant He is present and active as One who is

1. Comm. on Exodus 3:2, CO 24, 35-6.

2. Comm. on Malachi 3:1, CO 44, 461-2.

3. Comm. on Habakkuk 3:13, CO 43, 581: nempe Deum fuisse ab initio liberatorem populi sui in mediatoris persona.

anticipated. By His coming what was only anticipated receives its true and perfect fulfillment.

For Calvin the fulfillment of the covenant is the work of reconciliation. "Christ was appointed to be the Mediator of the covenant because the Jews by their sins had revolted from God who had made an everlasting covenant with them. The renewal of that covenant which had been broken or dissolved is ascribed to Christ."¹ By His coming it was sealed and sanctioned. We shall have occasion in the following chapters to show how Calvin worked this out in detail. It will suffice here to indicate in a general way that for Calvin reconciliation means the fulfillment of the covenant in the Person and Work of Christ.

The covenant, as we have already seen, was according to Calvin founded on Christ. In instituting and establishing His covenant with the people of Israel, God gave them the promise of a Mediator who would be born of the seed of Abraham and would redeem His people Israel. Righteousness, forgiveness and life were promised in the covenant. All this is realised in Christ in whom "all the promises of God are Yea and Amen."² Calvin sets this forth systematically when

1. Comm. on Isaiah 49:8, CO 37, 200: Nam constitutus est sponsor foederis, quod Judaei suis peccatis divortium fecissent a Deo, qui aeternum foedus cum illis pepigerat. Foederis ergo, quod cassum vel abruptum erat, renovatio Christo tribuitur.

2. Comm. on 2 Cor. 1:20, CO 50, 22-3.

he says: "First, God was moved by pure mercy to make a covenant with the fathers. Secondly, He has linked the salvation of men with His own Word. Thirdly, He has exhibited in Christ every blessing, so as to ratify all His promises: as, indeed, their truth is only confirmed to us when we see their fulfilment in Christ. Forgiveness of sins is promised in the covenant, but it is in the blood of Christ. Righteousness is promised but it is offered through the atonement of Christ. Life is promised, but it must be sought only in the death and resurrection of Christ."¹ In the coming of Christ the truth of the covenant made with Abraham was shown to be firm and infallible.² Through His obedient life and death the covenant was sealed and sanctioned. Christ is the completion of the covenant (illius complementum). The covenant became "new and eternal when it was consecrated and established in the blood of Christ. Hence, Christ in giving the cup to His disciples in the last supper, calls it the cup of the New Testament in His blood; intimating that the covenant of God was truly realised, made new, and eternal, when it was sealed with His blood."³

The Divinity of the Mediator

J.L. Witte, a Roman Catholic writer, in a recent

1. Comm. on Luke 1:72, CO 45, 48.

2. Comm. on Isaiah 42:6, CO 37, 64-5; and on Mark 14:24, CO 45, 711.

3. Inst. II, 11, 4.

article on Calvin's doctrine of the Person of Christ has made the point that Calvin's Christology, unlike the Christology of medieval scholastic theology, was strongly determined by Soteriology.¹ It is this clue to Calvin's Christology which we must keep constantly in mind throughout the remainder of our discussion in this chapter. While Calvin made full use of the Chalcedon Christology, he was concerned that it should not be presented in a cold or frigid way. In all his theology a soteriological rather than a metaphysical concern was always to the fore. It can be said that on the whole Calvin kept himself fairly strictly within the traditional boundaries of orthodox Christology, eschewing any speculation as not only unprofitable but also dangerous. We must not, however, think that Calvin's doctrine of the Person of Christ is, therefore, without interest because it is orthodox. It is orthodox but Calvin never took up any doctrine without leaving his peculiar and instructive stamp of mind on it.

The opening sentence of the chapter on the Mediator in the Institutio states that "It deeply concerned us, that He who was to be our Mediator should be true God and true man."² In line with the whole theological tradition, Calvin held that Jesus Christ is "very God and very man." To weaken

1. J.L. Witte, Die Christologie Calvins in Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart, herausgegeben von A. Grillmeier und H. Bacht, Bd. III, Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954, p. 488.

2. Inst. II, 12, 1.

either side of this truth, in Calvin's view, is to endanger our very hope of salvation. It is this article of faith which heretics have always tried to overturn. "Ever since Christ was manifested to the world, heretics have attempted by various contrivances - and as it were under ground - to overturn sometimes His human, and sometimes His divine nature that either He might not have full power to save us, or we might not have ready access to Him."¹ Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we should safeguard the true divinity and the true humanity of our Lord against every minimizing tendency.

Calvin gives us an exposition of the humanity of the Mediator in Chapter 13 of the Second Book of the Institutio. For his discussion of the true divinity of Christ we must turn back to Chapter 13 of the First Book, where he found it necessary to discuss the deity of the Mediator in the context of his discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity. Here we find seven paragraphs of intricate theological argumentation to establish that He who came to be our Mediator was true God. Though this discussion is set in the context of the consideration of "The Knowledge of God the Creator" we must not lose sight of the fact that Calvin's treatment of the subject is determined throughout by Soteriology. Here as elsewhere his concern is primarily to get at the meaning of Scripture and his orientation, the pastoral care of souls rather than a

1. Comm. on Matthew 22:42, CO 45, 617.

desire to indulge in subtle metaphysical distinctions.

In order to fulfill the office of Mediator Jesus Christ must be "true God". No human ability is equal to the task of man's redemption. "To conquer sin and death is doubtless what can only be effected by divine power. Hence Christ unless He were God could not have performed what we had to expect from Him."¹ "It was His to swallow up death; who but Life could do so? It was His to conquer sin: who could do so save Righteousness itself? It was His to put to flight the powers of the air and the world; who could do so but a Power higher than both? But who possesses life and righteousness, and the lordship and authority of heaven but God alone? Therefore God in His infinite mercy, having determined to redeem us became Himself our Redeemer in the Person of His only-begotten Son."²

The Son is "the eternal and essential Word of the Father." (aeternus et essentialis est Patris Sermo). He was from the beginning with God and was God. Together with God the Father He was the Maker of all things. As the Substantial Word (verbum substantiale) He is also the source of all revelation.³ Having stated Christ's deity, Calvin then proceeds to establish Christ's eternity over against the erroneous views of Servetus. Servetus had put forward the view

1. Comm. on Jeremiah 23:6, CO 38, 412.

2. Inst. II, 12, 2.

3. Inst. I, 13, 7.

that the Word of God began to be only at the time of creation. It was then that God spoke for the first time and therefore before that time no Word existed in Him. Calvin dismisses this with the words, nihil magis est nugatorium. It does not at all follow that because something begins to be manifested at a certain time that we should conclude that it never existed before. On the contrary, "the Word had existed long before God said, 'Let there be light' for the power of the Word immediately emerged and was exerted. If anyone inquire how long, he will find it was without beginning ... Therefore we again state that the Word was eternally begotten by God, and dwelt with Him from everlasting. By this, His eternity, His true essence, and His divinity are proved."¹

Calvin draws the proof of the eternal deity of Christ from both the Old and New Testaments. In the Old Testament there are passages, he holds, which clearly refer to the divinity of the Mediator; such as, Psalm 45:6, "Thy throne O God is forever and ever."; Isaiah 9:6, "His name shall be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,."; Jeremiah 23:6, "This is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord of Righteousness," etc. In all these passages Christ is set forth as the Redeemer and the name of God is given Him and the very power, authority and majesty of God are ascribed to Him.² The activity of the Mediator in the

1. Inst. I, 13, 8.

2. Inst. I, 13, 9.

Old Covenant under the title of the Angel of the Lord, to which we have referred earlier is brought forward as a further proof of the eternal deity of the Mediator.¹

The decisive evidence for the divinity of the Mediator is to be found in the New Testament where Old Testament passages which speak of Jehovah are quoted and applied to Christ. Prophecies concerning the eternal God are applied to Christ as either already fulfilled in Him or which are to be fulfilled at some future time. Calvin adduces a great number of passages. We shall only mention two or three. The Lord who appeared in the temple (Isaiah 6:1) is said to have been Christ. (John 12:41). The title of God is employed in speaking of Christ in a number of New Testament passages, such as Romans 9:5, "God ... blessed forever"; 1 Timothy 3:16, "God has been manifested in the flesh", etc.² The divinity of the Mediator is still more evident from the divine works which are ascribed to Him in various New Testament passages. In John 5:17, Christ is spoken of as a co-worker with God from all eternity; in Hebrews 1:3, He is said to uphold and govern the world along with the Father; and in Matthew 9:6, He is described as the forgiver of sins. He is also said to have performed miracles by His own proper power. "Again if out of God there is no salvation, no righteousness, no life, Christ

1. Inst. I, 13, 10.

2. Inst. I, 13, 11.

having all these in Himself is certainly God."¹ As is evident, the argument begins at the level of reality, the experience in Christ of salvation, righteousness and life, rather than at the level of abstract metaphysical statement. Christ, as the giver of life, the means of salvation, the source of our righteousness, is no other than God Himself.

Paul van Buren believes that Calvin placed certain limitations on the statement that Christ is the full revelation of God. He asks, "Do we have in Christ a full gift of God to us and a full revelation of the nature of God?" "Calvin", he answers, "is willing to let these statements stand only in a limited sense ..."² He adduces several quotations to show that Calvin accepted the totus Deus in Christ only with certain reservations. The first quotation is Calvin's words on John 14:10: "Christ, so far as His secret divinity is concerned, is no better known to us than the Father. But He is said to be the express image of God because in Him God has fully revealed Himself in so far as God's infinite goodness, wisdom and power are clearly manifested in Him."³ Van Buren comments that "Calvin clearly is holding back, reserving, as it were, some other characteristics of God that apparently are not revealed in Christ."⁴ The opening sentence of

1. Inst. I, 13, 12-3. See also the Commentaries on the passages quoted.
2. Paul van Buren, Christ in Our Place: "The Substitutionary Character of Calvin's Doctrine of Reconciliation", Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1957, p. 12.
3. Comm. on John 14:10, CO 47, 326.
4. Van Buren, op. cit., p. 12.

the paragraph, which van Buren does not quote, gives us the clue to Calvin's true meaning. It reads: "I do not consider these words to refer to Christ's divine essence but to the mode of revelation."¹ Calvin is not placing any restriction on the fact that God is fully revealed in Christ. His meaning is simply that what Christ, as God, is in Himself, that is, in His naked divinity, is as unknown to us as what God is in Himself. Christ's divine essence or naked divinity is no more an object of knowledge for us than the Father's divine essence. God is only known to us as He reveals Himself through Christ the Mediator. A further reason for believing that this is Calvin's true meaning is the context of the passage. Calvin notes that the words of John 14:10 are directed against those who are not satisfied with God's revelation in Christ, who are so offended by the meanness of Christ's humiliated condition that they wish to approach to the Godhead by some other road. For Calvin the passage means that we cannot go behind the back of Christ and bypass God's revelation of Himself in Christ. Calvin therefore is not placing limitations on the fact that God is fully revealed in Christ, rather he is concerned to show that there is only one way of access to the Godhead and that is through Christ the Mediator.

T.H.L. Parker has pointed out that, according to

1. ibid.: Haec verba non ad divinam Christi essentiam refero, sed ad modum revelationis.

Calvin, there is in the Word of God a duplex relatio.¹ The Word is related on the one hand to God, being eternally with God; and on the other hand to men, being the revelation of God to men. Parker goes on to say: "In His relation to God the Word is hidden and incomprehensible; in His relation to men He is revealed and known."² The distinction is an important one. A failure to observe it may result in confusing the one relation with the other and therefore suspecting Calvin of restricting the meaning of the full divinity of Christ. Van Buren is guilty of this confusion. Calvin is not dealing here with the relation of Christ to the Father but with His relation to men. In this relation Christ is the full revelation of God.

Another passage which van Buren brings forward to attempt to prove his point is from Calvin's Commentary on Philippians 2:6: "Being such as He was, He could have shown Himself equal to God without doing wrong to anyone; but He did not manifest Himself to be what He really was, nor did He openly assume in the view of men what belonged to Him by right."³ The difficult words to which van Buren takes exception are, "but He did not manifest Himself to be what He really was." Van Buren therefore asks: "If that is Calvin's position, then how does he know what Christ 'really was'?"

1. The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952, p. 64.
2. ibid., pp. 64-5.
3. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, CO 52, 26.

What other source does he have for the true nature of the Son of God and therefore of God Himself?"¹ Calvin is simply following the meaning of the text which draws a distinction between the state of being equal with God and the state of being a servant. Christ could have manifested Himself as He really was, that is, in the form of equality with God, but chose instead to reveal Himself in the form of a servant. He did not reveal Himself in His naked divinity, but in a form accommodated to our capacities. While this involves an economic subordination of the Mediator to the Father, it does not imply any diminution of Christ's deity. "Christ, indeed, could not divest Himself of Godhead."² We shall return to this matter later. Suffice it to say here that the Philippian passage clearly makes a distinction between the glory which Christ had with the Father before the world began, and the glory of His humiliated state. To admit such a distinction does not imply that there is something more which Christ could have shown Himself to be but which He did not reveal. Undoubtedly the idea of subordination is not without its problems. But it is inaccurate to say that Calvin restricted the meaning of the full divinity of Christ. For him the full divinity of Christ was an essential article of faith and, as we have seen, he was at great pains to establish it and to safeguard it against all errors.

1. op. cit., p. 13.

2. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, CO 52, 25.

The Humanity of the Mediator

Calvin was just as concerned to preserve the true humanity of Christ as to safeguard His divinity.¹ If Christ must be divine because only one who Himself possesses life, righteousness, and the very power of God can save us, He must also be truly human to make God accessible to us. We cannot approach to the Godhead except God should descend to us and as it were make Himself small.² God reaches down to us in Christ. Christ's humanity is the "bond of our union with God."³ Christ by His assumption of our nature unites Himself to us and through Him we are united and have access to God. "... It was necessary (oportuisse) for Christ to be a real man; for as we are very far from God, we stand in a manner before Him in the person of our priest, which could not be were He not one of us. Hence, that the Son of God has a nature in common with us, does not diminish His dignity, but commends it the more to us; for He is fitted to reconcile us to God, because He is man. Therefore Paul, in order to prove that He is a Mediator, expressly calls Him man; for had He been taken from among angels or any other beings, we could not by Him be united to God, as He could not reach down

1. See Max Dominicé, L'Humanité de Jesus d'après Calvin, Paris: 'Je Sers', 1933 who has shown the centrality of this aspect of Christology for Calvin.
2. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:20, CO 55, 226-7.
3. Comm. on 1 Timothy 2:5, CO 52, 270; and Comm. on Matthew 22:42, CO 45, 617.

to us."¹ Referring to the same Pauline passage (1 Tim. 2:5) in the Institutio Calvin says: "That no one therefore may feel perplexed where to seek the Mediator, or by what means to reach Him, the Spirit by calling Him man reminds us that He is near, nay contiguous to us, inasmuch as He is our flesh."²

Calvin makes use of the philosophical notion of the ontological relationship of all men to represent the nature of the unity which exists between us and Christ. Here his affinity with the Greek fathers, especially Athanasius, Irenaeus, and Cyril of Alexandria is quite clear. By His Incarnation Christ entered into an ontological relationship with humanity. Christ and believers are, as it were, "made out of the same mass" (ex una massa nos esse compositos).³ "The author of holiness and we who are made partakers of it, are all of one nature."⁴ Christ has joined Himself to the human race by a community of nature. This "common nature is the pledge of our union with the Son of God."⁵ This was such a dominating and powerful idea for Calvin that he went on to say that therefore we do not need to seek salvation outside our own nature.⁶ Though there is nothing but sin in all mankind, as a result

1. Comm. on Hebrews 5:1, CO 55, 57.

2. Inst. II, 12, 1.

3. Comm. on Hebrews 2:11, CO 55, 28.

4. ibid.

5. Inst. II, 12, 3: communem naturam pignus esse nostrae cum Filio Dei societatis. See also Comm. on Romans 9:5, CO 49, 173-4.

6. Sermon on 1 Tim. 3:16, CO 53, 319, and Comm. on Hebrews 2:11, CO 55, 28.

of Christ uniting Himself with us, we can find righteousness as well as life in our flesh. There is no remoteness here. God does not dispense salvation from afar off. The ontological relationship between Christ and men means that salvation is offered to us in the very midst of our humanity. Thus Calvin lays the objective basis for the atoning work of Christ.

While Calvin makes use of the concept of the organic unity of mankind, it is never an abstract, philosophical concept for him. Paul van Buren has said that "Calvin sees the divine assumption of human nature not as an abstract metaphysical fact but rather as a personal reality of God's reaching out to men in Christ."¹ Calvin, therefore, gives it an intimate and personal meaning. Christ's assumption of our common nature means that He becomes our brother and that we are made His brethren. "We find in the Son of God a brother, being a partaker of our common nature."² "... the Son of God holds out to us the hand of a brother, and ... we are united to Him by the fellowship of our nature (naturae societate nobis conjunctum), in order that, out of our low condition, He may raise us to heaven."³

G.S. Hendry has pointed out that Calvin does not keep very strictly to this notion of an ontological unity

1. op. cit., p. 15.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 2:16, CO 55, 34; Comm. on 1 John 4:2, CO 55, 349.

3. Comm. on 1 Tim. 2:5, CO 52, 270.

with our humanity established by Christ's incarnational union with us. When Calvin comes to the Third Book of the Institutio, the problem which occupies him there is how we can be united to Christ in order that we may be made partakers of what He has accomplished for us. Obviously Christ, who has united Himself to us by assuming a common nature, has somehow become separated from us.¹ We shall have to consider Professor Hendry's criticism, when we discuss Calvin's doctrine of "union with Christ," but here it is necessary to make two points.

First of all, it must be said that Calvin held that, while Christ has united Himself to our nature, the ungodly, by their unbelief, dissolve this relationship. The true honour of being one with the Son of God, therefore, belongs to believers alone.² "The ungodly by virtue of their unbelief, break off and dissolve that relationship of the flesh, by which He has allied Himself to us and thus render themselves utter strangers to Him by their own fault."³ If we may be permitted to read between the lines, Calvin holds that the new humanity which Christ and believers share is the true order of human existence. Unbelievers cut themselves off from a participation in this humanity by their unbelief and are therefore in a sense less than truly human. Still while

1. The Gospel of the Incarnation, London: SCM Press, 1959, pp. 68-72.
2. Inst. II, 13, 2.
3. Comm. on Psalm 22:22, CO 31,231-2.

the true enjoyment of the fraternal alliance belongs properly to genuine believers alone,¹ unbelievers cannot completely dissolve the relationship which God has established. Therefore, Calvin says, that the brotherly union with Christ "belongs to a certain extent to all mankind."² "Now, though the greater part of men break off, in most instances, from this holy society, yet their depravity does not violate the order of nature, for we ought to regard God as the author of the union."³ Man's unbelief cannot finally dissolve what God has established.

Secondly, it has to be seen that for Calvin "flesh alone does not constitute the bond of brotherhood."⁴ Something more is required, namely faith. This is a legitimate concern for otherwise salvation would become a mechanical process which takes place automatically regardless of man's belief or unbelief. Even the Greek fathers who have been accused of a purely physical conception of redemption emphasized the need of a personal appropriation of the objective fact of salvation. But while faith is the indispensable means of our salvation it must never be raised to a position where it is more determinative than its object, namely Christ and His atoning work. True faith never possesses its object but rather is always possessed by it. Calvin never fell into

1. *ibid.*, CO 31, 231.

2. *ibid.*, CO 31, 231.

3. Comm. on Matthew 5:43, CO 45, 187-8.

4. Inst. II, 13, 2.

the danger of making faith more important than its object, and even though he held that unbelief dissolves the brotherly union between Christ and men, he did not regard unbelief as powerful enough to dissolve completely what God had established. G.S. Hendry believes that the classical doctrine of the ontological unity between Christ and humanity was not able to satisfy the need of the Protestant Reformers who insisted on a "relation at the level of personality, a relation of personal encounter and personal response."¹ While these two kinds of relations are not opposed to each other, it must be admitted that they are extremely difficult to reconcile. The problem still persists, namely, how we are to hold them together in such a way that while insisting upon the importance of the ontological unity we do not destroy the indispensability of faith, and while emphasizing the necessity of faith we do not dissolve the ontological relationship. An adequate doctrine of the work of Christ must address itself to this problem.

We need only consider briefly here Calvin's other arguments for the true humanity of Christ. In actual fact we shall be returning to this theme throughout the course of our discussion in Part Two. Suffice it to say here then that Calvin advances a number of passages of Scripture to prove the true humanity of Christ, first against the Manichees, who attributed to Christ not earthly but what they called celestial

1. op. cit., p. 71.

flesh, and secondly against the Marcionites who held that Christ assumed a phantom instead of a body. Against both views, Calvin says that in the Old Testament, "the blessing is promised neither in heavenly seed nor in a phantom of a man but in the seed of Abraham and Jacob (Gen. 12:3, 17:2, 7; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4). Nor is an eternal throne promised to a man of air, but to the Son of David and the fruit of his loins (Ps. 45:6; 132:11)."¹ The victory over Satan is promised to the human race at the beginning and later is referred specifically to the seed of Abraham and Jacob. The fact that Christ is spoken of in the New Testament as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David shows beyond any shadow of doubt that by virtue of His true human descent Christ was true man.² "Christ, indeed, was really man in consequence of His springing from the seed of Abraham, David, and Adam."³ The fact of Christ's descent from Adam, Abraham and David has a twofold significance. First, it establishes the connection between the promise of the Redeemer under the Old Covenant and the fulfilment of this promise in Christ under the New Covenant. Secondly, it confirms the humanity of Christ. He has descended from Adam, Abraham and David and is therefore bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

The humanity which Christ assumed was like ours

1. Inst. II, 13, 1.

2. Inst. II, 13, 1.

3. Comm. on Daniel 10:6, CO 41, 198.

in all respects, sin excepted. He was "subject to hunger, thirst, cold and the other infirmities of our nature."¹ His humanity was no abstract humanity but one which possessed all the qualities of human nature. Christ not only put on our flesh but also its feelings and affections.² "In Christ's human nature there are two things to be considered, the real flesh and the affections or feelings. The apostle then teaches us, that He had not only put on the real flesh of man, but also all those feelings which belong to man."³ The Son of God voluntarily took upon Him everything that was inseparable from human nature.⁴ Calvin follows out the consequences of this statement. It means that Christ grew up like an ordinary child, progressing in wisdom and stature. Like little children, so far as it relates to His human nature, He was deficient in understanding.⁵ Moreover, Christ assumed our corruptible human condition. His body was not incorruptible but like ours was liable to death. In discussing this point in his Commentary on 2 Corinthians 13:4, Calvin refers to the controversy between the Arians and the orthodox Fathers with regard to the matter whether Christ suffered from such weakness as to be subjected to the necessity of death against His will. The Arians used this argument to refute the true divinity of Christ. If Christ's suffering is like ours, they

1. Inst. II, 13, 1.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 4:15, CO 55, 54.

3. Comm. on Hebrews 2:17, CO 55, 34.

4. Comm. on Luke 2:40, CO 45, 103-4.

5. ibid., and on Isaiah 7:15, CO 36, 158.

said, then Christ was subjected to necessity against His will because it belongs to the human condition that man suffers from weakness or, in other words, from constraint. The orthodox fathers replied that Christ died not from constraint or necessity but by appointment in so far as He willed it Himself. Calvin comments: "This answer is true, provided it be properly understood. There are some, however, that mistakenly extend the appointment to Christ's human will - as if this were not the condition of His nature, but a permission contrary to His nature. For example, 'His dying,' they say, 'did not happen because His humanity was, properly speaking, liable to death, but by appointment, because He chose to die.' I grant, indeed, that He died because He chose to do so; but whence came this choice, but from this, that He had of His own accord, clothed Himself with a mortal nature."¹ The decision to die is connected with the prior decision to assume our mortal flesh. Christ's death was a death which took place in accordance with His mortal nature rather than a death which occurred contrary to His nature by a permissive act of will because the nature which He assumed was immortalized. Calvin resisted every attempt to make Christ's human nature unlike ours for thereby the "main support of our faith would be overturned."² "Therefore we must say this in a twofold way: Christ suffered by appointment, not by constraint

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 13:4, CO 50, 149-50.

2. ibid.

(Christum dispensatione, non coactione esse passum) because being in the form of God He could have exempted Himself from this necessity; nevertheless He suffered through weakness, because He emptied Himself."¹ To say that Christ suffered in the flesh means that the human nature which He had taken from us was made subject to death, that is, that Christ as a man naturally died.² The Son of God assumed a human nature like ours in all respects, sin excepted, so that we might have access to the Father and find life and righteousness in our very flesh.

The Person of the Mediator

We have seen that the Mediator must be both human and divine. "Two things," Calvin says, "must be found in Christ, in order that we may obtain salvation in Him, even divinity and humanity. His divinity possesses power, righteousness, life, which by His humanity are conveyed to us."³ True deity and true humanity are indispensable to the work of salvation and therefore Calvin was anxious to emphasize with all possible force the integrity of each nature. At the same time, he stressed that there must be a unity of Person in the Mediator. This he stated also with his characteristic lucidity: "In short, since neither as God alone could He feel death,

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 13:4, CO 50, 149-50.

2. Comm. on 1 Peter 4:1, CO 55, 271. Cf. also on Acts 2:23, CO 48, 40.

3. Comm. on Romans 1:3, CO 49, 9.

nor as man alone could He overcome it, He coupled human nature with divine that to atone for sin He might submit the weakness of the one to death; and that, wrestling with death by the power of the other nature, He might win victory for us."¹ It was impossible for the Eternal Word of God to suffer death and the human nature was not capable of accomplishing our redemption, therefore to perform the work of salvation, the two natures were united in one Person.² In accordance with the tradition of the Church Calvin devoted considerable attention to the unio hypostatica. The centre of interest in Calvin's statement of this doctrine is the unio personalis rather than the coniunctio naturarum. It is the Word of God and not the divine nature who assumed flesh. "He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of person."³ "The Word begotten by the Father before all ages assumed human nature by hypostatic union."⁴ For Calvin the unio hypostatica is the basis of the communio naturarum.⁵ The relationship of the two natures follows from the unio personalis. "For we affirm His divinity so joined and united with His humanity that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ."⁶

1. Inst. II, 12, 3.

2. ibid.

3. Inst. II, 14, 1.

4. Inst. II, 14, 5.

5. See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/2, ed. by G. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1959, p.51f.

6. Inst. II, 14, 1.

Calvin used the illustration of the union of soul and body, popular with the Fathers, to explain the character of the unity between the two natures. The body and the soul are so intimately united in man and yet in such a way that one is not mingled with the other but each retains its own distinctive properties. This mysterious union is a clue to how the two natures are united in Christ. "For the soul is not the body and the body is not the soul. Therefore, some things are said exclusively of the soul which cannot in any way apply to the body; and of the body that in no way fit the soul; of the whole man, that cannot refer, except inappropriately, to either soul or body separately. Finally the characteristics of the mind are (sometimes) transferred to the body, and those of the body to the soul. Yet he who consists of these parts is one man, not many. Such expressions signify both that there is one person in man composed of two elements joined together, and that there are two diverse underlying natures that make up this person. Thus, also the Scriptures speak of Christ: they sometimes attribute to Him what must be referred solely to His humanity, sometimes what belongs exclusively to His divinity and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone. And they so earnestly express this union of the two natures that is in Christ as sometimes to interchange them. This figure of speech is called by the ancient writers, 'the communicating of properties'."¹ Karl Barth has pointed out the missing element in

1. ibid.

the likeness is that the soul does not assume the body into unity with itself and in this way give it existence; that is, its own existence.¹ This is so but we must remember that Calvin was aware that the illustration could not be pressed in all details. Barth's point, however, is well taken; namely, that all analogies which we use to represent the unity of the human and divine are basically misleading. The unio personalis is absolutely unique and has no human analogy.

The illustration for Calvin serves the purpose of showing that there are certain attributes which belong uniquely to His divinity, still others which belong exclusively to His humanity, and again others which must be referred to the Person of the Mediator. Therefore when Scripture says that He was before Abraham, that He is the first-born of all creation, that He possesses a glory in common with the Father and works together with Him it attributes qualities which are "utterly alien to man" and which therefore "apply exclusively to His divinity."² That He is called "the Servant of the Father", that He grew in stature and wisdom, did not know the Last Day, and did not do His own will - all these refer solely to Christ's humanity for "in so far as He is God, He cannot increase in anything, and does all things for His own sake: nothing is hidden from Him; He does all things according to the decision of His will, and can be neither seen nor handled."³

1. Barth, op. cit., p. 54.
2. Inst. II, 14, 2.
3. ibid.

At the same time these qualities are not attributed solely to His human nature, for they also belong to the Person of the Mediator.

The natures are distinct but this does not mean that we can separate them. A personal unity exists and on the basis of this unity characteristics which belong specifically to the one nature can be attributed to the other. I.A. Dorner has remarked that Calvin's use of the doctrine of the communicatio idiomatum approximates the meaning and importance which Luther gave to it.¹ Calvin notes that Paul said that "God purchased the Church with His blood" and that the Lord of glory was crucified, and John said that "The Word of Life was handled." These biblical statements can only be understood in virtue of a communication of properties from the one nature to the other. "Surely God does not have blood, does not suffer, cannot be touched with hands. But since Christ, who was true God and also true man, was crucified and shed His blood for us, the things that He carried out in His human nature are transferred improperly, although not without reason, to His divinity."² This communicatio idiomatum can take place for the Mediator was both God and man and for the sake of the personal unity what belongs to the one nature can be transferred to the other.

1. I.A. Dorner, The Doctrine of the Person of Christ, Div. II, Vol. 2, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1862, p. 221.

2. Inst. II, 14, 2; and Inst. IV, 17, 30.

There are things also which apply to the office of the Mediator and which are not spoken simply of the divine or of the human nature. Calvin finds that those passages which comprehend both natures at once are largely to be found in John's Gospel and in his view these passages "set forth His true substance most clearly of all."¹ Therefore while Calvin followed the practice of distinguishing those texts of Scripture which refer to Christ's deity and those which refer to His humanity (this is especially so in his Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels) the unity of the Person of the Mediator was in his eyes the more dominant concern. For this reason Calvin regarded the Gospel according to St. John as showing the power and benefit of Christ's coming more clearly than the others. In John's Gospel one does not read of humanity or of divinity alone but of both at once. For example Christ received power from the Father to remit sins, the power to raise the dead, to bestow righteousness, holiness and salvation.²

According to Calvin the passage which best describes the Person of Christ is Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 3:16 that Christ is God manifested in the flesh. In Calvin's view this passage testifies to both natures for it declares that Christ is at the same time both true God and true man. It also points out the distinction between the two natures,

1. Inst. II, 14, 3.

2. Inst. II, 14, 2.

when it calls Christ God and also says that He was manifested in the flesh. And finally, it asserts the unity of the person, when it says that it is one and the same who was God and who has been manifested in the flesh.¹ This passage appealed to Calvin for according to him it expressed three aspects of the Person of the Mediator which were so basic for his Christology, the two natures, their distinctness, and also the unity of the Person of the Mediator.

In stating how the two natures are united in one Person, Calvin fights on two fronts; on the one hand against Eutychianism which confused the two natures and on the other hand against Nestorianism which separated them. Against Eutychianism Calvin says: "When it is said that 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14), we must not understand it as if He were either changed into flesh, or confusedly intermingled with flesh, but that He made choice of the Virgin's womb as a temple in which He might dwell."² The unity of the Person of the Mediator does not prevent His natures from remaining distinct, so that His divinity retains whatever is proper to it and His humanity likewise has separately what belongs to it.³ The consequence of the Eutychian error is that a kind of intermediate being is formed so that Christ is neither God nor man.⁴ Our hope of salvation is thus

1. Comm. on 1 Timothy 3:16, CO 52, 289-90.

2. Inst. II, 14, 1.

3. Inst. II, 14, 2.

4. Inst. IV, 17, 30.

jeopardized. Servetus was for Calvin the contemporary exponent of this Christological error and Calvin devoted considerable space to refuting his views.

With equal insistence Calvin rejected the Nestorian heresy which separated the natures. "We must not imagine a Jesus Christ", Calvin says, "who is God and another Jesus Christ who is man; but we must know that He alone is both God and man."¹ Although we must distinguish the natures we cannot separate them. "Away with the error of Nestorius, who, in wanting to pull apart rather than distinguish the nature of Christ, devised a double Christ! Yet we see that Scripture cries out against this with a clear voice: there the name 'Son of God' is applied to Him who is born of the Virgin (Luke 1:32p), and the Virgin herself is called the 'mother of our Lord' (Luke 1:43p.)."² Calvin affirms the teaching of the early Church that Mary was the 'mother of our Lord' on the basis of which the Nestorian heresy was condemned. Against these two ancient heresies Calvin maintains therefore that we must distinguish the two natures without dissolving the unity, and stress the unity without dissolving the two natures. Calvin regarded it as absolutely essential for a proper Christology that there should be no minimization of either the divinity of the humanity of our Lord,

1. Comm. on 1 Timothy 3:16, CO 52, 289, and on Luke 2:40, CO 45, 104.
 2. Inst. II, 14, 4.

that the two natures should be distinguished, and that the unity of the Person should be emphasized. In all these respects he was completely faithful to the Chalcedon Christology.¹

1. See J.L. Witte, op. cit., p. 529.

PART TWOTHE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

In the history of Christian thought, Calvin's name has commonly been associated with the penal substitutionary view of the Atonement. The hall-marks of this theory are its emphasis on Christ's suffering and death as a penalty for sin, and its corresponding notion that this suffering and death were endured in man's place and stead. While there can be little doubt that the notions of penalty and substitution are to be found in Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation, it would be a serious misapprehension of his position to identify his view of the Atonement with the rigid penal substitutionary theory of later Calvinism, or even to speak of his doctrine of the Work of Christ as the penal substitutionary theory 'simpliciter'.¹

Calvin was acutely aware that the writers of Scripture ascribed a unique importance to the death of Christ. But this did not mean for him, as it undoubtedly did for later Calvinism, that only the death of Christ has redemptive significance or that this death is to be understood exclusively in forensic and penal terms. As the New Testament uses an abundance of images and metaphors to describe the work of

1. It is noteworthy that McLeod Campbell in attacking the penal substitutionary theory of Calvinism, criticized John Owen and Jonathan Edwards rather than Calvin himself. The Nature of the Atonement unfortunately has no separate treatment of Calvin's doctrine even though a whole chapter is devoted to Luther's view.

reconciliation, so we would expect Calvin, who was a Biblical theologian 'par excellence' to make full use of these images and metaphors. This we find to be the case. In the Institutio and Commentaries, Calvin's discussion of the work of salvation has a comprehensiveness and richness about it which makes it difficult to fit it into the framework of a particular theory without serious distortion. The notion of penalty is present, so is the idea of substitution, but there are other elements which are strongly represented: the ideas of sacrifice, satisfaction, Christus Victor, recapitulation, and especially that of obedience. What Calvin gives us then is not so much a theory of the Atonement as a rich picture of it, a picture which is a masterful synthesis of the Biblical material and previous theological attempts to understand the Work of Christ. In this picture there are, of course, certain regulative images: one is substitution which has received sufficient attention, but another is obedience which has not been given the attention that it warrants.

It will be our task in this next part to determine the extent to which Calvin used the notion of obedience and the significance which he attached to it as a soteriological image both by itself and in relation to other images. We can formulate at the very outset Calvin's use of the concept of obedience in the following manner: For Calvin the obedience of Christ is the act of Atonement. It is the general and comprehensive image which Calvin uses to understand the whole act of Atonement. In the chapter in the Institutio entitled "How

Christ has fulfilled the function of Redeemer to acquire salvation for us", where the question is posed, "How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly towards us?", Calvin gives the following answer: "To this we can in general reply that He has achieved this for us by the whole course of His obedience."¹ A number of Biblical references are adduced to confirm this statement and to indicate different moments in the course of Christ's obedience from His birth to His death. Still it is the death which the New Testament writers emphasize and therefore Calvin associates the work of reconciliation in a decisive way with the death of Christ. Thus he writes: "Yet to define the way of salvation more exactly, Scripture ascribes this as peculiar and proper to Christ's death."² This does not mean, as we have already urged, that only the death of Christ is of saving significance. Rather the death is the specific act which is the consummation of the entire work and which therefore comprehends in a brief way the whole course of Christ's obedience. For Calvin, this is the reason why the Apostles' Creed passes at once from the birth of Christ to His death and resurrection. It is not to exclude "the remainder of the obedience that He manifested in His life."³ It is to express in a shorthand

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.

2. Inst. II, 16, 5.

3. ibid.; This statement in the Institutio is to be contrasted with Calvin's position in the Geneva Catechism of 1541: "M. Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life?" (Cont'd)

form the whole course of that obedience. The whole life of Christ as such is His work and Calvin notes that Paul ascribed redemptive significance not only to the death but also to the life of Christ when he wrote: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, ... and was obedient to the Father unto death, even death on a cross."¹ Death is the climax of a life of perfect obedience. As the consummation of the rest, it receives its significance only from its connection with the perfect life of obedience. The common element which unites both the life and the death is obedience: "And truly, even in death itself his willing obedience is the important thing because a sacrifice not offered willingly would not have furthered righteousness."²

On the understanding that the obedience of Christ is the act of Atonement, every aspect of Christ's career on earth, His assumption of our flesh, His perfect life, His teachings, His suffering and His death, has saving significance. That this is so is evident from the whole corpus of Calvin's writings. We have a general outline of this understanding of Christ's work in the Institutio. For fuller details we must go to the Commentaries and Sermons. It will be our purpose to do this and to show how Calvin used the notion

C. Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption." T.F. Torrance, The School of Faith. London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1959, p. 13. We shall have occasion to return to this difference later.

1. Phil. 2:7-8.
2. Inst. II, 16, 5.

of obedience to view the whole redemptive activity of our Lord and how thereby he was able to bind together the Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ in an indissoluble unity.

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CHAPTER THREE: THE ASSUMPTION OF THE SERVANT FORM

Calvin stands firmly within the theological tradition in regarding the assumption of our humanity as the essential pre-condition for the work of reconciliation. As we have already had occasion to observe, he was deeply concerned to stress the brotherly union between Christ and men. His emphasis on Christ's incarnational union with us is reminiscent of a similar emphasis in the theology of Irenaeus and Athanasius for, along with them, he held that on this intimate unity between Christ's nature and ours depends the efficacy of what was accomplished in His life, death, resurrection and also priestly intercession in heaven.

Although the work of salvation must be a movement from outside of humanity, as no man is equal to this task,¹ at the same time it must be accomplished in our human flesh. That is, the disobedience which was committed in our human nature must be redressed in the same nature.² Thus Calvin

1. Inst. III, 11, 9; Nineteenth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 230.

2. Calvin's Geneva Catechism of 1541, Torrance, op. cit., p. 13.

says in one of his sermons, "It was necessary that righteousness should be acquired for us in our flesh and in our nature. For otherwise we would always remain condemned. But as we are guilty before God and in His judgment, so also we have the obedience of Christ which responds and satisfies in order to acquit us of all our debts. It was necessary that this should be accomplished in our flesh."¹ In order to acquire righteousness for us, the Son of God assumed human flesh. He became both the Servant of God and our Brother.² As the Servant of God, He came to acquire salvation for us in our flesh and in our nature. As our Brother, He came to be the pledge that we have been adopted to be the sons of God and to assure us that the benefits which He has acquired for us in our nature are ours through fraternal union with Him.

Here we must pause and ask how in general Calvin viewed the Incarnation. It is perfectly clear that while he did not ignore other elements - notably that of revelation - he saw the Incarnation primarily in a soteriological light. The Incarnation is the first act of the Son of God in our reconciliation. But the Incarnation is not an end in itself; it takes place for the sake of the Atonement. Thus Calvin strongly censured Osiander's view that Christ would have come as man even if man had not fallen into sin. Osiander had based this view on the conviction that unless Christ had

1. Nineteenth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 225.

2. Comm. on Psalm 45:7, CO, 31, 454.

become man, men would otherwise be without a Head. In support of this opinion he cited Alexander of Hales, Duns Scotus, and John Pico della Mirandola.¹ Calvin replied that Christ as the Eternal Son of God was the Head of men and angels. If man had remained sinless Christ would still have been the Head of the Church without an Incarnation.² The sole purpose of the Incarnation is not that men may have a Head - they already possess a Head - but that they might be redeemed. Scripture always connects the Incarnation with our reconciliation and to imagine another end or reason for it would be presumptuous. For Calvin this is a basic Biblical and theological perception: "We well know why Christ was promised from the beginning; to restore the fallen world and to succour lost men."³

While the sole end of the Incarnation is reconciliation, it would be a mistake to conclude from this that therefore, the Incarnation has little or no significance for Calvin. On the contrary, it is only on the understanding that its end is Atonement that the Incarnation receives its full and proper significance. Moreover, it is only on this basis that the inseparable unity of Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection can be preserved. The Incarnation is given full soteriological significance by Calvin in the following two ways: first, as the sanctification of our human nature;

1. OS, III, 443, n. 2.
2. Inst. II, 12, 7.
3. Inst. II, 12, 4.

and secondly, as an act of humiliation. To the former we shall return later; to the latter we now turn.

For Calvin the Incarnation meant the humiliation of the Son of God. Max Dominicé has stated this very strongly in his study, L'Humanité de Jesus d'après Calvin: "We may say that the total picture which Calvin has of Christ is dominated by two Biblical passages: Isaiah 53 and Philip-
pians 2 - He wished to consider the earthly career of the Lord (the 'Life of Jesus' as we would say today) solely from the point of view of this humiliation, of this supreme self-abasement."¹ Undoubtedly, there are other Biblical passages which formed Calvin's mind on the subject of Christology, yet there can be little question that the Philippians 2 pas-
sage deeply influenced him. It occurs over and over again in the Institutio, Commentaries and Sermons, and we would not err too greatly if we put forward the opinion that this pas-
sage is quoted by Calvin more than any other New Testament passage to describe the earthly career of our Lord. Perhaps this is so because Calvin saw in this passage several notions which are so determinative for his theological outlook: the movement of humiliation and exaltation, the concept of Ser-
vant of God, the notion of obedience, and the importance of the humanity of Christ. These concepts are by their very nature mutually related and interdependent and form the basis of Calvin's Christology.

1. Paris: Je Sers, 1933, p. 122.

The first act in the obedience of Christ is His assumption of the form of a servant. The Son of God took the form of a slave in obedience to God's will in order that from beginning to end He might live out a life of perfect obedience to the Father and offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

"It was necessary that our Lord Jesus Christ should take the form of a servant to accomplish the obedience which was required in order to efface the rebellion of our father Adam."¹

"For God could certainly save us without any means; but we must always take it as basic that life had to be won for us by Jesus Christ. Now to do this, it was equally necessary that He should be a servant, for He could not otherwise render obedience to God His Father, and without that obedience, He could not make reparation for our transgressions and iniquities."² He who was Lord became a servant and He who possessed all authority made obedience His life-characteristic.

For Calvin this has a twofold significance. First of all it means that Christ gave up His rights. Being in the form of God He could have shown Himself equal with God, but He gave up the heavenly glory for the meanness of the earthly condition.³ The Lord of glory and the Prince of Angels submitted Himself in complete obedience.⁴ This

1. Twenty-Sixth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 315.

2. Sixth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 666, trans. by T.H.L. Parker, p. 125.

3. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, CO 52, 25.

4. First Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 596, trans. by T.H.L. Parker, p. 31.

surrender of the heavenly state for the earthly had a powerful effect on Calvin's mind. Throughout his writings it is expressed in terms of the strongest contrasts. "The Son of God, by whom the world has been created and by virtue of whom all things consist ... who has given life to men and Angels from the very beginning ... nevertheless was made small."¹ Calvin also represents this act of condescension by the use of spatial metaphors. The Son of God abased Himself "from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest ignominy."² It is worth noting that Calvin's primary concern here is not to assert some metaphysical theory of the infinite distance between the heavenly and earthly conditions, but simply to magnify the greatness of Christ's act of condescension. In the act of humiliation the element of reconciliation is already present. "Our Lord Jesus Christ is abased in order to exalt us."³ He abased Himself so that by His humiliation and descent He might raise us up to heaven.⁴ "Our Lord Jesus Christ is born in a stable and He also wished to be emptied in all other things in order to raise us to the Kingdom of Heaven."⁵ The atoning act begins therefore with the assumption of the Servant form.

1. Thirty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 457.

2. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, CO 52, 25.

3. op. cit., CO 46, 457.

4. Comm. on John 6:55, CO 47, 155. Cf. also on 14:28: "And certainly as it has not been granted to us to reach the height of God, Christ descended to us, that He might raise us to it." CO 47, 355.

5. Twenty-Ninth Sermon, CO 46, 353.

With the utmost explicitness, Calvin states that Christ's abasement was voluntary, not of necessity.¹ This voluntary act is explained in terms of the Patristic idea of "*οἰκονομικὰ*". "That He was a servant was a voluntary act, so that we must not think that it detracted anything from His rank. The ancient writers of the Church expressed this by the word 'Dispensation'² by which it was brought about, they tell us, that He was subject to all our infirmities. It was by a voluntary determination that He subjected Himself to God, and subjected Himself in such a manner as to become also of service to us; and yet that exceedingly low condition does not hinder Him from still continuing to possess supreme majesty."³

Secondly, the humiliation involved the exchange of the 'forma Dei' for the 'forma servi'. Christ was brought down "to the level of mankind, so that there was in appearance nothing that differed from the common condition of mankind."⁴ He "was made in man's likeness; and in form and habit He appeared man ... so that He differed in nothing from the human species."⁵ For Calvin this means that Christ's assumption of our human condition was complete in every respect.

1. Comm. on Phil. 2:6, CO 52, 25.

2. It should be pointed out that this is 'dispensation' in the sense of the patristic notion of 'economic' condescension and not 'dispensation' in the modern sense.

3. Comm. on Isaiah 42:1, CO 37, 58.

4. Comm. on Phil. 2:7, CO 52,

5. Comm. on Ezek. 1:25-6, CO 40, 55.

The state of humiliation is not limited to the specific act of assuming the form of a servant but rather "extends from the birth right up to the grave".¹ But since the birth of Christ marks the beginning of this state of humiliation, it is singled out by Calvin for special attention. The act of condescension extends even to the genealogy of our Lord for here we have "a prelude to that emptying of Himself of which Paul speaks."² There is no retreat on Calvin's part from the full implications of the notion of humiliation. He does not fail to notice that the family of Judah into which Christ was born had been disgraced by Tamar's adultery. "The Son of God might have kept His descent unspotted and pure from every reproach or mark of infamy. But He came into the world to empty Himself and take upon Him the form of a servant; 'to be a worm and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people,' and at length to undergo the accursed death of the cross. He therefore did not refuse to admit a stain into His genealogy, arising from incestuous intercourse which took place among His ancestors."³ This was part of His making Himself of no reputation. Calvin holds that it was fitting that Christ's earthly line should be dishonoured so that we might be content with Him alone and so that His infinite purity might cleanse the stains by which His ancestry was defiled.⁴

1. Twenty-Ninth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 353.

2. Comm. on Matthew 1:3, CO 45, 60.

3. ibid.

4. Comm. on Genesis 38:1, CO 23, 493 and Nineteenth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 228.

Humiliation is evident, above all, in the birth of Christ. All the circumstances which attended our Lord's birth - the poverty of Joseph and Mary, the lodgement in a stable, the lack of comforts, the coming of the poor shepherds - are for Calvin a kind of mirror in which we can see the humiliation of the Son of God.¹ "We see ... what sort of beginning the life of the Son of God had, and in what cradle He was placed. Such was His condition at birth, because He had taken upon Him our flesh for this purpose that He might empty Himself on our account. When He was thrown in a stable, and a lodging refused among men, it was that heaven might be opened to us, not as a temporary lodging, but as our eternal country and inheritance, and that angels might receive us into their abode."² His coming among men was mean and lowly and an occasion de scandale.³ There is no attempt to minimize this aspect of scandal or what has more recently been called "offence". Although we must not make the mistake of identifying Calvin's notion of scandal with Kierkegaard's idea of offence, it is clear that Calvin's profound understanding of the act of humiliation enabled him to see the possibility of scandal, in the lowliness and ignominy of Christ's earthly condition. The Jews were offended by the lowliness of the flesh.⁴ The reason for their offence was that Christ "lived among men without any outward show;"

1. Twenty-Third Sermon, CO 46, 281.

2. Comm. on Luke 2:7, CO 45, 73.

3. op. cit., CO 46, 275.

4. Comm. on John 6:41, CO 47, 148.

and they "did not expect that their Redeemer would come in that state or condition."¹ But what is an occasion of scandal can also be the means of salvation. "Here then is something which is repugnant to men's minds. But it is necessary for us ... to adore the wonderful counsel of God in that He has willed that His Son should be so cast down ... It was necessary that He should take upon Himself all our poverties and miseries in order to deliver us of them and to make us partakers of His benefits. For this ignominy which we see in the stable is our glory, inasmuch as the inheritance of heaven is restored to us. When the Son of God is, as it were, dislodged from the world, and so is destitute, it is in order that He might raise us to the heights of heaven. When He is deprived of all the comforts which are required for our life, it is in order that we may be enriched with the spiritual benefits which are contained in perfection in Him. Therefore so much for the stable. And moreover, to remove this scandal, and in order that we might not be troubled by it, it is always necessary for us to come to the town of Bethlehem."² Throughout the above passage, the soteriological motif is to the forefront. Calvin puts this in an even more striking way when he says elsewhere: "Bethlehem, where the man had to be born, will be a door for us to go in unto the eternal God."³

1. Comm. on Isaiah 52:14, CO 37, 252.
2. Twenty-Third Sermon, CO 46, 275.
3. Comm. on John 7:27, CO 47, 175.

The act of humiliation also means sharing all our trials and experiences. The humanity which Christ assumed was no ideal or noble one but was, like ours, characterized by human weakness. He voluntarily took upon Himself everything which was inseparable from human nature.¹ It is not accidental but wholly in accord with this position, that Calvin holds that Christ grew up like an ordinary child, progressing in both wisdom and stature. He resisted all attempts to restrict the meaning of this assertion. To those who regard it as absurd that the Son of God should lack anything, Calvin says: "If it takes nothing from His glory that He was altogether emptied neither does it degrade Him, that He chose not only to grow in body but to make progress in mind. And certainly when the Apostle declares that 'in all things He was made like unto His brethren', (Hebrews 2:17) and 'was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted', (Hebrews 4:15), he no doubt includes that His soul was subject to ignorance."² He refers to "excessively timid persons" who wish to restrict the meaning of the Biblical statement to the fact that Christ only appeared to make progress whereas actually no addition was made to His knowledge. This sort of explanation strikes Calvin as altogether unsatisfactory. Knowledge was not concealed in Christ which afterwards made its appearance in progress of time, but Christ actually and

1. Comm. on Luke 2:40, CO 45, 104.

2. Comm. on Luke 2:40, CO 45, 103-4.

really increased in knowledge because He truly and completely took upon Himself our flesh. "Thus we see how far the Son of God condescended on our account, so that He was not only willing to be fed on our food, but also for a time to be deprived of understanding and to endure all weaknesses... Of this state of ignorance in which Christ was for a time, Luke testifies when he says, 'And He grew in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and with men'. If Luke had merely said that Christ grew, he might have been interpreted with men, but he expressly adds with God. Christ must therefore have been for a time like little children so that, so far as relates to His human nature, He was deficient in understanding."¹

Calvin seems to be aware that this way of stating the matter is open to the charge of Nestorianism. There is at least a 'prima facie' appearance that what we have here is a double Christ - a human Christ who increased in wisdom and knowledge, and a divine Christ Who possessed the gift of knowledge in all perfection. But this is certainly not Calvin's intention. Here we must recall his fundamental Christological principle that though there are qualities and acts which refer specifically to the one nature rather than the other, they are not ascribed solely to the one nature or the other, but also belong to the Person of the Mediator. What we have

1. Comm. on Isaiah 7:15, CO 36, 158. See also Thirty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 459; and Thirty-Ninth Sermon, CO 46, 486-7.

in this instance then is not a double Christ but one Person, the Mediator, Who increased in both wisdom and knowledge. Calvin did not attempt to solve the problem of how growth in knowledge can be reconciled with the possession of perfect knowledge. He was content to follow Irenaeus's explanation that the divine power was hidden and in a state of repose.¹ Undoubtedly, the weakness of this explanation is its tendency to forge a double Christ and to leave the suggestion of unreality by virtue of its assumption that the divine power is something which can be turned off and on. Calvin seemed to be aware of this problem which he had inherited from the history of Christian thought. He did not, however, attempt to further the solution of it.

Humiliation was characteristic of the entire life of Christ. He not only put on our flesh but also our feelings and affections.² Therefore, He was "subject to hunger, thirst, cold and the other infirmities of our nature."³ He fled to escape His enemies: "And this was a part of that emptying of Himself which Paul mentions, that when He could easily have protected His life by a miracle, He chose rather to submit to our weakness by taking flight."⁴ Finally, He humbled

1. Comm. on Luke 2:40, CO 45, 104, where in this connection Calvin quotes Irenaeus: Et quod dicit Irenaeus, quiescente divinitate passum fuisse, non modo de corporali morte interpretor, sed de illo incredibile animae dolore et cruciatu, qui hanc illi querimoniam expressit, Deus meus, ut quid me dereliquisti?
2. Comm. on Hebrews 4:15, CO 55, 54.
3. Inst. II, 13, 1.
4. Comm. on Matt. 12:14, CO 45, 329; and Comm. on John 7:14, CO 47, 164.

Himself to the extent of dying a despised and shameful death on the Cross.

It is already apparent that the notion of humiliation was a very important one for Calvin. We must now ask concerning the depth of this act of humiliation. Closely connected with this question is the problem of whether the humiliation is to be ascribed only to the human nature. We must preface our consideration of this matter by recalling that for Calvin there is a certain impropriety in the language which we use to speak about these matters. In his comment on David's hyperbolical language in Psalm 22, Calvin says that Christ's emptying Himself could not be adequately expressed "by any of the ordinary forms of speech."¹ Our human speech therefore is not entirely adequate to describe the depth of Christ's act of humiliation.

According to Calvin the act of humiliation refers to the whole Person of Christ. "For He did not abase Himself either as to His humanity alone, or to His divinity alone, but inasmuch as clothed in our flesh, He concealed Himself under its infirmity."² Erasmus had held that Christ emptied Himself only as man. Calvin criticises this view by asking: "But where was the form of God before He became man? Hence we must reply that Paul speaks of Christ wholly, as He was

1. Comm. on Psalm 22:16, CO 31, 228; See also Comm. on Phil. 2:8, CO 52, 27.

2. Comm. on Phil. 2:10, CO 52, 29.

God manifested in the flesh." Then Calvin adds: "Nevertheless, this emptying is applicable exclusively to His humanity, as if I should say of man, 'Man being mortal, he is exceedingly senseless if he thinks of nothing but the world,' I refer indeed to man wholly; but at the same time I ascribe mortality only to a part of him, namely, to the body, As then, Christ has one Person consisting of two natures, it is with propriety that Paul says that He Who was the Son of God - in reality equal to God - did nevertheless lay aside His glory, when He in the flesh manifested Himself in the form of a servant."¹ While in the previous quotation there was the suggestion that the divine nature underwent humiliation, here Calvin seems to exclude the divine nature from such an experience except of course in a manner of speaking. It can be said that the latter is Calvin's more considered view: the Person of the Mediator was abased, but by virtue of the communicatio idiomatum, this humiliation is attributed to the divine nature after a manner of speaking. Still there are one or two places where the attribution of abasement to the divine nature is more than just a manner of speaking. In his comments on Ephesians 4:9, where Paul has in mind Psalm 68, Calvin says: "Paul does not here reason in the manner of a logician, as to what necessarily follows, or may be inferred from the words of the prophet. He knew that what David said about God's ascension was metaphorical. But neither can it be denied, that the expression bears a

1. Comm. on Phil. 2:7, CO 52, 26.

reference to some kind of humiliation on the part of God which had previously existed. It is this humiliation which Paul justly infers from the declaration that God had ascended. And at what time did God descend lower than when Christ emptied Himself?"¹ Calvin speaks here of the "Humiliation of God" without his usual qualification that this is only a way of speaking, however, he did not develop or take this any further.

The Veiling of the Divine Glory

In becoming man, the Son of God did not cease to be Who He was before He became man. The exinanitio does not involve a change in the divine being or a surrender of the divine attributes. But the question immediately arises;- How can there be a genuine abasement of the Son of God without a change in the divine being? If we are to understand the act of humiliation aright, Calvin says, then we must see it as the veiling of the Godhead in Christ: "Christ indeed could not divest Himself of the Godhead; but He kept it concealed for a time, that it might not be seen under the weakness of the flesh. Hence He laid aside His glory in the view of men, not by lessening it but by concealing it."² There was a veiling of the Godhead throughout the entire earthly career of our Lord. The lowly circumstances of Christ's

1. Comm. on Ephesians 4:9, CD 51, 194.
2. Comm. on Phil. 2:7, CO 52, 26.

entrance into the world, His role as Servant of God and servant of men, His being made of no reputation and the reproach of men, for Calvin, all point to the veiling of the divine glory.

It can be said that Calvin's notion of the 'Veiling of the Godhead' is an attempt to steer a straight course between two false views: One is the idea that Christ's abasement involved the assumption of a humanity which was a semi-transparent veil through which the divine glory was able to shine with almost perfect brightness. The other is the notion that the act of humiliation involved not only an absolute concealment of the divine glory but also a surrender of the divine attributes.¹ The former is the error of an orthodox Christology which is docetic in tendency. The latter is the error of certain types of nineteenth century Kenotic Christology. In opposition to both errors, Calvin paradoxically combined a strong emphasis on the veiling of the divine glory with just as strong an insistence that the divine glory is present and radiant in Christ's person. It should also be observed in passing, that by the aid of this notion of veiling, Calvin attempted to work out the relation of the human and the divine in Christ, not so much in terms of substance philosophy as in terms of actual events and history.²

1. See A.B. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955, pp. 8ff.
2. See Wolfgang Kratz, "Christus - Gott und Mensch. Einige Fragen an Calvins Christologie", Evangelische Theologie, Mai, 1959, Heft 5. Chr. Kaiser & Verlag & München, p. 21.

According to Calvin, revelation is to be understood in terms of concealment and self-disclosure. "It pleased God to make known in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in Himself."¹ God Who is invisible in Himself makes Himself visible in Christ. Therefore Christ is described as the Image of the Invisible God: "He calls Him the Image of the Invisible God, meaning by this that it is in Him alone that God, Who is otherwise invisible, is manifested to us ... God in Himself, that is, in His naked majesty, is invisible, and that not to the eyes of the body merely but also to the understandings of men, and that He is revealed to us in Christ alone, that we may behold Him as in a mirror. For in Christ He shows us His righteousness, goodness, wisdom, power, in short His entire self."² At the same time, the disclosure of what was previously hidden and the making visible of what was beforehand invisible, does not mean that the mystery has been dispelled. God still dwells in light unapproachable. "As long as we are surrounded by mortal flesh, we never penetrate so far into the deepest secrets of God as to have nothing hidden from us; for 'we know in part and we see as by a mirror and in a riddle'. By faith we enter into the light of God but only in part."³ It is in this sense that Calvin speaks of Christ's divinity being as hidden as that of

1. Inst. III, 11, 9; and Comm. on John 5:27, CO 47, 119: "What had been hidden in God is revealed in Christ the man, and life formerly inaccessible is close at hand."
2. Comm. on Col. 1:15, CO 52, 84-5; and Inst. III, 11, 1.
3. Comm. on 1 Tim. 6:16, CO 52, 332.

the Father's: "For Christ in respect of His hidden divinity is not better known to us than the Father."¹

But there is a hiddenness not only behind the revelation but also a hiddenness in the very event of revelation. In revealing Himself in Christ, God also conceals Himself. "The abasement of the flesh was like a veil by which His divine majesty was concealed."² Calvin states this in the strongest possible way: "Christ took the image of a servant and, content with such lowness, allowed His divinity to be hidden by a veil of flesh ... what does 'being found in fashion as a man' mean that save for a time the divine glory did not shine, but only human likeness was manifested in a lowly and abased condition."³

Calvin's understanding of the relation of veiling and revealing is determined by the notion of the veil which covered the recesses of the Old Testament Sanctuary. The flesh of Christ, in Calvin's view, acts like this veil. Therefore the glory of Christ "is not to be estimated according to the external appearance of His flesh; nor is His flesh to be despised, because it conceals as a veil the majesty of God."⁴ "He came into the world in such a way as to be everywhere despised; His glory lay hidden under the humility of the flesh. For although there shone in Him a majesty worthy of the only-begotten Son of God, it was not visible to the

1. Comm. on John 14:10, CO 47, 326.

2. Comm. on Phil. 2:7, CO 52, 26.

3. Inst. II, 13, 2.

4. Comm. on Hebrews 10:20, CO 55,

majority of men. On the contrary, they saw and despised the abasement which was the veil or covering of His glory. The reason for their amazement was that among men He lived without any outward show and the Jews did not expect their Redeemer to come in that state and condition."¹ Commenting on Matthew 25:31, "Now when the Son of man shall come in His glory" Calvin says, "the divine glory ... at that time shone in the Father only, for in Himself (Christ) it was concealed."²

Although Calvin was accustomed to represent the veiling of the divine glory in the strongest possible terms, this did not mean for him that Christ gave up the divine glory. Calvin did not overlook the fact that if Christ is really the gift of God to sinful men and the very declaration of our reconciliation with God, then the glory of God must be visible in Him. In this particular respect, the Johannine notion of the divine doxa (δοξά) was strongly determinative for his theological outlook. Like Luther, Calvin had a special regard for the Fourth Gospel. He described it as "the key to open the door to the understanding of the others" for while the first three Gospels exhibit Christ's body, John shows us His soul. The Johannine passage, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), therefore, frequently appears in the

1. Comm. on Isaiah 52:14, CO 37, 252. See also Comm. on Matthew 17:1, CO 45, 485; "His majesty was concealed under the weakness of the flesh"; and Comm. on Hebrews 10:20, CO 55, 129; and Comm. on Daniel 7:13, CO 41, 59-62.
2. Comm. on Matthew 25:31, CO 45, 686.

Commentaries and Sermons in conjunction with the Philippians 2 passage and helps to bring out the strong emphasis on both the veiling and the unveiling of the divine glory. The juxtaposition of the notions of veiling and glory is evident in the following two quotations: "The majesty of God was not annihilated though clothed in flesh. It was indeed hidden under the lowliness of the flesh, yet that it still sent forth its glory. In Christ there was seen to be a glory consistent with the Son of God."¹ "The divine majesty was not so concealed under the contemptible and lowly appearance of the flesh that it did not send forth beams of His manifold brightness."²

The divine glory is not subsequent to but contemporaneous with the state of humiliation. Calvin sees the glory of God in the life of Christ from beginning to end. It was evident first of all in His birth. Although Christ's manner of entering the world was by no means illustrious, yet it "was not destitute of glory, for the splendour of the Godhead was manifested from the commencement by His heavenly Father."³ Again, when at the age of twelve our Lord sat in the midst of the doctors of the law in the temple: "Rays of divine brightness must have evidently shone in this child: otherwise those haughty men would not have permitted Him to sit

1. Comm. on John 1:14, CO 47, 15.
2. Comm. on John 6:41, CO 47, 148.
3. Comm. on Luke 1:26, CO 45, 24.

along with them."¹

The glory of Christ was attested above all by the miracles which He performed. "For all the miracles which He showed to the world were so many testimonies of His divine power. And now the proper time for manifesting forth His glory had come when at the Father's behest He willed to be known. Moreover from this we learn the purpose of miracles, for the expression amounts to a declaration that Christ performed this miracle to reveal His glory."² At the same time Calvin did not regard the miracles as an unambiguous testimony to Christ's majesty. Satan may like an ape counterfeit the works of God.³ Still to those who have eyes to see, miracles can be a sufficiently powerful attestation of the presence of God.⁴ Calvin is perfectly clear, however, that faith does not depend on miracles. Faith rests primarily on the Word of God and miracles are "the aids and supports" of faith. Thus Calvin writes: "Faith rests primarily on the Word of God, and looks to the Word as its only end, still the addition of miracles is not superfluous, provided that they be also viewed as relating to the Word and directing faith towards it. Why miracles are called signs we have already explained. It is because by means of them, the Lord

1. Comm. on Luke 2:46, CO 45, 105.

2. Comm. on John 2:11, CO 47, 42. See also Comm. on Mt. 21:23, CO 45, 587; on John 5:3, 15:24, CO 47, 105, 352-3; on Phil. 2:7, CO 52, 27; on 1 John 1:1, CO 55, 300.

3. Comm. on John 3:2, CO 47, 53. See also Comm. on John 5:36, CO 47, 123.

4. ibid.

arouses men to contemplate His power when He exhibits anything strange and unusual."¹

Even in the lowest depths of Christ's humiliation,- His agony and death on the Cross - the glory of God was discernible. "Although in the death of Christ the weakness of the flesh concealed for a short time the glory of the Godhead and though the Son of God Himself was disfigured by shame and contempt, and was emptied, yet the heavenly Father did not cease to distinguish Him by some marks and during His lowest humiliation prepared some indications of His future glory, in order to fortify the minds of the godly against the offence of the cross. Thus the majesty of Christ was attested by the obscuration of the sun, by the earthquake, by the splitting of the rocks, and the rending of the veil, as if heaven and earth were rendering homage which they owed to their Creator."² "Along with the weakness of the flesh, the glory of divinity appeared in Christ about the very time of His death."³

Calvin was able to ascribe glory to the humiliated Christ without any embarrassment. For Him the glory which was manifest in Christ's words and deeds did not lessen the humiliation of His earthly life. If anything, it made it more profound. Therefore, it is not so much a balancing of

1. Comm. on John 20:31, CO 47, 446-7.
2. Comm. on Matthew 27:45, CO 45, 777-8.
3. Comm. on Matthew 26:18, CO 45, 699: simul cum infirmitate carnis in Christo deitatis gloriam apparuisse sub ipsum mortis tempus.

the element of veiling against the element of glory, which we have in Calvin, as a real insight into the true meaning of the act of abasement; namely, that humiliation involves glory and glory involves humiliation. Unfortunately Calvin did not develop fully the implications of this profound insight into the nature of the act of humiliation. He saw clearly the one side; namely, that the humiliation of the Son of God does not mean any diminution of the divine glory. In humbling Himself Christ did not divest Himself of His Godhead. But if the act of humiliation does not mean any diminution of the divine glory, it then follows - if we are to understand the relation of glory and humiliation properly - that it also belongs to the very nature of the divine glory for the Son of God to humble Himself and to be small. It is this side of the bipolar relation between glory and humility that Calvin did not bring out. We found that in one place he was able to speak of the 'Humiliation of God'. But he did not go on to say that the glory of God consists precisely in the power of the divine Being to condescend and abase Himself for our salvation.¹ Calvin's thought moves in this direction but he did not take this consequent step.

In Calvin's view then, there was a glory which be-

1. Karl Barth has worked out this side of the matter in his idea that the clearest proof of Christ's divine freedom and Lordship is His humiliation and journey into the far country. "The descent to humility which took place in the incarnation of the Word is not only not excluded by the divine nature but signifies its greatest glory." Church Dogmatics IV/1. E.T. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956, p.192.

longed to Christ's life and work on earth rather than just one which He entered into as the result of His resurrection. Yet there is also the explicit recognition on his part that the glory which Christ brought with Him was not the whole of the glory which He had with the Father before and which would be His after He was exalted. Accordingly, Calvin made a distinction between the glory of the humiliated Christ and the exalted Christ. In His Transfiguration Christ gave His disciples a taste of His boundless glory, but even this was not a complete exhibition of the heavenly glory of Christ. As we shall have occasion to observe, only in the resurrection and ascension to heaven was the glory of Christ fully revealed.

Adam and Christ

The Incarnation also means that Christ assumed the persona and nomen of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father.¹ In the Commentaries and Sermons as well as in the Institutio, the Biblical analogy of Adam and Christ occupies a prominent place. Here Calvin was undoubtedly influenced by Irenaeus who had worked out a detailed comparison between the career of Adam and the career of Christ so that every circumstance in the life of Adam was duplicated in the life of Christ. Although Calvin did not draw such a deliberate

1. Inst. II, 12, 3: "Adae personam induit, nomen assumpsit, ut eius vices subiret Patri obediendo."

comparison between Adam and Christ, he did make full use of the analogy and of the whole notion of recapitulation. This is quite apparent in the Institutio. We shall quote the entire passage to which we have already referred: "The second requirement of our reconciliation with God was this: that man, who by his disobedience had become lost, should by way of remedy counter it with obedience, satisfy God's judgment and pay the penalties for sin. Accordingly, our Lord came forth as true man and took the person and the name of Adam in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgment, and in the same flesh, to pay the penalty we have deserved."¹ There are several notions which are intimately related in the above passage - the ideas of substitution, satisfaction, penalty and obedience. Here we are primarily concerned with the latter, especially as that is thought out in terms of a comparison and contrast of the persons and work of Adam and of Christ.

The validity and force of the Biblical analogy rests on the fact that Adam and Christ are not just isolated individuals. They are, according to Calvin, the "two origins or roots of the human race."² One is the cause of sin; the other is the cause of righteousness. Through the one

1. ibid.

2. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:45, CO 49, 559: "duo principia, vel duae radices generis humani."

sin and death enter the world; through the other, righteousness and life are made available to mankind. They represent, therefore, two opposite streams of humanity: one sinful and condemned; the other redeemed and delivered from sin and death.

All men were brought into being in Adam and the circumstances of the whole human race were determined in his person. "In the person of Adam men were created at first for the very purpose that they should be sons of God."¹ Moreover, in him all mankind was adorned with gifts which God intended to give to all men, the gifts of wisdom, justice, truth and holiness. "Adam when he was endued at creation with the gifts of the Spirit did not sustain a private character, but represented all mankind, who may be considered as having been endued with these gifts in his person."² Whereas obedience and faith, which are the proper life of man, would have kept Adam united and bound to His Creator, the act of disobedience estranged him and caused the downfall of his race. "By his fall he brought ruin on himself and those belonging to him, because he dragged them all with him into disaster at the same time."³ The whole order of nature was affected. "Adam's disobedience overthrew the order of things."⁴ But his posterity suffered the chief

1. Comm. on Psalm 33:12, CO 31, 330.

2. Comm. on Psalm 51:7, CO 31, 514.

3. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:45, CO 49, 559.

4. Comm. on Isaiah 65:25, CO 37, 433-4; in obedientia sua rerum ordinem perturbavit.

consequences. As all mankind was adorned with gifts in the person of Adam, so also in his person mankind was denuded of these gifts when he disobeyed God. "For as Adam at his creation had received for us as well as for himself the gifts of God's favour, so by falling away from the Lord, he in himself corrupted, vitiated, depraved and ruined our nature."¹ Although we are not directly concerned here with Calvin's doctrine of sin, it is worth remarking in passing that Calvin held that the corruption of mankind does not proceed so much from generation as from the ordinance of God. "As in one man He adorned us all, so He has also in him deprived us of His gifts. Therefore, we do not draw our individual vice and corruption from our parents but are all alike corrupted in Adam alone, because immediately after his fall God took away from human nature what He had given to it."²

Over against the disobedience of Adam there stands the obedience of Christ. Our Lord "obtained righteousness for us before God, having removed the disobedience of Adam by an act of an opposite kind, even obedience."³ This Pauline notion, found in Romans 5:12-19, figures largely in Calvin's writings. Calvin observes that for Paul there is a certain resemblance as well as a certain opposition between

1. Comm. on Romans 5:12, CO 49, 95; Inst. II, 1, 5; and Comm. on Genesis 3:6, CO 23, 62.
2. Comm. on John 3:6, CO 47, 57; Comm. on Genesis 3:6, CO 23, 62: "for the human race has not naturally derived corruption through its descent from Adam; but that result is rather to be traced to the appointment of God ..."
3. Comm. on Hebrews 5:9, CO 55, 64.

Adam and Christ, even though the two are not on the same footing. "... In saying that Adam bore a resemblance to Christ, there is nothing incongruous; for some likeness often appears in things wholly contrary. As then we are all lost through Adam's sin, so we are restored through Christ's righteousness."¹ Adam and Christ are not equals. Christ's work of reconciliation is infinitely greater than Adam's act of disobedience. Calvin, therefore, notes that scarcely has Paul shown how Adam is a type of Christ, than the thought occurs that the work of Christ is immeasurably greater than the work of Adam: "There is a greater measure of grace procured by Christ, than of condemnation introduced by the first man ... Christ is much more powerful to save, than Adam was to destroy ... it is hence possible that Paul rectifies or by way of exception modifies, what he had said of the likeness between Christ and Adam ... The sum of the whole is this - that Christ surpasses Adam; the sin of one is overcome by the righteousness of the other; from one death has proceeded which is absorbed by the life which the other bestows."² Although Calvin consistently emphasized the superiority of Christ over Adam, he did not seem to be too concerned about whether the Pauline line of argument was from Christ to Adam or the other way around. In the Institutio Calvin represents Paul's argument as from Christ to Adam: "But if it is beyond controversy that Christ's righteousness, and thereby life, are

1. Comm. on Romans 5:14, CO 49, 97.

2. Comm. on Romans 5:14, 17, CO 49, 98,100.

ours by communication, it immediately follows that both were lost in Adam, only to be recovered in Christ; and that sin and death crept in through Adam, only to be abolished through Christ."¹ That is, Christ is the primary reality. From what we possess in Him we can gather what we have lost in Adam. This is the primary line of argument and I believe we can say it was Calvin's basic one although he was not too explicit about the matter. At the same time if the analogy between Adam and Christ holds at all, it is permissible to allow the work of Adam a role in helping us to understand the work of Christ, provided that we do not give Adam's work an independence of its own and that we also recognize the superiority of Christ. Thus Calvin writes in his Commentary on Romans: "We cannot see with so much clearness what we have in Christ, as by having what we have lost in Adam set before us, though all things on both sides are not similar."² The Christological line of argument, although primary, does not exclude the other line of argument. It would be a forced use of Christology to maintain that it did. If we have anything to quarrel with in this connection it is Calvin's conviction that by meditating on the primeval dignity which God bestowed on our first parents, we can see what we have lost in Adam, and be therefore stimulated to the pursuit of goodness and justice.³ Is this kind of knowledge accessible to us? Can we know Adam

1. Inst. II, 1, 6.

2. Comm. on Romans 5:12, CO 49, 95.

3. Inst. II, 1, 1 & 3.

and what we have lost in him aright apart from Christ? In the final analysis Calvin would say, no; but occasionally he slips into a way of thinking which holds that we can see what we have lost in Adam by holding before us an image of the primeval dignity of our first parents as seen in the Scriptures.

By His obedience Christ reverses the work of Adam and restores everything to a better state. Commenting on Ephesians 1:10, Calvin says: "The meaning appears to me to be, that out of Christ all things were disordered, and that through Him they have been restored to order. And truly, out of Christ what can we perceive in the world but mere ruins? We are alienated from God by sin, and how can we but present a broken and shattered aspect? The proper condition of creatures is to keep close to God. Such a gathering together (*ἀνακεφαλαιώσις*) as might bring us back to regular order, the apostle tells us, has been made in Christ. Formed into one body, we are united to God, and closely connected with each other. Without Christ, on the other hand, the whole world is a shapeless chaos and frightful confusion. We are brought into actual unity by Christ alone."¹ Thus Calvin holds that it is the office of Christ to restore everything

1. CO 51, 151; and Fourth Sermon on Eph. 1:7-10, CO 51, 294: Brief c'est autant comme s'il disoit que l'ordre de nature est comme desfiguré que tout est ruiné et en confusion par le peché d'Adam, jusques à ce que nous soyons remis en la personne de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ ... Il faut donc que la restauration soit faite par Jesus Christ.

to its condition and order.¹ When Christ is called the heir of all things this is what is intended: "When He was made man He clothed Himself with our nature and thus received the heirship in order that He might restore to us what was lost in Adam. For God had at the beginning constituted man as a son, the heir of all His good things, but through sin the first man became alienated from God and deprived himself and his posterity of all good things, as well as of the favour of God. Therefore, we only begin to enjoy by right the good things of God when Christ, Who is the universal heir, admits us into union with Him; for He is an heir that He may endow us with His riches."² Calvin understands this eschatologically. Christ has not yet fully entered upon the possession of His dominion. This will be perfectly accomplished when death has been abolished.³

It is worth noting that according to Calvin Christ does not merely restore the original order of things but He does something far greater. "The state of man was not perfected in the person of Adam; but it is a peculiar benefit conferred by Christ, that we may be renewed to a life which is celestial, whereas before the fall of Adam, man's life was only earthly, seeing it had no firm and settled constancy."⁴

1. Comm. on Isaiah 11:6, CO 36, 241; on 65:25, CO 37, 434.
2. Comm. on Heb. 1:2, CO 55, 11; and Rom. 4:13, CO 49, 77:
"for the adoption which we obtain through His favour restores to us the possession of the inheritance which we lost in Adam.
3. Comm. on Psalm 8:7, CO 31, 93-4; and 1 Cor. 15:27, CO 49, 548.
4. Comm. on Gen. 2:7, CO 23, 36.

"The condition which we acquire through Christ is far better than the situation of the first man, because a living soul was given to Adam, for himself and for his posterity; but Christ, on the other hand, has brought us the Spirit who is life."¹ Adam was the head of a humanity whose condition was only earthly. Christ is the Head of a new and living humanity, a humanity which is perfectly obedient to God. Adam was the source of our life on earth. Christ is "the originator and source of the life of heaven."² The true order of human existence has its beginning in Christ.

Christ is therefore the Second Adam because He restores us to true and substantial integrity.³ Through Him the image of God which was defaced by the sin of Adam is formed anew in us. Here again we find that Calvin is in close agreement with a theme characteristic of the theology of Irenaeus; namely, that Christ fulfils and restores the image of God in man. If there is a difference in the way in which Irenaeus and Calvin worked this out, it is that Irenaeus was inclined to emphasize the element of fulfilment at the expense of the element of restoration, while Calvin insisted strongly on both aspects.⁴ First, Christ fulfils God's original purpose for man. Thus Calvin writes, "the image of God was only shadowed forth in him (i.e. Adam), till he should arrive at

1. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:45, CO 49, 558.

2. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:47, CO 49, 559.

3. Inst. I, 15, 4.

4. See O. Cullmann, The Christology of the New Testament London: SCM Press, 1959, pp. 189-92.

perfection."¹ Man's state was not perfected in Adam but in Christ. But Christ also restores what was lost in Adam, namely, his conformity to the image and likeness of God. He Who is the perfectissima Dei imago came to restore us into the image of God. "Adam was at first created after the image of God, and reflected as in a mirror, the divine righteousness; but that image, having been defaced by sin, must now be restored in Christ. The regeneration of the godly is indeed ... nothing else than the formation anew of the image of God in them. There is no doubt a far more rich and powerful manifestation of divine grace in this second creation than in the first; but our highest perfection is uniformly represented in Scripture as consisting in our conformity and resemblance to God. Adam lost the image which he had originally received, and therefore it becomes necessary that it shall be restored to us by Christ. The design contemplated by regeneration is to recall us from our wanderings to that end for which we were created."²

The Incarnation, therefore, involves in Calvin's view Christ's assumption of the persona of Adam so that He might remove the disobedience of Adam by an act of the opposite kind; namely, obedience. It would appear to follow that as the consequence of Adam's disobedience is

1. Comm. on Genesis 1:26, CO 23, 27, quoted by T.F. Torrance, Calvin's Doctrine of Man, London: Lutterworth Press, 1949, p. 65.
2. Comm. on Ephesians 4:24, CO 51, 208-9; Comm. on Genesis 1:26, CO 23, 26; Inst. 1, 15, 4; Comm. on John 17:22, CO 47, 388.

the condemnation of all, so the result of Christ's obedience is the justification of all. Calvin refused to draw this conclusion. For him the analogy between Adam and Christ breaks down at this very point. There is this difference between Adam and Christ that while Adam has involved his whole race in condemnation, the benefit of Christ does not come to all men.¹ That is, as Calvin explains later in this connection, justification is made common to all, only "because it is propounded to all and not because it is in reality extended to all; for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world and is offered through God's favour to all, yet all do not receive Him."² Undoubtedly, the Biblical word "all" is full of difficulties but if it has any meaning whatsoever in this context it is that all men are affected by Christ's obedience just as all men have been affected by Adam's disobedience. Otherwise there would be no purpose in the analogy. Calvin's exposition is unsatisfactory on two counts: First of all, in regard to the simple matter of exegesis, Paul does not say here or elsewhere that the Gospel is not actually extended to all men. Calvin is not keeping to the simple meaning of the text. His interpretation of the word "all" is not determined by the words of the text but by some other principle, which demands this

1. Comm. on Romans 5:17, CO 49, 100.

2. Comm. on Romans 5:18, CO 49, 101: Communem omnium gratiam facit, quia omnibus exposita est, non quod ad omnes extendatur re ipsa. Nam etsi passus est Christus pro peccatis totius mundi, atque omnibus indifferenter Dei benignitate offertur, non tamen omnes apprehendunt.

delimitation of the word. Secondly, to say that justification is common to all only in the sense of being preached to all and not in the sense of being actually extended to all is theologically unsatisfactory. Once we say that the Gospel is not really extended to all then we have knocked out the real support from our commission and task of proclaiming it to all. Surely the Gospel cannot seriously be preached to all men if there is the least doubt about its being actually extended to all. We can say in Calvin's defence that his own practice was better than his theory. However, a commission to proclaim the Gospel to all men which rests on the foundation that the Gospel is not really extended to all, is a rather shaky one. Again, there is no theological justification for connecting the fact that all men do not accept the Gospel with the conviction that it was not really intended for all. Our experience of the fact that there are men who do not accept God's grace in Jesus Christ in no way demands the conclusion that God's grace is not actually extended to them. Calvin leans in this direction with his notion of experientia docet. Without rejecting the role of experience, must we not ask how reliable a guide experience is in the matter of God's election and rejection of men? Surely the matter rests ultimately with God rather than with our experience or our judgment of our experience. Calvin would admit this. What he found difficulty in admitting was that just as God's condemnation is a condemnation of all men, so His justification is a justification of all men. We cannot restrict the meaning of the word 'all' and say, "No, not

really all; 'all' only in the sense of being preached to all." "God has concluded all men in disobedience in order that He might have mercy upon all." We do not say, "no, not really all," but with Paul: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and how inscrutable His ways." (Romans 11:32-33).

CHAPTER FOUR: THE OBEDIENT SERVANT OF GOD

When Calvin says that our reconciliation has been accomplished by the whole course of Christ's obedience, undoubtedly he is using the concept of obedience in a general or a formal way. In this sense it embraces the entire work of Christ from His birth into our nature to His suffering and death on the Cross. But it is also clear that Calvin was not satisfied here, or elsewhere, with a purely formal use of this concept. Therefore, in the statement referred to above, the obedience of Christ is not left vague and undetermined but is immediately specified and given content. It was an obedience, Calvin says, which involved among other things, undergoing baptism to fulfil all righteousness, being made under the law and submitting to it, and finally suffering, not just any kind of death, but the death of the Cross.¹

Genuine obedience always has a concrete content. This applies as much to the obedience of the Redeemer as to the obedience of men. The obedience which God requires is never just a general piety but is always a concrete and strenuous devotion to His service in a specific situation. Two brief illustrations will suffice to show that this was Calvin's understanding of the matter: first, his practice of Church discipline in Geneva, and secondly, the obedience

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.

of his own life. In regard to the former, Calvin was well aware that to demand a general and vague obedience of the people of Geneva would only lead to further unbridled libertinism. Therefore he instituted his well-known practice of Church discipline. Undoubtedly one can charge that Calvin made this discipline unduly rigorous but one certainly cannot say that he left obedience undefined. The obedience of his own life is certainly a less controversial illustration and perhaps also a better one. We know that Calvin, although he would have wished a life of scholarly retirement and literary work, obeyed Farel's call to share in the arduous task of reforming Geneva, because he believed that God had thus commanded him through Farel. He laboured faithfully in Geneva enduring the strongest opposition until both he and Farel were relieved of their duties. He accepted his recall to Geneva only with the greatest reluctance. He returned as he said, "as a sacrifice slain unto God", "bound and fettered in obedience to God".¹ We say this very briefly by way of illustrating that for Calvin obedience was always a concrete and definite act. Therefore, as we might expect, he understands Christ's obedience in and for man, as also a very concrete and definite act. It will be our task in this chapter to consider this in some detail.

Before we turn properly to this subject, it would

1. Quoted by B.B. Warfield, "John Calvin: The Man and his Work" in Calvin and Calvinism, New York: Oxford University Press, 1931, p. 6.

be useful to remind ourselves of a distinction which both Reformed and Lutheran theology made after the time of Calvin between the active and the passive obedience of Christ (obedientia activa et passiva).¹ Although Calvin never used this terminology, the basis for this later distinction, according to F.C. Bauer, J. Köstlin and others,² is already present in his thought. It will therefore be helpful to keep this later terminology in mind. The distinction between an obedientia activa and an obedientia passiva was made in order to point out two related though inseparable aspects of Christ's work which, taken together, constitute the whole work of reconciliation. The 'active obedience' referred to that side of Christ's work which has to do with His perfect and positive fulfilment of the will of the Father, especially His fulfilment of the positive demand of the law. The 'passive obedience' referred to that aspect of Christ's work which involves His willing submission to the judgement of the Father upon sinful humanity and His endurance of the penalty of death in our

1. See Heppe, op. cit. pp. 450 ff.

2. F.C. Bauer, Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung, Tübingen: Verlag von C.F. Osiander, 1838, p. 331: "so unterschied auch schon Calvin eine doppelte Seite des Gehorsams, ohne sich entschliessen zu können, die Einheit desselben in zwei einander stehende Hälften zu zerteilen."; J. Köstlin, "Calvins Institutio nach Form und Inhalt in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung" in Theologische Studien und Kritiken, Gotha bei F.A. Perthes, 1868, p. 441-2, and A. Ritschl, A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation, trans. by J.S. Black, Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1872, pp. 213 ff. and E. Doumerque, Jean Calvin, Les hommes et les choses de son temps, Vol. IV, Lausanne: Georges Bridel & Cie, Editeurs, 1910, pp. 224 ff.

place. Both Lutheran and Reformed theology stressed that these two ways of representing the matter are not inconsistent with each other but, on the contrary, presuppose and involve each other. There are two sides to Christ's work and the one is as essential to reconciliation as the other. The passive obedience would not be reconciling unless it included the active obedience and vice versa the active obedience would not be saving apart from the passive. While these two aspects can be distinguished, it is still one work, the work of the obedient and suffering Servant of God.

The distinction referred to above is extremely important because it serves to draw attention to the fact that the work of reconciliation cannot be limited to the suffering and the death alone but rather belongs to the whole life and work of Christ. Nothing could be clearer in this connection than Calvin's statement that from the very moment that Christ "assumed the form of a servant, He began, in order to redeem us, to pay the price of deliverance."¹ This statement, and the others to which we have already referred in Chapter III, indicate Calvin's strong emphasis on the active obedience of Christ. J. Köstlin has said that he knows of no writings outside of Luther's and the Brandenburg-Nürnberg Kirchengordnung of 1533 where the notion of the active obedience of Christ appears so strongly as in Calvin's Institutio from its first edition.² To be sure, Calvin held that the death of Christ,

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.
2. Op. Cit., p. 442.

i.e. His passive obedience, was of decisive and central importance for our salvation. But he was also of the conviction, as Albrecht Ritschl has expressed it, that "it is only His general active obedience that guarantees the significance and efficacy of His suffering and death."¹ Therefore he was equally concerned to emphasize the one as the other. This double emphasis, as we shall see later, has important consequences for the doctrine of justification. It means that justification involves not only the non-imputation to us of our sins on account of Christ's death but also a positive impartation of His righteousness on account of His active obedience. In the words of Professor T.F. Torrance, "We are saved not only by the death of Christ which He suffered for our sake, but also by His life which He lived for our sake."² To repeat again what we said earlier, it is therefore inaccurate to identify Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation with a penal substitutionary theory which not only concentrates exclusively on Christ's death but also regards justification as merely the non-imputation of our sins.

Further by way of introduction, it is necessary to point out that when we distinguish between the active and passive obedience of Christ we do not thereby assign them to different parts of Christ's life. The active obedience does not occupy the period from His birth to His arrest and the passive obedience from His arrest to His death. They both extend from beginning to end. Schleiermacher has pointed

1. Op. Cit., p. 213

2. Introduction to The School of Faith, Op. Cit., p. lxxxvi.

out that since on the one hand there can never be any suffering without reaction, which means activity; and since on the other hand there can never be any activity without a definite occasion, which always presupposes a passive state, therefore, the active and passive obedience of our Lord were bound up with each other at every moment.¹ The older Reformed theology expressed this by speaking of the active obedience as an actio passiva and the passive obedience as a passio activa.² That there is an explicit recognition of this truth by Calvin can be seen from his two statements: first, that the whole life of Christ was in a real sense a perpetual bearing of the Cross;³ and secondly, that immediately that Christ put on the form of a Servant He began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us.⁴ With this in mind we propose first of all to consider what Calvin has to say concerning the obedience of Christ's life and later to examine his teaching in regard to the obedience of Christ's death.

Calvin's awareness of the problem of finding an integral place for the life of Christ in the work of reconciliation goes back to Le Catechisme de Geneve of 1541. We cannot however regard this first attempt of Calvin's to grapple with the problem as adequate or even correct. Here Calvin noted that the Apostles' Creed omits any explicit reference to the

1. The Christian Faith, E.T., ed. by H.R. Mackintosh & J.S. Stewart, T. & T. Clark, 1928, p. 452-3.

2. Heppe, op. cit., p. 467.

3. Inst. III, 8, 1.

4. Inst. II, 16, 5.

life of our Lord. His formulation and solution of this difficulty is given in the following dialogue form of the Catechism: "Minister: Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life? Child: Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption."¹ Karl Barth has rightly criticised this cavalier dismissal of the whole life of Christ: "I contest Calvin's opinion that the Creed has omitted the whole history of the life of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels, the whole history of Jesus is the history of His passion and cross, still more, of His resurrection. By speaking of the passion, cross, and resurrection, the Creed recalls the whole substance of the Gospel narratives. As to Calvin's answer, it is decidedly insufficient: the life of Jesus, His miracles, His preaching, His relationship with the apostles, do they not all belong to the substance of redemption? Is all this not full of His passion and full of His resurrection?"² Undoubtedly Calvin himself was not satisfied with his answer for we find him returning to the question and giving a decidedly different answer. It is often assumed that Calvin did not change his mind on any subject. Here, however, we have a

1. The School of Faith, op. cit., p. 13. At the same time it should be pointed out that in his discussion of the Lord's Supper in the same Catechism Calvin gives a place to the obedient life of Christ.
2. The Faith of the Church. "A commentary on the Apostles' Creed according to Calvin's Catechism", ed. by Jean-Louis Leuba, trans. by Gabriel Vahanian, London: Collins Fontana Books, 1960, p. 74. See also Barth's Credo, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1936, pp. 66-7; and Dogmatik im Grundriss, Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947, p. 127.

very clear instance of an evident change and correction of the weakness of a former position. Further study of the Scriptures, especially of the Gospels, combined with a life-time of preaching, convinced him that the life of Christ is of decisive importance for our salvation. Therefore in the 1559 edition of the Institutio Calvin attempts to do justice to the life of Christ in the following way:¹ First of all, he corrects the explanation given in the Catechism by the following statement: "Therefore, in the so-called Apostles' Creed there is very properly an immediate transition from the birth of Christ to His death and resurrection in which the sum of perfect salvation consists, yet there is no exclusion of the rest of the obedience which He performed in His life."² That is, there is no implied exclusion of the obedience of Christ's life. Secondly, Calvin says that the whole life of Christ is full of His passion and Cross. "It may truly be said, not only that He was perpetually burdened with a cross during His sojourn on earth, but that His whole life was nothing but a kind of perpetual Cross."³ And finally, Calvin's attempt to include the prophetic among the offices of Christ is a clear recognition of the fact that he saw the life and teachings of Christ as an important element in the work of salvation. In these three points we have Calvin's more mature and reflective solution of the problem of finding an integral place for the

1. G.S. Hendry, op. cit., pp. 35-7.

2. Inst. II, 16, 5.

3. Inst. III, 8, 1.

life of Christ in the work of reconciliation.

We noted that when Calvin came to specify the obedience of Christ in the Institutio he referred first of all to the obedience which was manifested in Christ's baptism. Our Lord commenced His public ministry by submitting to the baptism of John. It was by baptism that He was introduced into His office.¹ Calvin acknowledges that the traditional explanation that this was part of Christ's observance of the law is a possible one. However, he himself prefers a simpler reason, namely that here Christ fulfilled an important aspect of His Sonship by carrying out what the Father had enjoined upon Him. There is a general and a special reason for Christ's baptism. "The general reason why Christ received baptism was that He might render full obedience to the Father; and the special reason was that He might consecrate baptism in His own body, that we might have it in common with Him."² In regard to the general reason, Calvin explains that it was appropriate to Christ's character as the Servant of God that He should undergo baptism.³ It was His task to fulfill all righteousness. "Thus in His very baptism, He asserted that He fulfilled a part of righteousness in obediently carrying out His Father's commandment."⁴ His baptism then was a voluntary act in obedience to the commission which He had received.

1. Comm. on Matthew 3:16, CO 45, 126.

2. Comm. on Matthew 3:13, CO 45, 125.

3. Comm. on Matthew 3:14, CO 45, 125.

4. Inst. II, 16, 5.

In this public act He offered Himself to the Father and so began to fulfil all righteousness.

Calvin, however, does not fail to see that there is something seemingly contradictory in the submission of Jesus to a baptism which is a baptism for the remission of sins. Therefore, he states emphatically that Christ did not need to be baptized. As He was united to the Father in all perfection and righteousness there was no need that He should be converted or changed.¹ Rather it was for our sake that He underwent baptism. His baptism was an act of identification with our sin and need. This is what Calvin means when he says that Christ consecrated baptism in His own body that we might have it in common with Him. In His baptism we have a pledge of the intimate fellowship which He wishes to maintain with us.² He was baptized in order that He might show that, although He possessed all holiness, He wished to receive the condemnation of our sins, to submit to the judgement of the Father, and to make the payment in order to acquit and absolve us of it.³ This act of identification is accomplished through His willing obedience to the Father.

Christ's undertaking of His office involved, immediately after the reception of baptism, His being tempted by Satan. The conflict with Satan is in Calvin's eyes an important aspect

1. Forty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of Three Gospels, CO 47, 577.
2. Comm. on Matthew 3:11, CO 45, 122; Cf also Inst. IV, 15, 6; and Comm. on Acts 19:5, CO 48, 441.
3. Forty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of Three Gospels, CO 46, 578.

of the work of reconciliation. Christ engaged in a struggle with Satan to deliver us from the power of sin, death and darkness. Gustaf Aulén has pointed out that the Christus Victor theme, that is, the idea of Christ's coming upon earth to deliver mankind from the power of sin, death and Satan, is one of the classical ways in which the doctrine of reconciliation has been stated.¹ He has also shown that the patristic motif of Christ's conflict with and victory over Satan was strongly recaptured by Luther and played a major role in his doctrine of reconciliation. Although Aulén, in tracing the 'classic' view of the Atonement from Irenaeus to the present day makes no reference to Calvin, there can be little doubt, as we shall show, that this traditional way of speaking of the work of Christ also appealed greatly to Calvin and is to be found very strongly in his representation of the work of reconciliation.²

First of all, Calvin makes it quite clear that Christ was brought into this contest with Satan "by a fixed purpose of God."³ He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. Here, as in Calvin's exposition of Jesus' baptism, the notion of obedience is dominant. It is in obedience to the will of the Father that Christ withdraws into the desert and in steadfast obedience to the divine will that He triumphs over Satan.

1. Christus Victor, trans. by A.G. Hebert, London: SPCK, 1953.
2. See M. Dominicé, op. cit., "Jesus et Satan: II. L'Opposition des Deux Régnes", pp. 185-196.
3. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 129.

Calvin regards the temptations of Jesus as a kind of preparation and testing of our Lord before He enters properly upon His office. There are, he says, two reasons for Christ's withdrawal into the wilderness: "The first was, that, after a fast of forty days, He might come forth as a new man, or rather a heavenly man, to the discharge of His office. The next was, that He might be tried by temptation and undergo an apprenticeship, before He undertook an office so arduous and so elevated."¹ The first reason is a little difficult to understand until we see that it has a polemical purpose behind it. Calvin wished to establish that the purpose of Christ's fasting was to acquire greater authority for Himself rather than to give an example of temperance which Christians could imitate. The specific object of his attack was the Caresme, or in other words, the forty days fast appointed once a year by the Roman Church in imitation of Christ. Calvin was concerned to show that our Lord's fast was a divine miracle and therefore incapable of imitation. Christ's forty day fast was a seal of His office showing that He was surrounded by marks of divine grace and power in being relieved of the necessity of eating. While the first reason attests Christ's heavenly origin and separates Him from the common condition of men, the second reason affirms the reality of His humanity and establishes His unity with our nature. Our Lord was, as it were, put to the test. He was made to

1. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 128.

undergo a period of instruction (posito tiroconio) before He undertook His arduous office. He habituated Himself to obedience. It was because He withstood the temptations in faithful obedience to the Father that we can share in His victory.

Before Calvin turns to the analysis of the three temptations he deals with the problem of how Christ could be tempted by Satan since temptation always implies sin and weakness. He advances two important considerations: "First, Christ took upon Him our infirmity, but without sin, (Heb. 4:15). Secondly, it detracts no more from His glory, that He was exposed to temptations, than that He was clothed with our flesh: for He was made man on the condition that, along with our flesh, He should take upon Him our feelings."¹ The real difficulty, however, Calvin remarks, concerns the first point and the problem may be formulated as follows: How was Christ surrounded by our weakness so as to be capable of being tempted by Satan, and yet to be pure and free from all sin? For the solution of this question, he draws upon the analogy between Adam and Christ. He notes that the nature of Adam before the Fall was liable to temptation. That is, the nature of Adam while it was still innocent and reflected the brightness of the divine image was characterized by a weakness which made it capable of being tempted but this weakness was not in itself sinful. Christ shared this kind of sinless weakness.

1. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 130.

Therefore He was capable of being tempted but this proneness to temptations is not in itself sinful. The analogy is clear and to the point, but Calvin adds this qualification: "Christ was separated from us, in this respect, by the perfection of His nature; though we must not imagine Him to have existed in that intermediate condition, which belonged to Adam, to whom it was only granted, that it was possible for Him not to sin. We know that Christ was fortified by the Spirit with such power, that the darts of Satan could not pierce Him."¹ At first glance we might conclude that Calvin wishes to establish an ontological difference between Adam and Christ: namely, that while Adam existed in the condition of 'posse non peccare', Christ existed in the condition of 'non posse peccare'. This is Paul van Buren's interpretation and he criticises Calvin for understanding the sinlessness of Christ ontologically, in terms of 'condition' rather than dynamically, in terms of the movement of humiliation and obedience.² But a more careful reading of the above passage would indicate that this interpretation is not correct and the criticism therefore quite unjustified. The point which Calvin wishes to make here is that the sinlessness of Christ is not so much guaranteed by an ontological condition as by the operation of the Spirit who fortifies Christ and makes it impossible for sin to fall upon Him. Moreover, this interpretation agrees with Calvin's statement in another connection that Christ was

1. ibid.

2. op. cit., pp. 31-2.

not sinless because He was born of a virgin but rather because He was sanctified in His birth by the Spirit of God. We shall have occasion to return to this point later.

The Christus Victor theme, the idea of obedience, and the notion of representation all figure in Calvin's discussion of Christ's temptations. Satan attacks Christ when "he sees Him preparing at the command of the Father to undertake the redemption of men."¹ He attacks our salvation in the person of Christ. Calvin makes use of military metaphors to describe the conflict between Satan and Christ. Our Lord "entered the field in the name of the whole Church."² Here the element of representation is also present as well as in the statement that Christ was "tempted as the public representative of all believers."³ Christ, our representative, and Satan engage in a struggle. As Calvin says: "The Son of God voluntarily endured the temptations ... and fought, as it were, in single combat with the devil, that, by His victory, He might obtain a triumph for us."⁴

Calvin dismisses the interpretation that the first temptation was to gluttony, the second to ambition, and the third to covetousness. In his view, the temptations of our Lord were far more profound and far more severe than the above view suggests. The first temptation was a temptation not to gluttony but to unfaithfulness. "Satan made a direct attack

1. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 129.

2. ibid.

3. ibid.

4. ibid., 130.

on the faith of Christ, in the hope that, after destroying His faith, He would drive Christ to unlawful and wicked methods of procuring food ... the single object which he has in view, is to persuade Christ to depart from the word of God, and to follow the dictates of infidelity."¹ Calvin shows no embarrassment whatsoever in attributing faith to Christ. Our Lord, as the public representative of believers, was also a believer. Like Adam, Christ is tempted by Satan to unfaithfulness. We recall that for Calvin infidelitas is the root cause of sin.² Satan tempts Christ to distrust the Father and to depart from His Word. Christ overcomes Satan by depending on the will and good-pleasure of God and, unlike Adam, persisting in obedience.

In the second temptation, as reported by St. Matthew (Calvin notes that Matthew and Luke observe a different order for the second and third temptations), Christ is carried to the pinnacle of the temple and tempted to cast Himself down. Calvin favours the view that this temptation, as well as the third, occurred in a vision rather than Christ's body being actually conveyed to the pinnacle of the temple and to the top of a high mountain. Moreover, he also holds that it is very probable that the temptations did not follow one another in immediate succession but rather after an interval of time. The object of the second temptation is to make Christ to over-

1. Comm. on Matthew 4:4, CO 45, 132.

2. Inst. II, 1, 4 & 49th Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 610 ff.

leap all bounds. "The design of Satan ... was to induce Christ to make trial of His divinity, and to rise up, in foolish and wicked rashness against God."¹ But Christ relies with confidence on God and does not exalt Himself unduly, and again abides in obedience.

Satan's final temptation is to offer Christ the kingdoms of the world if He will only bow down and worship Him. Calvin explains that "the kind of temptation here described was, that Christ should seek, in another manner than from God, the inheritance which He has promised to His children."² Christ defeats Satan by answering that worship is due to God alone and tells Satan to depart from Him.

In his exposition of the temptations of our Lord, Calvin⁴⁴⁵ concerned to establish Christ's brotherhood with us. Thus he says: "The Son of God did not choose to undertake any contest of an unusual description, but to sustain assaults in common with us, that we might be furnished with the same armour, and might entertain no doubt as to achieving the victory."³ Christ is set before us as an Example, a mirror of faith, of obedience and of patience.⁴ He is the universal model of the godly Who underwent the contest with Satan in His own Person so that we may have the victory in Him and that we might be encouraged and instructed to resist the

1. Comm. on Matthew 4:4, CO 45, 132.

2. Matthew 4:8, CO 45, 135.

3. Comm. on Matthew 4:4, CO 45, 132.

4. 49th Sermon on the Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 608.

daily onslaughts of the devil.

In being obedient to the Father's will, Christ resists Satan and also engages in a momentous struggle with him. Beginning with the temptations, then, Christ and Satan join in a battle which continues throughout the rest of Christ's life until Satan and his tyranny are finally destroyed. The obedience of Christ involves a conflict with Satan. There can be little doubt that for Calvin Christ's conflict with and victory over Satan was an important aspect of the work of reconciliation. Christ, Calvin says, was sent by the Father in order to destroy Satan's spiritual tyranny over the souls of men.¹ He assumed our humanity, "that He might expiate our sins, and vanquish death and Satan in our flesh."² Calvin's Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels and on John indicate the importance of the 'classic' view of the Atonement in his representation of the work of reconciliation.

The Christus Victor element comes out very clearly and strongly in Calvin's belief in a kingdom of Satan. When Adam fell, by withdrawing from the dominion of God, he subjected all his posterity to the dominion of Satan.³ Satan then established his kingdom over the whole world and subjected all men to his tyranny. Calvin is, however, careful to explain that this is a kingdom which is not separated from God but a kingdom which exists only through God's permission.⁴

1. Comm. on Matthew 12:29, CO 45, 338.
2. Comm. on Luke 1:35, CO 45, 31.
3. Comm. on Matthew 12:29, CO 45, 339.
4. Comm. on John 14:30, CO 47, 327.

Scripture, he holds, never gives any support for the Manichean view that there were two first principles, one good and the other evil. Satan is not by nature evil; rather he is a fallen angel. His wickedness is not derived from creation but from depravation.¹ Moreover, he is not an unlimited Monarch but only has as much authority as God grants him.² Nevertheless, through this kingdom which he is permitted, he exercises a terrible tyranny over all men. He has a residence within man and inhabits both the soul and the body.³ This applies not only to one individual but to the whole race of mankind. The effect of this tyranny is such that men are so bound by fetters that they even cherish this slavery rather than attempting to free themselves from it.⁴ Satan not only oppresses mankind but he also inflicts innumerable evils upon them. He has schemed man's destruction from the very beginning and has devoted all his strength to destroy man.⁵

It was therefore necessary that a stronger one than Satan should arise to overcome him and his kingdom and to establish the kingdom of God in the place of his tyranny. Since no one on earth can be found who is capable of such a great feat, it was promised that a Redeemer should come from

1. Inst. I, 14, 16.

2. Comm. on Ephesians 2:2, CO 51, 162; and on 2 Cor. 4:4, CO 50, 50-51; Cf. also Inst. I, 14, 17.

3. Comm. on Matthew 12:43, CO 45, 346.

4. Comm. on Matthew 12:29, CO 45, 339.

5. Comm. on John 8:44, CO 47, 208.

heaven. Christ comes to deliver us from Satan's tyranny. "Now this kind of redemption Christ shows to be necessary in order to wrench from the devil by main force, what he will never quit till he is compelled. It is vain for men to expect deliverance, till Satan has been subdued by a violent struggle."¹

Christ's coming upon earth means then that a battle of gigantic proportions is waged between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan for "the prince of death and his agents are in a state of irreconcilable enmity with the Author of eternal salvation and life."² Calvin's language abounds in dramatic and vivid imagery to describe the struggle which ensues between Christ and Satan. "Christ attacked Satan in open combat, threw him down, and left him nothing remaining. He did not lay him low in one respect, that He might give him greater stability in another, but stripped him completely of all his armour."³ When God approaches us in the person of His Son, His purpose is to deliver us from the tyranny of Satan and to restore us to His favour. Satan is said to have undisputed possession of the world until he is dispossessed by Christ.⁴ Therefore Christ engages in a conflict with wicked spirits and the power of the air. The powers of evil fear Him, "for in every case in which Christ operates on men,

1. Comm. on Matthew 12:29, CO 45, 339.
2. Comm. on Mark 1:34, CO 45, 156.
3. Comm. on Matthew 12:25, CO 45, 336.
4. Inst. I, 14, 18.

the devils are drawn into a contest with Him, and sink beneath His power."¹ Christ's coming among us means that we are delivered from the kingdom of Satan and are transferred into the glorious kingdom of the sons of God.

It is chiefly through the preaching of the Gospel, Calvin holds, that the kingdom of Satan is overthrown. Thus the proclamation of the Gospel heralds the defeat of Satan. When the Seventy return from their mission of preaching, Christ says that He beheld Satan falling from heaven like lightning. Calvin comments: "Hence we infer, that our deliverance from the bondage of Satan is effected in no other way than through the Gospel; ... We ought also to attend to the comparison which He employs, that the thunder of the Gospel makes Satan fall like lightning; for it expresses the divine and astonishing power of the doctrine which throws down, in a manner so sudden and violent the prince of the world armed with such abundant forces. It expresses also the wretched condition of men, on whose heads fall the darts of Satan, who rules in the air, and holds the world in subjection under his feet till Christ appears as a Deliverer."² The kingdom of Christ is raised up and established by the preaching of the Gospel and the kingdom of Satan falls.

Some of Christ's miracles, particularly those which

1. Comm. on Matthew 12:43, CO 45, 346.
2. Comm. on Luke 10:18, CO 45, 315.

have to do with the casting out of demons, also bring about the downfall of Satan's kingdom. Calvin sees an intimate relationship between the miracles which our Lord performed and His office of delivering mankind from the bondage of Satan. Christ, he says, "came to bestow on us every blessing, to rescue us from the tyranny of Satan and of death, to heal our diseases and sins, and to relieve us from all our miseries."¹ Even the miracles which have to do with physical diseases and afflictions bring about the destruction of Satan's kingdom. "Thus in rescuing the bodily senses of men from the tyranny of the devil, He proclaimed that the Father had sent Him as a Deliverer, to destroy his spiritual tyranny over their souls."² Calvin is of the view that diseases of an unusual and extraordinary kind, like the spirit of infirmity which the woman had for eighteen years, and the dumbness of the man Jesus healed were inflicted by Satan.³ This of course does not mean that Calvin believes that all diseases proceed from Satan. On the contrary, Calvin thinks it is absurd to hold that a person is tormented by the devil who is sick of an ague, or of some other common kind of disease, but the alienating of the mind, furious madness, and other monstrous troubles he says are properly ascribed to Satan.⁴ In healing diseases and infirmities of this order our Lord both frees men from Satan's tyranny and

1. Comm. on

2. Comm. on Matthew 12:29, CO 45, 338.

3. Comm. on Luke 13:11, CO 45, 338-9; and Matt. 9:32, CO 45, 261.

4. Comm. on Acts 10:38, CO 48, 246.

overcomes Satan's illegitimate reign over the souls and bodies of men. But it is in the power of death that Satan exercises his chief tyranny. It was therefore necessary that this power should be destroyed. Christ accomplishes this victory by His death on the Cross, but we shall have to return to this subject in Chapter Six.

Christ's Obedience to the Law

We noted at the beginning of this chapter that when Calvin comes to give the obedience of Christ a concrete content, he points, secondly, to our Lord's submission to the law, as described by Paul in Galatians 4:4: "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." In this submission of our Lord to the law - a submission which, he notes, extends over the whole of Christ's life - Calvin sees again an aspect of our reconciliation.¹ Therefore he is never tired of pointing out that we could not have been redeemed if Christ had not brought the obedience which we owed to the law.

In order to see this more clearly we shall have to retrace our steps a little. We noted in Chapter One that, according to Calvin, the life of man is to be a perpetual course of obedience, or to be more exact, a life of strenuous

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.

and concrete obedience. For this reason God delivered His law to His people to show that there is nothing more acceptable to Him than obedience. The law is the perfect expression of the will of God. It is the unerring standard to which man must conform himself in a life of complete and utter obedience. Before God "nothing is counted righteous but perfect and absolute obedience to the law."¹ Calvin steers clear of a legalistic understanding of obedience to the law. "The Law-Giver," he says, "is to be considered rather than each particular precept apart." The righteousness of God constitutes an organic whole and to fail in one precept is to destroy the whole of God's righteousness.² There is then no righteousness in the sight of God unless there is a full and complete obedience. Since no one can be found who has attained such a measure of goodness, it follows that all men are destitute of righteousness.³

If we are to be reconciled with God, it follows that righteousness has to be procured for us. "Righteousness", Calvin says, "is restored to us on this ground, that Christ by fulfilling the law in our nature, has abolished Adam's disobedience."⁴ In Him alone there is found the perfect righteousness of the law.⁵ The fact that Christ procures

1. Comm. on Romans 3:22, CO 49, 60.

2. Comm. on James 2:11, CO 55, 401-2.

3. Comm. on Phil. 1:11, CO 52, 13 & on Romans 3:22, CO 49, 60 and Romans 4:8, CO 49, 78.

4. Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:16, CO 50, 252.

5. Comm. on Romans 3:31, CO 49, 67.

righteousness for us by His perfect obedience to the law has important consequences, as we shall see later, for the doctrine of justification. It means that, along with our sins not being reckoned against us, we are made to share in Christ's perfect righteousness. Therefore justification is not a legal fiction but an actual participation in the obedience and righteousness of Christ.

Calvin traces the course of Christ's subjection to and fulfilment of the law from His circumcision to His death. Christ as a man came under the obligations of other men. As a Jew it was necessary that He should be circumcised. Circumcision was the sacrament by which the Jews were initiated into the observance of the law. Therefore Jesus' parents had Him circumcised. Calvin comments: "By undergoing circumcision Christ acknowledged Himself to be the slave of the law, that He might procure our freedom. And in this way not only was the bondage of the law abolished by Him, but the shadow of the ceremony was applied to His own body, that it might shortly afterwards come to an end. For though the abrogation of it depends on the death and resurrection of Christ, yet it was a sort of prelude to it, that the Son of God, submitted to be circumcised."¹ Submission to the law means the abrogation of the law. There was no need for Christ to be circumcised as far as His own Person was concerned. By undergoing circumcision He further identified

1. Comm. on Luke 2:21, CO 45, 125-6.

Himself with our sin and need, accomplished the demand of the law, and also brought about its abrogation.

Calvin also notes that the institutions of religion were as binding for Him as for others. This careful attention to the religious practices of the Jews also shows Christ's complete submission and obedience to the law. He goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover. Calvin says: "Whenever therefore it is said afterwards that Christ came to Jerusalem for the feast days, let the reader observe that He did so, first, that along with the rest He might perform the exercises of religion instituted by God, and next that He might proclaim His teaching to a larger concourse of people."¹ He attends the Synagogue on the Sabbath, observing the usual order of the Church.² He commands the lepers whom He has cleansed that they should go and show themselves to the priest for it was necessary that the ceremonies which were prescribed by the law should be observed until the time when they would be repealed.³ He does not neglect observing the feast of the Passover at the end of His earthly life: "Having determined to be subject to the law, that He might deliver us from its yoke, He did not forget this subjection at His latest hour; and therefore He would rather have chosen to omit an outward ceremony, than to transgress the ordinance

1. Comm. on John 2:13, CO 47, 44; and on 5:1, CO 47, 104; on 7:2, CO 47, 165; and on 7:14, CO 47, 168-9.
2. Comm. on Luke 4:16, CO 45, 140.
3. Comm. on Matthew 8:4, CO 45, 232.

which God had appointed, and thus lay Himself open to the slanders of wicked men."¹

Our Lord, according to Calvin, also fulfilled His duties to His parents and relatives. As an obedient son, He subjected Himself to His earthly parents: "Though this subjection, on the part of Christ, arose from no necessity which He could not have avoided, yet, as He had taken upon Him human nature on the condition of being subject to parents, and had assumed the character both of a man and of a servant, with respect to the office of Redeemer, this was His lawful condition."² He also discharged His lawful duties towards His relatives, paying the strictest attention to human order.³ And on the Cross, while He obeyed the Father, He did not fail to perform the duty which He owed as a son towards His mother. Therefore He commits Mary to John's care.⁴ Further in regard to the matter of human order, Christ observed the political duty of paying taxes. Thus Calvin points out that Christ "by paying tribute of His own accord declared His subjection, as He had taken upon Him the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7), but at the same time showed that it was not by obligation or necessity, but by a free and voluntary submission, that He had reduced Himself so low that the world looked upon Him as nothing more than one of the common people."⁵

1. Comm. on Matthew 26:17, CO 45, 699.
2. Comm. on Luke 2:51, CO 45, 107.
3. Comm. on Matthew 12:50, CO 45, 351.
4. Comm. on John 19:25, CO 47, 416-7.
5. Comm. on Matthew 17:24, CO 45, 521-2.

The important thing to note in all these instances of subjection according to Calvin, is that Christ submitted Himself freely and not out of constraint and for our sake rather than for His own. Perfect obedience to the law is for us an absolutely binding although unfulfilled duty, which belongs to the very nature of our existence. For Christ it is a free and voluntary act. Since we could not render the perfect obedience which the law required, Christ took our place, subjected Himself to the law and fulfilled it perfectly. He underwent the bondage of the law to redeem those who were under the law. It was the office of Christ to fulfil all righteousness. But this righteousness does not consist only in enduring the curse of the law; namely death; but it also involves performing what we were unable to perform; namely the perfect and complete obligation of the law. Calvin never poses the disjunction which became characteristic later of a certain type of Reformed Orthodoxy that the law is fulfilled either by obedience or by enduring its penalty rather than both. On the contrary Calvin's view is very clearly that we are reconciled not only because Christ bore our punishment but equally because Christ accomplished what God demands of us.

Calvin's comments on the key passage, Galatians 4:4, are therefore very instructive. "Christ the Son of God, who might have claimed to be exempt from every kind of subjection, became subject to the law. Why? He did so in our room, that He might obtain freedom for us. A man who was free by

constituting himself a surety, redeems a slave: by putting on himself the chains he takes them off from the other. So Christ chose to become liable to keep the law that exemption from it might be obtained for us; otherwise, it would have been to no purpose that He should come under the yoke of the law, for it certainly was not on His own account that He did so."¹ Since perfect observance of the law is righteousness, Christ, by taking the burden of the law upon Himself and fulfilling it, has purchased righteousness for us and reconciled us to God. Therefore Calvin can say that "the perfection which the law demands was manifested in our flesh."² In His own Person, Christ has vanquished sin, met the requirements of the law, endured the curse, appeased the wrath of God, and won life.³

We pointed out in our first chapter that the law can only be rightly understood in the context of the covenant of gratuitous adoption, as a further act of grace by which God binds His people to Himself. This view of the law militates against all attempts to interpret or apply it legalistically. It also means that grace and law are not unalterably opposed to each other but rather that the latter is the expression of the former. There is of course a difference between the

1. CO 50, 227. See also Sermon on the same passage, CO 50, 583-4, and the Twenty-Sixth Sermon on the Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 316-7.
2. Comm. on Romans 8:4, CO 49, 140: Perfectio enim quam lex exigit, ideo in carne fuit exhibitā.
3. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:57, CO 49, 565.

law and the Gospel when the law is seen apart from the promises of grace but the law, as God's Word and as the expression of His will, is the eternal rule of righteousness.

How then are we to understand the obedience of Christ in view of this positive evaluation of the law? We can express it in this way: the work of Christ in relation to the law means that Christ is the end of the law, not in the sense of abrogating it, but in the much more profound sense of completing and fulfilling it, and thus freeing us from its bondage. The Eternal Son of God who possessed all power and authority humbled Himself and assumed the form of a Servant in order to render obedience to the Father. He was obedient to the law in the twofold sense of the law as God's Word and the expression of His will and also as that which implies bondage and servitude. In the former sense His obedience had the effect of validating the law. That is, the law was not set aside but confirmed as God's true and righteous Word and thereby sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ, in whom, as we have observed above, was found the perfect righteousness of the law. In the other sense, Christ freely submitted to the bondage of the law and obtained freedom for us. Even though He subjected Himself for a time, the law, Calvin holds, never ruled over Him.¹ And as a result of this

1. Comm. on Romans 7:2, CO 49, 121.

voluntary subjection, the terror and the rigor of the law are abolished and Christ conveys to believers the liberty which He possesses. Still this does not mean that we no longer owe any obedience to the doctrine of the law and may do whatever we please. The third use of the law means that the law still has a normative function for believers as "the everlasting rule of a good and holy life."

The Obedience of Christ as the Fulfilment of His Sonship

It would be a mistake, however, to regard Calvin's understanding of the obedience of Christ in an exclusively legal way. We observed earlier that, as against the usual interpretation of the baptism of Jesus as an instance of His willing submission to the law, Calvin preferred the view that here Christ fulfilled a part of the office which had been committed to Him by His Father. The obedience of Christ is then also to be seen as Christ's fulfilment of His office as Son and Servant in loving and grateful response to the Father's will. Here we recall what was established in Chapter One, that obedience must be understood in terms of such related concepts as faith, love and gratitude.

Christ, Calvin says, came into the world to be obedient in all respects to the Father.¹ "He presented Himself to the Father as obedient even to death (Phil. 2:8); He

1. Comm. on John 10:18, CO 47,

entered completely into the accomplishing of God's works (cf. John 4:34, Luke 2:49); He breathed heart and soul the glory of the Father (Cf. John 8:50; also John 7:16-18); He laid down His life for His brethren (John 10:15; Cf. John 15:13). He did good to His enemies and prayed for them (Cf. Luke 6:27, 35; also Luke 23:34)."¹ His whole purpose was to fulfil the will of His Father.² And the 'will of the Father' to which He devoted Himself was to fulfil the office which had been given to Him.³ Or as Calvin states it elsewhere "... the chief design of His being sent into the world ... was that He might discharge the office enjoined upon Him by His heavenly Father."⁴ To fulfil this office, Calvin says, was the height of pleasure for Him so that this made Him forget meat and drink when He was tired and hungry.⁵ In the carrying out of His redemptive task Christ neither spared Himself at all or gave Himself grudgingly. "For he who gives because he has to, even though in the end he becomes open handed, will always betray some niggardliness; but one who 'pours out' shows that he goes to work with a generous spirit. So we are shown that our Lord Jesus was inflamed with such affection of love towards us that His life was poured out like water and that He made a voluntary sacrifice, to show that He asked nothing but to reconcile us to God His Father."⁶ The image

1. Inst. III, 15, 8.

2. Comm. on John 5:30 and 6:38, CO 47, 120-1 & 146.

3. Comm. on John 4:34, CO 47, 94.

4. Comm. on Luke 2:49, CO 45, 106.

5. Comm. on John 4:34, CO 47, 94.

6. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 677. E.T. by T. H.L. Parker, p. 139.

of our own calling is clearly shown to us in Christ's fulfilment of His Sonship. Calvin paraphrases the words of Jesus "If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, as also I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in His love", in John 15:10, as follows: "In me", he says, "shines the similitude of those things which I demand from you; for you see how sincerely I am devoted to obedience to my Father, and how I persevere in this course. My Father also has loved me, not for a moment or for a short time but His love toward me is constant."¹

Here we recall what was pointed out in Chapter One that the notion of obedience must be understood in terms of such related concepts as love, faith and gratitude. These terms together express the character of man's duty to God. Faith, love and gratitude fill out the content of obedience. The obedience of Christ is therefore to be seen as His faithful and loving fulfilment of His Sonship. Christ "was the beloved Son in whom the Father's will was satisfied."² Therefore the public appearance of Christ to fulfil the office of Mediator was accompanied with the testimony that He was the Beloved Son.³ "The Father calls Him 'my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased', and thus declares Him to be the Mediator, by whom He reconciles the world to Himself."⁴ He is God's

1. Comm. on John 15:10, CO 47, 343.

2. Comm. on John 15:9, CO 47, 342.

3. Comm. on Matthew 3:17, CO 45, 127.

4. Comm. on Matthew 17:5, CO 45, 488; and Inst. II, 15, 2; and III, 8, 1.

only Son by nature and He alone is beloved by the Father. In Him dwells and rests the Father's love and from Him it then pours itself upon us.¹ While Calvin held that there was an eternal bond of love between the Father and the Son, he thinks that when Scripture speaks of the Father loving the Son this has a reference to us, for the Father loves Him as He is the Head of the Church. "And this is highly necessary for us; for he who without a Mediator inquires how he is loved by God, involves himself in a labyrinth, in which he will neither discover the entrance, nor the means of extricating himself. We ought therefore to cast our eyes on Christ in whom will be found the testimony and pledge of the love of God; for the love of God was poured out on Him, that from Him it might flow to His members. He is distinguished by this title, that He is 'the beloved Son', in whom the will of the Father is satisfied. (Matthew 3:17). But we ought to observe the end, which is that God may accept us in Him. So then, we may contemplate in Him, as in a mirror, God's paternal love towards us all; because He is not loved apart, or for His own private advantage, but that He may unite us with Him to the Father."² Christ abides in the Father's love and in turn loves the Father. He fulfils completely man's duty by pouring Himself out in love towards God and His fellow man.

We noted earlier that Calvin felt no embarrassment in

1. Inst. III, 2, 32.

2. Comm. on John 15:9, CO 47, 342.

attributing faith to Christ. Our Lord's assumption of the form of a servant means that He was also a believer, the model and example of our piety towards God. He put His trust in God because, as man, He was subject to our necessities and wants: "As then He depended on God's aid His lot is the same with ours ... At the same time we differ from Christ in this - the weakness which necessarily and naturally belongs to us He willingly undertook. But it ought not a little to encourage us to trust in God, that we have Christ as our leader and instructor; for who would fear to go astray while following in His steps? Nay, there is no danger that our trust should be useless when we have it common with Christ, who we know cannot be mistaken."¹ Calvin notes that Christ calls God His God. "The Son of God became man in such a manner, that God was His God as well as ours. 'I ascend,' He says, 'to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' (John 20:17). And the reason why He is our God is that He is the God of Christ whose members we are. Let us therefore remember, however, that this relates to His human nature so that His subjection takes nothing away from His eternal Godhead."² It is in virtue of humbling Himself and taking the form of a servant that He calls God His God. While faith and trust in God are peculiar to Christ's human nature, Calvin, in accordance with his Christological principle, applies these to the whole Person,

1. Comm. on Hebrews 2:13, CO 55, 30.

2. Comm. on Ephesians 1:17, CO 51, 155-6.

on account of the union, because He is both God and man.¹

In fulfilling all the parts of His office as Mediator, Christ prayed to God His Father. "Though He had all things at His disposal, He showed Himself to be a man by praying; and this He did not hypocritically but manifested sincere and human affection towards us."² Our Lord spent time in prayer.³ He depended entirely on God's will and aid.

The question arose in later Reformed theology whether Christ possessed faith and hope. Calvin was criticised for his views on this matter. Riessen, replying to the charge, says: "Not a few condemn Calvin because He attributes faith to Christ. But that faith must not be denied simpliciter to Christ, Scripture shows in more than one passage. It calls Christ faithful, Hebrews 2:17 (in all things like unto His brethren), 3:2 (faithful unto Him who appointed Him) and Peter, Acts 2:26 refers to Christ the words of Psalm 16:9 'my flesh shall tabernacle in hope'. And Matthew 27:43, by calling the Father His God (He trusted in God), Christ witnesses to His faith in Him. Faith therefore is attributed to Christ, not so far as it is trustful apprehension of God's mercy, because so it is competent for sinners only; nor in a sense of a mode of knowing about the obscurity of the enigma, 2 Corinthians 5:7 (by faith not by sight) which argues imperfection; but

1. Comm. on John 20:17, CO 47, 435.

2. Comm. on Matthew 14:23, CO 45, 440-1.

3. Comm. on Matthew 17:2, CO 45, 485; on Mark 3:13, CO 45, 157-8.

as regards the substance of knowing and assent to the thing known, i.e. the doctrine revealed by God which rests upon God's goodness providing all things needful for us."¹ In all things our Lord fulfilled His Sonship to the Father. He was the beloved Son, who lived in constant faith and trust and rendered a perfect obedience on our behalf. Thereby He fulfilled the office of Servant and Son which had been given to Him by the Father.

1. Heppe, op. cit., p. 437.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SERVANT

We continue in this chapter our discussion of the obedience of Christ's life under the aspect of the self-sanctification of the Servant. Christ's obedience involves a complete consecration and devotion of Himself to the service of God. Calvin understands this as Christ's sanctification of Himself for our sakes.

A point which Calvin was often fond of making was that all the parts of our salvation are to be found in Jesus Christ. This means that Christ's work is a perfect and complete one which provides all that sinful man desperately needs in order to be delivered from sin and death and also in order to live the life of God in faith and obedience. We cannot stress this point too strongly. For Calvin, the act of Atonement is equally the task of bearing away the sins of men as that of creating a new and redeemed humanity. If we may put it in another way which expresses it more sharply: the work of reconciliation is not only the negative task of destroying sin, Satan, and death, but also the positive one of communicating life, righteousness, and holiness to mankind. As God has not abandoned the race of sinful men to their own destructive ends but has graciously delivered them in Jesus Christ, so He has not left them to accomplish and perfect holiness by themselves, but has mercifully provided sanctification and holiness for them also in Jesus Christ. Here we have an integral aspect of the work of Christ. For Calvin, this feature

of Christ's atoning act is summed up in the words of Jesus recorded in John 17:19: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." Christ is the fountain and source of holiness in that He has sanctified Himself. Through His self-sanctification mankind is sanctified. When Calvin uses this saying of our Lord's to interpret His work he has in mind not only Christ's death but His whole life from beginning to end. This sanctification, Calvin says, belongs to the whole of Christ's life (ad totam Christi vitam).¹ The brightest illustration, however - and here we see Calvin repeating the point which we have seen him make in the Institutio - is to be seen in the sacrifice of His death.

Here it will be our task to trace this sanctification of the Servant from His birth to His death. In doing so we shall inevitably anticipate some of the material which is reserved for the following chapter. Two points should be made. The first is that the self-sanctification of the Servant is an aspect of the work of reconciliation which belongs properly to the priestly office of Christ, although of course, it is also connected with His prophetic and kingly offices. Christ is consecrated as Prophet, Priest and King. His entire work embraces these three offices, which in Calvin's view are never separated from but constantly involve and interpenetrate one another. Christ is one and His work is also one rather

1. Comm. on John 17:19, CO 47, 385.

than three divided and separated works. Therefore, when we say that the self-sanctification of Christ is to be ascribed to the priestly office, we do not thereby exclude the other offices from this particular work but instead locate it more accurately within its proper sphere. The second point which we should make, which perhaps is even more important than our first one, is that the whole notion of the self-sanctification of the Servant is one which goes beyond purely legal and penal categories. By this we do not mean that these notions are completely absent here but instead that they are very much in the background in order to provide room for other ideas: sacrifice, priesthood, sanctification, and the life-giving humanity of Christ. These all belong to what we have called "the obedience of Christ's life", or, if one prefers the terminology of Reformed and Lutheran Orthodoxy, they are all integral to the obedientia activa. Calvin's stress at one time upon the legal and penal notions and at another time upon the non-forensic ones is completely faithful to the practice of Scripture and thereby his theology merits consideration as a significant attempt to do justice to the variety, complexity and richness of the Biblical witness, with respect to the presentation of the work of reconciliation. This point will bear repetition because Calvin has been unjustly viewed as one of the persons responsible for a very narrow conception of the Atonement. If we may put it quite simply, Calvin was too good a Biblical theologian to look at the work of Christ exclusively from the point of view of one or two Biblical

images without taking into account the others. Living on this side of historical-critical scholarship we may not always be able to agree with Calvin's interpretation of some of these images, however, we cannot fail to see in his Commentaries and Institutio, when these are read together, a breadth of vision which takes into account the manifoldness and richness of Biblical thought. It is for this reason that we cannot accept the almost uncontested judgement of the history of dogma that Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation is nothing but the 'penal substitutionary theory'.

Christ and His Spirit and the Sanctification of the Servant

The work of sanctification is commonly ascribed to the Holy Spirit. It will therefore be necessary to consider the relation of Christ and the Holy Spirit as this has to do with the sanctification of Christ, the Servant of God. We note at the very outset that, for Calvin, it was a basic principle that Christ is never separate from His Spirit.¹ This is expressed by him in a number of ways. In his comments on Romans 8:9 he says that those who separate Christ from His Spirit make Him into a dead image or carcass.² Elsewhere he says that we cannot receive Christ without His Spirit or the Spirit without Christ.³ In Calvin's view Christ both receives

1. Comm. on Isaiah 6:10, CO 36, 138; Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:27, CO 49, 491.

2. Comm. on Romans 8:9, CO 49, 290: mortuo simulacro vel cada-veri similem.

3. Comm. on Ephesians 3:17, CO 51, 186.

and gives the gift of the Spirit.¹ As the Mediator, whom God has elected from before the foundations of the world, He obtains from the Father the grace of the Spirit, in order to accomplish the work of reconciliation. He Himself requires the gift of the Spirit to be sanctified and strengthened for His office. At the same time He receives the Spirit to pour Him out upon believers. As He is God, He bestows the gift of the Spirit from Himself. We are chiefly concerned in this section with the former emphasis and we shall return to the latter point in another connection.

It is as the Servant of God, that is, as the One who has humbled Himself in assuming our weak and frail humanity, that Christ receives the gift of the Spirit from the Father.² He receives the fulness of the Spirit in His conception and birth and at His Baptism when He is anointed to His mediatorial office. The gift of the Spirit, according to Calvin, is poured out upon Christ's humanity.

We consider first of all, then, the action of the Spirit in the birth of Jesus. The conceptus de Spiritu sancto, natus ex Maria virgine was for Calvin a fundamental article of the Christian faith. He recognizes that what we have to do with here is a miraculous event. The Spirit of God is the essential power of God whose energy is exerted in the entire

1. Comm. on John 14:16, CO 47, 329.

2. See Werner Krusche, Das Wirken des Heiligen Geistes nach Calvin, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957, pp. 130ff.

government of the world and in miraculous events.¹ In setting forth this miraculous occurrence, Calvin carefully avoids what Brunner has called a "biological interpretation of the miracle."² He points out that Christ is not called the Son of God because He was conceived in a miraculous way by the power of the Spirit. Christ was the Eternal Son of God, the Word begotten of the Father before all ages. Therefore He who had been the Son of God in His eternal Godhead appeared also as the Son of God in human flesh³ as a result of this miraculous event. At the same time Calvin combats a false view of the operation of the Holy Spirit in the birth of Jesus. Menno Simon had put forward the idea that Mary did not have a part in the development of the human body of Jesus. She was, in his view, ἄσπρόπους - a view which Calvin regards as a new Marcionism. Calvin replied that the work of the Holy Spirit in no way excludes the fact that the man Jesus was formed out of the proper seed or substance of Mary.⁴ It is of extreme importance for him that our Lord was born of the flesh and blood of Mary else He would not be that promised seed of Abraham and of David according to the flesh.

1. Comm. on Luke 1:35, CO 45, 31.

2. See The Mediator trans. by O. Wyon, London: Lutterworth Press, 1934, p. 322-7. Karl Barth has rightly criticized Brunner's cavalier dismissal of the Virgin Birth. Barth makes a distinction between the sign and the thing signified. While for him the sign, namely the Virgin Birth, cannot be identified with the miracle, he holds that we cannot sever the sign and that which it signifies, without placing Christology in a very ambiguous light; See Church Dogmatics, I/2, ed. by G.W. Bromiley & T.F. Torrance, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956, pp. 183-4.

3. Comm. on Luke 1:35, CO 45, 31.

4. Inst. II, 13, 3. See Krusche, op. cit., pp. 131-2.

There is still another reason why Calvin gives the utmost significance to the article of the Creed, conceptus de Spiritu sancto. Christ in order to efface our sin and uncleanness must Himself be without spot or stain. He must be like us, that is our true Brother (frater); but He must also be unlike us in this important respect that He is not sinful. It is not, however, the biological aspect which ensures the sinlessness of Christ. Calvin makes it quite clear the purity of Jesus is guaranteed, not by the fact that He was begotten without the agency of a human father, but rather by the fact that He was sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit. "For we make Christ free from all stain not just because He was begotten of His mother without copulation with man, but because He was sanctified by the Spirit that the generation might be pure and undefiled as would have been true before Adam's fall. And this remains for us an established fact: whenever Scripture calls our attention to the purity of Christ, it is to be understood of His true human nature, for it would have been superfluous to say that God is pure. Also the sanctification of which John 17 speaks would have no place in divine nature."¹ The holiness of Christ is the action of the Spirit. This sanctifying function of the Spirit in Jesus' birth is therefore as important as the Spirit's generative function. Throughout the Institutio and Commentaries it is continually alluded to and stressed. "Truly Christ was sanctified from earliest infancy

1. Inst. II, 13, 4.

in order that He might sanctify in Himself His elect from every age without distinction. For to wipe out the guilt of the disobedience which had been committed in our flesh, He took that very flesh, that in it, for our sake, and in our stead, He might achieve perfect obedience. Thus He was conceived of the Holy Spirit in order that, in the flesh taken, fully imbued with the holiness of the Spirit, He might impart that holiness to us."¹ The work of sanctification begins with the very act of the assumption of the form of a servant and therefore our salvation also begins there. In the above passage the intimate relation between the assumption of our humanity, sanctification, and the obedience of Christ is also clearly set forward. Christ has assumed the Servant form, has been sanctified in our humanity from the very beginning, and has achieved perfect obedience in order that He might efface the guilt of the disobedience which had been committed in our flesh. Two further quotations will confirm this strong emphasis on the Spirit's sanctifying function from the beginning of Jesus' life. "The Virgin Mary conceived not in an ordinary manner, nor according to the order of nature, but by the secret and wonderful power of God who wished to sanctify His only Son from His origin and conception."² "For as it was necessary that He should be a real man in order that He might expiate our sins and vanquish death and Satan in

1. Inst. IV, 16, 18.

2. Twenty-Second Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 270.

our flesh; so it was necessary in order to His cleansing others, that He should be free from every spot and blemish (1 Peter 1:19) Though Christ was formed of the seed of Abraham, yet He contracted no defilement from a sinful nature for the Spirit of God kept Him pure from the very commencement; and this was done not merely that He might abound in personal holiness, but chiefly that He might sanctify His own people."¹ Through the work of the Spirit the destructive effects of the Fall are once and for all abolished. Jesus is miraculously sanctified and this means that by the grace of the Spirit we have, in the Person of Christ, humanity, in which there is no sin, and over which sin has no rule or power. The birth of Jesus is, as Werner Krusche has expressed it, the birth of a New Man.² Here is a new order of humanity, a humanity which is consecrated to God in all holiness and purity, and which lives in faithful obedience to the Father. Adam was the head of a sinful and disobedient humanity. Christ is the Head of a new and obedient humanity. The true order of human existence has its commencement in the birth of Jesus. Christ is "the originator and source of the life of heaven."³ He, Himself, does not require rebirth. While all men need to be reborn, He does not require rebirth for He is the source of new life, in that in His birth and in His life, He received the regener-

1. Comm. on Luke 1:35, CO 45, 31-2.

2. op. cit. p. 133.

3. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:47, CO 49, 559.

ative gifts of the Spirit.

The emphasis upon the sanctification of our humanity in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is combined by Calvin with the notion of Christ's brotherly union with our humanity. For Calvin there are two things which are required of the Son of God to perform the office of Redeemer.¹ The first is that He should be united to our nature and for this end He assumed our weak and frail flesh to be our Brother and to sympathize with us. He who was Lord became a Servant and for our sake and in our stead rendered perfect obedience to the Father. Secondly, it was necessary that He should be free from all spot and stain so that He might sanctify His people. Therefore, Christ received the Spirit in His birth to be preserved from the universal corruption of the human race and also to be filled with all holiness. He who was to sanctify others was made free from every stain and from His mother's womb was consecrated to God in all purity.² The work of reconciliation therefore rests on this twofold basis that in Christ an intimate and brotherly union has been effected between the Son of God and our humanity and that in this very humanity the Son of God was sanctified and consecrated to God. And because He was so sanctified and because we are truly united by faith to the Son of God, the Holy

1. Twenty-First Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 248-9.
2. Geneva Catechism, Q & A, 53 & 54, Torrance, School of Faith, op. cit., p. 13.

Spirit cleanses us by the holiness of Christ and makes us partakers of it.

The Anointing of Jesus

Undoubtedly the Gospel accounts that Jesus received the fulness of the Spirit at His birth and that He was further anointed at the time of His baptism, present something of a contradiction. This difficulty did not escape Calvin's notice. One can ask, he says, why it is said that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus Christ seeing that He possessed the gift of the Spirit from His miraculous conception.¹ The problem can be resolved, Calvin thought, by the words of Isaiah 61:1 which speak of the anointing of the Servant of God. "Though the grace of the Spirit was bestowed on Christ in a remarkable and extraordinary manner, yet He remained at home as a private person, till He should be called to public life by the Father. Now that the full time is come, for preparing to discharge the office of Redeemer, He is clothed with a new power of the Spirit, and that not so much for His own sake, as for the sake of others."² In His birth the reception of the Spirit was primarily for Himself; in His baptism it is primarily for us. The distinction, though valid, cannot be pressed too far and Calvin does not press it. His point is simply that the anointing of Jesus is une nouvelle espèce de

1. Comm. on Matthew 3:16, CO 45, 126; and Forty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 585.

2. Comm. on Matthew 3:16, CO 45, 126.

recevoir le S. Esprit.¹ Christ was never at any time before His baptism empty of the Spirit, but now He is consecrated by a solemn ceremony and receives the Spirit not so much for Himself as for His people.²

While Calvin stresses the pro nobis aspect of the reception of the Spirit in the above statements, he also recognizes that Christ required the gift of the Spirit for the accomplishment of His office of Mediator. There is then in Calvin's view a twofold purpose for the gift of the Spirit: for the Redeemer Himself and for those whom He redeems. In regard to the former, Calvin says that Christ would have come to us in vain if He had not been furnished with the power of the Holy Spirit.³ The word 'Spirit' includes everything in Christ that was divine and superior to man.⁴ He required the power of the Spirit to resist the temptations of Satan,⁵ to perform miracles,⁶ and to discern the thoughts and intentions of men.⁷ And in His great agony on the Cross, when He was seized with horror; a horror, Calvin says, which would have been sufficient to swallow up a hundred times all the men in the world, He needed the power of the Spirit in order to achieve the victory.⁸ It is in His humanity that Christ

1. Forty-Seventh Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 585.
2. Comm. on John 1:32, CO 47, 28.
3. Inst. III, 1, 2.
4. Comm. on 1 Tim. 3:16, CO 52, 290; and Comm. on Acts 10:38, CO 48, 245.
5. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 130-1.
6. Comm. on Matthew 9:20, CO 45, 257.
7. Comm. on Mark 2:8, CO 45, 246.
8. Comm. on Matthew 27:46, CO 45, 779.

receives the Holy Spirit. Therefore Calvin says that the words of Isaiah 11:2, "And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him ..." refer "to Christ's human nature; because He could not be so enriched with the gift and grace of the Father except so far as He became man."¹

But Christ also receives the gifts of the Spirit that He may pour them out on us. The Father "has poured out upon Him an unlimited wealth of His Spirit. And indeed it is right that the Spirit should dwell in Him without measure, that we may all draw from His fulness..."² "As He came down to us, so He received the gifts of the Spirit that He might bestow them on us."³ Christ on our behalf receives these gifts which He graciously communicates to us. This will be seen more clearly from what immediately follows.

The descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at His baptism is understood by Calvin primarily as His Anointing. Here the pro nobis emphasis is at the very forefront. Christ's Anointing is for the sake of the Church which is His body, for Christ and His people cannot be separated. He is anointed for our sakes "in order that we may all draw out of His fulness. Hence He is the Christ, we are Christians proceeding from Him as rivulets from a fountain."⁴ "For not only as God

1. CO 36, 235.

2. Comm. on John 3:34, CO 47, 75; and on John 7:38, CO 47, 182.

3. Comm. on Isaiah 11:2, CO 36, 235.

4. Comm. on Heb. 1:9, CO 55, 18.

does Christ bestow upon us what we receive from Him but the Father conferred on Him what would flow to us as through a channel. This is the anointing which was liberally poured upon Him that He might anoint us all along with Him. It is for this reason that He is called Christ and we are called Christians."¹

The Anointing is to the office of Prophet, Priest and King. A great deal has been written on Calvin's introduction of the munus triplex into dogmatics. This is a large subject and we shall be able only to touch on some of the results of this research.² It is generally recognized that the doctrine of the threefold office of Christ is a rather 'latecomer' into Calvin's theology. A munus duplex (Priest and King) appears in the first edition of the Institutio (1536) and, while the munus triplex is alluded to in the 1539 edition of the Institutio, it is not until the Geneva Catechism of 1543 (French edition) and of 1545 (Latin edition) and the 1545 edition of the Institutio that Calvin begins to make explicit use of it. In the final edition of the Institutio (1559) Calvin adds a separate chapter in which the threefold office is stated in detail and carefully explained. J.F. Jansen, in a work especially devoted to this theme in Calvin's theology, has shown that Calvin decidedly

1. Comm. on John 1:16, CO 47, 18.

2. See J.F. Jansen, Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ, London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1956.

preferred the munus duplex formula to the munus triplex one. According to Jansen the latter formula never appears in Calvin's commentaries and occurs only once in his sermons and in this latter instance merely in a descriptive way.¹ On the basis of these findings Jansen concludes that Calvin did not arrive at the formula through exegesis.² It has to be

1. op. cit., pp. 60-1.

2. It is difficult to know what Jansen means by the statement that Calvin did not arrive at the munus triplex formula through exegesis. If he means that Calvin did not find a passage of Scripture in which the three-fold office was clearly stated then of course he is right because no such passage exists. But if he means that Calvin did not have exegetical reasons for employing the formula of the three-fold office in the Institutio then he is ignoring the reason which Calvin gives there for introducing it; namely, that not only kings and priests but also prophets were anointed. This is an exegetical conclusion as can be seen from Calvin's comments on Isaiah 61:1-2, CO 37, 371-3. Jansen's argument, more specifically, is that "nowhere does Calvin make this teaching (that is, the teaching of Christ as a prophet and teacher) a separate messianic dignity alongside with the messianic offices of king and priest." (p. 61). But again this is to ignore Calvin's exegesis of Luke 4:16-22, where, although the offices of King and Priest are not mentioned, Christ's Prophetic office is given a Messianic dignity. In Calvin's exegesis of Exodus 30:23, Christ's Prophetic office is given 'a separate messianic dignity alongside with the messianic offices of King and Priest', CO 24, 446: "But we were especially to consider the anointing of the priest, who was sanctified by the Spirit of God for the performance of His office; thus, as Isaiah, in the person of Jesus Christ declares that He was anointed with the spirit of prophecy, (Isa. 61:1); and David affirms the same of the royal Spirit (Psalm 45:7); so Daniel is our best interpreter and witness how the sacerdotal unction was, at length manifested (in Him) for when He says that the time when by the death of Christ the prophecy shall be sealed up was determined upon 'to anoint the holy of holies', he plainly reminds us that the spiritual pattern, which answers to the visible sanctuary, is in Christ so that believers may really feel that these shadows were not mere empty things." We of course agree with Jansen that the munus duplex teaching is more central and basic to Calvin's theology but we cannot follow him when he says that Calvin's introduction of the threefold office in the 1559 Institutio was not arrived at through exegesis.

admitted that the munus duplex formula is more basic to Calvin's theology than the munus triplex one. The reason for this is that Calvin regarded the kingdom and the priesthood as the two fundamental institutions of Old Testament religion. Basically regarded then, there are two offices - that of King and that of Priest. The office of Priest, however, includes the twofold function of liturgical priest and prophet. A short excursus will indicate that this is the case. "Teacher and priest", Calvin says, "are ... almost convertible terms."¹ Therefore Calvin defines the priesthood as "an embassy which God commits to men, that they may be His interpreters in teaching and ruling the Church. What then is a priest? A messenger of God, and His interpreter. It hence follows that the office of teaching cannot be separated from the priesthood; for it is a monstrous thing when anyone boasts himself to be a priest, when he is no teacher."² The office of priesthood and teaching are inseparable.³ "There is no priesthood without doctrine or teaching, and no priest except he who faithfully performs his office as a teacher."⁴ Included in the office of priesthood then, is the twofold function of liturgical priest and teacher or interpreter of the Word of God. When the priests neglected this second function, prophets were raised up to make good their neglect.⁵ God appointed

1. Comm. on Hosea 4:6, CO 42, 275.

2. Comm. on Malachi 2:7, CO 44, 437.

3. Comm. on Malachi 2:6, CO 44, 435.

4. Comm. on Malachi 2:9, CO 44, 440.

5. See R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life, op. cit., p. 9.

these prophets from among the common people or from other families and not from the Levites and thus condemned the priests by transferring the work of teaching to others.¹ Therefore, for Calvin, the prophetic office is, as it were, an extraordinary office (munus quasi extraordinarium)² It was only established when the priests failed to perform the work of teaching.

Calvin can at one time use the munus duplex formula and at another time the munus triplex one without any real contradiction. When he employs the formula of the twofold office he is reflecting the witness of the Old Testament that the kingdom and priesthood are the two fundamental institutions of Old Testament religion. The munus duplex formula is thus the more basic one. But the prophetic office of teaching is not excluded but is included in the office of priesthood. The systematic intent in the Institutio leads Calvin to use the formula of the threefold office there and thus to give the office of prophet a separate Messianic dignity. His purpose in the Institutio is to show that the work of Christ is the complete fulfilment of the Old Covenant and Calvin feels that the munus triplex formula expresses this better than the munus duplex one. Thus he points out that, under the Old Covenant, prophets as well as priests and kings were anointed with holy oil which signified that they were assigned a particular office

1. Comm. on Zechariah 7:1-3, CO 44, 220.

2. Comm. on Zechariah 7:1-3, CO 44, 220.

within God's redemptive plan.¹ In Jesus Christ these three separate offices were united and all they represented was completely and perfectly fulfilled. He is the true Prophet, Priest and King. While the Old Testament figures were anointed with visible oil, He is anointed by the grace of the Holy Spirit which is the essence of that external anointing.² Calvin notes in passing that the Roman Church uses the titles of Prophet, Priest and King with reference to Christ's work, but he says sed frigide nec magno cum fructu.³

But to return to our consideration of the Anointing of Christ. Calvin notes that Christ is called the 'Anointed' and that this title "includes both an everlasting kingdom and an everlasting priesthood, to reconcile us to God, and by expiating our sins through His sacrifice, to obtain for us a perfect righteousness and having received us under His protection, to uphold and supply and enrich us with every description of blessing."⁴ Jesus is also called 'the Lord's Christ' "because He was anointed by the Father and at the same time that He received the Spirit He received also the title of King and Priest."⁵ While here the reference is primarily to the kingly and priestly offices, if we regard

1. Inst. II, 15, 2.

2. Geneva Catechism, Answer 36. Torrance, School of Faith, op. cit., p. 10.

3. Inst. II, 15, 1.

4. Comm. on Matthew 16:16, CO 45, 472-3. See also on Matthew 1:16, CO 45, 61; and Twentieth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 235-48.

5. Comm. on Luke 2:25, CO 45, 89.

the 1559 edition of the Institutio as Calvin's final and definitive word on the matter then the prophetic office is not excluded from these Messianic titles, but is subsumed under the priestly office. In his exposition of Luke 4:16-22, Calvin notes that Christ is anointed by the Spirit of God to the office of preaching¹ and in his comments on the words of the woman of Samaria, 'We know that the Messiah will come, who will teach us all things', and our Lord's reply, 'I who speak to you am He', Calvin definitely regards the prophetic office as a Messianic one. Thus with reference to Christ's words, Calvin says: "When He acknowledges to the woman that He is the Messiah, He unquestionably presents Himself as her teacher in correspondence with the hope she had conceived. And so I think it probable that He went on to give her fuller instruction to satisfy her thirst ... Again, by these words, 'I that speak with thee am the Messiah, the Son of God', He sets the name of Messiah as a seal to ratify the teaching of His Gospel; for we must remember that He was anointed by the Father, and the Spirit of God rested on Him, that He might bring us the message of salvation, as Isaiah says (Isa. 61:1)."² Yet when all this is said, it must be recognized that the more basic formula for Calvin is the munus duplex one, with the prophetic office subsumed under the priestly. This is Calvin's more usual way of speaking in accordance with the Old Testament witness. Thus

1. See especially on Luke 4:18, CO 45, 141-2.
 2. Comm. on John 4:26, CO 47, 91.

he speaks of the kingdom and priesthood as a kind of double mirror in which Christ was set before the eyes of His ancient people.¹ Zechariah is told in a vision to place two crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest, and by this symbol the union of the kingly and priestly offices in the person of Christ is foreshadowed.² The Royal Priesthood of Christ is especially foreshadowed in the person of Melchizedek who was both priest and king in a way which was quite unique in the Old Testament, where the two offices were always kept separate.³ The kingdom and the priesthood thus belong to the regular order of Old Testament religion but, according to Calvin, the office of teaching is included in the priesthood. Christ fulfils the royal priesthood of the Old Testament for He is both Priest and King. The munus propheticum viewed separately is an irregular office (munus quasi extraordinarium). While this is so, Calvin, nevertheless, can say that Christ is Prophet as well as Priest and King (that is, giving the prophetic office a separate messianic dignity) and that He fulfils not only the kingly and priestly offices but also this munus quasi extraordinarium of the Old Testament.

The Consecration of Christ

Calvin thinks of the Anointing in conjunction with the

1. Inst. II, 7, 2.

2. Comm. on Zechariah 6:9-11, CO 44, 211-2.

3. Comm. on Genesis 14:18, CO 23, 201; on Psalm 110:4, CO 32, 163-5; and on Hebrews 7:1, CO 55, 82.

sanctification or consecration of Christ. He translates the Greek words in Hebrews 2:10, 5:9, *τελεωσας, τελεωθεις* by consecrare and sanctificatus, and connects the latter passage with John 17:19: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."¹ That is, he prefers the cultic meaning of these words and thus renders them by the notions of consecration and sanctification rather than by the usual translation 'made perfect' which is more ethical in connotation.² This, of course, does not mean that all ethical notions are excluded but simply that the primary focus here is the cultic and sacrificial. We have already pointed out that for Calvin Christ's consecration or sanctification of Himself belongs to the whole course of His life and work on earth, the highest illustration of which is seen in His death on the Cross.³ It must be also observed that Calvin explicitly connects the consecration of Christ with the humiliation and obedience of the Son of God. It is as the Servant of God that Christ is con-

1. Comm. on Heb. 2:10, CO 55, 28: Ubi nos consecrare vertimus, alii, reddunt perficere. Sed quum verbum *τελεωσας*, quo usus est, ambiguae sit significationis perspicuum esse arbitror quam posui melius contextu quadrare; and on 5:9, CO 55, 64: Sanctificatus melius quadrat contextui, quam perfectus.
2. See E. Käsemann, Das wandernde Gottesvolk, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939, p. 83: "Beide *τελεωσας* und parallelen *εταπεινωσειν* soll nicht eine sittliche, sondern religiöse Idee verkörpern: Heiligen heisst in Gottes Heilsbereich aufnehmen, und geheiligt werden bedeutet nichts anderes und nichts weiter, als Gottes Eigentum werden." - p. 83. Käsemann also holds that the parallel between Phil. 2 and Hebrews 5:7 (we would add Hebrews 2:10) is also very clear - p. 87.
3. Comm. on John 17:19, CO 47, 385.

secrated.¹ Commenting on Hebrews 2:10 Calvin says of the author: "His object is to make Christ's humiliation to appear glorious to the godly; for when He is said to have been clothed with our flesh, He seems to be classed with the common order of men; and the cross brought Him lower than all men. We must therefore take heed, lest Christ should be less esteemed, because He willingly humbled Himself for us; and this is what is here spoken of. For the Apostle shows that this very thing ought to be deemed honourable to the Son of God, that He was by these means consecrated the Captain of our salvation."²

The notion of consecration has its roots in the Old Testament cult and therefore we must consider Calvin's exposition of the notion in its Old Testament usage.³ In the Temple ritual as practised under the Old Covenant, the priest, the whole Temple and the vessels were consecrated through the sprinkling of blood. These ceremonies shadowed forth the reality of what would be accomplished in Jesus Christ. We

1. See C.K. Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, London: S.P.C.K., 1955, p. 426: "To consecrate oneself is the act of a servant of God who makes himself ready for his divinely appointed task, and the task immediately ahead of Jesus was that of dying for his friends. The language is equally appropriate to the preparation of a priest and the preparation of a sacrifice; it is therefore doubly appropriate to Christ."
2. Comm. on Hebrews 2:10, CO 55, 28.
3. See R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1959, pp. 6 ff, where a little of this is done.

shall consider the ceremonies in order and see how Calvin applied and understood them in relation to Christ. First, then, the consecration of the priest. Since the priests were sinful and mortal men, Moses, before he consecrated them, washed them by the sprinkling of water in order that they might no longer be regarded as of ordinary rank. After they had been washed they were invested with sacerdotal dress, and finally they were anointed. This elaborate process was a kind of preparation for the purpose of initiating them before they performed the office of sacrificing.¹ Calvin then turns his attention to the 'peculiar ceremony' (peculiaris caermonia) in which the right ear, the thumb of the right hand and the toe of the right foot, both of Aaron and his sons were smeared with the blood of a ram and afterwards both their persons and garments were sprinkled with the blood which was deposited on the altar. As a humanist Calvin must have found these Old Testament ceremonies strange and repugnant. What is important is that he did not dismiss them but looked at them as belonging to the childhood of the Church. He gave value to them by seeing them as exercises which trained the people of Israel and which helped them to see and to express spiritual truths which they would not have otherwise comprehended. In regard to the question why only the right side of the priests was consecrated Calvin thinks that the conjecture is probable that the whole body was consecrated in the right side.

1. Comm. on Exodus 29:1, CO 24, 438.

Further in regard to the question of why the ear and foot and hand instead of the breast or tongue were smeared, Calvin says that by the ear obedience was designated and by the hands and feet all the actions and the whole course of life. The priest was sprinkled with blood so that He might propitiate God. Therefore the priesthood of Christ was dedicated with blood so that it might be efficacious to reconcile God with us.¹ The reality of the Old Testament ceremonies is to be seen in the life and obedience of Jesus Christ. "It is therefore very appropriate that man's life should be consecrated by blood; and inasmuch as the foundation of well-doing is obedience, which is preferred to all sacrifices, Moses is commanded to begin with the ear. And we know that the 'odour of a sweet smell' in the sacrifice of Christ was obedience (Phil. 4:18); on which account, David, in the spirit of prophecy introduces himself, saying, 'Mine ears hast thou bored.' (Psalm 40:6). If anyone should object that the tongue is of no less importance, because the priest is the messenger of the Lord of hosts, I answer that the office of teaching is not here referred to, but only that of intercession; wherefore in these three members Moses embraced whatever related to atonement. But we must remember that what is said of the consecration of Christ does not apply to His own person, but refers to the profit of the whole Church; for neither was He anointed for His own sake, nor had He need to borrow grace from the

1. Comm. on Exodus 29:16, CO 24, 438.

blood; but He had regard to His members, and devoted Himself altogether to their salvation, as He himself testifies, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself.' (John 17:19)."¹ And again, "Hence Moses commenced the consecration at the ear, in order to devote the priest to God unto obedience. Paul shows how this was fulfilled in Christ, where he celebrates His obedience in the sacrifice of His death, in order to reconcile His Father to us. (Romans 5:19)."² The important points in the above passages in application to the life and obedience of Christ are five in number. First, the innocence and purity of the Levitical priesthood which was only typified by the sprinkling of water, is to be found in Christ alone. Secondly, it was necessary for the priest to be consecrated to God in his whole life and actions. This also was truly accomplished only by Christ. Thirdly, obedience is the very foundation of well-doing and preferable to all sacrifices. The obedience demanded of the Old Testament priesthood was accomplished in Christ for it is obedience which was 'the odour of a sweet smell' in His sacrifice. Fourthly, Christ, unlike the Old Testament priests, did not have to borrow the grace of reconciling from the blood. And finally, Christ sanctified Himself for the profit of the whole Church.

Calvin's view concerning the consecration and obedience of Christ is most clearly set forward in his Commentary on Hebrews. Here it will not be possible to present a detailed

1. *ibid.*, CO 24, 439.

2. *Comm. on Lev. 8:4*, CO 25, 135.

discussion of Calvin's understanding of the Priesthood of Christ. But we shall present some of the material here and reserve the remainder for the next chapter. The consecration of the priesthood under the Old Covenant was only a type or shadow of the true consecration of Christ the Eternal Priest under the New Covenant. Christ's entire life from beginning to end was a consecration of Himself to the office of priesthood. Commenting on Hebrews 5:8-9 "Though He was a Son, yet learned ^{He} obedience from those things which He suffered; and being sanctified He became to all who obey Him the author of eternal salvation having been called by God a priest according to the order of Melchizedek," Calvin says that there were two reasons why Christ had to suffer.¹ The proximate end was that He might learn obedience, and the more ultimate end was that He might be consecrated a priest for our salvation. In regard to the former point, it is necessary to note that Christ was neither forced into this obedience, nor did He require in any way to exercise it, for He was always more than willing to render to the Father the obedience which He owed.² Instead He habituated Himself to obedience for our benefit. But there is a more ultimate end for all this: by learning obedience through suffering, Christ was consecrated a priest for our salvation. The purpose of His suffering and voluntary submission to the Will of the Father, throughout His entire life, was to consecrate Himself and to sanctify us.

1. Comm. on Hebrews 5:7-8, CO 55, 61-64.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 5:8, CO 55, 63.

Here it is important to have a proper understanding of the character of Christ's obedience. James Denney has expressed this very well and we quote his words as follows: "Christ's obedience is not merely that which is required of all men, it is that which is required of a Redeemer; and it is its peculiar content, not the mere fact that it is obedience which constitutes it as an atonement."¹ It is through His suffering then that Christ is consecrated a true priest. He was sanctified by the Father and sent into the world,² and He consecrated Himself throughout a lifetime of obedience and submission to the Father's will. By this self-consecration or self-sanctification He has achieved for His Church that consecration to the service of God and sanctification which the ceremonies of the Old Testament only symbolized. What was only shadowed forth has been realized in reality in Jesus Christ.³

When Calvin speaks of the consecration of Christ, similarly he thinks of the practice of anointing the Sanc-

1. The Death of Christ, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1903, pp. 233-34. Denney's strong distinction between moral obedience and the obedience required of the Redeemer is clearly determined by a polemical purpose. See his more positive use of the notion of obedience in his The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917, p. 233.
2. Comm. on John 10:36, CO 47, 253: Itaque haec duo coniuncta sunt quod sanctificatus fuerit et missus in mundum.
3. See G.H.C. MacGregor, The Gospel of John (Moffat Commentaries), London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1928, pp. 320-321, who quotes Calvin and notes the approximation of John's thought to that of Hebrews on this point.

tuary and its appendages under the Old Covenant. The tabernacle was anointed with oil which is a symbol of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and by this practice it was clearly shown that "nothing pleases God, that nothing is pure or holy in His sight, except what has been purged and duly consecrated by the influence and grace of the Holy Spirit."¹ The true and perfect spiritual anointing was put off until the advent of Christ for what took place before was only a figure. But, says Calvin, "in Christ we have the true exhibition of the reality, although He was not visibly anointed with oil but spiritually, when the Spirit of God rested upon Him with all His gifts. Wherefore He says, 'For their sakes I sanctify myself' (John 17:19)."² He is rightly called the Holy One of holy ones, or the Tabernacle of God for His body was really the Temple of deity.³ The use of this language in Hebrews 9:11 is, in Calvin's view, very appropriate: "... the word sanctuary is fitly and suitably applied to the body of Christ, for it is the temple in which the whole majesty of God dwells. He is further said to have made a way for us by His body to ascend into heaven, because in that body He consecrated Himself to God, He became in it sanctified to be our true righteousness, He prepared Himself in it to offer a sacrifice; in a word, He made Himself of no reputation, and suffered the death of the cross; therefore, the Father highly exalted Him and

1. Comm. on Exodus 40:9, CO 25, 124; and Inst. II, 15, 6.

2. Comm. on Daniel 9:25, CO 41, 183.

3. Comm. on Daniel 9:25, CO 41, 183.

gave Him a name above every name, that every knee should bow to Him. (Phil. 2:8-10). He then entered into heaven through His own body, because on this account, it is that He now sits at the Father's right hand; He, for this reason, intercedes for us in heaven, because He had put on our flesh, and consecrated it as a temple to God the Father, and in it sanctified Himself to obtain for us an eternal righteousness, having made an expiation for our sins."¹ Christ is not only our Eternal High Priest but He is also the true sanctuary.² In Him all the ceremonies and figures of the Old Covenant have their true completion and their true end. The ancient tabernacle was made of wood and brass, of skins and of silver and gold, all of which were dead things. Christ is the true sanctuary because the power of God has made the flesh of Christ to be "a living and spiritual temple."³

The Sinlessness of Christ

Since sanctification belongs to the whole course of Christ's life it includes all His acts. A related question is the sinlessness of Christ for His whole life and all His acts must exhibit a purity and innocency such as is not seen in any other man. The sinlessness of Christ is therefore, for Calvin, a fundamental presupposition of Christ's being able

1. Comm. on Hebrews 9:11, CO 55, 110.
2. Comm. on 1 John 2:20, CO 55, 323-4.
3. Comm. on Hebrews 9:11, CO 55, 110.

to undertake and to fulfil the office of Redeemer, for if Christ is to procure righteousness and holiness for us He must Himself be pure and spotless. We have already had occasion to observe that Calvin held that Christ's conception by the Holy Spirit was necessary to preserve Him from all uncleanness and to fill Him with holiness. We also pointed out that Christ's sinlessness is guaranteed not so much by an ontological condition (a non posse peccare) as by the operation of the Spirit who fortifies Christ and makes it impossible for sin to fall upon Him. It is necessary here to enlarge on this matter and to consider more fully the significance of the sinlessness of Christ for the work of reconciliation.

Calvin, in accordance with the practice of Scripture, states the sinlessness of Christ both negatively and positively. To make use of the categories of disobedience and obedience, we can say that the sinlessness of Christ means both that He was never disobedient and that He was perfectly obedient to the will of the Father. In regard to the former emphasis Calvin says: "He committed no sin at all and was not guilty in any point."¹ His perfect innocence consists in the fact that "He never offended whether in word or in deed."² It is indeed certain "that there was nothing sinful in Christ which required to be corrected."³ Christ is "pure from all pollution of sin."⁴ This particularly applies to Christ's feelings. Our inward

1. Sermon on Isaiah 53:4-6, CO 35.

2. Comm. on Isaiah 53:9, CO 37, 262.

3. Comm. on 1 Peter 4:1, CO 55, 270; and on 1 Peter 2:22, CO 55, 323-4.

4. Comm. on John 14:30, CO 47, 337.

feelings are always sinful on account of the depravity of our nature, "but in Christ, who possessed the highest rectitude and perfect purity they were free from everything vicious."¹ The innocence of Christ is an indubitable fact and even His judge Pontius Pilate, "bore witness to His innocence."²

But the sinlessness of Christ is not just a negative purity in that He committed no act of disobedience nor was guilty in any point. It is also positive. In his Sermon on Isaiah 53:9, 10 'yet He had committed no sin' Calvin says: "And indeed if we examine the life of our Lord Jesus we shall not find cause for any to attack Him. It is true that the Chief Priests told Pilate that if He had not been a malefactor they would not have brought Him before him. Yet if we investigate the 'evil deeds' of Jesus Christ we find that He has done good to everybody. He gave sight to the blind, He made the lame to walk, He healed the sick, He raised the dead, He fed the hungry; in short we see displayed in Him just all the wealth of the goodness and mercy of God."³ In the words of John 8:29, "He always did those things that pleased." During the course of His earthly ministry, our Lord walked through the whole of Judea, "so that no corner was without His good deeds."⁴ The sinlessness of Christ therefore means that His whole life was in perfect conformity with the will of God and

1. Comm. on Heb. 4:15, CO 55, 54.

2. Comm. on Isaiah 53:4, CO 37, 257; on Matthew 27:19, CO 45, 756; and on John 19:6, CO 47, 407-8.

3. Sermon on Isaiah 53:9, 10, CO 35,

4. Comm. on Acts 10:38, CO 48, 246.

that this was testified by His miraculous deeds and acts of mercy.

We have said that the purity and innocence of Christ is a fundamental presupposition for the work of reconciliation. Were Christ sinful either in an act of omission or an act of commission this would be entirely inconsistent with His office and work. It was necessary that a priest should be just, without fault, and pure from every spot. This kind of perfection was not found in the Levitical priesthood but was only symbolized by anointing and sprinkling with water. Only in Christ is perfect and entire purity to be found. Therefore He alone is truly competent to be our High Priest. Christ "would not have been a meet High Priest unless He had been perfect, free from every spot and deficient in nothing which is required unto complete holiness."¹ The priesthood of the Old Covenant was defiled with many spots and therefore Aaron and his sons were obliged to bring sacrifices to atone for their own sins. Christ was entirely free of all spot or stain for in Him was to be found real holiness and innocency. He alone therefore was capable of undertaking the office of priest "being not of the common order of man but the Son of God subject to no defect but adorned and endowed with the highest perfection."² He was therefore supremely qualified to perform those duties which pertained to the priestly office. The sinlessness of Christ

1. Comm. on Exodus 28:4, CO 24, 430.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 7:28, CO 55, 95-6.

ensures us then that in Him alone we have a High Priest "who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens."¹ Undoubtedly this perfection and innocence may make us feel that He is unapproachable but Calvin does not think so. On the contrary, he holds that this knowledge of Christ's separateness from sinners makes us confident that in Him we truly have a priest who can stand before a holy God and a sinful people and represent each perfectly to the other.

The Redemptive Significance of the Humanity of Christ

We have already observed how much importance Calvin attached to the humanity of Christ. This strong emphasis has kept recurring throughout our whole discussion. The obedience of Christ, Calvin says, is an act of Christ's humanity; it is in His humanity that He is made subject to the law, in His humanity that He receives the gifts of the Spirit, and also in His humanity that He sanctifies Himself for our sakes. In other words, in Calvin's understanding of the matter the humanity of Christ has redemptive significance. Here we have to do with an extremely important and yet rather neglected aspect of Calvin's Christology and Soteriology. Almost a hundred years ago, J. Köstlin pointed out this element of Calvin's thought, in an article entitled "Calvin's Institutio nach Form und Inhalt in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung"

1. Hebrews 7:26.

to which we have previously referred.¹ According to Köstlin, Calvin, from the Second Edition of the Institutio onwards, found himself, with regard to his doctrine of the Lord's Supper, in an open battle for the true humanity of Christ against the Lutheran doctrine of the Ubiquity of Christ's body, by which he felt it was compromised. His interest in this matter was a fundamentally religious one for he believed that the Ubiquity doctrine both obscured the difference between deity and human nature and wiped out the substance of the body so that our hope of the resurrection of the flesh was seriously threatened. Therefore he sought to win for both the humanity and the flesh of Christ a far-reaching and permanent mediatorial significance; not only in virtue of the fact that it was in our humanity that He was obedient, suffered and died once-and-for-all but that through the flesh of Christ, the life of the exalted Lord should be poured out upon men. Köstlin describes this as "the most original and positive moment in the development of Calvin's Christological doctrine"² although he notes that Calvin did not work it in, in the section on the Person of Christ. This element was also given prominence, as Köstlin again mentions, in Calvin's teaching on Justification. Against Osiander, Calvin maintained that Christ makes us righteous not only as He is God but also as He is man. We shall return to this matter in its appropriate place. Here we should add that this emphasis of

1. op. cit., p. 440.

2. ibid., p. 440: "das eigentümlichste positive Moment in der christologischen Lehrentwicklung Calvin's."

Calvin's on the redemptive significance of Christ's humanity has been brought to our notice in our own day by Professor T.F. Torrance. He writes in this connection: "Christ is not only the Author and Agent of our salvation, but is in Himself, even in His human nature, the Source and Substance of it; therefore everyone of the saving acts of Christ must carry with it, in our understanding, the whole substance of Christ's human life and nature."¹

In order to see the relation between this theme, namely, the redemptive significance of Christ's humanity and the topics treated in this chapter, Christ and His Spirit, the Anointing of Jesus, and His Sanctification of Himself, we shall quote Calvin's comments on John 6:51: "In this sense it (i.e. His flesh) is called life-giving, because it communicates to us a life that it borrows from elsewhere. This will not be at all obscure if we consider what is the reason for life, namely righteousness. Although righteousness flows from God alone, we shall not have the full manifestation of it anywhere else than in Christ's flesh. For in His flesh was accomplished man's redemption; in it a sacrifice was offered to atone for sins, and an obedience yielded to God to reconcile Him to us; it was also filled with the sanctification of the Spirit; finally, having overcome death, it was received into the heavenly glory. Therefore it follows that in it are placed all the parts of life; so that none can

1. The School of Faith, op. cit., p. lxxxii.

rightly complain that he is deprived of life because it is hidden and far off."¹ It is abundantly clear that it is by virtue of Christ's sacrifice of Himself, His obedience, and His sanctification by the Spirit - in our humanity - that His flesh has a life-giving property. Here we note again the element which is so distinctive of Calvin's theology and which is undoubtedly his permanent contribution to the history of Christian thought; namely, his emphasis on the intimate relation between Christology and Pneumatology. The flesh of Christ has its life-giving and quickening power from the Holy Spirit.² On Christ, the Father has bestowed all the gifts of the Spirit. He is therefore the Author and the Cause of our life by the efficacy of the Spirit,³ and, as we established earlier, not only by virtue of having received the Spirit from the Father but also as the Eternal Word who Himself bestows

1. Comm. on John 6:51, CO 47, 152-3: Nam in ea impleta fuit hominum redemptio, in ea oblatum sacrificium expiandis peccatis, obedientia Deo praestita quae ipsum nobis placaret, ea quoque perfusa fuit sanctificatione spiritus, ea tandem devicta morte in coelestum gloriam recepta fuit. Sequitur ergo omnes vitae partes illic fuisse locatus: ne quis possit iure conqueri se privari vita, quia procul lateat. See also on John 6:63, CO 47, 159: Christ's flesh is meat "in that by it life is procured for us, in it God is reconciled to us, and in it we have all the parts of salvation accomplished."
2. Comm. on John 6:63, CO 47, 159. See also the treatise, "The clear explanation of sound doctrine concerning the true partaking of the flesh and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper to dissipate the mists of Tileman Heshusius". CO 9, 511, trans. by J.K.S. Reid in Calvin Theological Treatises (Library of Christian Classics) Vol. XXII, London: SCM Press, 1954, 315-6.
3. Comm. on John 14:19, CO 47, 331.

the Spirit.¹

When Calvin says that Jesus Christ is the Author of life and that life resides in His flesh, he means more than that Jesus Christ is the Cause of life as the Eternal Word of God. If this were only his meaning his thoughts on the matter would not be particularly distinctive or noteworthy. He undoubtedly means this and we shall consider this in due course. The additional significance which he gives to the statement that Christ is the Author of life and that His flesh is life-giving can be seen from the following passage in the Institutio where he refers to the Johannine passage, "As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself.": "For there he is properly speaking not of those gifts which he had in the Father's presence from the beginning, but of those with which he was adorned in that very flesh wherein He appeared. Accordingly, He shows that in his humanity there also dwells fullness of life..."² Here Calvin notes his kinship with Greek theology and particularly that of Cyril of Alexandria on this point.³ Christ, not only as the Eternal Word, but also as God manifested in the flesh is the Source and Cause of life. We will now show why this has to be the case.

First of all, Calvin emphasizes that Christ, as the

1. Cf. supra. p. 3 for references.

2. Inst. IV, 17, 9.

3. Inst. IV, 17, 9. Cf. McNeill's edition for reference: Cyril of Alexandria, Exposition of John's Gospel, II.viii (MPG 73, 381 f.)

Eternal Word of God, was the original source and cause of life (vitae fons et causa fuit).¹ He was with God from the beginning and was at the same time the cause of all things with God the Father.² Life was in Him from the beginning.³ This is not to be understood only in the sense that He caused life so that those things which had not yet existed began to be, but also in the important sense that His life-giving power made them remain in their state of existence. It was necessary that His continued inspiration should quicken the world otherwise everything would immediately decay or else be reduced to nothing.⁴ Calvin sums up these points as follows: "Christ was from the beginning that life-giving Word of the Father (1 John 1:1) the spring and source of life, from which all things have always received their capacity to live."⁵ Christ was always God and as such the fountain of life, however, though He possessed the power and capability of communicating life He did not actually exercise it before the creation of the world.⁶ This power to give life was actualised in creation. God therefore gives life and He does so by His Eternal Word.

But Calvin recognizes that it would not be of any value to us if Christ were the Author of Life only as the Word of God. Here we come to his distinctive emphasis which merits

1. Comm. on John 1:1, CO 47, 1; and Inst. IV, 17, 8.

2. Inst. I, 13, 8 & 17.

3. Inst. I, 13, 13; Inst. I, 15, 4; and Inst. II, 6, 1.

4. Comm. on John 1:4, CO 47, 5.

5. Inst. IV, 17, 8.

6. Comm. on 1 John 1:2, CO 55, 301.

more attention than it has been given. Calvin's argument is that since we are under the bondage of death and estranged from the source of life, it is therefore necessary that life should be manifested in our very midst; that is, that it should be manifested in our flesh. "For even though He previously poured out His power upon the creatures, still, because man (estranged from God through sin and having lost participation in life) saw death threatening from every side, He had to be received into communion of the Word in order to receive hope of immortality. For how little assurance would you grasp, if you heard that the Word of God (from which you are far removed) contains in itself fullness of life, but in and round about yourself nothing but death meets you and moves before your eyes? But when the Source of life begins to abide in our flesh, He no longer lies hidden far from us, but shows us that we are to partake of Him. But He also quickens our very flesh in which He abides, that by partaking of Him we may be fed unto immortality. 'I am,' He says, 'the bread of life come down from heaven. And the bread which I shall give is my flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.' (John 6:48, 51; cf. ch. 6:51-52, Vg.) By these words He teaches not only that He is life, since He is the eternal Word of God who came down from heaven to us, but also that by coming down He poured that power upon the flesh which He took in order that from it participation in life might flow unto us."¹ Christ is therefore the Author of life on two counts: first

1. Inst. IV, 17, 8.

of all, as the Eternal Word of God He communicated life to all creatures; and secondly, as God manifested in the flesh, He restored life in us who had perished through Adam's sin.¹ The manifestation of life is in Calvin's view bound up with Christ's assumption of the form of a servant; that is, Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, is the source and the cause of life. For "life was only manifested in Christ when He put on our flesh and completed all the parts of redemption."²

Calvin believed that this truth would be a particular source of comfort to believers; namely, the knowledge that they could now find life in their own flesh. "For thus not only do they reach it by an easy approach, but they have it spontaneously presented and laid out before them."³ It is undoubtedly the case that these truths had a tremendous impression on Calvin's mind for his language indicates how dominating these ideas were and what comfort he himself derived from them. "It is a wonderful purpose of God that He has set life before us in that flesh, where before there had only been the material of death. And thus He provides for our weakness, for He does not call us above the clouds to enjoy life, but exhibits it on earth, just as if He were exalting us to the mysteries of His Kingdom."⁴ We must rely on and seek life

1. Comm. on 1 John 1:1, CO 55, 301.

2. Comm. on 1 John 1:2, CO 55, 302.

3. Inst. IV, 17, 8.

4. Comm. on John 6:51, CO 47, 152; Mirificum sane Dei consilium quod in ea carne, ubi sola prius mortis materia erat, vitam nobis proposuerit. Atque ita infirmitati nostrae consulit, dum nos ad fruendam vitam non vocat supra nubes, sed eam exserit in terra; non secus ac si in regni sui adita nos eveheret.

from Christ's flesh even though its appearance is lowly and contemptible.¹ Our only way of access is by our faith being directed to the flesh of Christ.² Christ, inasmuch as He was man, was appointed by the Father to be the Author of life.³ Therefore none will ever come to Christ-God who neglects the man.⁴

Inevitably the question arises how Christ's flesh can have this life-giving quality. Calvin was aware that objections would be raised against his doctrine on the basis that the flesh of Christ cannot be life-giving for in its earthly condition it was liable to death and also in its exalted state, though it is endowed with immortality, it does not live through itself.⁵ While conscious of these difficulties and the associated one that it is not the property of flesh to give life, Calvin insisted that the flesh of Christ can rightly and properly be called life-giving if we regard it as a channel (canalis) which pours out life, which resides intrinsically in the divine nature.⁶ That is, the flesh of Christ is life-giving because it communicates life to us which it borrows from elsewhere. "We can explain the nature of this," Calvin says, "by a familiar example. Water is sometimes drunk from a spring,

1. Comm. on John 6:51; and 6:53, CO 47, 152, 154.

2. Comm. on John 6:56, CO 47, 156.

3. Comm. on John 5:21, CO 47, 118-19: "What had been hidden in God is revealed in Christ the man, and life formerly inaccessible, is now close at hand."

4. Comm. on John 6:56, CO 47, 156: Neque enim ad Christum Deum unquam perveniet qui hominem negligit.

5. Comm. on John 6:51, CO 47, 152; and Inst. IV, 17, 9.

6. Comm. on John 6:51, CO 47, 152.

sometimes drawn, sometimes led by channels to water the fields, yet it does not flow forth from itself for so many uses, but from the very source, which by unceasing flow supplies and serves it. In like manner, the flesh of Christ is like a rich and inexhaustible fountain, that pours into us the life springing forth from the Godhead into itself."¹ In another place Calvin presents this same idea in terms of the notion of three degrees of life. First of all, there is the Father, Who is Source of life, but Who is also remote and hidden. Secondly, there is the Son, Who is exhibited as a fountain and through Whom life flows to us. Thirdly, there is the life which we derive from Him. This, Calvin says, is the heart of the matter: "God the Father, in Whom life dwells, is far removed from us; and Christ, placed between us, is the second cause of life, so that what would otherwise be concealed in God may reach us from Him."² "What had been hidden in God is revealed in Christ the man, and life formerly inaccessible is now close at hand."³

It should be pointed out in conclusion that Calvin's profound emphasis on the "vivifying flesh" of Christ shows how seriously he took the Incarnation of Christ. Here his great debt to the Greek Fathers, particularly Irenaeus and Athanasius is unmistakable. Along with them he emphasized the saving significance of Christ's assumption of our humanity. Christ, he

1. Inst. IV, 17, 9.

2. Comm. on John 6:57, CO 47, 156.

3. Comm. on John 5:27, CO 47, 119.

was never tired of repeating, assumed our human flesh that in it He might sanctify Himself, render a perfect obedience to the Father, and offer Himself as a sacrifice for our sins. And because He performed these saving acts in the flesh which He assumed, His humanity has saving significance, not of course, apart from His divinity but in the most intimate unity with it. In the theology of Calvin then we have a most profound account of the redemptive significance of Christ's humanity. Incarnation and Reconciliation are always held together in the most intimate unity. Our salvation and new life - as we shall see later - consist in participating in Christ's obedient and risen humanity.

With this chapter we end our discussion of the obedience of Christ's life (obedientia activa). Before we turn our attention in the next chapter to the obedience of Christ's death (obedientia passiva), it might be well to consider briefly the problem of whether Calvin regarded obedience as exclusively an act of Christ's humanity. Paul van Buren has criticized Calvin for failing to hold that Christ submitted Himself to obedience not only in His humanity but also in His divinity.¹ This, according to van Buren, raises the question as to "the complete involvement of God in the substitutionary work of Christ."² It is true that Calvin continually speaks of obedience as an act performed secundum humanam naturam for according to him, the predicate of obedience, like the

1. op. cit., pp. 38-9.

2. ibid., p. 39.

predicates of suffering and death, strictly speaking, belongs to the humanity of Christ and not to His divinity. Just as it is improper to say that God suffers or that God dies, so it is improper to say that God is obedient. The notion of divinity submitting to obedience or of an obedience of God Himself, is a rather difficult one. It is beyond our purpose here to enter into a consideration of this notion which has recently been put forward so persuasively by Karl Barth.¹ We only ask the question whether the idea of an obedience of the Godhead does not commit one to a form of theopaschitism. But our concern here is with Calvin. While it is the case that for him obedience is a predicate of Christ's humanity this does not mean that it is to be understood exclusively of His humanity. Jesus Christ is "God manifested in the flesh" and therefore the obedience which is performed secundum humanam naturam is the obedience of the Person of the Mediator. We have drawn attention earlier to Calvin's Christological principle that the things which are carried out in Christ's human nature belong to the

1. Church Dogmatics, IV/1, op. cit., pp. 192 ff. See especially pp. 200-201. "We have not only not to deny but actually to affirm and understand as essential to the being of God the offensive fact that there is in God Himself an above and a below, a prius and a posterius, a superiority and a subordination.....it belongs to the inner life of God that there should take place within it obedience. We have to reckon with such an event even in the being and life of God Himself. It cannot be explained away either as an event in some higher or supreme creaturely sphere or as a mere appearance of God. Therefore we have to state firmly that, far from preventing this possibility, His divine unity consists in the fact that in Himself He is both One who is obeyed and Another who obeys."

Person of the Mediator and in virtue of the hypostatic unity, are transferred improperly although not without reason to His divinity. This means that obedience can, in accordance with the communicatio idiomatum, be transferred improperly although not without reason to His divinity. There can be no doubt that for Calvin God is completely involved in the work of Christ. God has so completely and unreservedly acted in Christ that the whole work of Christ is the work of God Himself. Therefore we can say that, in a certain sense, God was obedient in Christ. But we cannot speak properly of divinity submitting to obedience or of an obedience in the Godhead itself. To do so would be to leave the sphere of revelation and to enter the dangerous realm of speculation.

CHAPTER SIX: THE 'OBEDIENCE UNTO DEATH' OF THE SERVANT OF GOD

Emil Brunner, speaking of Luther's doctrine of the Work of Christ, has pointed out that Luther changed about from one 'theory' of the Atonement to another of the most varied kind, because he knew that each 'theory' was necessary for a complete picture and that no single one was by itself sufficient or in any way adequate. The analogy which Brunner uses to clarify this is that the different ways of speaking of the death of Christ are like radii of a circle which converge on the same central point without actually touching it.¹ This way of regarding the matter is helpful in understanding Calvin's doctrine of the Work of Christ. Calvin's thorough

1. The Mediator, trans. by O. Wyon, London: Lutterworth Press, 1934, p. 455. It is only fair to mention that Brunner himself thinks that Calvin and Zwingli did not use the various New Testament images with the same freedom as Luther. We quote Brunner's own words so that there will be no misunderstanding: "In this whole question, so far as I can see, there is complete agreement between the Swiss Reformers and Luther, with the one difference, that Zwingli and Calvin seem to be rather more tied to the terminology of Anselm, and do not use the various New Testament images with the same freedom as Luther. Their feeling for intellectual clarity makes them unable to see the necessity for mythical language and the use of images and they strive for a logical clarity which will satisfy the intellect." - Dogmatics, Vol. II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, trans. by O. Wyon, London: Lutterworth Press, 1952, pp. 313-4. We shall attempt in this chapter to show Calvin's freedom in the use of Biblical imagery. Also, we contest Brunner's judgement that Calvin's doctrine of the work of Christ is intellectualistic. At no time is Calvin abstract, speculative, or intellectualistic in speaking of the work of Christ. His primary concern in this central doctrine of the Christian faith, is as elsewhere, the proclamation of the Christian message and the pastoral care of souls.

knowledge of Scripture and of the history of Christian thought made him aware of the variety of Biblical and theological images which can be used to describe Christ's work. Therefore, when he came to speak of the work of reconciliation, he did not confine himself to one way of speaking; namely, the 'penal substitutionary theory' which has been associated with his name;¹ but on the contrary strove to give a comprehensive and unified picture of the Atonement. He differed from Luther in that he attempted to bring these images together into one concrete and unified whole. But this attempt at synthesis, at the same time, ought not to lead us astray into thinking that Calvin tried thereby to 'straight-jacket' the different Biblical images into the framework of one theory. If anything is clear from the Institutio it is the freedom with which Calvin approached this subject and the different ways in which he attempted to come at it. It is worth recalling that the section on Christology in the Institutio was among those which received the most careful and extensive re-working and enlargement in Calvin's hands from the first edition in 1536 to the

1. See van Buren, op. cit., pp. 141-2, who concurs in the judgement of the history of dogma that Calvin's doctrine of the Atonement is the 'penal substitutionary theory'. Van Buren has rendered a good service in showing how basic the idea of substitution is to Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation. Unfortunately, he has over-emphasized the forensic and penal elements and so identified them with the notion of substitution that, in his hands, Calvin's doctrine of substitution means almost wholly 'penal substitution'. Moreover, he has played down the sacrificial elements and almost wholly neglected the notions of recapitulation and Christus Victor.

final edition in 1559. We are not, however, to draw from this the conclusion that Calvin altered his views on this subject. Instead, by this re-working and enlargement of previous material, he attempted to round out his discussion and to give a more complete and comprehensive picture. The addition of the chapter on the munus triplex and the one on the Merit of Christ to the 1559 edition indicate - if we may return to Brunner's analogy - that Calvin attempted to use two more radii (actually more for the content of these chapters is so rich) to arrive again at this same central point. It is therefore a mistake to call Calvin's doctrine, the 'penal substitutionary theory'. Actually this has been, and can only be done, when the penal and substitutionary elements are abstracted from this concrete and comprehensive picture, and the other elements are completely neglected or ignored.

Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation, therefore, calls for a radical re-assessment. R.S. Paul has recently made a valuable start by attempting to show that the penal elements in Calvin's doctrine are modified by other ones and that his presentation of the Work of Christ goes "far beyond the mere use of one image or another in describing the doctrine."¹

1. The Atonement and the Sacraments, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1961, p. 105. See whole discussion, pp. 97-108. Professor Paul believes that Calvin did not develop the notions of obedience and sacrifice very fully. What we are attempting to show, in this thesis, of course, is that the contrary is the case. It should also be added that we came to these conclusions independently of Professor Paul.

We go even further and claim that the notion of obedience is the dominating and all-embracing category (binding together the Incarnation, life and death) which provides the context in which the other views are set. This obedience is an obedience in man's place and on his behalf. For Calvin this is very basic. Moreover, Christ's obedience is sacrificial, penal, and satisfactory in character and also is combined with the ideas of recapitulation and Christus Victor. Along with this we must remember that the Work of Christ is, for Calvin, the fulfilment of the covenant which God instituted and established between Himself and the race of Abraham.

In setting forth the different ways in which Calvin describes the death of Christ, we shall inevitably find, that the different images which he uses dovetail into one another. The paragraphs on Soteriology in the Institutio contain many statements in which two, three or more of these images are used in one and the same sentence. This does not mean, however, that these terms have an identical meaning for Calvin. They are distinct images, but in using one to interpret the other, Calvin has blended and unified them into a comprehensive whole. We have made the point previously that this interdependence and interpenetration of images is characteristic of Calvin's style and way of speaking. It is, as we have also said, very faithful to the manifold and rich nature of the Biblical witness, with regard to the death

of Christ, where the different and varied images merge into one another and are also combined to form a comprehensive whole.¹

It should also be added that, according to Calvin, "No language, indeed, can fully represent the consequences and efficacy of Christ's death."² We must, of course, understand this aright. It does not mean that we cannot say anything definite or concrete about Christ's death. Calvin believed that Scripture spoke on this central doctrine with a concreteness and perspicuity which was inescapable. But at the same time he was aware that our human language by its very nature is both inappropriate and inadequate to describe this great spiritual reality. His favorite way of expressing this is that the language of Scripture is accommodated to our capacity. Although Calvin often uses this notion of 'inappropriateness' and 'accommodation' when he is speaking of the Trinity or the nature of God, he also uses it with regard to the

1. See Karl Barth who has several excellent things to say on this matter. After making the point that the New Testament uses a variety of standpoints and terminologies to speak of the work of Christ, he adds this comment: "The fact that in the New Testament more than one starting point is proposed for our systematic reflection on the pro nobis ought to be a salutary reminder that in dogmatics we cannot speak down from heaven in the language of God but only on earth as strictly and exactly as we can in a human language, as the New Testament writers themselves did - the variety of the standpoints and concepts which they adopted being the attestation. In all its contexts theology can speak only approximately." Church Dogmatics IV/1, op. cit., p. 274. See also Brunner, Dogmatics, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 286, who is also very instructive on this point.
2. Comm. on Ephesians 5:2, CO 51, 214. See also on Psalm 22: 15, CO 31, 227-8.

death of Christ. "It is true that Scripture often says that we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, inasmuch as He offered His body as a sacrifice: and that is also why it is said that His flesh is meat indeed and His blood drink indeed; but that is said in regard to our rudeness. Because we are common and rude (grossiers), the Spirit has communicated to us what is visible in the death of Jesus Christ in order that we may have there a certain gauge of our salvation."¹ We are not to be offended at the language of Scripture with regard to the death of Christ, because this language is at times harsh and severe. To be so offended is to be ashamed of the Cross itself. But we must also remember that the language of Scripture is accommodated to our capacity and therefore is not wholly adequate or appropriate to represent the efficacy or consequences of Christ's death.²

The Obedience of Christ in His Death

We turn now to a consideration of that aspect of Christ's Work which both Reformed and Lutheran Orthodoxy designated as His Passive Obedience. Here we have to do with the obedience of Christ as it was manifested in His suffering, His willing submission to the judgement of the Father, and His acceptance of the just judgement of God in our place and on our behalf. In tracing these elements it is necessary to keep in mind that

1. Seventh Sermon on the Passion of Christ, CO 46, 920.
2. See R.S. Wallace, Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life, Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959, pp. 3-5 on the language of the Bible about the death of Christ.

though the emphasis here is on the passive side of Christ's work, the active obedience is by no means excluded for both are bound up with each other in every moment of Christ's life and death. This becomes clearer still when we consider that submission and suffering, in so far as it is voluntary, which in Christ it was, always has an active character. Suffering in and by itself, is not necessarily obedience for a person may suffer and not be obedient. The Passion of Christ was obedient in character because it was voluntarily assumed on our behalf.

We noted previously that Calvin associates the work of reconciliation in a decisive way with the death of Christ for he saw clearly that Scripture ascribes the work of salvation quasi peculiare ac proprium to Christ's death.¹ Scripture comprehends the work of redemption in this one event, as it were, by metonymy. The death of Christ is the consummation of the whole course of His obedience and therefore it expresses in a brief way our salvation. Having assumed the form of a servant and accomplished perfect obedience in our flesh Christ closed His career by a sacrifice of obedience which was the culmination of His work. His obedience was an obedience unto death, and His priestly self-oblation in faith and love can therefore be described as the highest act of His obedience. "Even in death itself His willing obedience is the important thing because a sacrifice not offered willingly would not have

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.

furthered righteousness."¹ To use the words of H.A. Hodges, "The Cross itself was obedience carried to the point beyond which it could not be carried any further ... (it was) an obedience to the point of self-annihilation."² Or in Calvin's own words: "It may at the same time be truly said that Christ by His death learned fully what it was to obey God, since He was then led in a special manner to deny Himself; for renouncing His own will, He so far gave Himself up to His Father that of His own accord, and willingly He underwent that death which He greatly dreaded."³ It is in Christ's death that we see the most clear and excellent instance of His willing obedience to the Father. Therefore in this part of the whole course of His obedience we have that great act, which the writers of Scripture describe as the cause of our redemption.

Calvin also expresses this in terms of the associated notion of Christ's profound self-humiliation even unto the death of the Cross. We attempted previously to show that the whole of Christ's life bears witness to the gracious condescension of the Son of God for our salvation. The very act of assuming the 'form of a servant' in Calvin's view was itself a descent to our weakness and frailty, and the circumstances which attended our Lord's birth, and the flight of Mary, Joseph and the Babe into Egypt were so poor and humble that Calvin could say that our Lord began to bear His Cross from

1. ibid.

2. H.A. Hodges, The Pattern of the Atonement, London: SCM Press, 1955, p. 29.

3. Comm. on Hebrews 5:8, CO 55, 63.

the very beginning.¹ Therefore we can say that His being in the form of a servant was His Passion. But the self-humiliation of the Son of God is supremely revealed in the death on the Cross for here we see the very depths to which Christ was willing to abase Himself for our salvation. This is expressed in a phrase which keeps recurring over and over again in Calvin's writings, that Christ did not merely assume the form of a servant but that He humbled or emptied Himself to the death of the Cross.² Or to quote Calvin's words on Philip-
 pians 2:8: "Even this was great humility - that from being Lord He became a servant; but he says that He went farther than this, because, while He was not only immortal, but the Lord of life and death, He nevertheless became obedient to His Father, even so far as to endure death. This was extreme abasement, especially when we take into account the kind of death which he immediately adds, with the view of enhancing it. For by dying in this manner He was not only covered with ignominy in the sight of men but was also accursed in the sight of God. It is assuredly such a pattern of humility as ought to absorb the attention of all mankind; so far is

1. Thirty-Seventh Sermon on the Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 451-2: Car il n'a point falu qu'il fust seulement crucifié une fois, mais qu'il commençast des son enfance, et voyla pourquoy il a este transporte en Egypte.
2. Comm. on Psalm 68:18, CO 31, 628; on Ezekiel 17:24, CO 40, 420; First Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 596; Third Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 621: He "was not only degraded for our salvation but was willing to be brought to the lowest depths - more, did not refuse to suffer the pangs of death, as if He had entered into hell." (Parker's translation); Comm. on Matthew 27:27, CO 45, 761.

it from being possible to unfold it in words in a manner suitable to its dignity."¹

Humiliation and obedience unto death are the indispensable elements in the work of reconciliation. In the passage from the Sermon to which we have referred earlier, where Calvin says that the Scriptural expression that we are redeemed by the blood of Christ, is accommodated to our capacity, Calvin adds these following words: "However, it is not to exclude what is shown to us in all the other passages and even to derogate from this article that the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ would not have served to efface the iniquities of the world except inasmuch as He obeyed or abased Himself even unto death."² Though we cannot press this too far we can say that for Calvin the important thing in Christ's sacrifice is not blood but obedience. Therefore he continually went to great pains to emphasize that Christ went to His death voluntarily and not out of constraint. Otherwise it would not have been obedience and without obedience atonement could not have been effected. "He was, therefore, not coerced to death but bore it willingly that He might be a voluntary sacrifice; for without obedience atone-

1. Comm. on Phil. 2:8, CO 52, 27; See also Comm. on Heb. 2:10, CO 55, 27; Comm. on Psalm 22:6, CO 31, 224.
2. Seventh Sermon on the Passion, CO 46, 920: Cependant ce n'est pas pour exclure ce qui nous est montré en tous les autres passages; et mesmes pour deroguer à cest article que la mort et passion de nostre Seigneur Jesus n'eust de rien servi pour effacer les iniquitez du monde, sinon d'autant qu'il a obey, voire s'abaissant jusques à la mort tant espovantable.

ment would not have been obtained for us."¹ Christ could not atone for our sins in any other way than by obeying the Father.² And the will of the Father was that He should offer Himself as a sacrifice for man's salvation. This He willingly and freely did.

The agony of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemene and His death of the Cross belong intimately together and are of one piece. Calvin devotes considerable space to our Lord's agonizing experience for he sees in it a real testing of Christ's faith and obedience. Two emphases are continually to the fore in Calvin's discussion: the free and willing obedience of our Lord, and the genuineness of His prayer and His human decision to submit Himself to the Father's will. His exposition of Matthew 26:36-40 is prefaced by the statement that the obedience of Christ is the theme of the passage because Christ could not have appeased the Father except by a voluntary death.³ That Christ prayed to be delivered from death is not at all inconsistent with His free and willing obedience for it was necessary that He should contend with difficulties in order that He might overcome them.⁴ Obedience is only true and genuine obedience when there are difficulties and contradictions to overcome. If there are no obstacles then one cannot really speak of

1. Comm. on John 18:1, CO 47, 391: nam sine obedientia nobis expiatio parata non esset.

2. Inst. II, 16, 12: Quasi vero expiare peccata nostra potuerit nisi Patri obediendo.

3. Comm. on Matthew 26:36, CO 45, 719.

4. Comm. on John 18:1, CO 47, 392.

obedience¹ but only of an automatic or mechanical response. Dread, difficulty, and anxiety were presented to Christ's mind.² His struggle was a real and genuine one, which penetrated to the very depths of His soul, for it is there that the inclination or will to obey lies.³

In the midst of genuine dread, fear, and sorrow Christ remained genuinely obedient. Calvin found himself almost from the very beginning in a controversy with interpreters who refused to admit that Christ was actually seized with sadness and trembling for they thought that this would be inconsistent with the glory of the Son of God. This shrinking from the Biblical witness struck Calvin as strange for in his view "if we are ashamed that Christ should experience fear and sorrow, our redemption will perish and be lost."⁴ If we accept the witness of Scripture that Christ clothed Himself with all our infirmities then we must admit that He could experience fear and sorrow and dread. This clearly is the meaning of the Biblical word for it comprehends not only the experience of cold and heat, hunger and other needs of the body, contempt and poverty but also along with these external evils, the feelings of the soul, such as fear, sorrow and the dread of death.⁵ Moreover, we are not to think that

1. Seventh Sermon on the Passion, CO 46, 919: Car s'il n'y eust eu nulle difficulté ne contradiction, ce n'estoit pas obeissance.
2. Comm. on Luke 9:53, CO 45, 525.
3. Inst. II, 16, 12: Ubi autem affectus aut voluntas obedientiae nisi in anima?
4. Comm. on Matthew 26:37, CO 45, 719.
5. Comm. on Hebrews 4:15, CO 55, 54.

Christ "had an iron heart which felt nothing."¹ On the contrary He experienced the most profound anguish and fear. This is eminently clear from the strong language which the Synoptic writers use: Matthew says that He was affected by grief and sorrow; Luke says that He was seized with anguish; and Mark adds that He trembled.² Calvin also supports his interpretation by appealing to both Ambrose and Cyril of Alexandria who had held similar views. We quote in part the words of Ambrose: "For He would not have done so much for me, if He had not taken upon Him my feelings. He grieved for me, who had no cause of grief for Himself ... I boldly call it 'sorrow' because I preach the cross. For He took upon Him not the appearance but the reality of the Incarnation. It was therefore necessary that He should experience grief, that He might overcome sorrow, and not shut it out; for the praise of fortitude is not bestowed on those who are rather stupified than pained by wounds."³ Calvin also takes over the view that during Christ's struggle with death, His divinity "rested and was concealed for a time, that by His sufferings He might discharge all that belonged to the Redeemer," and he adds the remark that "this was so far from being absurd, that in no other way could the mystery of our salvation have been accomplished."⁴ We have referred previously to this view which goes back to Irenaeus and some

1. Comm. on Hebrews 5:7, CO 55, 62; and John 12:27, CO 47, 291.

2. Comm. on Matthew 26:37, CO 45, 720.

3. Comm. on Matthew 26:37, CO 45, 719; cf. also Inst. II, 16, 12.

4. ibid., divina Christi virtus quasi abscondita ad tempus quievisse.

of the other Fathers of the early Church. It should be pointed out that whatever limitations we may place upon this conception, it does not mean that the divine power was surrendered at any time, for quiescence does not mean the absence of divine power but its presence in a passive form or manner.¹ We must then see the notion as an attempt to explain how the two natures co-operated in the work of reconciliation. It is noteworthy that whereas Calvin uses this conception at least four times in his Commentary on the Harmony of the Gospels,² once in the Commentary on John³ and once in the Geneva Catechism,⁴ he never makes use of it in the Institutio.

While we would expect it to appear at least once, especially in the long section on the Agony of Christ, Book II, 16, 8-12, because it is employed in the Commentaries in connection with this teaching, we find that it does not occur at all. This would lead us to believe that Calvin never regarded this notion as a wholly adequate one. Irenaeus had employed it and Calvin, following him, makes use of it in his Commentaries. Its omission from the Institutio, however, suggests that Calvin

1. This is clear from Calvin's use of the notion of 'hiddenness' in conjunction with the notion of 'quiescence'. See on John 12:27, CO 47, 291: Divinitas enim occulta, neque vim suam exserens, quodammodo quievit ut locum expiationi faceret.
2. Comm. on Luke 2:40, on Luke 19:41, on Matthew 24:36, and on Matthew 26:37, CO 45, 104, 576, 672, and 719. The latin of the last passage is as follows: Imo quum, dicitur divina Christi virtus quasi abscondita ad tempus quievisse, ut partes redemptoris patiundo impleret, adeo in eo nihil, est absurdum, ut aliter salutis nostrae mysterium impleri nequiverit.
3. Comm. on John 12:27, CO 47, 291.
4. Catechism, Answer 68, Torrance, The School of Faith, op. cit., p. 16.

never viewed it as a positive doctrine but as a negative notion which, though useful, has definite limitations. But here it is necessary to ask why Calvin used it to explain how the two natures co-operated in Christ's experience of agony? It is evident that the major concern in Calvin's representation of the sufferings of Christ is to show that Christ experienced agony and grief as intensely as it was humanly possible for him to do so. In order to give full reality to Christ's human experience of sorrow and grief Calvin says that the divine nature rested or remained hidden. There may be two false presuppositions at work here; first, the presupposition that the agony of Christ can be a genuine human agony only when the divine nature remains quiescent or hidden, and secondly, the presupposition that the two natures can co-operate in this instance only by one as it were being switched off in order to allow the other to operate with all its strength and force. But if these are the presuppositions behind its use here then it is a definitely inadmissible conception. However, another interpretation can be given of Calvin's use of the notion. The conception of quiescence can be employed to express the freedom of Christ in acting in a certain manner, a manner which at one time accords more with His human nature and at another time in a manner which accords more with His divine nature. That is, while Christ does not give up His divinity, He is free to act in a way so as, in this instance, to participate fully in the human experience of grief and agony. This is not to postulate a double Christ.

Christ is "God manifested in the flesh," and this means that we cannot separate the two natures although we must distinguish them. Christ, as "God manifested in the flesh," therefore, without giving up His divinity is free to act in a way which fully accords with the most intense human experience of agony and grief. The notion of quiescence is a symbol which is used to express this freedom.

Christ, therefore, experienced the most profound dread and terror. When we take into account the fact that our Lord's feelings were always regulated by reason and never disordered in the way our emotions are then the question arises as to the real reason for Christ's fear. Calvin's answer is that death in itself and as such was not the object of Christ's dread. If it were then Christ would be "more unmanly and cowardly than most men."¹ Rather the judgement which God executes upon sinners was Christ's object of fear. But we shall have to return to this aspect of the matter when we look at Christ's death as a penalty for our sins.

What is most interesting in Calvin's exposition of Christ's Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane is his view that there was what he calls an 'indirect disagreement' between the will of Christ and the will of the Father, when Christ prayed that the decree of the Father in regard to His death should be revoked. We have here an unequivocal assertion of the true humanity of Christ, the genuineness of His prayer, and of His

1. Inst. II, 16, 12.

human decision to submit to the will of the Father. Christ, in Calvin's view was so struck with fear "that amidst the violent shocks of temptation, He vacillated, as it were, from one wish to another."¹ That is, the fear and dread of our Lord was so strong that it was necessary to restrain Himself and to correct and recall the wish which He expressed and "to bring Himself into a state of obedience."² Although we cannot attribute to Calvin the modern interest in and understanding of psychology, we have in Calvin's exposition what approximates to a psychological analysis of our Lord's experience. It is perhaps inevitably the case that when we take the humanity of Christ seriously then we also have to take the psychology of that humanity with equal seriousness. If Christ had genuinely human feelings and these feelings are faithfully represented in the Gospels, then they are as much an object of knowledge for us as His Words and Deeds. Calvin is aware that the interpretation that our Lord vacillated from one wish to another, raises the question of how it can be said that Christ remained sinless when there was this indirect disagreement between His will and the will of God. First, Calvin offers the general explanation that there can be a certain kind of indirect disagreement with the will of God, which is not in and by itself faulty or to be regarded as sin, as for example, when we pray for something which is good but which God has not appointed.³ In this instance

1. Comm. on Matthew 26:39, CO 45, 721-2.

2. *ibid.*, CO 45, 723.

3. Comm. on Matthew 26:39, CO 45, 722-3.

Christ prays that He might be delivered from an evil death but God has appointed otherwise. Yet Calvin somehow feels that this general explanation has not fully resolved the difficulty. The Gospel accounts suggest that after asking that the decree of God might be revoked, Christ then brought "His feelings into obedience to God, in such a manner as if He had exceeded what was proper."¹ Calvin therefore seeks to give the further answer that when the dread of death presented itself to His mind, Christ left out of view everything else, prayed genuinely, and there was no fault in this.² He overcame His fear with a contrary emotion, and as Calvin says: "This plainly appears to be a great paradox: 'Father, save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify Thy name. (John 12:27-28)'"³ The important thing is that Christ kept Himself within proper bounds and in His perplexity there was no extravagant behaviour as is the case with us when we attempt to control our feelings.⁴

It is clear that here Calvin gives full value to the Two Will doctrine and uses this passage to refute the Monothelite heresy. Christ's experience in Gethsemane clearly refutes the Monothelites who held that the will of Christ was one and simple, for although Christ, as He was God, did not

1. *ibid.*, CO 45, 723.

2. *ibid.*, CO 45, 723.

3. *Inst.* II, 16, 12.

4. *Inst.* II, 16, 12; and *Comm.* on Matthew 26:39, CO 45, 723.

will anything different from the Father, it is clear that His human soul had feelings distinct from the secret purpose of God.¹ Still there was a remarkable agreement between the will of Christ and the will of God. Calvin explains this by using the excellent illustration of music. Just as musical sounds, though various and differing from one another, are not discordant but produce beautiful harmony and melody, so in Christ there was a "remarkable example of adaptation between the two wills, the will of God and the will of man, so that they differed from each other without any conflict or opposition."² Calvin thus sees the unity of Christ and the Father, preserved in the work of reconciliation, not by the unsatisfactory notion of there being one simple and indivisible will in Christ but in terms of an act of obedience in which Christ makes the will of the Father His own will. This is undoubtedly the reason why Calvin devotes so much space and careful attention to Christ's Agony in Gethsemane. Our Lord's experience clearly shows that though the two wills differed they were also in perfect accord because of His perfect obedience. The notion of obedience is therefore basic to understanding the work of reconciliation.

Calvin can therefore say in a concrete way that the obedience of Christ is the act of Atonement. Our Lord

1. Comm. on Matthew 26:39, CO 45, 723.

2. ibid., CO 45, 723: Imo secuti varii cantus et inter se discrepantes adeo nihil dissonum habent, ut potius concinnam suavemque harmoniam conficiant, ita in Christo insigne existit symmetriae exemplar inter Dei et hominum voluntates, ut absque conflictu et repugnantia inter se differant.

submitted voluntarily to death that He might blot out our transgressions by His obedience.¹ Our sins are buried by the obedience which He rendered to the Father.² "For the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ is like a cloak covering all our iniquities."³ God sent His Son to us in order to accept the obedience which He had offered Him in His death and passion in order to abolish all our faults and iniquities.⁴ Without obedience He could not make reparation for our transgressions and iniquities.⁵ This was the only way to appease God's wrath in that He showed Himself obedient.⁶ One can multiply these references but what we have given here should be sufficient to indicate the prevalence and importance of this notion for Calvin in speaking of the death of Christ. Our Lord was obedient unto death and this obedience has affected our reconciliation. Now we must see how this notion is related to the other images which Calvin uses to describe the death of Christ.

The Death of Christ as a "Sacrifice of Obedience".

We developed, in the last chapter, Calvin's understand-

1. Comm. on John 18:8, CO 47, 393.
2. Second Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 21; Cf also *ibid.* 18th Sermon, CO 46, 219; and Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 680.
3. Fifth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 655 (Parker's trans.).
4. Third Sermon on the Passion, CO 46, 866.
5. Sixth Sermon on Prophecy of Isaiah, CO 35, 666; Second Sermon on Passion, CO 46, 858; Fifth Sermon on Passion, CO 46, 888; and Sermons on Acts of the Apostles.
6. Comm. on Acts 20:21, CO 48, 463.

ing of the work of reconciliation in terms of such cultic notions as priesthood, consecration and sanctification. Here we must take up where the discussion left off and consider the death of Christ as a Sacrifice for sin. It is undoubtedly the case that the sacrificial or cultic group of images plays an important role in the Biblical witness and adds immeasurably to our understanding of the work of Christ. Calvin, in complete faithfulness to Scripture, makes full use of these images to represent the death of Christ. Of that there can be little doubt. A difficulty, however, arises with respect to how this group of images is related to the others in Calvin's understanding of the work of reconciliation. Paul van Buren has given some attention, in his study of Calvin, to the use of the sacrificial terminology. He has, however, confined his interest in this group of images to the question of whether the notion of sacrifice as used by Calvin confirms or alters what is said by the forensic and substitutionary line of thought. Thus he can write: "Calvin can pass from forensic language to sacrificial as though the two terminologies were equivalent, which shows us that, although the figures are different, the basic thought ... followed in a forensic setting remains the same here."¹ But this is a very doubtful procedure and can also be very misleading. If it is the case that the whole Biblical witness is essential for a complete picture of the work of Christ

1. op. cit., p. 68.

then we must attempt as far as possible to represent that picture in its entirety. We do not make the error of identifying Calvin's Biblical theology with the Biblical witness, but we can safely say that Calvin at least attempted to reproduce this witness in its wholeness and completeness. Undoubtedly, he was not aware, as we are, of the complexity of the Biblical sources or of the differences between one tradition or one author and another. Still he knew that in Paul the forensic notions were to the fore while, for instance, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the sacrificial notions were emphasized. Thus he writes in the preface to his Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews: "There is indeed no book in the Holy Scriptures which speaks so clearly of the priesthood of Christ, so highly exalts the virtue and dignity of that only true sacrifice which He offered by His death, so abundantly treats of the use of ceremonies as well as of their abrogation, and in a word, so fully explains that Christ is the end of the law. Let us not therefore suffer the Church of God nor ourselves to be deprived of so great a benefit, but firmly defend the possession of it."¹

In Calvin's representation of the Atonement some notions are more determinative than others. We take these to be: obedience, the forensic group of ideas, substitution, and sacrifice. Granted that the forensic group of notions is the most dominant, it is still a mistake to regard Calvin's use

1. CO. 55, 5.

of the sacrificial imagery only as a kind of confirmation of what he says in forensic terms. The notions of Christ as High Priest and as victim give Calvin another standpoint from which to look at the death of Christ. While Calvin recognized a basic unity of thought in the different Biblical standpoints, the sacrificial one was, in his eyes, an indispensable one which added greatly to his understanding of Christ's work. If the above quotation from his Commentary on Hebrews gives us any indication of his mind, on this matter, he would regard the elimination or soft-peddling of the notion of Christ's death as a sacrifice as a great impoverishment of our understanding of the work of Christ.¹

1. It is a great pity that Karl Barth has devoted so little space and attention to this important Biblical way of looking at the death of Christ. What he has to say in the nine pages given up to this theme is, as always, extremely instructive and illuminating. Church Dogmatics, IV/1, op. cit., pp. 274-283. As is well-known, Barth has selected the forensic framework as the best one within which to set forth the doctrine of reconciliation. At the same time he acknowledges that other standpoints might equally be considered as guiding principles for dogmatics. The most important one of these is the cultic and he states that it would have been quite possible to have presented what he wished to say within the framework of this standpoint. His reasons for not doing so are twofold: First of all, it would have made difficult material more difficult by trying to understand it in a form which is remote to twentieth century man. Secondly, he holds that it is easier to see the matter more distinctly and comprehensively from the forensic line of Biblical thought. These two reasons are not altogether persuasive. First of all one wonders how much more difficult the material would be if the sacrificial imagery were taken into account. With regard to the remoteness and strangeness of the cultic imagery, this is admittedly the case. But is it not therefore important to explicate these ideas and to confront modern man with this alien and strange form of Biblical thought? This point gains added pertinency when we recall that it was Barth who called to our attention the "strange new world of the Bible." But our question is a more (cont'd)

Before we turn to the material which we must present here, it should be pointed out that when Calvin considers the death of Christ in relation to the Old Testament cult, Christ's Sacrifice is not for him a sanctioning of the Old Testament practice in the sense that His Sacrifice is dependent on the Old Testament sacrifices and determined by them. On the contrary the sacrifices of the Old Covenant are dependent on Christ's Sacrifice. His Sacrifice is the reality; the sacrifices of the cult are only shadows. To refer to a passage which we quoted earlier, if Christ is left out of view then all the sacrifices of the cult are no better than pure and simple butchery. It is important to keep this point in mind otherwise we may be led into the false view that the Sacrifice of Christ is subsumed under the general idea of

basic one, and it concerns his second reason. Why decide on one standpoint instead of two or even more? It is dogmatically more feasible but is it not also more susceptible to distortion and narrowness of view? If it is the case, as Barth admits, that the cultic images are so important, then why not use at least two standpoints: the forensic and sacrificial? It would seem, by the very nature of the case, to give a more complete picture of the Atonement. Markus Barth has recently produced an excellent monograph entitled, Was Christ's Death a Sacrifice? (Scottish Journal of Theology, Occasional Papers No. 9, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1961) in which he argues for a reinstatement of this way of looking at Christ's death. "We hold," he says, "that the proclamation and celebration of Christ's sacrifice is nothing less than a criterion for 'that obedience of faith' to which all Churches and all Christians are called at all times." p. 50. The five reasons which he gives why the notion of Christ's death as a Sacrifice is of such importance repay careful study. See. pp. 51 ff.

sacrifice.¹ Calvin is always careful to point out the one true Sacrifice of Christ.

Here we will have to recall briefly some of the things which were said about the sacrifices of the Old Covenant. We pointed out that, for Calvin, there were at least four reasons why sacrifices were instituted: first, to instruct the people in the spiritual worship of God; secondly, to bind them to Himself in love and obedience, obedience being the most important thing in sacrifices; thirdly, to bring Israel to a true understanding of sin and forgiveness; and fourthly, to hold before the people the promise of reconciliation and salvation in the coming and the offering of the One True Sacrifice by the Son of God. Calvin sums up some of these points in the following quotation from the Institutio: "Sacrifices made them aware of their unrighteousness and at the same time taught them that some satisfaction must be paid to God's justice. They also taught that there should be some high priest, a mediator between God and men, to make satisfaction to God by the shedding of blood and by the offering of a sacrifice that would suffice for the forgiveness of sins. This high priest was Christ (Heb. 4:14; 5:5; 9:11); He poured out His own blood; He himself was the sacrificial victim; He offered

1. See Markus Barth, op. cit., p. 47, who makes the point that the equation Christ's death was a sacrifice is never found in the Bible for this would be to start from a general concept of sacrifice and deduce from this the conclusion, 'If this or that is sacrifice, then Christ's death is - or is not a sacrifice'.

Himself obedient unto death to the Father (Phil. 2:8). By His obedience He cancelled the disobedience of man (Romans 5:19) which had aroused God's wrath."¹

The connection between the obedience of Christ and His sacrifice is clearly seen in the phrase which Calvin uses several times to designate Christ's death: obedientiae sacrificia. Christ willingly offered Himself "and it was necessary that He should do so, because God could not be appeased but by a sacrifice of obedience."² He "was not dragged unwillingly to death, but ... He came forward voluntarily to offer to the Father the sacrifice of obedience."³ It is important to note that Calvin does not abandon the notion of sacrifice in favour of the more ethical and spiritual notion of obedience but rather brings the two together. Sacrifices were important because they were instituted as a means of dealing with sin. That is, they made the people conscious of their sin and guilt and also taught that satisfaction must be made to God. But the important thing in sacrifices was obedience. What the sacrifices of the Old Covenant were unable to accomplish, namely, true expiation; and what they lacked, namely,

1. Inst. IV, 14, 21.

2. Comm. on Matthew 26:1, CO 45, 692: quia nisi obedientiae sacrificio placari Deus non poterat. See also Comm. on John 12:12, CO 47, 281: Nam mortem eius voluntariam esse oportuit quia non nisi obedientiae sacrificio poterat ira Dei erga nos placari.

3. Comm. on Matthew 17:1, CO 45, 484. See also Comm. on Matthew 27:34, CO 45, 765: "For even this was part of His sacrifice and obedience, to endure to the very last the lingering exhaustion"; and on John 19:12, CO 47, 412: Et certe haec obedientia effecit, ut mors eius boni odoris sacrificium esset expiandis omnibus peccatis.

true obedience, Calvin sees accomplished and fulfilled in the one unique and perfect sacrifice of obedience which Christ offered to the Father.

There were two important features in the Old Testament cult: the priest and the victim. Calvin sees the uniqueness of Christ's Sacrifice - which distinguishes it from the Old Testament sacrifices - in the fact that Christ was at once both priest and victim.¹ We shall consider these two aspects of Christ's Sacrifice in turn. In the last chapter we touched on Christ's Priestly office and here it will be necessary to consider a few aspects of Christ's priesthood which were not considered there.

Under the Old Covenant, expiation was founded on the priesthood.² The priest was an intermediary to intercede between God and man.³ He so "mediated as an intercessor, that He reconciled men to God and in a manner united heaven to earth."⁴ The great dignity of the Levitical priesthood consisted in the fact that they were representatives of Christ and, with respect to their office, were even better than the very angels.⁵ Calvin acknowledges that the heathen nations also had their own priests but he speaks of these as empty phantoms because there was no mention among them of a Mediator

1. Inst. II, 15, 6: ut idem esset hostia qui sacerdos.

2. Comm. on Lev. 6:7, CO 24, 529.

3. Inst. II, 12, 4.

4. Comm. on Exodus 28, CO 24, 426.

5. ibid.

and of the necessity of a peace-maker to intercede between them and God. The Levitical priesthood was different because by it the people were taught that they were unworthy to stand before God and that there was need of an Intercessor to propitiate Him.¹ In his Commentary on Hebrews, Calvin enumerates five characteristics of the Levitical priesthood: first, they were taken from among men; secondly, they did not represent themselves but the whole people; thirdly, they were to be furnished with sacrifices; fourthly, they were not sinless; and finally they were not to rush presumptuously into their office but were chosen and appointed by God.²

Christ is the "sole Pontiff and Priest of the New Testament."³ All priestly offices have been transferred to Him and are fulfilled and completed in Him.⁴ He is a "priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, that He should perform an everlasting priesthood."⁵ Calvin considers the priesthood of Christ in the light of the five characteristics of the Levitical priesthood given above. In regard to the first characteristic Calvin points out that Christ is able to represent us because He has a nature in common with us. "It was necessary," Calvin says, "for Christ to be a real man; for as we are very far from God, we stand in a manner

1. ibid.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 5:1, CO 55, 57.

3. Inst. IV, 18, 14 and IV, 18, 2.

4. Inst. III, 4, 4.

5. Inst. IV, 18, 2.

before Him in the person of our priest, which could not be, were He not one of us."¹ The Incarnation and Death of Christ are bound inseparably together. Christ's unity with our nature means that His representation of us is not artificial or fictitious but actual and real. The second point was that the priest was appointed for the common good of the people. This is of great importance for it means that the salvation of all men is connected with and revolves on the priesthood of Christ.² In regard to the third characteristic it was necessary for the priest to bring a sacrifice, for without a sacrifice the priest "is no peacemaker between God and men" and "sins are not atoned for, nor is the wrath of God pacified."³ Christ was, however, both Priest and Victim and therefore accomplished the true expiation. The fourth point is that though Christ, unlike the Levitical priests was exempt from all sin, He bore our infirmities and weaknesses. He is "a brother to us, not only on account of unity as to flesh and nature, but also by becoming a partaker of our infirmities, so that He is led, and, as it were, formed, to show forbearance and kindness."⁴ The final point Calvin regards as of extreme importance. The priesthood depends on God's authority for He is the sole author of the priesthood.⁵ Therefore it is unlawful for a person to assume the office to himself. Herein is the difference between the

1. Comm. on Hebrews 5:1, CO 55, 57; See also Comm. on Numbers 1:47, CO 25, 147; & on Isaiah 66:21, CO 37, 452.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 5:1, CO 55, 57.

3. *ibid.*, CO 55, 58.

4. Comm. on Hebrews 5:2, CO 55, 58.

5. Comm. on Exodus 28:1, CO 24, 428.

heathen nations and Israel. Among the heathen nations the priests were appointed by popular election; whereas in Israel God would have only those regarded as lawful priests whom He Himself had chosen.¹ Calvin emphasizes the point by saying that even "Christ Himself would not have been sufficient to propitiate God, unless He had undertaken the office by the decree and appointment of the Father."² Christ was called to the priestly office but He succeeded to it by a new and different way and was made an Eternal and Everlasting Priest.³ Though Calvin does not enlarge on it, he makes the statement that Christ's begetting included His priesthood.⁴ Christ's priesthood is therefore distinguished from the priesthood under the law. His is eternal; what existed before was only temporary. The type of Christ's priesthood under the Old Covenant is to be seen in the person of Melchisedek.⁵ He was both a King and a Priest and His priesthood was superior to that of the law because when Abraham paid him tithes he also received tithes of Levi himself.⁶ But what was only shadowed forth in Melchisedek was really accomplished in Jesus Christ.⁷ He is the true and Everlasting Priest.⁸ Moreover, while it

1. *ibid.*, CO 24, 428.

2. *ibid.*, CO 24, 428.

3. Comm. on Hebrews 5:4, CO 55, 59.

4. Comm. on Hebrews 5:5, CO 55, 60.

5. Comm. on Genesis 14:18, CO 23, 200-203; on Psalm 110:4, CO 32, 164-5; Preface to Comm. on Heb., CO 55, 7-8; on 5:6; 7:3; 17, CO 55, 60, 83-4, 91.

6. Comm. on Numbers 18:20, CO 24, 480.

7. Comm. on Heb. 7:3, CO 55, 83; and on Luke 24:50, CO 45, 827.

8. Comm. on Matthew 27:51, CO 45, 782.

was forbidden under the law for the same person to be both a priest and a king, Christ, like Melchisedek, is both King and Priest. By His priesthood He has abolished the ancient priesthood. And its abrogation means the abolition of the law for the law and cult belong together and the abrogation of the one means the abrogation of the other.¹ Calvin is careful to point out that by the law, here, he understands that which belonged properly to Moses - in which the love of the Gospel was not made known, the people were kept under veils, and the knowledge of Christ was set forth in types and shadows - in short, the law, as it was distinguished from Christ. The law as the rule of life and the gratuitous covenant of life is, however, not abolished.²

The characteristic activity of the Priest was that of sacrificing. We have already dealt with this feature of the cult and therefore it will not be necessary to go over that ground again. But we should devote some attention here to the great yearly atonement, when the High Priest entered the holy of holies to perform a sacrifice, which typified the once and for all sacrifice of Christ. Here again Calvin compares and distinguishes the office of Christ with that of the ancient high priest. The high priest under the Old Covenant alone entered the inner sanctuary once a year with blood to expiate sins.³ Under the law it

1. Comm. on Hebrews 7:12, CO 55, 89.

2. ibid.

3. Comm. on Lev. 16:2, CO ; on Heb. 9:11, CO 55, 109.

was forbidden for a priest to enter the sanctuary without blood.¹ In this way the great yearly atonement clearly represented the one and perpetual sacrifice offered by Christ.² Calvin, following the Epistle to the Hebrews, puts forward the general principle that 'Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.' (Hebrews 9:22).³ Sacrifices under the Old Covenant pointed to the true expiation which would be accomplished by Christ. "Surely, since in every age, even when the law had not yet been published, the Mediator never was promised without blood, we infer that He was appointed by God's eternal plan to purge the uncleanness of men; for shedding of blood is a sign of expiation."⁴ But to return to the point of the comparison. Calvin says that Christ is the true High Priest because He alone possesses the dignity of this office and He differs from the ancient High Priest in that "He brings with Him eternal blessings which secure a perpetuity to His priesthood."⁵ The second point of comparison and difference can be seen in the fact that both the ancient high priest and Christ entered the holy of holies but Christ alone entered into heaven through the temple of His body. "To enter once then was common to both, but to the earthly it was every year, while it was to the heavenly for ever, even to the end of the world."⁶ Thirdly,

1. Inst. II, 15, 6; and Comm. on 1 John 2:2, CO 55, 509.
2. Comm. on Lev. 16:2, CO 24, 501; Inst. IV, 14, 21.
3. Inst. II, 17, 4; Comm. on Heb. 9:22, CO 55, 117; and on 9:26, CO 55, 119.
4. Inst. II, 12, 4.
5. Comm. on Hebrews 9:11, CO 55, 109.
6. ibid.

both offered blood but with this difference, that Christ did not offer the blood of beasts but instead His own blood.¹ And finally, while expiation was common to both, that under the law was not truly effective because it was repeated every year, while the expiation accomplished by Christ is always effective and is the cause of eternal salvation.² Christ offered Himself and not an animal and He did not repeat His sacrifice, for having been accomplished once it is ever perpetual in its effects.³

Most of these points are admirably summed up by Calvin in his discussion of the Priestly Office of Christ in the Institutio: "But God's righteous curse bars our access to Him, and God, in His capacity as judge, is angry toward us. Hence, an expiation must intervene in order that Christ, as priest, may obtain God's favour for us and appease His wrath. Thus Christ, to perform this office, had to come forward with a sacrifice. For, under the law also, the priest was forbidden to enter the sanctuary without blood (Heb. 9:7), that believers might know, even though the priest as their advocate stood between them and God, that they could not propitiate God unless their sins were expiated ... The priestly office belongs to Christ alone because by the sacrifice of His death He blotted out our guilt and made satisfaction for our sins... Although God, under the law, commanded animal sacrifices to

1. ibid.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 9:11, CO 55, 109.

3. Comm. on Hebrews 9:25, CO 55, 118.

be offered to Himself, in Christ there was a new and different order, in which the same one was to be both priest and sacrifice. This was because no other satisfaction adequate for our sins and no man worthy to offer to God the only-begotten Son, could be found."¹ The intimate relation between forensic and sacrificial terms is evident in the above quotation. We shall have to speak of the unity of these two notions later.

Here a word should be said about the wrath of God although we shall also have to return to this in another context. While the notion that God can be and is angry with sinners sounds harsh and crude to the modern mind, Calvin, like Luther, was conscious of and felt intensely the fact of the wrath of God. Calvin knew that where there is sin there also the wrath and vengeance of God show themselves.² God is angry with sinners. Therefore the wrath of God is poured out on the whole world.³ But it is in the Cross that the wrath of God is fully revealed. "Surely, it was an amazing display of the wrath of God that He did not spare even His only begotten Son, and was not appeased in any other way than by that price of expiation."⁴ Because this wrath is real, something real has to be done to deal with it. The situation which has been created by sin and God's reaction

1. Inst. II, 15, 6.

2. Inst. III, 11, 2.

3. Comm. on Romans 1:18, CO 49, 22-3.

4. Comm. on Matthew 27:45, CO 45, 778.

to it must be met. God meets it and deals completely with it in the Cross of Christ. Christ's death is the expiation for our sins by which the wrath of God is appeased. He willingly assumed our flesh that He might be a sacrifice to appease God on our behalf.¹ "He offered as a sacrifice the flesh He received from us, that He might wipe out our guilt by His act of expiation and appease the Father's righteous wrath."² The other way in which Calvin expresses this is by the image of Christ as our Passover Lamb. While Calvin notes that there are some interpreters who did not think that the Passover lamb was a sacrifice, he holds that Scripture is clear that it was a proper sacrifice. A perfect lamb without blemish was chosen for the Passover. The Paschal Lamb was a type of Christ who by His death propitiated the Father.³ "Peter, by applying this to Christ, teaches us that He was a suitable victim, and approved by God, for He was perfect without any blemish; had He had any defect in Him, He could not have been rightly offered to God, nor could He pacify His wrath."⁴ Paul can say that 'Christ is our Passover' because "He has been sacrificed once for all, and on this condition that the effect of His unique sacrifice may be forever."⁵

1. Inst. II, 12, 4.

2. Inst. II, 12, 3.

3. Comm. on Exodus 12:21, CO 24, 136.

4. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:19, CO 55, 225.

5. Comm. on 1 Cor. 5:7-8, CO 49, 382-3; See also Comm. on John 1:29, CO 47, 25-27; Inst. IV, 18, 3.

The Sacrifice of Christ is also the sanctification of believers. Here we take up again the discussion of Chapter Five. There we noted that sanctification belonged to the whole life of Christ, but the highest illustration of it was given in the sacrifice of His death, "for then He appeared as the true High Priest, consecrating the Temple, the altar, all the vessels, and the people by the power of His Spirit."¹ This effect or consequence of Christ's death is extremely important. If we confine ourselves exclusively to the forensic or judicial aspect of Christ's death there is the danger of neglecting Calvin's understanding of Christ's death, not only as satisfying, but also as sanctifying in character. The endurance of His Passion and Cross were to Christ a solemn kind of consecration or initiation into the priesthood.² Two quotations will suffice to show the sanctifying effect of Christ's death. "But as it was a supereminent example of obedience in Christ to offer Himself to the death of the cross, and as it was for this especially that He put on the form of a servant, the Apostle says, that Christ by offering Himself fulfilled the command of His Father, and that we have been thus sanctified. When he adds, 'through the offering of the body, etc.' he alludes to that part of the Psalm, where he says, 'A body hast thou prepared for me,' at least as it is found in the Greek. He thus intimates that Christ found in Himself what could appease God, so that He

1. Comm. on John 17:19, CO 47, 385.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 5:9, CO 55, 64.

had no need of external aids. For, if the Levitical priests had a fit body, the sacrifices of beasts would have been superfluous. But Christ alone was sufficient, and was by Himself capable of performing whatever God required."¹ Christ "offered Himself as a sacrifice on the cross in order to sanctify us forever, and to acquire eternal redemption for us."² The blood of Christ has a sanctifying power.³ Under the law God had appointed both washings and sacrifices to shadow forth what would be perfectly accomplished in Christ. We are both cleansed and sanctified by Christ's blood. Commenting on 1 John 5:8-9, Calvin says, "This is why he had said earlier, 'Not by water only.' For he means that not only is a part of our salvation found in Christ, but so to say the whole of it entire, so that nothing has to be sought elsewhere."⁴ The sacrifice of Christ's death includes both satisfaction and sanctification. The blood of Christ both satisfies the wrath of God and acts as a laver to wash away our corruption.⁵ Therefore, Calvin says that we must "keep sacrifice and cleansing constantly in mind. For we could not believe with assurance that Christ is our redemption, ransom, and propitiation unless He had been a sacrificial victim."⁶

Two further points of interest deserve to be mentioned.

1. Comm. on Hebrews 10:10, CO 55, 125-6.
2. Inst. IV, 18, 3.
3. Inst. II, 17, 4.
4. Comm. on 1 John 5:8-9, CO 55, 366; and on 1 John 5:6, CO 55, 364.
5. Inst. II, 16, 6; and Comm. on Eph. 5:2, CO 51, 214; and on Titus 3:5, CO 52, 429-30.
6. Inst. II, 16, 6.

The first is that Calvin emphasizes that Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice through the "eternal Spirit". Christ's death is not to be regarded externally but by the power of the Spirit.¹ His sacrifice would not otherwise be effective if He had not suffered by the Spirit.² "For Christ suffered as man; but that death becomes saving to us through the efficacious power of the Spirit; for a sacrifice which was to be an eternal expiation was a work more than human. And he calls the Spirit 'eternal' for this reason, that we may know that the reconciliation, of which He is the worker or effector, is eternal."³

The second point is Calvin's view that the Sacrifice of Christ's death has retroactive effect. Under the law the priests were continually sacrificing. Christ's sacrifice was offered once and for all and is eternal in its effect. Its consequences extend perpetually both forward and backward. "And he says, since the foundation of the world, or, from the beginning of the world; for in all ages from the beginning there were sins which needed expiation. Except then the sacrifice of Christ was efficacious, no one of the fathers would have obtained salvation; for as they were exposed to God's wrath, a remedy for deliverance would have failed them, had not Christ by suffering once suffered so much as was necessary

1. Comm. on Heb. 9:14, CO 55, 111; and Inst. II, 16, 6; and IV, 14, 21.
2. Comm. on Ex. 30:23; and 27:1, CO 24, 446, 418; and on Matt. 27:51, CO 45, 782.
3. Comm. on Hebrews 9:14, CO 55, 111.

to reconcile men to God from the beginning of the world to the end."¹ Christ does not need to be offered many times as is done in the Mass. His sacrifice is both once for all and is eternal in its effects.

The Death of Christ as a Penalty for Sin

We will now direct our attention to the penal and substitutionary elements of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation for which he is best known. Here the setting is the legal or judicial one. Christ takes our place before the judgement seat of God, is condemned, and pays the penalty for our sins. We have repeatedly run across this emphasis in our discussion. Our purpose has not been in any way to ignore or to soft-pedal this aspect of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation. To do so would be to fly into the face of irrefutable evidence. Our point has simply been that this aspect of Calvin's emphasis must not be abstracted from the larger picture which he gives, for this inevitably distorts and leaves many important things unsaid. Our purpose in this section will be, not only to indicate how important this forensic emphasis was for Calvin, but also to show that, when Calvin uses the judicial categories, he does not commit those errors which are usually associated with the "penal substitutionary theory"; that is, to use a very descriptive phrase of Professor McIntyre's, he does not reduce the Atonement to "a tidy system of punishment".¹ It will

1. John McIntyre, Anselm and his Critics, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1954, p. 199.

become clear from our discussion that, however harsh the language of law and penalty in this context may sound to us, Calvin used it because he believed Scripture used it. We may not always be able to give the same value to some of these terms as Calvin did, but we cannot ignore or neglect this element in the Biblical picture of the work of reconciliation.

First of all, it is necessary to see how Calvin relates the notions of obedience and penalty. This is set forward very clearly in the Institutio, where Calvin says that Christ came to undo the disobedience of Adam by an act of the opposite kind: "Therefore our Lord came forth as true man, adopted the person of Adam and assumed His name in order to take Adam's place in obeying the Father, to present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to God's righteous judgement and in the same flesh to pay the penalty which we had deserved."¹ The obedience of Christ is a specific and concrete obedience for it is an obedience to the will of the Father which requires that He should offer Himself as a sacrifice and penalty for our sins. The pro nobis aspect is here clearly to the fore. Christ is obedient in our stead and pays the penalty for sin in our place.

Christ's way of obedience means His taking of our sin in all its terrible reality and with all its dreadful consequences upon Himself. His entrance into our situation means

1. Inst. II, 12, 3.

that He sustains "the character of a guilty man and evildoer."¹ There can be no getting around the fact that the death of Christ has to do with our sin and our guilt, and therefore Christ assumes our character and exposes Himself to the judgement of God. He "assumed in a manner (quodammodo) our place, that He might be a criminal in our room, and might be dealt with as a sinner, not for His own offences, but for those of others, inasmuch as He was pure and exempt from every fault, and might endure the punishment that was due not to Himself but to us."² Calvin makes full use of the language and the thought of Isaiah 53. Christ was "numbered among the transgressors." (53:12). He who is Himself "eternal justice" was ranked with robbers.³ The prediction of Isaiah 53:12, which Luke uses, applies clearly to Christ: "Now since it is there said that He was to be 'reckoned among transgressors', such a spectacle, however atrocious, ought not to alarm believers, or to alienate them from Christ, who could not have been their Redeemer in any other way than by taking upon Himself the shame and disgrace of a wicked man. For nothing is better adapted to remove grounds of offence, when we are alarmed by any strange occurrence, than to acknowledge that it so pleases God, and that whatever takes place by His appointment is not done rashly or without good reason; more especially when that which is made evident by the event itself was anciently predicted."⁴

1. Inst. II, 16, 5.

2. Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:21, 60 50, 74.

3. Comm. on Matthew 27:27, CO 45, 768.

4. Comm. on Luke 22:37, CO 45, 717; Inst. II, 16, 5.

Taking our place and sustaining our character means further that Christ comes before the bar of God's tribunal. "And as He assumed our person and took upon Him our sins, it was necessary that He should appear before the judgement seat of God as a sinner."¹ Since sin is against God and God regards it with utmost seriousness, Christ's sustaining of our character involves submitting to the judgement of God. There was no way of escaping God's dreadful judgement. "The supreme and sole Judge of the world is placed at the bar of an earthly judge, is condemned to crucifixion as an evildoer, and what is more is placed between two robbers as if He had been the prince of robbers."² The trial of Jesus has a particular importance for Calvin. He holds that it clearly establishes Christ's innocence and shows that it was our place which He took and our condemnation which He suffered. "He was justified by the testimony of the judge, to show that He did not suffer for His own unworthiness but for ours and yet He was solemnly condemned by the sentence of the same judge, to show that He is truly our surety, receiving condemnation for us in order to acquit us from it."³ Pilate witnesses to Christ's innocence. He not only says that he can find no crime in Him but by the act of washing his hands testifies to Christ's

1. Comm. on Psalm 22:2, CO 31, 222: Et certe suspecta nostra persona nostroque reatu, necesse habuit ad Dei tribunal se instar peccatoris sistere.
2. Comm. on Matthew 27:24, CO 45, 759.
3. Geneva Catechism A. 58, Torrance, op. cit., p. 14.

innocence.¹ It is His "shining innocence" which shows that "He was burdened with another's sin rather than His own."² "For He suffered death not because of innocence but because of sin."³ Christ allows Himself therefore to be condemned before a mortal man.⁴ He submits to judgement and condemnation without pleading His cause or making any defence as is the case with those who wish to be acquitted, and thereby acknowledges that the judgement is perfectly right and just.⁵ In our place Christ submits to the righteous judgement of God upon sinners, makes no protest whatsoever, and therefore admits the justice of the sentence. As a result we are acquitted: "The guilt that held us liable for punishment has been transferred to the head of the Son of God. (Isa. 53:12). We must above all remember this substitution (compensatio) lest we tremble and remain anxious throughout life - as if God's righteous vengeance, which the Son of God has taken upon Himself still hung over us."⁶ Calvin's purpose here is thoroughly evangelical. Our confidence and hope is based on the fact that Christ has completely taken our place - sustained our character, accepted our condemnation, and suffered our punishment - so that we no longer need to fear that we must pay the penalty or do something in

1. Comm. on John 19:6, CO 47, 407; Comm. on Matth. 27:24, CO 45, 759; Inst. II, 16, 5; and Comm. on Matthew 27:19, CO 55, 756.

2. Inst. II, 16, 5.

3. ibid.

4. Comm. on Luke 23:4, CO 45, 752.

5. Comm. on John 19:19, CO 47, 409-10.

6. Inst. II, 16, 5.

order to deliver ourselves from God's righteous vengeance. We shall have to return later to this evangelical purpose which underlies Calvin's emphasis upon Christ bearing our punishment.

As the One who has assumed our persona and has taken our sins, Christ must not only be judged and condemned but He must also bear our punishment. Calvin uses the notion of exchange or transfer to express this. As the guilt which made us liable to punishment was transferred to the Son of God, so the penalty of our iniquities is also transferred to Him.¹ He had clothed Himself with our flesh that He might endure the punishment due to our sins.² Calvin remarks on the significance of the kind of death which Christ suffered. It was not enough that Christ should undergo just any kind of death - to be murdered by thieves or slain by a mob in an insurrection - but that He should make satisfaction by this form of death in which our guilt and punishment is transferred to Him.³ The form of Christ's death, namely, the Cross, shows that He subjected Himself to the curse of men and of the Law of God.⁴ "For as under the law, the sinner, that he might be released from guilt, substituted a victim in his own place; so Christ took upon Himself the curse due to our sins, that He might atone for them before God. And he expressly adds, 'on the tree' because He could not offer such an expiation

1. Inst. II, 16, 5; and Comm. on Isaiah 53:5, CO 37, 258.

2. Comm. on Matthew 24:36, CO 45, 672.

3. Inst. II, 16, 5.

4. Inst. II, 16, 6.

except on the cross. Peter, therefore, well expresses the truth that Christ's death was a sacrifice for the expiation of our sins; for being fixed on the cross and offering Himself a victim for us, He took on Himself our sin and punishment."¹ In emphasizing Christ's death as a penalty, Calvin is guided largely by such Biblical texts as Isaiah 53; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Galatians 3:13. We quote his comments on this last text, a text which he made great use of: "Now Christ hung upon the cross, therefore he fell under that curse. But it is certain that He did not suffer that punishment on His own account. It follows, therefore, either that He was crucified in vain, or that our curse was laid upon Him, in order that we might be delivered from it. Now, he does not say that Christ was cursed, but, which is still more, that He was 'a curse' - intimating that the curse 'of all men was laid upon Him'. (Isa. 53:6). If any man think this language harsh, let him be ashamed of the cross of Christ, in the confession of which we glory. It was not unknown to God what death His own Son would die, when He pronounced the law, 'He that is hanged is accursed of God.' (Deut. 21:23)."² Calvin feels that, in faithfulness to Scripture, he is committed to use the notion of penalty even though it

1. Comm. on 1 Peter 2:24, CO 55, 251-2: Sicuti enim sub lege, peccator ut reatu solveretur victimam substituebat suo loco: ita Christus maledictionem peccatis nostris debitam in se suscepit, ut ea coram Deo expiaret.
2. Comm. on Galatians 3:13, CO 50, 209-10; on Deut. 21:23, CO 24, 629; on Phil. 2:8, CO 52, 27; on 2 Cor. 5:21, CO 50, 74; Inst. II, 7, 15; II, 17, 4, etc.

is harsh and severe.

The utter seriousness with which Calvin took the idea of Christ's condemnation and judgement is more than clear from his interpretation of Christ's Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the Cross as His descensus ad inferos. Five paragraphs are devoted to this doctrine in the 1559 edition of the Institutio for Calvin's interpretation of this clause of the Apostles' Creed had been contested by his critics throughout his whole life.¹ Therefore he sought to establish it from Scripture and also to defend the doctrine from misunderstanding and error. With regard to the problem why Christ experienced such intense agony in the Garden and on the Cross, we noted that Calvin gave the answer that He feared the righteous judgement of God. Death in itself and as such was not the object of Christ's dread. If it were, then Christ would have been "more effeminate and timid than the generality of men".² Christ's great agony was His descensus ad inferos. This article of the Creed means that "not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that there was a greater and more excellent price, that He bore in His soul the tortures of condemned and ruined man."³ Calvin, in accordance with the patristic notion that what is unassumed is unhealed, emphasizes that Christ's suffering in soul as well as

1. See Paul Althaus, Calvins Kampf um seine Lehre vom Leiden Christi, in Theologische Blätter 22, 1942, pp. 132-6 who identifies the "untutored wretches" (Inst. II, 16, 12) as a group of Vaudland pastors particularly Zebedee of Noyon and Lange of Bursin.

2. Inst. II, 16, 12.

3. Inst. II, 16, 10.

body is decisively important for our salvation. Had Christ not experienced in His soul the punishment of God He would not have been the Redeemer of the body only.¹ Man is a sinner as a whole. Moreover, it is in the soul that the inclination to obedience or disobedience lies. Christ experiences in His soul the severity of the divine judgement, appeases the wrath of God and satisfies His justice. His agony means that He has to "grapple hand to hand with the armies of hell and the dread of everlasting death."² His greatest agony is most evident, according to Calvin, in the cry from the Cross: 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' Calvin will not allow that God was ever angry toward His Son or that He forsook Him at the Cross, and we shall have occasion to say something more about this. Still, "... it was necessary that He should suffer fearful distress of conscience, as if He had been forsaken by God, and even as if God had become hostile to Him. It was in this extremity that He cried, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me.'"³ Calvin puts this very strongly: "And certainly this was His chief conflict and harder than all the other tortures, that in His anguish He was so far from being soothed by the assistance or favour of His Father, that He felt Himself to be in some measure estranged from Him. For not only did He offer His body as the price of our reconciliation with God, but in His soul also He endured the punishments due to

1. Inst. II, 16, 12.

2. Inst. II, 16, 10.

3. Geneva Catechism, Torrance, op. cit., p. 15.

us; and thus He became as Isaiah speaks, a 'man of sorrows'."¹

One further point in Calvin's exposition, before we consider in general Calvin's use of the penal categories: It is his emphasis upon the fact that Christ's death applies to all men. This is most clear in his exposition of the words of the Last Supper, 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood which is shed for many' (Mark 14:24): "By the word 'many' he means not a part of the world only, but the whole human race; for he contrasts many with 'one'; as if he had said, that He will not be the Redeemer of one man only, but will die in order to deliver 'many' from the condemnation of the curse."² The word 'many' does not stand for a fixed number but for all men. Calvin remarks that Paul uses it in Romans 5:15 not to refer to a limited number of men but to the whole human race.³ (We have seen, however, that Calvin will not say as a result that Christ has made all men righteous by His obedience. Righteousness is proclaimed to all men but is not in reality extended to all men; "for though Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world, and is offered through God's favour to all, yet all do not receive Him."⁴ But Christ bears the sins of all men and suffers the punishment which is due to all men and therefore is offered to all the world. "That then, is how our Lord Jesus bore the sins

1. Comm. on Matthew 27:46, CO 45, 779; on Psalm 22:2, CO 31, 220-2; Inst. II, 16, 11, 12.

2. Comm. on Mark 14:24, CO 45, 711.

3. Comm. on Matt. 20:28, CO 45, 559; and on Rom. 5:15, CO 49, 98.

4. Supra, Chapter III, p. 30; Comm. on Rom. 5:19, CO 49, 101.

and iniquities of many. But in fact, this word 'many' is often as good as equivalent to 'all'. And indeed, our Lord Jesus Christ was offered to all the world. For it is not speaking of three of four when it says: 'God so loved the world, that He spared not His only Son.' But yet we must notice what the Evangelist adds in this passage: 'That whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but obtain eternal life.' Our Lord Jesus suffered for all and there is neither great nor small who is not inexcusable today, for we can obtain salvation in Him. Unbelievers who turn away from Him, and who deprive themselves of Him by their malice are today doubly culpable. For how will they excuse their ingratitude in not receiving the blessing in which they could share by faith?"¹

It is interesting to note that in the above passage, which is taken from one of Calvin's sermons, the emphasis is clearly on the fact that Christ died for all men and that all men can receive the gift of salvation. This does not mean that Calvin never preached reprobation but only used it as a dogmatic concept. There are sermons in which reprobation is preached. But in order to understand how Calvin could say that Christ died for all men and the gift of salvation is offered to all, and also say that righteousness is preached to all but is not actually extended to all, we must not conclude that Calvin held the view of Reformed Orthodoxy that Christ died sufficiently for all men but effectively only for the elect. Calvin

1. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah 53:12, CO 35, 678-9; Parker's trans., p. 141.

would not admit such a distinction. It is difficult to regard the above two statements of Calvin's as anything but contradictory. Unbelief created a real problem for Calvin. He looked upon unbelief as the cause of reprobation but not as the sole cause for this would be to take election and reprobation out of the hands of God and put them into the hands of men. Reprobation is laid up in the secret counsels of God and in some mysterious way unbelief is a manifestation of reprobation. Christ has suffered and died for all men and all men can receive the gift of salvation. That they do not all receive it is an "accidental" or "adventitious" result. The proper work of the Gospel is to save men but on account of men's depravity what is life becomes death for some men. Christ is "the light of the world but He blinds unbelievers. (John 9:39). He is a rock for a foundation but He is also to many a stone of stumbling. (Isaiah 8:14). We must always therefore distinguish between the proper office of the Gospel and the accidental one (so to speak) which must be imputed to the depravity of mankind, to which it is owing that life to them is turned into death." ¹ Calvin's doctrine of election contains a real problem; namely, the tendency to separate the Father and the Son in the work of election. This much, however, must be said in Calvin's favour: he never reduced the mystery of election and reprobation to a neat logical or systematic form. His doctrine of election contains statements which cannot be easily integrated. Rather we have

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 2:15, CO 50, 34.

here what Hermann Bauke has called a complexio oppositorum.¹

We must now consider in general Calvin's use of the forensic and penal categories. The use of these notions to represent the death of Christ has been severely attacked in the last century and even earlier and therefore it is necessary to see Calvin's use of these categories in the light of this criticism. It should be said first of all that Scripture employs many judicial expressions to describe Christ's death: those of guilt, condemnation, judgement, punishment, pardon, etc. As Emil Brunner has said, it would be difficult to imagine a Bible without them.² The notions of penalty and substitution can be found in the Old Testament, particularly in Isaiah 53, and may also be present to some degree in such New Testament passages as 2 Cor. 5:21, 1 Peter 2:24, and Galatians 3:13. We cannot content ourselves, however, with the answer that Calvin used these categories because Scripture uses them. To give such a simple and general answer would be not only to misunderstand the character of Scripture but also the nature of Calvin's theology. There are other reasons why Calvin used these notions and we must consider them here.

First of all, there can be no doubt that Calvin held that the forensic and penal categories express the gravity of sin and the seriousness with which God regards it. Calvin is

1. Die Problem der Theologie Calvins, Leipzig: 1922.

2. The Mediator, op. cit., p. 465.

at one with Anselm's statement of the matter, Nondum considerati^s quanti ponderis sit peccatum. Sin is an absolutely serious matter. It has created a state of alienation between God and man. Man is guilty and is under the divine condemnation. Something must be done to remove the obstacle of sin, to effect reconciliation between God and man, and to restore the fallen order of things. One of the ways in which Calvin sees this accomplished - and here we must remember that this is only one among a number of ways in which Calvin looks at the matter - is that Christ assumes our character, bears our sin, experiences our condemnation, and suffers our punishment. The notion of Christ's death as a punishment is used then to express the gravity and seriousness of our sin.

Calvin's employment of the category of punishment must also be seen in relation to the penitential system of the Roman Church of his day. The medieval theologians made a distinction between penalty and guilt and said that, whereas guilt is completely pardoned by the mercy of God, a penalty still has to be paid to God's justice. This penalty, they said, can be remitted by satisfactions.¹ The penitent, however, can never be absolutely certain that the whole penalty has been paid and if he takes God's judgement with dead seriousness, he is left in a continuous state of turmoil and

1. Inst. III, 4, 29. See J.T. McNeill's edition of the Institutio where references are given to Aquinas, Summa Theol. III, lxxxvi. 4; III. Suppl. xv. 1. Cf I II ae lxxxvii. 4; Bonaventura, Commentary on the Sentences IV. xviii. part i. art. 21 qu. 2.

anguish. Over against the Roman Church Calvin wished to make it clear that the work of Christ is a complete work and that our Lord, by His sacrifice on the Cross, not only removed the guilt, but also the penalty which all men deserved.¹ If therefore the notion of penalty is sometimes to the fore in Calvin's discussion of the death of Christ, we must remember that behind it lies the thoroughly evangelical motive, namely, to give men and women the confidence and hope that not only their guilt but also their punishment has been transferred to Christ and therefore they need not tremble or be anxious throughout life that God's righteous judgement still hangs over them.² The punishment which all men deserved has been borne by Christ. Therefore, a new future has been created for man; a future which no longer involves the fear of divine condemnation and punishment but a life of perfect fellowship and communion with God.

It should be pointed out, however, that the concept of punishment is a difficult one and that, if we are to employ it, we must be aware of some of its difficulties.³ First of all, it is clear that no precise meaning can be given to this notion. Punishment has been defined as the infliction of some kind of pain or loss upon a person for a crime committed.⁴ This simple definition, however, only conceals

1. Inst. III, 4, 30. See also Comm. on Isaiah 53:5, CO 37, 258.

2. Inst. II, 16, 5.

3. See J. McIntyre, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

4. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 18, London: William Benton, 1959, p. 772.

the real complexity of the notion. Its wide and complex range of meaning can be indicated by pointing out, first, that the infliction of 'some kind of pain or loss' of the definition may be motivated by a retributive, a reformative, or a deterrent purpose; and secondly, that in a particular punishment, one, two, or possibly all three of the above motives may be at work.

The complexity of the notion is in part due to our change in understanding of the concept in recent times. Until about a century ago punishment was usually thought of as purely retributive in character. Social reformers questioned this. As a result the purely retributive understanding of punishment, with its notion of justice as an end in itself has been superseded by a theory which regards punishment not so much as an end in itself^{or} as a means to an end and one in which the person and good of the criminal are taken into account. This, of course, does not mean that retribution - the fixing of a penalty commensurate with the crime and its infliction - is no longer an element in punishment. If it were not, then crime would be condoned and would go scot-free. But it means that this aspect of punishment cannot be abstracted from other ends and in particular the purpose of reforming the criminal.

When we say that Christ's death is a penalty or punishment for sin then we must be aware both of the complexity of this concept and of the change in our understanding of it. It need hardly be pointed out that when the category

of punishment is applied to Christ's death it is the retributive understanding of it which is generally at work. The disciplinary or reformatory notion may be present in the sense that Christ learned obedience by the things which He suffered; the notion of deterrence may also be operative, but the notion of retribution is uppermost.

But to return to Calvin. When he speaks of Christ's death as penal in character he does so with great care. The retributive understanding of punishment of course is at work in his notion of the just judgement of God upon sin, but, however, rightly so. Sin for Calvin was an absolutely serious matter. Therefore he saw God's judgement against man's sin as an absolute and inexorable one. But Calvin was always eminently clear that this inexorable and annihilating judgement of God's against sin is determined by a loving and saving purpose.

Thus, according to Calvin, reconciliation has its source in the eternal love and purpose of God for our salvation. He makes this clear before he begins his discussion of the death of Christ in Chapter XVI of the Second Book of the Institutio. Here he quotes with approval the words of Augustine on the matter: "The love of God is incomprehensible and unchangeable. For it was not after we were reconciled to Him through the blood of His Son that He began to love us. Rather, He has loved us before the world was created, that we also might be His sons along with His only-begotten Son - before we became anything at all. The fact that we were

reconciled through Christ's death must not be understood as if His Son reconciled us to Him that He might now begin to love those whom He had hated. Rather, as we have already been reconciled to Him who loves us, with whom we were enemies on account of sin."¹ This basic thought keeps recurring throughout Calvin's writings,² and determines everything which he has to say about the work of reconciliation. The work of Christ does not transform God from One who hated us to One who loved us, from One who refused to One who wanted to forgive us. Atonement proceeds from the eternal love of God and therefore we must not think of the pagan idea of a change in God which is wrought through the death of Christ. Nor are we to think that the Father represents justice and the Son love and that Christ's death extracts from the Father what He was Himself not willing to grant. There is a continuity of God's gracious action in the work of reconciliation. The love of the Father is the cause of our reconciliation and the way in which His love is realized is in the work of Christ for our salvation. Atonement therefore has its source in the love of God and its end is our salvation. It involves

1. Inst. II, 16, 4.

2. See Comm. on John 3:16, CO 47, 64: "But we should remember ... that the secret love in which our heavenly Father embraced us to Himself is, since it flows from His eternal good pleasure, precedent to all other causes; but the grace which He wants to be testified to us and by which we are stirred to the hope of salvation begins with the reconciliation provided through Christ. For since He necessarily hates sin, how shall we be convinced that He loves us until those sins for which He is justly angry with us have been expiated? Thus before we can have any feeling of His fatherly kindness the blood of Christ must intercede to reconcile God to us." See also on Rom. 5:10, CO 49, 94; on 2 Cor. 5:19 & 13:13, CO 50, 71-2 & 154-5; and on 1 John 4:10, CO 55, 353-4.

judgement - the absolute and inexorable judgement of God - but not judgement for judgement's sake but for the sake of our salvation. We are sinful and therefore guilty in God's sight. Yet God in His great mercy loves us. "However much we have brought death upon ourselves, yet He has created us for life. Thus He is moved by gratuitous love to receive us into His favour."¹

It is clear then that, although Calvin used penal categories, he never reduced the Atonement to a 'tidy system of punishment'. Thus, with regard to the crucial question - whether Christ in suffering our punishment was the object of God's wrath - Calvin says: "We do not suggest that God was ever inimical or angry toward Him. How could He be angry with His beloved Son, 'in Whom His heart reposed' (Matthew 3:17)? How could Christ, by His intercession, appease the Father toward others, if He were Himself hateful to God? What we are saying is that He bore the weight of the divine severity, since He was 'stricken and afflicted' (cf. Isa. 53:5) by God's hand, and experienced all the signs of a wrathful and avenging God."² Calvin will use the notion of punishment to speak of Christ's death but he will never allow that Christ was, therefore, the object of God's wrath. In this connection it

1. Inst. II, 16, 3.

2. Inst. II, 16, 11: Neque tamen innuimus Deum fuisse unquam illi vel adversarium vel iratum ... Sed hoc nos dicimus, divinae severitatis gravitatem eum sustinuisse: quoniam manu Dei percussus et afflictus, omnia irati et punientis Dei signa expertus est.

should also be pointed out that Calvin did not have anything to do with, or did not in any way prepare the ground for the 'blood and wound' theology of the Cross of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. When Calvin used the category of punishment he emphasized the agony and dread which Christ endured in His soul. He had very little to say about Christ's bodily pain and suffering.

While all this has to be said in Calvin's favour, we must now ask whether Christ's death is presented as a punishment for sin in Scripture and, if so, whether this notion is strongly represented. It has been pointed out that the penal understanding of Christ's death derives largely from the Old Testament, particularly from Isaiah 53.¹ In the New Testament no really explicit use is made of it. It may, however, be an element in such texts as Galatians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and 1 Peter 2:24. This, of course, does not mean that the notion must be completely rejected by dogmatic theology on that account. It can be employed to express the truth that man's sin against God involves God's annihilating judgement upon man's sin. When God is disobeyed and resisted then His love "works itself out as death-dealing wrath."² But we must not make punishment the main concept in our presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement.

1. The point has often been made but see particularly Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/1, op. cit., p. 253.

2. See Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/1, op. cit., p. 253, on this whole matter.

To return again to Calvin. We said earlier that Calvin used the notion of punishment because he believed Scripture employed it. Here we must take up that point and say that, while this is so, it is also true that in his Commentaries on the New Testament, Calvin used the notion of Christ's death as a punishment for sin far more often than the text actually warrants.¹ The reason for this, we believe, is that at this particular point Calvin allowed his interpretation to be too strongly influenced by the Old Testament, and particularly of Isaiah 53. Scripture, of course, is an organic whole and we should use one part to help us to understand and to interpret another. Therefore, we must use the Old Testament to throw light upon our understanding of the death of Christ. In this use of Old Testament Scripture one of the highest places of honour will be given to Isaiah 53. But we must always be careful to preserve the distinction between the Old and New Testament. If the Old Testament is, as Calvin says, shadow, and the New Testament is reality, then, however exalted a place we give Isaiah 53, we must always remember that it belongs to the Old Testament, that it is a 'figure', and that it only shadows forth the reality of Christ's death. It is in this 'figurative' sense, we believe, that the New

1. See how the notion of punishment, though not actually in the text, creeps into Calvin's interpretation of the following New Testament passages from Isaiah 53: on Matthew 27:46, CO 45, 779; on Luke 22:37, CO 45, 716-7; and on Romans 4:25, CO 49, 87. Also on 2 Corinthians 5:21, CO 50, 73-4; on Galatians 3:13, CO 50, 209-10; and on 1 Peter 2:24, CO 55, 251-2.

Testament writers employ this Old Testament passage. It is also noteworthy that they never quote the strongly penal verses. Calvin's employment of Isaiah 53, we feel, goes beyond this 'figurative' use and therefore he finds the notion of Christ's death as a punishment for sin, in New Testament passages where this concept does not explicitly occur. For this reason we cannot give the concept of punishment quite the same value as he did.

While all this must be said, it cannot be too strongly emphasized that punishment is not the main concept in Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Where it does occur, it is in conjunction with other notions, usually those of sacrifice and obedience, and is thus modified by them. Moreover, in using the concept, Calvin avoids the pitfalls which are usually associated with it. We conclude this discussion by reminding ourselves that, for Calvin, Christ's death is penal in character in the following sense: Man's sin is something against which God is unalterably opposed. It cannot go free for God's reaction against it is absolute and inexorable. In identifying Himself with sinful men Christ must experience God's annihilating judgement and suffer the punishment which men have brought upon themselves by their sin. By acquiescing in the judgement of God and submitting to our condemnation and our death, Christ delivers us and reconciles us to the Father.

Satisfaction

It will be our purpose in the remainder of this chapter

to consider briefly three other ways in which Calvin looked at the death of Christ. In this section we shall discuss Christ's death as a satisfaction, then we shall have to look at Calvin's use of the notion of the 'Merits of Christ', and finally we will take up again the Christus Victor theme which we considered in part in Chapter Four. After we have concluded our discussion of these other standpoints which Calvin uses, we will have a few words to say about how the various images are related and combined.

First, then, the notion of Christ's death as a satisfaction to the righteous judgement of God. This idea is connected by Calvin with the notions of obedience and of punishment, as can be easily seen from the following quotation:

"Therefore our Lord came forth very man, adopted the person of Adam and assumed his name, that He might in his stead obey the Father; that He might present our flesh as the price of satisfaction to the just judgement of God and in the same flesh pay the penalty which we had incurred."¹ We will consider first the relation of obedience and satisfaction. For Calvin, the obedience of Christ is the perfect satisfaction.² By His obedience Christ has satisfied the Father's justice.³ When Calvin says this he means not only the obedience of

1. Inst. II, 12, 3.

2. Introduction to Comm. on Acts, (Calvin Translation Society) P. xxi - xxii.

3. Comm. on Rom. 3:24, CO 49, 61. See also Nineteenth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 225: Mais comme nous sommes coupables devant Dieu et en son iugement, aussi nous avons l'obeissance de nostre Seigneur Jesus Christ qui respond et satisfait, afin de nous acquitter de toutes nos dettes.

Christ's death (obedientia passiva) but also the obedience of Christ's life (obedientia activa). The work of reconciliation is not merely negative in the sense that it removes the obstacle of sin; but also positive in the sense that righteousness is procured for us. In satisfying the Father's justice, Christ not only does away with our sin but also makes us righteous through His obedience. This is clear from Calvin's comments on Romans 5:19: "And then as he declares that we are made righteous through the obedience of Christ we hence conclude that Christ, in satisfying the Father, has provided a righteousness for us."¹ By the whole course of His obedience on earth, from the cradle to the Cross, Christ satisfied the Father's justice and obtained righteousness for us.

The notion of satisfaction is also connected by Calvin with the idea of punishment. Thus Calvin writes: "We have in His death the complete fulfilment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, His righteous judgement is satisfied, the curse is removed, and the penalty paid in full."² Commenting on 1 Corinthians 15:3, 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures', Calvin describes the death of Christ as a poena satisfactoria but he also makes use of the sacrificial image: "For what else was the death of Christ, but a sacrifice for the expiation of our sins; an atoning punishment through which we are reconciled to God; the condem-

1. Comm. on Romans 5:19, CO 49, 101.
2. Inst. II, 16, 13.

nation of one person to procure our acquittal?"¹ Here again we see that Calvin refused to confine himself to the use of one image or concept. When the notions of punishment and satisfaction are employed they do not appear in 'splendid isolation' but are used in conjunction with other images, in this instance, the sacrificial one. Therefore we must not abstract them from the total picture which Calvin gives of the work of Christ.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the doctrine of satisfaction does not mean that Christ offered the Father an exact equivalent. Calvin's understanding of the notion does not require him to say that Christ's suffering and death is the same in kind and degree as the penalty which was due those, for whom Christ acted. Paul van Buren has expressed this very well. He says: "The connotation for Calvin of God's satisfaction ... is far from that of a cruel miser who insists on getting what is his due."² There can be no mention of equivalence for that would immediately set up an opposition between the Father and the Son and nowhere will Calvin allow such an opposition. There is a unity of the Father and the Son in the work of reconciliation from its initiation in the 'secret counsels of God' to its execution and fulfilment in

1. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:3, CO 49, 538: Quid enim aliud fuit mors Christi quam sacrificium pro expiandis peccatis? Quam poena satisfactoria, per quam Deo reconciliaremur? Quam unius damnatio ad impetrandam nobis absolutionem?

2. op. cit., p. 74.

the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This will be more clearly shown in the section which follows on the 'Merits of Christ'. When Calvin uses the doctrine of satisfaction, then, he does not have the notion of equivalence in mind but wishes to express the fact that Christ's work is a complete and effective one, not only in destroying our sin but also in obtaining righteousness for us, and therefore no other 'satisfactions' are required.

The Merits of Christ

Calvin's discussion of the 'Merits of Christ' is worthy of careful attention. The chapter was added to the 1559 edition of the Institutio as an answer to Camillus Renatus and Laelius Socinus who, in letters to Calvin, raised the point that if the will of God is absolutely free and therefore undetermined by anything outside it, then our salvation must proceed from God alone and is not to be attributed to the merits of Christ.¹ The charge which they brought against Calvin was that by using the notion of merit he obscured the grace of God. Calvin was aware of this difficulty which the notion of merit raised. Therefore, in replying to the charge, he admits, first of all, that "were Christ opposed simply and by Himself to the justice of God, there could be no room for merit, because there cannot be found in man a worth which

1. See OS III, pp. 508 ff.; F. Wendel, op. cit., pp. 171 ff.; J. Köstlin, op. cit., p. 449 ff.; and Paul van Buren, op. cit., p. 60 ff.

could make God a debtor."¹ To show that this is far from his own intention and view he appeals to Augustine's idea that Christ is the brightest illustration of predestination and grace. Augustine had said that Christ's character as Saviour was procured neither by faith nor by works in His nature. Rather the grace by which every man from the beginning of his faith becomes a Christian is the very same grace by which that man from His beginning became Christ. Therefore Calvin says that when we speak of the merit of Christ we do not give it a primary and independent role; on the contrary, the merit of Christ is located in the ordination of God as its primary and ultimate cause. In accordance with the principle that things quae subalternum sunt, non pugere, there can be no conflict between the merit of Christ and the mercy of God. Salvation is the result of both the gratuitous mercy of God and the merit of Christ intervening in subordination to that mercy. Both the grace of God and the merit of Christ are also equally opposed to any notion of human merit. "For Christ could not merit anything apart from the good pleasure of God but only inasmuch as He had been appointed to appease the wrath of God by His sacrifice and to wipe away our transgressions by His obedience. In short, inasmuch as the merit of Christ depends entirely on the grace of God, which has ordained this manner of salvation for us, it is just as properly opposed to all human righteousness as God's grace is."² This subordination of Christ to the grace of

1. Inst. II, 17, 1.
2. Inst. II, 17, 2.

God, however, does not mean that Christ is only the minister or instrument of salvation. He is its very author: not just the causa formalis but the materia salutis.¹ There is a continuity of divine action in the work of atonement. Grace belongs to Christ and proceeds from Him.

Calvin establishes a close connection between the notions of merit and obedience. "By His obedience," Calvin says, "Christ truly acquired and merited grace for us with His Father. Many passages of Scripture surely and firmly attest this. I take it to be a commonplace that if Christ made satisfaction for our sins, if He paid the penalty owed by us, if He appeased God by His obedience - in short, if as a righteous man He suffered for unrighteous men - then He acquired salvation for us by His righteousness which is tantamount to deserving it."² The notions of penalty and satisfaction are also used in the above quotation but the two main concepts are obedience and merit and we shall concentrate our attention on them. When Calvin says that Christ merited grace for us by His obedience he is thinking of both the obedience of Christ's life and the obedience of His death. Thus he refers to Christ's perfect fulfilment of the law on our behalf: "For if righteousness consists in the observance of the law, who will deny that Christ merited favour for us when, by taking that burden upon Himself, He

1. Inst. II, 17, 2.

2. Inst. II, 17, 3: Quod autem vere Christus sua obedientia nobis gratiam apud Patrem acquisierit ac promertius sit,...

reconciled us to God as if we had kept the law?"¹ Again, referring to the Romans 5:19 passage, he says: "As by the sin of Adam we were alienated from God and doomed to destruction, so by the obedience of Christ we are restored into His favour as righteous."² That is, as Adam's disobedience is the 'meritorious cause' of damnation, so the obedience of Christ is the 'meritorious cause' of salvation.

In saying that Christ merited grace, Calvin, however, will not allow that Christ merited it for Himself. Calvin admits that such an assertion need not be false; however, one must be careful not to obscure the grace of Christ.³ His views on this matter can be gathered from his polemic against Peter Lombard, Bonaventura, and Aquinas, who had not only raised the question of whether Christ merited grace for Himself but had also answered it in the affirmative. The work of salvation, Calvin stresses, is pro nobis. As we cannot speculate whether Christ would have become incarnate if man had not sinned, so it is vain and curious for us to ask whether Christ merited grace for Himself when Scripture clearly says that Christ came and performed His work for us. There was no need for Christ to acquire by merit of works something which He already possessed. "Christ", Calvin says, "did not seek or receive anything for Himself but everything

1. Inst. II, 17, 5.

2. Inst. II, 17, 3.

3. See Comm. on Phil. 2:9, CO 52, 27.

for us."¹ "For He who gave away the fruit of His holiness to others testifies that He acquired nothing for Himself. And this is indeed worth noting: to devote Himself completely to saving us, Christ in a way forgot Himself."²

Christus Victor

Finally, we shall consider the Christus Victor element in Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement. Calvin sees the Cross as Christ's struggle with Satan and the forces of evil. He connects the notions of obedience and the victory over Satan in the following way. Satan, he holds, is the prince of death and exercises his chief tyranny in the power of death. Christ, in submitting to death, permits Satan to "triumph over Him for a little while, as if victorious."³ Therefore, He does not "resist Satan in order that He might obey the Father and may thus offer His obedience as the ransom of righteousness."⁴ In actuality, Satan, the prince of death, has no power over Christ for Christ is pure from all sin and possesses a divine power which is not subject to death.⁵ Christ does not submit to death because He is forced to out of necessity but in order that He might obey the Father.⁶ Satan is given power over Christ only because Christ voluntarily

1. Comm. on Philippians 2:9, CO 52, 28.

2. Inst. II, 17, 6.

3. Comm. on John 14:31, CO 47, 338: Hoc ut fierit, Satanae ad breve tempus permisit quasi victorem illi insultare.

4. ibid., CO 47, 338.

5. Comm. on John 14:30, CO 47, 337-8.

6. ibid., CO 47, 337.

subjects Himself. In one place Calvin speaks of Christ's death as a debt which is paid not only to God but also to Satan.¹ But this is far from his usual practice. In submitting Himself to death Christ gains a magnificent triumph over Satan.² Therefore Calvin says that by Christ's death "atonement has been made for sins, the world has been reconciled to God, the curse has been blotted out, and Satan has been vanquished."³ The Cross is thus described by Calvin as a triumphant chariot: "For there is no tribunal so magnificent, no throne so stately, no show of triumph so distinguished, no chariot so elevated, as is the gibbet on which Christ has subdued death and the devil, the prince of death; nay more, has utterly trodden them under His feet."⁴

The death of Christ on the Cross means not only that the tyranny which Satan exercises in the power of death has been put to an end but that Satan himself has been "so laid prostrate, that no more account is to be taken of him than as though he no longer existed."⁵ By Christ's death, Satan is dealt such a staggering and decisive blow that he can no longer prevail against us. Christ "by dying conquered Satan, who had the 'power of death' (Heb. 2:14), and

1. Sixth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 670.
2. Comm. on John 6:15, 8:28, and 17:1, CO 47, 135, 200 & 375.
3. Comm. on John 17:1, CO 47, 375.
4. Comm. on Colossians 2:15, CO 52, 109; See also on Acts 16:22, CO 48, 385, & First Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 602.
5. Comm. on Heb. 2:14, CO 55, 33. See also Comm. on John 12:31, CO 47, 293-4.

triumphed over all his forces, to the end that they might not harm the church."¹ Thus for Calvin one of the ways in which we can look at the death of Christ is that it is a victory over Satan and the forces of evil. It should, of course, be pointed out that he would be the last person to reduce the Atonement to this image of Christ's victory over Satan and death. It, however, receives due recognition in his presentation of the doctrine of reconciliation and here again Calvin shows his faithful adherence to the manifold imagery which Scripture uses to speak of the death of Christ.

Concluding Remarks

If anything has become clear from our discussion, it is the variety of ways and the different standpoints which Calvin could use to describe the death of Christ. From his vast store of knowledge of Scripture and the history of Christian thought on the Atonement, he was able to draw upon and to use many radii, to employ our earlier analogy, to approach this centre - the death of Christ on the Cross for our salvation. Therefore, his presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement never betrays a narrowness of view but always reveals a real theological freedom in the use of the appropriate images and concepts. It is, therefore, refreshing to turn, from those who argue that the notion of Christus Victor, of Penal Substitution or of Vicarious Sacrifice,

1. Inst. I, 14, 18.

is the basis of the Atonement, to Calvin who can employ all these images and also others, combine them into a concrete and comprehensive picture, and do so without leaving us with what might be called a 'theory' of the Atonement. In this respect and in others we still have something to learn from Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of reconciliation.

We have said that what Calvin presents us with, is a concrete picture of the Atonement. In studying a picture it is often best to concentrate on a particular aspect of it and to work from it to its other parts. We have taken the image of obedience and used it in this way to help us to appreciate the complete picture which Calvin paints. It has, we believe, helped us to see the whole and the parts, and how they are related.

The image of obedience is used by Calvin in a twofold way: first, as a general and comprehensive one; and secondly, as a concrete one. In its first use, it serves as a unifying image, thus connecting into an inseparable unity the incarnation, life, and death of Christ and also helping to unify the different images which are used to describe the death of Christ. In its concrete use, it describes specific acts of our Lord in specific situations, in submission to the will of God; for example, Christ's baptism and His death on the Cross.

The two dominant groups of images in Calvin's description of the work of Christ are the forensic or legal

group and the sacrificial or cultic one. The notion of obedience is employed in both contexts. We have pointed out that the forensic and sacrificial images dovetail into one another. This was shown in part but perhaps it will be best to give two instances. First, in his exposition of 1 John 2:1-2, Calvin speaks of Christ as both our Advocate and High Priest.¹ It should be pointed out that the passage brings together the legal and sacrificial images. (Christ is described as our "Advocate with the Father" and "the propitiation for our sins"), and Calvin faithfully reproduces this in his interpretation of the text.² A similar combination of the two contexts can be seen in Calvin's discussion of the priesthood of Christ in the Institutio: "... God's righteous curse bars our access to Him, and God, in His capacity as judge, is angry toward us. Hence, an expiation must intervene in order that Christ, as priest may obtain God's favour for us and appease His wrath."³ This bringing together of the two contexts - the forensic and the sacrificial - is possible because the law and the cult belong intimately together. The freedom which Calvin shows in combining them and also in moving from one to the other must not be interpreted, however, as meaning that he regarded these two lines of thought as

1. Comm. on 1 John 2:1-2, CO 55, 308-10.
2. Paul van Buren uses Calvin's interpretation of this passage to show that, for Calvin, "Advocate" and "High Priest" are synonymous terms. op. cit., p. 69. Van Buren, however, fails to see that while the text uses both terms to describe Christ, neither it nor Calvin's exposition provides any ground for saying they are synonymous terms. Intimately related, yes; synonymous, no!
3. Inst. II, 15, 6. (my underlining).

synonymous. They are rather, for him, two intimately related ways of coming at the meaning of Christ's life and death and one is as essential to his understanding of the work of reconciliation as the other. Here we are primarily concerned to emphasize the significance of his use of the sacrificial imagery; sufficient attention has been devoted, in discussions of his doctrine of the Atonement, to his use of legal notions. We can state the importance of the sacrificial or cultic imagery for Calvin in the following way: the sacrificial imagery expresses the important truth that Christ's life and death is the sanctification of believers. Or to put it in another way: if the legal notions help to express the justifying effect of Christ's life and death; then, the sacrificial notions, help to express their sanctifying effect. Thus Calvin says that we must keep sacrifices and cleansing constantly in view. The blood of Christ not only satisfies the justice of God but also washes away our corruption.¹

Now we must see how the notion of obedience is related to the sacrificial and legal groups of images and also to the other notions which Calvin uses. We said that Calvin employs the notion of obedience in both the forensic and the sacrificial contexts. The matter can now be stated in this way. The obedience of Christ is both a judicial and a sacrificial act; not merely a judicial act and not merely a sacrificial one but both judicial and sacrificial. From the forensic

1. Inst. II, 16, 6.

point of view, the obedience of Christ means His perfect fulfilment of the law, His willing submission to the judgement of the Father upon sinful humanity and His endurance of the penalty of death in our place. From the sacrificial point of view, the obedience of Christ signifies His sanctification of Himself in our humanity and His offering of a life of perfect obedience and holiness to the Father on our behalf. As the Beloved Son[^] in whom the Father is well-pleased, Christ both accomplished and offered up a life of perfect obedience and holiness which man did not render and which he did not offer. Christ, by His obedience, therefore fulfils the obedience which God demanded in His covenant with Israel - the obedience demanded by the law and the obedience required in sacrifices. And if we take into account the other notions, we can say that the obedience of Christ satisfies the judgement of the Father, merits our salvation, achieves the victory over Satan, and reconciles us to the Father.¹ A strong word of caution must, however, be sounded about a summary such as this. It is only a summary and nothing more.² Calvin's use of the notion of

1. The general term "reconciliation" has often appeared in our quotations from Calvin. We refer to it here only in passing. A fuller discussion of Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation would have to take into account his use of this biblical term.
2. This should also be said about the statement we made at the beginning of Part II (*infra.*, p. 95) that for Calvin the obedience of Christ is the act of Atonement. This is only a convenient way of stating the matter. When we use the statement we should presuppose a discussion of this sort and even then we should use it with great care. Calvin never leaves us with the formula; the obedience of Christ equals the Atonement. If anything has become clear from our discussion it is that we cannot reduce Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation to a formula or to one or two concepts.

See 1/16

obedience and the other images is both rich and complex. We put forward this summary only as a helpful way of looking at the matter and in doing so we hope that it will also suggest something of the richness and complexity of Calvin's presentation of the doctrine of the Atonement. This summary, of course, must not be abstracted from the material we have presented.

Finally, a word or two about the question of whether the work of Christ is substitutionary or representative in character. Paul van Buren has devoted a study to this theme and we need, therefore, touch on this subject only briefly. We can say that for Calvin the work of Christ is both representative and substitutionary. Calvin uses many terms to express the relation of Christ's work to us. The general term is pro nobis; some of the others are the notions of Christ assuming our vicus, locus, persona, nomen, etc. In most instances, the notion of Substitution will translate what Calvin means by Christ taking our vicus and locus; while the term Representation will translate what Calvin means by Christ assuming our persona and nomen. This is a general rule and it may not always work in practice. It is sometimes the case that the use of the one term (Substitution or Representation) will suit a particular context better than the use of the other term. The notion of Substitution goes with the forensic context, although it should be pointed out that here Calvin can also use the notion of Representation.¹ The notion of Representation accords

1. Inst. II, 16, 5: Atque ita et peccatoris sceleratique personam in Christo representatam intuebimur....

with the sacrificial and the Christus Victor contexts. With regard to the former, Calvin speaks of Christ as our High Priest who stands before the Father in our nomen or persona.¹ With regard to the Christus Victor context, Calvin says that Christ entered into a conflict with Satan in the nomen of the Church.² The intimate unity between the notions of Substitution and Representation is suggested by the fact that Christ is both Priest and Victim. As Priest He is our Representative; as Victim He is our Substitute. One final word: in using these terms we must never lose sight of the fact that Christ is our Substitute and Representative because of the unity which He has established with our nature by His Incarnation.

1. See Comm. on Hebrews 5:1, CO 55, 57.

2. Infra., p. 149.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE EXALTATION OF THE OBEDIENT SERVANT OF GOD

We have traced, in the preceding four chapters, the course of Christ's obedience from His assumption of the Servant form to His death on the Cross. In doing so, the decisive significance of the category of Christ's obedience for Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation has become clear. Christ emptied Himself and assumed the form of a Servant that in our flesh He might render a perfect obedience to the Father which would undo the disobedience of Adam. He consummated that obedience on the Cross when He offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. We pointed out earlier, the affinity of Calvin's thought with the Philippians 2:5-11 passage, where Christ's humiliation and obedience are described.¹ But this passage (so determinative for Calvin's doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ) speaks, not only of a downward movement of humiliation and obedience, but also of an upward movement of exaltation and sovereign rule. He who was Lord became a Servant and was obedient in all things even unto the death of the Cross. This is the former aspect. The latter aspect belongs to the former and is equally as important. He who was abased was highly exalted by the Father above all principalities and powers. In this chapter we shall direct our attention to this latter emphasis. To the movement of exaltation there belongs the resurrection, ascension, priestly

1. Infra., p. 100-102.

intercession, and kingly rule of Christ, and it will be our task to consider each of these in turn, in relation to what has been said about the obedience of Christ in His life and death.

Calvin did not devote a separate section of the Institutio to what became known later in both Lutheran and Reformed theology as the doctrine of the 'Two States' of Christ; that is Christ's status exinanitionis and His status exaltationis. There can be no doubt, however, that this doctrine plays an important role in his Christological and Soteriological thought. In later Reformed theology the doctrine of the 'Two States' usually followed the discussion of the work of Christ,¹ but was often not organically related to it.² In Calvin the doctrine is not treated separately but appears throughout the Christological material and is part of the organic whole of his Christological thought. Moreover, for Calvin, in contradistinction to Reformed Orthodoxy, the status exinanitionis and the status exaltationis do not simply succeed but rather involve each other. We have indicated something of this in our discussion of the veiling and unveiling of the divine glory. According to Calvin, the divine glory was present and manifest during the whole period of Christ's humiliation on earth and was not simply a glory which He entered into as a result of

1. Heppe, op. cit., pp. 488-509.

2. The criticism is Karl Barth's. See his Church Dogmatics, IV/1, op. cit., p. 133.

His exaltation.¹ Here we can state this in the following way: Christ is exalted in His humiliation for "God began to raise (suscitare) Christ when He came into the world."² He is humiliated in His exaltation for He reigns "in that same flesh in which He was humbled."³ Therefore we must not think of two successive "states", one which precedes and one which follows but, as Karl Barth has pointed out, "of two sides or directions or forms of that which took place in Jesus Christ for the reconciliation of man with God."⁴ The divine glory or the state of exaltation is not subsequent to but is contemporaneous with the state of humiliation. The exaltation does not do away with the humiliation for Christ does not cast aside the form of the Servant but is exalted in the same flesh wherein He was humbled.

At the same time Calvin recognizes that, though the divine glory was present and manifest in Christ's life and work on earth, the fullness of this divine glory was not exhibited until His exaltation. Only in His resurrection and ascension is His majesty clearly displayed. Christ's exaltation, however, is not to be regarded as a new bestowal of a glory which He did not possess in His earthly life but

1. Infra., pp. 118-121.

2. Comm. on Acts 13:33, CO 48, 301.

3. Comm. on Acts 7:56, CO 48, 168 and Comm. on Psalm 2:8, CO 31, 47.

4. op. cit., p. 133. We hold that while Calvin has not worked this out as clearly as Barth, his thought is basically the same on this point.

rather as the unveiling of that glory which He continually had. Thus Calvin sees the resurrection as the drawing aside of the veil by which for a time His divine power and majesty had been concealed.¹ With the resurrection, the fullness of Christ's divine majesty is clearly exhibited. To quote the whole passage to which we have referred above: "Therefore, though God began to raise Christ when He came into the world, yet His raising was then, as it were, perfect and full; because whereas He was humbled before, having taken as it were the form of a servant (Phil. 2:7), He then appeared to be the conqueror of death and the Lord of life; so that He lacked nothing of that majesty which was appropriate to the Son of God and to the only begotten Son."² Christ's divine authority was not fully known until He rose from the dead, "for then only did He come forth adorned with the emblems of a supreme King."³ When He rose again from the dead and was exalted He was declared to be the Son of God in power.

It is the Person of the Mediator who is exalted and not just His divinity or humanity. Calvin makes this point

1. Comm. on Matthew 17:1, CO 45, 485: Nunc autem resurrectio velum illud sustulit quo virtus eius tecta ad tempus fuerat.
2. Comm. on Acts 13:33, CO 48, 301: Quamvis ergo suscitare Christus a Deo coeperit, quando prodiit in mundum, resurrectio tamen quasi iusta, et plena suscitatio fuit: quia quum prius exinanitus esset forma servi accepta tunc victor mortis, et dominus vitae emersit ut nihil ad maiestatem Dei filio, et quidem unigenito dignam illi deesset.
3. Comm. on Matthew 28:18, CO 45, 821.

clear in order to avoid any form of Adoptionism. Exaltation cannot refer to the divine nature alone for nothing new could be given to Christ's divinity and it cannot relate to His humanity viewed separately, for humanity in itself does not have such worthiness as to be exalted by God. Exaltation refers to Christ's entire Person: "For He did not abase Himself either as to His humanity alone, or to His divinity alone but inasmuch as clothed in our flesh, He concealed Himself under its infirmity. So again God exalted His Son in the same flesh in which He had lived in the world, abject and despised, to the highest rank of honour that He may sit at His right hand."¹

The exaltation is preceded by and is consequent upon the humiliation; that is, Christ must first descend into the depths before He is exalted to the heavens. "It is necessary that He should be humbled and reduced almost to nothing, before He appear adorned with the emblems of His royal power and with magnificent splendour."² Christ had first to tread the road of humiliation and obedience for "the only way by which He could enter into His glory was that humiliation or emptying (Phil. 2:7) out of which the Redeemer had arisen."³ It is by the humiliation of the Cross that Christ must be inaugurated into His supremacy.⁴

1. Comm. on Phil. 2:10, CO 52, 29.
2. Comm. on Matthew 26:64, CO 45, 739.
3. Comm. on Luke 24:26, CO 45, 806.
4. Comm. on Hebrews 2:10, CO 55, 27.

By enduring its ignominy and shame He obtains kingly power.¹ Therefore, Christ, having passed through death, is exalted into the glory which He had obtained by humbling Himself.² Calvin, however, will not allow that Christ earned this glory for Himself.³ It is true He obtained glory as a consequence of His humiliation but He obtained it primarily for us and not for Himself. This means that the movement of exaltation belongs as much to the substance of redemption as the movement of humiliation. That is, we must not think that whereas Christ's humiliation has to do directly with our salvation, His exaltation has to do primarily with Himself as His reward for the work which He had accomplished. Because Christ humbled Himself and was obedient unto the Father in all respects, He was exalted. But He was exalted for us and therefore in His exaltation we have been exalted. His exaltation means that we also have been raised up to heaven. The pro nobis aspect of Christ's exaltation will become clear in our discussion of the resurrection and ascension. What we wish to stress here is that our salvation is grounded on the fact that Christ was both humiliated and exalted for us. Calvin makes this quite clear in a sermon on Isaiah 53. He points out that the way which Christ took for our salvation was to descend into the depths before being exalted into the glory of heaven. Both His descent to us and His ascent to the

1. Comm. on Luke 22:29, CO 45, 545.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 2:9, CO 55, 26.

3. See Comm. on Phil. 2:9, CO 52, 27-8; on Hebrews 2:9, CO 55, 26; and Inst. II, 17, 6.

Father are essential for our reconciliation. On the one hand, if Christ had come only in His majesty, and had not condescended to us, He would be separated from us and we could not draw near Him or have the assurance of forgiveness. On the other hand, if He had descended into the abyss without being raised to the heavens we would be in endless anxiety for the wrath of God would ever be upon us. When it is said that He was condemned and suffered for us, we know that He loves us and receives us into His favour; and when we know Christ has been exalted we can conclude that it was to draw us to Him that we might be partakers of the glory given to Him by God His Father.¹ Christ's exaltation is therefore as essential to our salvation as His humiliation.

A corollary of what has been said is that the work of reconciliation is not completed with the death on the Cross. Christ's death and His exaltation which follows certainly mark the termination of His earthly ministry, but the exaltation means the beginning of His heavenly ministry for our salvation. After He had accomplished the work which had been given to Him, Christ was received into the heavenly glory.² Having completed His obedience, He was crowned with glory and honour and exalted to the highest Lordship that before Him every knee should bow.³ But thereupon He did not cease His work for us. He commenced His priestly office of

1. Fourth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 640.

2. Comm. on John 17:4, CO 47, 378.

3. Inst. II, 14, 3.

intercession and assumed His office of kingly rule over His Church and the world.

The Resurrection of Christ

Our point, that for Calvin the humiliation of Christ involves His exaltation and His exaltation involves His humiliation, can also be seen from the way in which Calvin relates the death and resurrection of Christ. For him the death of Christ is not just the prelude to His glory but in a certain sense part of that glory itself. Even though Christ's death was shameful and ignominious, Calvin can write: "The glory of God shines, indeed in all creatures both high and low, but nowhere has it shone more brightly than in the Cross, in which there has been a wonderful change of things - the condemnation of all men has been manifested, sin has been blotted out, salvation has been restored to men; in short, the whole world has been renewed and all things restored to order."¹ A boundless glory was manifest in the death of Christ but this glory was concealed from the ungodly.² This emphasis on the glory of Christ's death can also be seen from Calvin's notion of the Cross as a triumphant chariot. Thus, in Calvin's view, the cross is not a shameful defeat but a magnificent victory. The resurrection does not reverse the cross but reveals its

1. Comm. on John 13:31, CO 47, 317: Sursum quidem et deorsum in omnibus creaturis relucet Dei gloria, sed nunquam illustrior alibi fuit quam in cruce, in qua admirabilis facta est rerum conversio....

2. Comm. on John 17:1, CO 47, 375.

true nature, seals it, and makes the death effective.

The death and resurrection of Christ are then indissolubly connected. Calvin sees a certain tension in Scripture where, in some places, salvation is ascribed to the death of Christ and yet, in other places, it is ascribed to His resurrection. He sees in this tension no real contradiction but a testimony to the fact that the death and resurrection are inseparably related. On the one hand, Scripture makes it clear that "we have in His death the complete fulfilment of salvation, for through it we are reconciled to God, His righteous judgement is satisfied, the curse is removed and the penalty is paid in full."¹ On the other hand, we are told by 1 Peter 1:3 that we have been begotten unto a lively hope not by His death but by His resurrection, and Paul in Romans 10:9 says that we are saved by confessing that Christ was raised from the dead, without explicitly mentioning the significance of His death. There is, however, no real inconsistency here as if the resurrection were played off against the death. "Express mention is made only of Christ's resurrection," Calvin says, "which must not be so interpreted as though His death were of no consequence, but because Christ, by rising again, completed the whole work of salvation: for though redemption and satisfaction were effected by His death, through which we are reconciled to God; yet the victory over sin, death, and Satan was attained by His resurrection; and

1. Inst. II, 16, 13: in eius morte habemus solidum salutis complementum.

hence also came righteousness, newness of life, and the hope of a blessed immortality. And therefore the resurrection alone is often set before us as the assurance of our salvation, not to draw away our attention from His death, but because it testifies to the efficacy and fruit of His death: in short, His resurrection includes His death."¹

Both the death and the resurrection of Christ belong to the substantia fidei. The initium of our salvation is in Christ's death; its complementum is in His resurrection.² They are related together in this inseparable way. Therefore, says Calvin, we must not confine our attention to Christ's death alone but must also consider the fruit which His resurrection bears.³ "When we speak of His death, we must come at once to His resurrection, and so join them together. For these are two inseparable things - that Jesus Christ has voluntarily suffered in the infirmity that He has taken of us, and that He was quickened in the power of His Holy Spirit, and that thereby He is declared the true Son of God."⁴ We are to begin with Christ's death for this is the proper sequence of events, but we are not to stop there.⁵ We are to move on to the resurrection for "in the mere death of Christ we can discover nothing but grounds for despair."⁶

1. Comm. on Rom. 10:9, CO 49, 201. See also on 1 Peter 1:3, CO 55, 210.
2. Comm. on 1 Corinthians 15:3, CO 49, 538.
3. Comm. on John 12:23, CO 47, 288.
4. First Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 601. Parker's trans. p. 36; & Sermons on the Passion, CO 46, 914.
5. Comm. on Isaiah 53:3, CO 37, 256-7.
6. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:14, CO 49, 542.

But we must of course remember that the resurrection is the rising again of One who has died for us. The resurrection does not cancel the death but seals it and makes it perpetually effective.¹ The main foundation of the Gospel is therefore both the death and the resurrection of Christ.² Calvin counsels preachers to be exceedingly careful always to connect the glory of Christ's resurrection with the ignominy of His death.³ The preaching of the one cannot be effective without the proclamation of the other; they must be taken together. In a similar vein, Calvin says we must always follow the rule that when Scripture speaks of the death alone, the resurrection is included; and the same applies to the resurrection, that when it is mentioned separately it includes what has to do with His death.⁴

This indissoluble unity of Christ's death and resurrection is more apparent still when we consider their fruit or consequences. What took place in the death and resurrection of Christ is a single act but at the same time we can distinguish what was effected by the one and what was effected by the other. "Therefore," says Calvin, "we divide the substance of our salvation between Christ's death and resurrection as follows: through His death sin was cancelled and death destroyed; through His resurrection, righteousness

1. Comm. on Hebrews 13:20, CO 55, 197.

2. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:14, CO 49, 542.

3. Comm. on Matthew 16:20, CO 45, 479.

4. Inst. II, 16, 13; and Comm. on 1 Corinthians 15:3, CO 49, 538.

was restored and life raised up, so that by His resurrection, His death manifested its power and efficacy in us."¹ Within this single and complete whole, our salvation has its beginning in Christ's death and its completion in His resurrection. "It indeed greatly concerns us, not only to have our minds directed to Christ but also to have it distinctly made known how He obtained salvation for us. And though Scripture, when it treats of our salvation, dwells especially on the death of Christ, yet the Apostle now proceeds farther; for as his purpose was more explicitly to set forth the cause of our salvation, he mentions its two parts: and says first, that our sins were expiated by the death of Christ, and secondly, that by His resurrection our righteous^{ness} was obtained. But the meaning is, that when we possess the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection, there is nothing lacking in the completion of perfect righteousness. By separating His death from His resurrection, he no doubt accommodates what he says to our ignorance; for it is also true that righteousness has been obtained for us by that obedience of Christ, which He exhibited in His death ... But as Christ, by rising from the dead, made known how much He had effected by His death, this distinction is designed to teach us that our salvation was begun by the sacrifice by which our sins were expiated and

1. Inst. II, 16, 13: Quare sic salutis nostrae materiam inter Christi mortem et resurrectionem partimur, quod per illam peccatum abolitum et mors extincta: per hanc, iustitia reparata, et erecta vita; sic tamen ut huius beneficio vim efficaciamque suam illa nobis proferat.

was at length completed by His resurrection: for the beginning of righteousness is to be reconciled to God, and its completion is to attain life by having death abolished."¹ The destruction of sin and death is ascribed to Christ's death; the establishment of righteousness and life to His resurrection.

We may put the matter more explicitly in yet another way. The death of Christ has to do with the negative task of removing sin and destroying death; the resurrection is concerned with the positive task of obtaining righteousness and establishing life. Here Calvin reproduces faithfully the basic thought of Paul in Romans 4:25 that Christ "was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification." In His death Christ exposed Himself to the wrath and judgement of God that He might bear away our sin and deliver us from the death we deserved. "He died that He might destroy sin." "He underwent death on account of sin, that having made Himself ἀντίλυτρον, a ransom, He might annihilate the power and dominion of sin."² But it is not enough that sin should be destroyed. We must also obtain righteousness, for without righteousness we cannot live in fellowship with God. Through Christ's resurrection, righteousness and life are procured for us. By His rising again from the dead we are justified. "As it would not have been enough for Christ to undergo the wrath and judgement of God and to endure the curse due to our

1. Comm. on Romans 4:25, CO 49, 87.

2. Comm. on Romans 6:10, CO 49, 109.

sins without His coming forth as conqueror and without being received into celestial glory, that by His intercession He might reconcile us to God, the efficacy of justification is ascribed to His resurrection by which death was overcome; not that the sacrifice of the cross, by which we are reconciled to God contributes nothing towards our justification but that the completeness of His favour appears more clearly by His coming to life again."¹ "Scripture," says Calvin, "rightly joins together remission of sins and righteousness as also Paul says, 'Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25)'. His death procured satisfaction for us so that we should not always remain guilty nor be subject to the condemnation of eternal death, and then by His resurrection He procured righteousness for us and also acquired eternal life."²

In Chapter Five we pointed out that Calvin regarded the work of reconciliation as equally the task of creating a new and redeemed humanity as that of bearing away the sins of mankind. Therefore, we attempted to show there that, in Calvin's view, Christ came not only to die for our sins but also to sanctify Himself for us during the whole course of His life, and also in His death that He might not only cancel out our sin but also communicate life and righteousness to us. It is necessary to relate what was said there to our present discussion. This can be done by saying that, for Calvin, the

1. Comm. on Romans 4:25, CO 49, 87-8.
 2. Comm. on Daniel 9:25, CO 41, 181.

righteousness and life which Christ acquired by His perfect obedience, His self-sanctification, and His sacrifice of Himself on the Cross, are communicated to us by His resurrection. In His resurrection, Christ, the Author of life, bestows life on us, and as Calvin is quick to point out, this life "contains righteousness and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit and all the parts of our salvation."¹ This bestowal of life and righteousness is as essential to us as our deliverance from sin and death. "It would not have been sufficient for us to be rescued from death without Christ fully and substantially restoring life to us."² By His resurrection, Christ obtains righteousness for us and opens up our entrance into heaven.³ But, for Calvin, a theologia gloriae has no meaning unless it includes within it a theologia crucis. Therefore he says that righteousness depends on expiation and cannot exist apart from that gratuitous pardon which is obtained through the sacrifice of Christ.⁴ The true relation between a theologia gloriae and a theologia crucis can be seen from Calvin's concluding comments on Romans 4:25: "Then, as He is said to have died for our sins because He delivered us from the evil of death by suffering death as a punishment for our sins; so He is now said to have been raised for our

1. Comm. on John 5:21, CO 47, 114: vita autem et iustitiam et omnia spiritus sancti dona, et omnes salutis nostrae partes in se continet.
2. ibid.: quia non satis esset nos a morte esse ereptos, nisi vitam plene et solide nobis restitueret Christus.
3. Comm. on Matthew 28:1, CO 45, 792. See also Comm. on John 16:10, CO 47, 360.
4. Comm. on Daniel 9:25, CO 41, 181.

justification, because He fully restored life to us by His resurrection; for He was first smitten by the hand of God that in the person of the sinner He might sustain the misery of sin; and then was raised to life that He might grant to His people righteousness and life."¹

In relation to us this means that our old man has been put to death by Christ's death, and by His resurrection we have been raised into newness of life. Calvin makes frequent use of this Pauline notion. He represents it very graphically when he says that our old man is fastened to the cross of Christ and by its power is slain.² As Christ has died once for the purpose of destroying sin so we have once died that we may in the future cease from sin.³ In these Pauline statements Calvin sees not only an exhortation to exhibit the example of Christ's death by mortifying our members,⁴ but also a declaration of the fact that His death is truly efficacious in slaying the old man.⁵ The same thing holds true of the resurrection. As there is an actual correspondence between Christ's death and the death of our old man so there is an actual correspondence between Christ's resurrection and our being made into new creatures. "These two things," Calvin says, "are connected by an indissoluble knot -

1. Comm. on Romans 4:25, CO 49, 88.

2. Comm. on Romans 6:6, CO 49, 107.

3. Comm. on Romans 6:11, CO 49, 110.

4. Comm. on Colossians 3:5, CO 52, 119; on 2 Cor. 4:10, CO 50, 54-5; on Romans 6:7, CO 49, 108; Inst. III, 3, 8-9 & 11; Inst. IV, 15, 5; Inst. IV, 16, 16 & 21.

5. Inst. II, 16, 7; & Comm. on Romans 6:4, CO 49, 105.

that the old man is destroyed by the death of Christ and that His resurrection brings righteousness and renders us new creatures."¹ As Christ has been raised to an incorruptible life so we have been regenerated by the grace of God so that we may lead lives of holiness and righteousness.² But here again the Pauline statements not only exhort us "through the example of the risen Christ to strive after newness of life; but we are taught that we are reborn into righteousness through His power."³

The resurrection of Christ has, for Calvin, an ecclesiological reference. Christ "did not rise privately for Himself but for His members inasmuch as He is the first-fruits of them who shall rise."⁴ In the resurrection, the Church, which is Christ's body, is raised up and therefore the resurrection of Christ is the common life of the Church.⁵ Calvin continually mentions and stresses this pro nobis aspect of Christ's resurrection.⁶ It receives its strongest emphasis in his use of the Pauline notions of Christ as the Head of His body, the Church, and of Christ as the first-fruits of our resurrection. These notions, it should be said, accord more with the idea of Christ as our Representative

1. Comm. on Rom. 6:4, CO 49, 105; & on Luke 24:46, CO 45, 817.
2. Comm. on Romans 6:11, CO 49, 110.
3. Inst. II, 16, 13; and Comm. on Romans 6:4, CO 49, 105.
4. Comm. on Hosea 6:2, CO 42, 320.
5. ibid., CO 42, 320.
6. Comm. on Acts 2:32; and 13:34, CO 48, 47 & 302; on 1 Cor. 15:12-13, CO 49, 542; on 1 Thess. 4:14, CO 52, 165; on Psalm 16:10, CO 31, 157 etc.

than with the notion of Christ as our Substitute; that is the representative aspect of the pro nobis is more to the fore, although the substitutionary aspect is also present. First the idea of Christ as Head: "Now, in the resurrection of Christ we all have a sure pledge of our own resurrection. Accordingly, he who acknowledges that Christ has risen affirms that the same thing will take place with us also; for Christ did not rise for Himself but for us. The Head must not be separated from His members."¹ In virtue of Christ's intimate unity with our nature we can be assured that what has happened to the Head will also happen to the members. Here it is necessary to note what might be called Calvin's "inaugurated eschatology". Our salvation has been inaugurated in Christ's life, death and resurrection but it waits for its completion. Therefore, Calvin's eschatology is an "eschatology of hope."² This is clear from the following passage: "And certainly, although with regard to ourselves our salvation is still the object of hope, yet in Christ we already possess a blessed immortality and glory ... It does not yet appear in the members but only in the Head, yet in consequence of the secret union it belongs truly to the members."³

Calvin also employs the idea of Christ as the first-fruits of our resurrection. He sets forth Paul's argument

1. Comm. on 2 Tim. 2:8, CO 52, 363.

2. See T.F. Torrance, Kingdom and Church, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1956, pp. 90 ff.

3. Comm. on Ephesians 2:6, CO 51, 164.

in 1 Corinthians 15:20-23 as follows: Christ was not raised up from the dead as an isolated individual. The analogy of Adam and Christ makes this clear. Adam and Christ must both be seen in connection with those whom they represent. As Adam did not die for himself alone but for us all, so Christ, who is the antitype, did not rise again merely for Himself. Yet this is not to be understood in the Pelagian sense that Adam was only the Exemplar of sin and death and Christ was only the Exemplar of life and righteousness. As Adam is the cause of sin and death, so Christ is the cause of life and righteousness. "The cause of death is Adam and we die in Him; therefore Christ, whose function is to restore what we have lost in Adam, is the cause of life for us; and His resurrection is the foundation and pledge of ours. And just as Adam is the originator of death, so Christ is the one with whom life has its origin."¹

There are two further points of interest in Calvin's discussion of the resurrection of Christ. They are his notion of the Holy Spirit as the autor resurrectionis and his idea of the nature of Christ's resurrection body. With regard to the first, Calvin notes that the writers of Scripture speak sometimes of Christ being raised by the Father and at other times of Him raising Himself. He recognizes a truth in both emphases for he holds that it is, properly speaking, the Holy Spirit - Who is the Spirit of both the

1. Comm. on 1 Corinthians 15:21-2, CO 49, 545-6.

Father and the Son - Who is the Author of the resurrection. Therefore, in such passages as Romans 1:4, and John 2:19, Calvin sees the resurrection represented as the work of Christ Himself.¹ The resurrection incontestably proved that Christ was the Son of God for in it He openly exercised a divine power - the power of the Spirit - when He rose from the dead. "A divine power is said to have shone forth in the resurrection of Christ for this reason, because He rose by His own power as He had often testified, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it again', (John 2:19), 'No man taketh it from me', (John 10:18). For He gained victory over death, to which He submitted with respect to the weakness of the flesh, not by aid sought from another, but by the operation of His heavenly Spirit."² We pointed out earlier that Christ was endowed with the power of the Spirit as the Eternal Word of God and that He was also anointed by the Father with all the gifts of the Spirit. In the resurrection, the full power of His Spirit was displayed and He was thereby declared to be the Son of God.³

1. It is quite wrong to say, as van Buren has, that Calvin put forward the view that Christ had raised Himself, only in his early works and abandoned it in his later ones, op. cit., pp. 83-4. This emphasis appears in Calvin's Commentary on John (1553) and the Commentary on the Psalms (1557). Van Buren fails to see that it is the Holy Spirit - Who is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son - Who is, properly speaking, the Author of the resurrection. See, in this connection, Krusche, op. cit., pp. 137-8.
2. Comm. on Romans 1:4, CO 49, 11.
3. Comm. on Psalm 2:7, CO 31, 47; on John 6:61, CO 47, 159; and on 1 Tim. 3:16, CO 52, 290. See also Comm. on Phil. 2:7, CO 52, 26; and on 1 John 5:8, CO 55, 365-6; on 1 Cor. 15:45, CO 49, 558.

"We know that the grave of Christ was filled and, as it were, embalmed with the life-giving perfume of His Spirit that it might be to Him the gate to immortal glory."¹

While the resurrection is ascribed to Christ's own divine power, Calvin notes that in Scripture it is generally said to be the work of God the Father.² This is the more usual way of speaking, that the Father raised Christ from the dead,³ and Calvin thinks that it is also a more proper way of speaking, because against the statement that Christ was able to raise Himself by His own power, it could be objected that this is something which no man can do.⁴ When God is made the author of the resurrection, He is assigned a life-giving Spirit.⁵ The former insistence, that Christ raised Himself, however, is a correct one. Commenting on John 2:19, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up", Calvin says: "Here Christ claims for Himself the glory of His resurrection, though generally in Scripture it is said to be the work of God the Father. But the two statements are perfectly in accord. For to commend God's power to us Scripture expressly ascribes it to the Father that He raised His Son from the dead, but here Christ proclaims His own divinity. And Paul reconciles the two in Romans 8:11, for the Spirit, whom He

1. Comm. on Psalm 16:10, CO 31, 157.

2. Comm. on John 2:19, CO 47, 48.

3. Comm. on Acts 5:30-31, CO 48, 110-11; on Acts 13:30 & 33, CO 48, 298 & 300; Comm. on Romans 8:11, CO 49, 145-6; Comm. on 1 Peter 3:21, CO 55, 269; and on 1 Cor. 15:47, CO 49, 559.

4. Comm. on Romans 8:11, CO 49, 145-6.

5. ibid.

makes the author of the resurrection, he calls indiscriminately sometimes the Spirit of Christ, sometimes the Spirit of the Father."¹

Finally, we should say a word or two about Calvin's conception of Christ's resurrected body. This is a large subject and we can only touch on one or two points. The Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection appearances show, Calvin thinks, that the resurrection was not a 'symbolical' but a genuine and physical one, for our eyes cannot be witnesses of a 'spiritual' resurrection.² The resurrected body of Christ was given an incorruptible quality but it remained a body. Calvin steadfastly refuses to spiritualize. His exegesis of John 20:19 which speaks of the doors being shut where the disciples were, and Jesus coming and standing in their midst, is most instructive in this connection. Calvin refuses to defer here either to the Papists or to the Lutherans who held that the body of Christ passed through the shut doors because it was infinite and not confined to one place. He holds that a miracle took place so that Christ opened an entrance for Himself by His divine power but He will not allow that Christ's body penetrated through the solid matter of the doors.³ This would be to spiritualize the body - to make it pass through doors and do things which we know bodies are not able to do. Calvin supports his interpretation by pointing

1. Comm. on John 2:19, CO 47, 48.

2. Comm. on 1 Corinthians 15:5, CO 49, 539.

3. Comm. on John 20:19, CO 47, 436; on Luke 24:36, CO 45, 811-12; and Inst. IV, 17, 29.

to the passage which says that Peter went out of a prison that had been locked, and he asks the rhetorical question; Must we therefore say that He passed right through iron and beams?¹ Again, the fact that Mary at the tomb and the disciples on the way to Emmaus did not at first recognize Christ does not mean that Christ, Proteus-like, repeatedly assumed new forms but that "it is in the will of God, who gave men eyes to weaken their keenness when He thinks good, that seeing they may not see."² The identity of the crucified and resurrected body is most clearly indicated, Calvin holds, when it is said that Christ showed His disciples His wounds and side in order to confirm that He was risen. Calvin adds, however, that we must not think that these wounds still exist. They were of a temporary nature and, when the end they were intended to serve was fulfilled, they disappeared.³ Werner Krusche holds that Calvin did not break through to Luther's conception that what happened in Christ's resurrection was so completely new that the ordinary determinations of our material world are no longer applicable.⁴ Calvin, indeed, recognized that what occurred in Christ's resurrection and ascension was so completely new that it is only with a certain impropriety that we can employ the temporal and spatial categories of this world of sin and bondage, change

1. Comm. on John 20:19, CO 47, 436.

2. Comm. on John 20:14, CO 47, 431-2. See also Comm. on Luke 24:16, 28, 31, CO 45, 803, 808, 809.

3. Comm. on John 20:20, CO 47, 437; on Luke 24:39, CO 45, 813; and Inst. IV, 17, 29.

4. Krusche, op. cit., pp. 139-40.

and decay.¹ But he was equally concerned to preserve the identity of the crucified and resurrected Lord. Therefore, he writes: "For what does all Scripture more clearly teach than that Christ, as He took our true flesh when He was born of the virgin and suffered in our true flesh when He made satisfaction for us, so also received that same true flesh in His resurrection and bore it up to heaven? For we have this hope of our resurrection and of our ascension into heaven: that Christ rose and ascended, and as Tertullian says, bore the guarantee of our resurrection with Him to heaven. But how weak and fragile that hope would be, if this very flesh of ours had not been truly raised in Christ and had not entered into the Kingdom of heaven."²

The Ascension of Christ

The ascension is the complementum of the resurrection and is inseparably connected with it.³ Christ's glory and power were manifested by His rising again from the dead but His Kingdom was truly inaugurated only at His ascension into heaven.⁴ Calvin emphasises two related aspects of Christ's

1. See Torrance, Kingdom and Church, *op. cit.*, p. 108. Also see in this connection *Comm. on Ephesians* 1:20 & 4:10, CO 51, 79 & 195.
2. *Inst.* IV, 17, 29.
3. *Comm. on John* 6:61-2, CO 47, 159: resurrectio quasi specimen statuitur unde ista Christi gloria agnosci debuit: ascensus vero in coelum gloriae istius complementum fuit. See also *Comm. on Matt.* 28:18, CO 45, 821; and on *John* 20:17, CO 47, 433; and *Inst.* II, 16, 14.
4. *Inst.* II, 16, 14: sua tamen demum in caelum ascensione regnum suum vere auspiciatus est.

ascension. First of all, the ascension means that Christ's body "was raised above all the heavens" (supra omnes caelos elevatum est).¹ We are not to understand this, however, as literally a place beyond the world. Calvin's view on this point is clear from the following quotation: "When Christ is said to be in heaven, we must not view Him as dwelling among the spheres and numbering the stars. Heaven denotes a place higher than all the spheres, which was assigned to the Son of God after His resurrection. Not that it is literally a place beyond the world, but we cannot speak of the Kingdom of God without using ordinary language. Others again, considering that the expressions 'above all heavens', and 'ascension into heaven' are of the same import, conclude that Christ is not separated from us by distance of place. But one point they have overlooked. When Christ is placed above the heavens or in the heavens all that surrounds the earth, all that lies beneath the sun and stars, beneath the whole frame of the visible world is excluded."² The ascension was the ascension of a body and this means a bodily separation from us.³ Christ's body was not made infinite in character. There is an underlying polemic in Calvin's writing against the Lutheran doctrine of the ubiquity of Christ's body. In the Institutio he quotes Augustine to support his position; "... He went about in the flesh for forty days

1. Inst. II, 16, 14.

2. Comm. on Ephesians 4:10, CO 51, 195.

3. Comm. on Acts 1:2, CO 48, 3.

with his disciples, and while they were in His company, seeing Him but not following Him, He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:3, 9), and is not here: for there He sits at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19); yet He is here, for the presence of majesty has not withdrawn (cf. Heb. 1:3). Therefore, we always have Christ according to the presence of majesty; but of His physical presence it was rightly said to His disciples, 'You will not always have me with you' (Matt. 26:11). For the Church had Him in His bodily presence for a few days; now it holds Him by faith, but does not see Him with the eyes."¹ Here again we see Calvin's steadfast refusal to spiritualize Christ's body, for our hope of salvation rests on the fact that Christ ascended in our flesh.

The second aspect of the ascension is that although Christ is now bodily separated from us, nevertheless, He is spiritually present. This presence everywhere is by the power of the Spirit rather than by the substance of His flesh.² Calvin makes it clear that it was not Christ's body, viewed as infinite spirit, which was diffused and spread beyond all the bounds of heaven and earth but His power and energy.³ By the power of His Spirit He fills all things.⁴ Moreover, this spiritual presence is more useful to us than a bodily presence which would be confined to a particular time and space.⁵

1. Inst. II, 16, 14.

2. Comm. on Acts 1:11, CO 48, 13.

3. Inst. II, 16, 14.

4. Comm. on Eph. 4:10, CO 51, 195; and Inst. IV, 6, 10.

5. Inst. II, 16, 14.

Christ has left us but in such a way that He might be always present with us.¹

The ascension, like the resurrection, has, for Calvin, an ecclesiological dimension. Christ "did not ascend into heaven to benefit Himself personally and alone, but to be our Leader and Guide. And He calls Himself the Son of Man so that we shall not doubt that we have an entrance in common with Him who clothed Himself with our flesh to make us participants in all His blessings."² Calvin's words here become clearer still when we recall what we have said about the obedience of Christ. The entrance to heaven had been closed by the disobedience of Adam.³ Christ put on our flesh to accomplish the obedience which was required to efface the disobedience of Adam. But He was not only obedient in our humanity; He also ascended in that same obedient humanity. Therefore, He has opened for us the way to the Heavenly Kingdom, which had been closed by Adam.⁴ "For as righteousness is restored to us on this ground that Christ, by fulfilling the law in our nature, has abolished Adam's disobedience, so also life has been restored to us by this means that He has opened up for our nature the kingdom of God, from which it had been banished and given it a place

1. Comm. on John 16:7, CO 47, 358.

2. Comm. on John 3:13, CO 47, 62: Neque enim quod adscendit in coelum, id sibi privatim ac solus facit, sed ut nobis dux sit et director. Atque hac causa vocavit se filium hominis, ne dubitemus communem nobis cum eo esse ingressum; qui ideo carnem nostram induit, ut nos bonorum omnium consortes haberet.

3. Inst. II, 16, 16; and Comm. on John 3:13, CO 47, 62.

4. Inst. II, 16, 16.

in the heavenly dwelling."¹ We participate in His obedient humanity and thus in Him we already possess heaven. Therefore, Calvin writes: "Since He entered heaven in our flesh, as if in our name, it follows, as the Apostle says, that in a sense, we already 'sit with God in the heavenly places in Him' (Ephesians 2:6) so that we do not await heaven with a bare hope, but in our Head already possess it."² The pro nobis aspect of Calvin's thought, which is usually expressed by the notion of Substitution and Representation, here approaches close to the notion of Identity. Christ has so intimately united Himself with our nature that our true citizenship is in heaven. By union with Him we participate in His heavenly life - the life of His obedient and sanctified humanity.

As the ascended Lord, Christ exercises a priestly office of intercession and a kingly rule over the Church and the world. Calvin prefers the munus duplex formula here to the munus triplex one and, on the whole, has little to say about the exercise of the prophetic office by the exalted Christ. In one place, however, he states that the Apostles were authorized to expound the Scriptures "with Christ's Spirit as precursor in a certain measure (quodammodo) dictating the words."³ In another place, Calvin connects Christ's prophetic office with His priestly office, although

1. Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:16, CO 50, 68.

2. Comm. on Phil. 3:20, CO 52, 56; and Comm. on Galatians 2:20, CO 50, 199.

3. Inst. IV, 8, 8.

it is not altogether clear here whether Calvin is thinking of the exercise of these two offices in Christ's humiliated or His exalted state.¹ The references to the exercise of the prophetic office by the exalted Christ, however, are rare and we shall confine our attention to the exalted Christ's exercise of the other two offices.

Christ's Office of Priestly Intercession

Christ's priesthood has two parts which belong inseparably together: the first relates to His earthly ministry and has to do with the sacrifice of His death; the second is connected with His heavenly ministry and concerns His continual intercession.² His office of intercession is grounded on His obedient death. Calvin clearly establishes the connection between the obedience of Christ's death and His priestly intercession on our behalf: "... when Christ is said to intercede with the Father for us, let us not imagine anything fleshly about Him, as if He were on His knees before the Father offering humble supplications. But

1. Comm. on Hebrews 4:14, CO 55, 53: "And he properly connects the priesthood with the apostleship, since he reminds us that the design of both is to enable us to come to God. He employs an inference, 'then'; for he had before referred to this great truth, that Christ is our high priest; but as the character of the priesthood cannot be known except through teaching, it was necessary to prepare the way, so as to render men willing to hear Christ. It now remains that they who acknowledge Christ as their teacher should become teachable disciples, and also learn from His mouth and in His school, what is the benefit of His priesthood and what is its use and end."
2. Comm. on 1 Timothy 2:6, CO 52, 272.

the power of His sacrifice, by which He once pacified God towards us, is always powerful and efficacious. The blood by which He atoned for our sins, the obedience which He rendered, is a continual intercession for us."¹ He who assumed the form of a servant and who offered the perfect sacrifice of obedience on the Cross now stands before God as our Representative and pleads our cause. His obedience is a continuous intercession for our disobedience. Therefore we have the full assurance of faith that God receives us into His favour.

Christ rose again from the dead and ascended into heaven to fulfill and complete His office of priesthood. He exercises the office not only by bearing our sins and suffering for our iniquities so that His death is "the sacrifice by which our sins are wiped out, His blood is our cleansing, the purpose of His obedience is to abolish all our rebellions and to win righteousness for us."² He also exercises it by His intercession in heaven, for it belongs to a priest not only to offer a sacrifice but also to intercede for the people that they may obtain favour with God.³ Calvin points out that this aspect of Christ's priesthood was shadowed forth in the law, "when the High Priest not only offered sacrifices to God, but also added prayers. So

1. Comm. on John 16:26, CO 47, 371: Sed virtus sacrificii, quo semel Deum nobis placavit, semper vicens et efficax, sanguis quo explavit peccata nostra, obedientia quam praestitit, continua est pro nobis intercessio.
2. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 680. Parker's trans., p. 143.
3. Comm. on Hebrews 7:25, CO 55, 94.

under the ancient shadows the priest could not intercede before God and be received as pleasing without the shedding of blood; but to the blood he added prayers that the sins of the people might be pardoned and that God in His mercy would receive those who deserved only to be rejected. Jesus Christ has brought to an end all the figures of the law and has willingly fulfilled it in Himself. Thus, He has presented blood for the washing of our sins - not the blood of a calf or a lamb as in the law, but His own holy blood, which was consecrated by the Holy Spirit, that we may have complete holiness in Him. But to the shedding of blood He added prayers. And this is why He is today our Mediator and it is said that He intercedes for us."¹ Calvin holds that this is how we are to understand Isaiah's prophecy that the Servant of God "bore the sins of many and prayed for the wicked." (Isaiah 53:12). In the prayer from the Cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do, Christ anticipated His office of priestly intercession."²

Christ's representation of us before the Father was also foreshadowed under the law when the priest entered the sanctuary bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel upon his shoulders and the same number of precious stones on his breastplate while the people stood afar off. By this ancient ceremony, Calvin says, we are taught that we

1. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 684. Parker's trans., pp. 146-7.
2. Comm. on Luke 23:34, CO 45, 767-8; and Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 681.

are barred from the presence of God and need a Mediator "who should appear in our name and bear us upon His shoulders and hold us bound upon His breast so that we are heard in His person."¹ Christ now stands before the Father and actively and efficaciously represents us. His continuous intercession on our behalf is grounded upon His obedience and sanctification of Himself in our humanity. Thus Calvin writes: Christ "entered heaven through His own body ... (and) intercedes for us in heaven, because He had put on our flesh, and consecrated it as a temple to God the Father, and in it sanctified Himself to obtain for us an eternal righteousness, having made expiation for our sins."² Christ appears continually before the Father as One who died and rose again and therefore "His death and resurrection stand in the place of a powerful prayer for reconciling and rendering the Father propitious to us."³ This continuous intercession is expressed even more strongly by Calvin when he says that Christ's death and resurrection is "a perpetual dedication of the way because the blood of Christ is always in a manner (quodammodo) distilling before the presence of the Father, in order to irrigate heaven and earth."⁴

1. Inst. III, 20, 18. See also Comm. on Exodus 28:9, CO 24, 431; and on Hebrews 10:19, CO 55, 128.
2. Comm. on Hebrews 9:11, CO 55, 110: ideo in coelo pro nobis intercedit, quod carne nostra indutus eam Deo patri in templum consecravit; et in ea sanctificavit se ipsum ut nobis aeternam iustitiam, facta peccatorum expiatione, acquireret.
3. Comm. on Romans 8:34, CO 49, 165. See also Comm. on 1 John 2:1, CO 55, 309, where Calvin says intercessio Christi continua est mortis eius applicatio in salutem nostram.
4. Comm. on Hebrews 10:19, CO 55, 129.

Christ's entrance into heaven and His priestly intercession on our behalf means that we have been made a royal priesthood. That is, our entrance into heaven is not merely symbolical but actual and real, for by Christ's grace we are now a royal priesthood.¹ Christ was invested with the kingdom and the priesthood that He might confer both of these privileges upon His members.² By His ascension to the right hand of the Father and His priestly intercession on our behalf we have been consecrated to be associates of His kingdom and partakers of His priesthood.³

Calvin can also, in connection with the forensic group of images, speak of Christ as our Advocate before the Father. He who is our Judge, namely, Jesus Christ, is also our Advocate to intercede for us.⁴ Thus Calvin writes: "Christ was indeed our Advocate when He was on earth; but it was a further concession made to our infirmity that He ascended into heaven to undertake there the office of an Advocate. So that, whenever mention is made of His ascension into heaven, this benefit ought ever to come to our minds that He appears there before God to defend us by His advocacy."⁵ The idea of Christ as Advocate is closely connected with the idea of Christ's Priestly Intercession and, in fact, comment-

1. Comm. on Hebrews 10:19, CO 55, 128.

2. Comm. on Exodus 19:6, CO 24, 197.

3. Comm. on 1 Peter 2:9, CO 55, 240.

4. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 685; and on Romans 8:33, CO 49, 163-4.

5. Comm. on Hebrews 9:24, CO 55, 118; and on John 2:1, CO 55, 308-9.

ing on Romans 8:34, Calvin brings the two together by speaking of Christ as "our perpetual Advocate and Intercessor in securing our salvation."¹ This work of the exalted Lord is a work in which our Lord abases Himself. Here again we see how the status exaltationis involves the status exinanitionis and vice versa: "When we see the Son of God praying, even Him, who is eternal God, abasing Himself to become a suppliant and to make intercession before God His Father in our name, should we not perceive in it an infinite goodness?"² Calvin is thinking here of our Lord's High Priestly prayer recorded in John 17, but the idea of Christ's heavenly intercession seems also to be expressed. Thus in the same sermon Calvin says: "And this is why He is today called our Mediator and it is said that He intercedes for us. And when St. Paul speaks about prayers he adds that there is one God and one Mediator, who is the man, the Lord Jesus. He could just as well say: 'There is one God; there is Jesus Christ who is the eternal Word of God and of the same essence, glory and majesty.' He does not speak like this, however, but says: 'There is one God,' and then 'There is one Mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ'. It is as if He were saying: 'Behold the Son of God, who having taken our nature and been made a man like unto us, sin excepted, now intercedes for us.'³ In the flesh in which He was humiliated Christ even

1. Comm. on Romans 8:34, CO 49, 164.

2. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 682. Parker's trans., p. 145.

3. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 684. Parker's trans., p. 147.

now represents us before the Father.

Before concluding this section and beginning our discussion of the kingly office of Christ, it might be well to point out that the notion of Representation expresses the pro nobis aspect of Christ's heavenly ministry better than the notion of Substitution. In fact, we can employ the notion of Substitution with reference to Christ's heavenly ministry only by giving this notion a rather different meaning than that which it usually bears. To say that Christ is our Substitute in dying for us, means that He takes our place and 'instead of' us endures the divine condemnation in order that we may be delivered from it. But to say that Christ is our Substitute in heaven would mean that He is there 'instead of' us and in such a way that we do not and shall not occupy that place along with Him. It need not mean this, but if we use the notion of Substitution with reference to Christ's heavenly work, then we must make clear this important change of meaning; that is, that with reference to Christ's death Substitution signifies that Christ endures the divine judgment 'instead of' us; but that with reference to Christ's resurrection and ascension, it signifies that He has risen and ascended in our place not 'instead of' us but so that we shall also rise and ascend to be with Him.¹ Both the notion of Substitution and the notion of Representation attempt to express Christ's identity with us and they must always be

1. Van Buren does not seem to notice this change of meaning. See op. cit., pp. 81-91.

used in conjunction with the notion of Christ's brotherhood with us. We hold that, with reference to Christ's heavenly ministry, the notion of Representation expresses the identity of Christ with the believer better than the notion of Substitution. Clearly, the notion of Substitution breaks down when it is employed with reference to Christ's office of priestly intercession and His office of kingly rule. We do not say, therefore, that Christ intercedes or rules in our place but rather that in His ministry of intercession He represents us before the Father, and in His work of kingly rule He represents the Father to us and rules for our salvation. As we have pointed out previously, the notions of Substitution and Representation are intimately connected, and they both attempt to express what is meant by the pro nobis aspect of Christ's work. The use of one notion may, however, suit a particular context better than the use of the other notion. Thus we should exercise a freedom in the use of these two notions to suit the particular context under discussion. There is no special sanctity belonging to the notion of Substitution so that we should feel obliged to use it everywhere. Such a use of it would be forced and even misleading. The notion of Representation, we submit, is more appropriate to the context of Christ's heavenly ministry and more adequately describes His priestly intercession and kingly rule on our behalf.

Christ's Office of Kingly Rule

Here again we shall have to confine our attention to only one or two aspects of Calvin's thought. According to Calvin the resurrection marks the commencement of Christ's kingly reign.¹ We are not to conclude, however, as Werner Krusche has, that Calvin knows nothing of a Kingship of Christ in His humiliated state.² It was shown earlier that Calvin often spoke of the Cross as a 'triumphant chariot' and that in his view Christ obtained kingly honour by the ignominy of the Cross.³ There is another consideration in this connection which leaves the matter in no doubt. It is Calvin's exposition of the crucifixion passages, and especially of those which speak of Pilate writing the title 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews' and putting it on the Cross.⁴ Here Calvin sees Pilate's unwitting testimony to Christ's Kingship. God testified, as it were, by Pilate, "the firmness of His Son's Kingdom."⁵ The Jews, however, were unable

1. Comm. on Galatians 1:1, CO 50, 169: The resurrection is regni Christi initium.

2. Krusche, op. cit., p. 155.

3. Supra., pp 300-1. In setting forth these considerations it should be pointed out that Calvin held that the Son of God, during His earthly sojourn, exercised the government of the universe extra carnem. This, of course, is the so-called Extra Calvinisticum - Calvin's notion that the Son of God "descended from heaven in such a way that, without leaving heaven, He willed to be born in the virgin's womb, to go about the earth, and to hang upon the cross; yet ... continuously filled the world as even He had done from the beginning." (Inst. II, 13, 4). In becoming man Christ therefore did not give up His Kingship over the world.

4. Comm. on John 19:19, CO 47, 414.

5. Comm. on John 19:21, CO 47, 415.

to see Christ as their King because they had a view of Kingship which did not involve such abasement as the death on a Cross. Even the disciples were blinded. Only the thief who confessed Christ recognized Him as King. He, Calvin says, "adores Christ as a King while on the gallows, celebrates His Kingdom in the midst of shocking and worse than revolting abasement, and declares Him when dying, to be the Author of life (yet) what marks or ornaments of royalty did he see in Christ, so as to raise his mind to His Kingdom? To the flesh it must have appeared to be fabulous and absurd to ascribe to one who was rejected and despised (Isa. 53:3), whom the world could not endure, an earthly kingdom more exalted than all the empires of the world. Hence we infer how acute must have been the eyes of his mind, by which he beheld life in death, exaltation in ruin, glory in shame, victory in destruction, a kingdom in bondage."¹ There can be no doubt that Calvin knows a Kingship of Christ in His humiliated state.

Christ is raised to the right hand of the Father and from there exercises His kingly rule. Calvin makes it abundantly clear that the expression "the right hand of the Father" is a metaphor and simply means that Christ has been given all power that He may reign in His Father's stead in the flesh in which He was humbled and that He may be next to Him.² Or

1. Comm. on Luke 23:42, CO 45, 774.

2. Comm. on Acts 7:56, CO 48, 168; See also on Acts 2:33, CO 48, 47; on Hebrews 1:3 & 10:11, CO 55, 13-14 & 126; and on 1 Peter 3:22, CO 55, 269.

as Calvin says, commenting on Ephesians 1:20: "It does not mean any particular place, but the power which the Father has bestowed on Christ, that He may administer in His name the government of heaven and earth ... God the Father is said to have raised Christ to 'His right hand' because He has made Him share in His government, because by Him He exerts all His power; the metaphor being borrowed from earthly princes, who confer the honour of sitting along with themselves on those whom they have clothed with the highest authority. As the right hand of God fills heaven and earth, it follows that the kingdom and power of Christ are equally extensive."¹

Christ exercises a sovereign rule over both the Church and the world. We shall have to confine our attention to the former emphasis. As he has done previously, Calvin makes clear the pro nobis aspect of Christ's kingly rule. Christ was taken up to heaven, Calvin says, "not to enjoy blessed rest at a distance from us but to govern the world for the salvation of believers."² He was given all power and authority not for Himself but for us. His Kingship therefore is to be seen in the light of its purpose which is to confer eternal life upon us. "For Christ did not receive authority for Himself but for the sake of our salvation."³

Finally, it is necessary to consider Calvin's view

1. Comm. on Ephesians 1:20, CO 51, 158. See also on Mark 16:19, CO 45, 828.
2. Comm. on Mark 16:19, CO 45, 828.
3. Comm. on John 17:2, CO 47, 376.

of Christ's handing over the Kingdom to the Father at the consummation that "God may be all in all". (1 Corinthians 15:28).

H. Quistorp and Wolfgang Kratz believe they have detected a spiritualizing tendency in Calvin's exegesis of this text and they have put forward the interpretation that Calvin held that Christ, having completed His Mediatorship at the consummation will cast off His humanity like a discarded cloak.¹

In his exegesis of the above Pauline passage, Calvin notes a distinction between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of God.² The Kingdom of Christ will one day come to an end and the Kingdom of God will be fully inaugurated. Christ continues to reign but when all enemies have been put down and defeated He will hand over the Kingdom to the Father that "God may be all in all". Therefore at the consummation the present order of things will come to an end. The present distinction between master and servant, king and subject, magistrate and private citizen will no longer prevail. There will also be an end both to the rule which angels exercise in heaven and the government which ministers and overseers practise in the Church so that God alone may exercise His power through Himself and not through the hands of men or angels. Bishops and teachers and prophets will cease to exercise their offices.³

1. Heinrich Quistorp, Die letzten Dinge im Zeugnis Calvins. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1941, pp. 166-75; and Wolfgang Kratz, "Christus - Gott und Mensch; Einige Fragen an Calvins Christologie", in Evangelische Theologie 19 (1959) pp. 217 ff.
2. See O. Cullmann, Königsherrschaft Christi und Kirche im Neuen Testament, Theologische Studien, Heft 10. Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1950, p. 11 ff.
3. Comm. on 1 Corinthians 15:24, CO 49, 546-7.

But first all things must be brought into subjection to Christ before He hands back the sovereignty over the world to the Father. "Then Christ will hand back the Kingdom which He has received so that we may cleave more completely to God. This does not mean that He will abdicate from the Kingdom in this way but will transfer it in some way or other (quodammodo) from His humanity to His glorious divinity, because then there will open up for us a way of approach, from which we are now kept back by our weakness. In this way, therefore, Christ will be subjected to the Father, because when the veil (vellum) has been removed, we will see God plainly, reigning in His majesty and the humanity of Christ will no longer be in between to hold us back from a nearer vision of God."¹

Clearly the difficult phrase is "the humanity of Christ will no longer be in between to hold us back from a nearer vision of God." How are we to understand this phrase? Does it mean that the humanity of Christ will be cast aside at the consummation for then it will have ceased to have a mediatorial significance? Two points have to be made at the very outset. First, nowhere in his writings does Calvin question the doctrine of the eternal humanity of Christ. This, of course, by itself, cannot be a conclusive argument against the supposition that Calvin held that the humanity of Christ will be cast aside at the consummation but this fact may suggest that Calvin meant something different by his statement than

1. Comm. on 1 Cor. 15:27, CO 49, 549.

the view which Quistorp and Kratz have attributed to him. Secondly, since Calvin's remarks here are somewhat obscure it will be best to consult his discussion of this subject elsewhere in his writings.

Calvin refers to the matter of Christ delivering up the Kingdom to the Father in a number of places. Particularly instructive are the following two citations: "We are not to take these words (i.e. 1 Corinthians 15:24), as denoting that He shall cease to reign and become, as it were, a private individual; we are to regard them as describing the manner of His reign, that is, that His divine majesty will be more conspicuous."¹ And again: "Christ indeed reigns, not only in His human nature, but as He is God manifested in the flesh. In what way, therefore, will He lay aside the Kingdom? Because the divinity which is now beheld in Christ's face alone will then be openly visible in Him ... Paul ... describes the highest perfection of the divine brightness whose rays began to shine from the time when Christ ascended into heaven."² This whole subject is of course a very difficult one and what Calvin has to say on it is not altogether clear but I believe we can make the following two conclusions: first, Christ will continue to exercise His Kingship but in a different manner - a manner in which His divine majesty will be more conspicuous. Secondly, this does not mean that Christ will cast aside His

1. Comm. on Psalm 110:1, CO 32, 161.

2. Comm. on John 14:28, CO 47, 336.

humanity. Rather Calvin's meaning is that as the world comes more and more under Christ's sway, His glory will shine more and more brightly until that day when all things shall be put under His feet and He will be clearly seen as Lord. The glory of Christ which even now is to a certain extent concealed, will then be visible to all. If we may express it this way, the subject of Calvin's discourse here is not the doctrine of the Two Natures but the doctrine of the Two States of Christ. The words "the humanity of Christ will no longer be in between to hold us back from a nearer vision of God", refer then to the supreme exaltation of Christ. His supreme exaltation does not mean, however, that His humanity will be cast aside. As Christ did not give up His divinity when He descended to the lowest depths of humiliation so He will not give up His humanity when He is supremely exalted.

PART THREETHE OBEDIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN AS A PARTICIPATION
IN THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRISTCHAPTER EIGHT: PARTICIPATION IN CHRIST AND ITS FRUITS:
JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

Our discussion of the obedience of Christ in Calvin's theology would be incomplete without a consideration of how Christ's obedience becomes ours. According to Calvin, this happens when, by the power of the Spirit, we are united with Christ. It is only then that we truly participate in the obedience and holiness of Christ's life and death and receive all that He has accomplished for us. It will be our purpose in this chapter to consider the general theme of union with Christ and the fruits of that union; namely, sanctification and justification. In the final chapter, we shall attempt to show how, for Calvin, the obedience of the Christian is founded upon and proceeds from his participation in Christ's obedience. It will not be possible to deal extensively with these themes but only as they relate specifically to our topic. The reader is referred to an extensive body of literature on these subjects.¹

1. On Calvin's doctrine of the Holy Spirit see Krusche, op. cit.; on the doctrine of union with Christ see W. Kolff-hause, Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin, Neukirchen: Buchhandl. d. Erziehungsvereins, 1938. Particularly instruc-
(Cont'd.)

Union with Christ

At the beginning of Book Three of the Institutio Calvin raises the question: "How do we participate in the work of Christ and all His benefits? The answer which he gives is by unio cum Christo. "We must understand," Calvin says, "that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from Him, all that He has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what He has received from the Father, He must become ours and dwell within us."¹ Or, in slightly different language which expresses the same thing, we must "grow into one body with Him", be "engrafted into Him," "put on Christ", and be conjoined with Him.² According to Calvin, both the Holy Spirit and faith are the bond of our union with Christ. Before we turn our attention to the Holy Spirit and faith as the means of incorporation into Christ, however, we must ask: How are we to understand Calvin's doctrine of union with Christ? Does it mean that Calvin has forgotten everything which he said about the intimate bond of union which Christ has established with us by virtue of His incarnation? Is he in his doctrine of unio cum Christo by the power of the Spirit proposing a second and different bond of union because the first one is not wholly effective?

tive is the Introd. to The School of Faith by T.F. Torrance, op. cit. See also R.S. Wallace, Paul van Buren, W. Niesel, and F. Wendel, all previously cited.

1. Inst. III, 1, 1.

2. See Inst. III, 1, 1: cum ipso in unum coalescere, Christum induere, in ipsum inseri, etc.

There is a prima facie appearance, when we turn from the Second to the Third Book of the Institutio that somehow Christ has become separated from us and that we must become united with Him again by a second and different bond.¹ But this is not actually the case. For Calvin the ontological unity between Christ and us remains effective. It is a union, as we had occasion to observe earlier, which, to a certain extent, belongs to all mankind.² Unbelievers, Calvin says, cut themselves off from it but even their depravity does not violate it. The union between God and man accomplished in Christ's assumption of our flesh cannot be undone.

To put the question again: If the union between God and man wrought out in the incarnation, life, and death of Christ is wholly efficacious for our salvation, how are we to understand Calvin's emphasis upon the need of our union with Christ? Calvin's doctrine of unio cum Christo is his way of stating how the union once and for all time established between God and man becomes effective for us. Our union with Christ is the subjective actualisation of Christ's union with us and of all that He accomplished for us as "very God and very man." What we shall be considering, therefore, in this section is a complementary or 'correlative' union,³ and not an additional

1. See G.S. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation, pp. 69 ff.

2. Supra., p. 79 & 80.

3. The term 'correlative' is Professor Torrance's. Introd. to The School of Faith, op. cit., p. cvii. Cf. also p. cvii: "... there is only one union with Christ, that which He has wrought out in His birth and life and death and resurrection and in which He gives us to share through the gift of His Spirit."

and totally different one because the first was never wholly effective or else has ceased to be so. It is necessary to make this point clear at the outset lest there be confusion on this matter. What follows will attempt to establish this more fully.

When we turn to Calvin's writings, we find that he speaks at one time of the Holy Spirit as our bond of union with Christ and yet at another time of faith as our means of communion with Him. There is, however, no inconsistency in this twofold emphasis because, for Calvin, faith is not a work of man but the gift of the Spirit. We can express the matter as follows: union with Christ is effected by the power of the Holy Spirit who creates faith in us. It will now be our task to consider both aspects of the matter in turn.

In an earlier part of our discussion we noted that Calvin described Christ as the sacrum vinculum between God and man. In this context Calvin speaks of the Holy Spirit as the vinculum "by which Christ effectually unites us to Himself."¹ Here it is important to keep in mind what was said previously about the Holy Spirit being the Spirit of the Son as well as being the Spirit of the Father. If we remember the intimate unity between the Holy Spirit and the Person and Work of

1. Inst. III, 1, 1: Spiritum sanctum vinculum esse, quo nos sibi efficaciter devincit Christus. See also Inst. III, 11, 5 where Calvin speaks of the Holy Spirit as the vinculum unitatis and Inst. IV, 17, 12, where the Spirit is described as the vinculum conjunctionis.

Christ, then we shall not be in danger of thinking that this bond of union which Christ effects by His Spirit is something additional to the bond of union effected by the incarnation. It is, instead, its subjective side - Christ making real to us what He has accomplished for us. As Calvin says: "The love of Christ led Him to unite Himself with us and He completed the union by His death. By giving Himself for us He suffered in our own person; as on the other hand, faith makes us partakers of everything which it finds in Christ."¹ Now if we substitute the word "Spirit" for "faith" in the above quotation, and to do so would not misrepresent Calvin's meaning, we can see that what we have to do with here are two intimately related aspects which are complementary in character. On the one hand, we have the objective work of Christ - His uniting Himself with us and completing the union by His death; and on the other hand, the subjective actualisation of this work - our participation in Him by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not communicate something new to us. He is Christ's Spirit and He communicates Christ to us. Thus we can speak of the work of the Holy Spirit as the subjective actualisation of Christ's union with us and His work for us.

The work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit are inseparable even as Christ cannot be separated from His Spirit. But, as there is a distinction of persons so there is a distinction between the proper work of Christ and the proper work

1. Comm. on Galatians 2:20, CO 50, 200.

of the Holy Spirit. "Christ's proper work," Calvin says, "was to appease the wrath of God by atoning for the sins of the world, to redeem men from death and to procure righteousness and life; the proper work of the Spirit is to make us partakers, not only of Christ Himself, but of all His blessings."¹ Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice through the "eternal Spirit". It is through the efficacious power of the Spirit that Christ's death becomes saving to us.² The proper work of the Spirit then is to communicate to us what Christ has accomplished for us. "He it is who by His power makes the fruit of Christ's death come to us, who makes the blood shed for our redemption penetrate our souls. In a word, He makes Christ with all His blessings become ours."³ As a result, we are incorporated into Christ's body.⁴ Christ comes to dwell within us,⁵ and we grow together with Christ.⁶ All this is accomplished by the power of the Spirit. He is the bond of our communion with Christ and "is like a channel through which all that Christ Himself is and has is conveyed to us."⁷

Still, all this cannot and does not happen apart from

1. Comm. on John 14:16, CO 47, 329: Christi proprium fuit, expiando peccata mundi iram Dei placare, redimere a morte homines, iustitiam ac vitam acquirere: spiritus proprium est, nos tam ipsius Christi quam omnium eius bonorum facere participes.
2. Comm. on Hebrews 9:14, CO 55, 111.
3. Comm. on 1 John 5:8, CO 55, 365.
4. Comm. on Eph. 5:31, CO 51, 226: spiritus sui virtute nos in corpus suum inserit.
5. Comm. on John 14:3, CO 47, 323; and CO 46, 966.
6. Inst. III, 11, 5.
7. Inst. IV, 17, 12.

faith. Calvin in no way belittles the role of faith. To emphasize its importance he employs similar language to speak of it as we have seen him use to describe the Holy Spirit. Thus he says that faith is the vinculum by which Christ unites us to Himself.¹ By faith we are engrafted into the body of Christ and are adopted by God as His children.² We receive Christ "by faith that He may dwell in us, and that we may be made partakers of Him and thus one with Him."³ And commenting on Ephesians 3:17, Calvin writes: "What a remarkable commendation is here bestowed on faith, that by means of it, the Son of God becomes our own, and 'makes His abode with us' (John 14:23). By faith we not only acknowledge that Christ suffered and rose from the dead on our account but accepting the offer which He makes of Himself we possess and enjoy Him as our Saviour ... In a word, faith is not a distant view, but a warm embrace of Christ by which He dwells in us, and we are filled with the divine Spirit."⁴ As God has given Himself to us in Jesus Christ, so faith, which Calvin likens to a vessel,⁵ receives Christ and all His benefits. The proper object of faith is Christ.⁶ In believing we

1. Comm. on John 16:9, CO 47, 360: vinculum quo se nobis unit est fides.
2. Comm. on Matt. 22:30, CO 45, 606. Cf. also Inst. III, 2, 30.
3. Comm. on John 6:47, CO 47, 151: fide eum recipimus ut habitet in nobis, simusque eius participes adeoque unum cum ipso.
4. Comm. on Eph. 3:17, CO 51, 186-7; Cf. also on John 6:35, CO 47, 144-5.
5. Inst. III, 11, 7.
6. Inst. III, 2, 1; Inst. II, 6, 4; and Comm. on Romans 14:1, CO 49, 321-2.

receive "Christ as He is offered by the Father; that is, clothed with His Gospel."¹ But we must bear in mind that while faith is a genuine human act, nevertheless it is not the work or the production of man. Man has no innate capacity for faith. Faith is not an attitude, a feeling, or even an insight of the mind. We are illuminated into faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. Faith is not of our own production but a heavenly gift.² In short, faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit.³

By the power of the Spirit, Who creates faith in us, we are therefore engrafted into Christ. Here the question arises whether there is a temporal sequence of events, that is, first the creation of faith in us and then our incorporation into Christ. W. Kolffhaus has pointed out that for Calvin faith in Christ and incorporation into Christ are not to be temporally or materially separated and one cannot be seen without the other.⁴ Thus Calvin writes: "Christ, when He illuminates us into faith by the power of His Spirit, at the same time so engrafts us into His body that we become partakers of every good."⁵ It is also important to emphasize that our incorporation into Christ is not the beginning of a process of development which automatically continues by

1. Inst. III, 2, 6.

2. Comm. on John 1:13, CO 47, 12.

3. Inst. III, 1, 4.

4. Christusgemeinschaft bei Johannes Calvin, op. cit., p. 44.

5. Inst. III, 2, 35: Christum, ubi nos in fidem illuminat Spiritus sui virtute, simul inserere in corpus suum, ut fiamus bonorum omnium participes.

itself and is perfected. Rather it is from beginning to end the work of the Holy Spirit who creates faith in us and upholds us in Christ from moment to moment.¹

We are now in a position to inquire more specifically how Calvin regarded the nature of this union between believers and Christ and what fruits he saw proceeding from it. It is clear from what has been said that our union with Christ is a spiritual union. The use of the word "spiritual", however, can be misleading. Too often it suggests something vague and nebulous as, for example, in the notion of 'spirit communing with Spirit'. When Calvin speaks of our spiritual communion with Christ he has, on the contrary, something definite and concrete in mind. Accordingly, he writes: "We should note that the spiritual union which we have with Christ is not a matter of the soul only but of the body also so that we are flesh of His flesh, etc. (Eph. 5:30). The hope of the resurrection would be faint if our union with Him were not complete and total like that."² Or, as he says, commenting on Ephesians 5:31: "As Eve was formed out of the substance of her husband, and thus was a part of himself; so if we are the true members of Christ, we share His substance, and by this communion unite into one body."³ It is this kind

1. See Kolfhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

2. Comm. on 1 Cor. 6:15, CO 49, 398.

3. Comm. on Eph. 5:29, CO 51, 225: Quemadmodum Heva ex Adae mariti sui substantia formata est, ut esset quasi pars illius; ita nos, ut simus vera Christi membra, substantiae eius communicare, et hac communicatione nos coalescere in unum corpus.

of intimate union which we enjoy with Christ so that "not only does He cleave to us by an indivisible bond of fellowship, but with a wonderful communion day by day, He grows more and more into one body with us, until He becomes completely one with us."¹

The strong and vivid language which Calvin uses to represent the intimate nature of our unity with Christ helps us to see his controversy with Andreas Osiander in a proper perspective. Calvin's dispute with the Lutheran theologian makes two points clear: first, that Calvin was as concerned as Osiander to see our union with Christ as a real and substantial one. (This is borne out by the fact that he can employ almost the same language which Osiander used to describe our union with Christ). Secondly, that while Calvin could agree that our union with Christ was a true and substantial one, he could not agree that in this union Christ's essence is blended with ours and we are transfused and become a part of God Himself. Thus Calvin writes: "He (i.e. Osiander) says that we are one with Christ. We agree. But we deny that Christ's essence is mixed with our own."² Osiander had spoken of a union between Christ and the believer in which the essential righteousness of Christ was poured into the

1. Inst. III, 2, 24: nec solum individuo societatis nexu nobis adhaeret, sed mirabili quadam communione in unum corpus nobiscum coalescit in dies magis ac magis, donec unum penitus nobiscum fiat.
2. Inst. III, 11, 5: Dicit nos unum esse cum Christo, Fatemur: interea negamus misceri Christi essentiam cum nostra.

believer. Calvin calls this a crassa mixtura of Christ and the believer.¹ "We are one with Christ," he says, "not because He transfuses His substance into us but because, by the power of His Spirit He communicates to us His life and all the blessings He has received from the Father."²

We shall be returning to the controversy between Calvin and Osiander in the context of our discussion of Calvin's doctrine of justification, but here it is necessary to see that there are two points at issue on the question of union with Christ: first, the bond of this union; secondly, whether the 'whole' Christ or a 'partial' Christ comes to dwell in us. In connection with the first point, Calvin accused Osiander of failing to see that we are united to Christ by the secret power of His Spirit.³ The bond of connection which Osiander proposed was the essential righteousness of Christ. The other point in the controversy with regard to union with Christ - that is, the point whether the 'whole' or only a 'partial' Christ comes to dwell in us - does not appear so explicitly but is nevertheless implied throughout. It comes to the surface in the following remark of Calvin's: "Suppose he (i.e. Osiander) had only said that Christ, in justifying us, by conjunction of essence becomes ours, not only in that in so far as He is man is He our Head, but also in that the essence of the divine nature is poured into us. Then he

1. Inst. III, 11, 10.

2. Comm. on John 17:21, CO 47, 387.

3. Inst. III, 11, 5.

would have fed on these delights with less harm, and perhaps such a great quarrel on account of this delusion would not have had to arise."¹ The point behind Calvin's objection is that, according to Osiander's doctrine of union with Christ, only a 'partial' Christ; that is, His divine nature or essential righteousness is united with us. For Calvin union with Christ means that the whole and undivided Christ dwells within us. Thus in a sermon on the Nativity of Christ Calvin says: Christ "declared Himself to be God with us when He willed to dwell in our human nature as in a temple; but now He is God in us, that is to say that we feel Him conjoined to us by a stronger power than when He showed and declared Himself to be a mortal man. Moreover, He is God and man in us. First by the power of His Spirit He vivifies us: and then He is man in us inasmuch as He makes us participants of the sacrifice which He offered for our salvation and declares not without reason ... that His flesh is meat indeed and His blood drink indeed."² By the power of the Holy Spirit we participate in the whole Christ not merely in His divine nature or for that matter merely in His human nature but in the one Person of the

1. Inst. III, 11, 6.

2. Sermon on the Nativity of Christ, CO 46, 966: Il s'est déclaré nostre Dieu avec nous quand il a voulu habiter en nostre nature humaine comme en son temple: mais maintenant il est Dieu en nous, c'est à dire que nous le sentons conjoinct a nous en plus grande vertu que quand il s'est montré et déclaré homme mortel. Mesmes il est et Dieu et homme en nous. Car premierement par la vertu de son saint Esprit il nous vivifie: et puis il est homme en nous d'autant qu'il nous fait participans du sacrifice qu'il a offert pour nostre salut, et nous déclare que non sans cause il a prononcé que sa chair estoit vrayement viande, et son sang estoit vrayement bruvage.

Mediator - "God manifested in the flesh." Osiander had forgotten or else regarded as inadequate the bond of union which Christ had established with our nature in His birth, life, and death and was therefore proposing a second and different bond of union. Accordingly, Calvin pronounced Osiander's doctrine a 'strange monster',¹ for it dissolved Christ's 'incarnational unity' with our nature and made the obedience of Christ's life and death quite insignificant for our salvation.

As we shall have occasion to see more fully later, because it is the whole Christ with whom we are united by the power of His Spirit, therefore we are given to share in the obedience and holiness of Christ's human nature. In the very act of assuming our flesh Christ sanctified it. In our humanity He lived out a life of perfect obedience and trust to the Father. It is in this obedient humanity that we are given to share by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the bond of our union with Christ and is like a channel so that the life and righteousness which reside in Christ's flesh flow to us.

While we are not directly concerned here with Calvin's doctrine of the Lord's Supper, it is necessary to point out, if only in passing, that for Calvin, the Lord's Supper is the symbol and the pledge of our intimate union with Christ. In this sacrament Christ holds out His body to be enjoyed by us

1. Inst. III, 11, 5.

and to nourish us unto eternal life, and our communion with Christ is so intimate that we actually become flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone.¹ It is true that Christ has ascended to heaven. But He has ascended not to be separated from us but that He may, by this sacrament, make us participants of His body and of His blood.² "For we know that His righteousness and obedience is the satisfaction for our sins, and that He has appeased the wrath of God by the sacrifice which He offered of His body and of His blood in the humanity which He took from us. Since this is so we should not doubt that when Christ is conveyed to us at this table, we do not perceive only bread and wine. He truly dwells in us and we are so conjoined with Him that He possesses nothing which He does not wish to communicate to us."³

The Fruits of Participation in Christ: Justification and Sanctification.

Our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ.⁴ When, by the power of His Spirit, Christ unites us into a common life with Himself, we receive all that is needful for our salvation. For Calvin, this is summed up in the twofold grace (duplex gratia) which Christ bestows on us; namely, justification and sanctification.⁵ Accordingly, Calvin says:

1. Comm. on Ephesians 5:31, CO 51, 226.
2. Sermon on the Nativity of Christ, CO 46, 966.
3. ibid., CO 46, 966.
4. Inst. II, 16, 19.
5. Inst. III, 11, 1.

"Christ lives in us in a twofold way: first, in governing and directing all our actions; and secondly, by making us partakers of His righteousness, so that while we can do nothing of ourselves we are accepted in the sight of God."¹ In putting the matter in this way Calvin makes it clear that it is not primarily a question of receiving certain benefits from Christ which we require for our salvation. It is first and foremost a matter of receiving Christ Himself, who is our salvation, and who comes to dwell within us in this twofold way. The gifts which we receive from Christ - justification and sanctification - are never to be abstracted from Christ. As a matter of fact, these benefits would not come to us unless Christ first made Himself ours.²

If the twofold grace which we receive from Christ is not to be abstracted from Him, neither are we to separate the one grace from the other. There is, according to Calvin, an inseparable unity between justification and sanctification: "As Christ cannot be torn into parts, so these two which we perceive in Him together and conjointly are inseparable; namely, righteousness and sanctification."³ "For those gifts of grace go together as if tied by an inseparable bond, so that if anyone tries to separate them, he is in a sense tear-

1. Comm. on Galatians 2:20, CO 50, 1991

2. Inst. IV, 17, 11. Cf. the excellent remarks of Niesel on this point, *op. cit.*, pp. 121 ff.

3. Inst. III, 11, 6: sicut non potest discerpi Christus in partes, ita inseparabilia esse haec duo, quae simul et conjunctim in ipso percipimus iustitiam et sanctificationem.

ing Christ to pieces."¹ If, in our theological reflection upon justification and sanctification, we keep our eyes constantly on Christ rather than upon some abstract notion of benefits, we shall not be in danger of separating what by its very nature cannot be separated.

Calvin brings out the inseparable relation between justification and sanctification more clearly when he points out that we never receive the one grace without the other. "Christ justifies no one whom He does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are joined together by an everlasting and indissoluble bond, so that those whom He illumines by His wisdom, He redeems; those whom He redeems, He justifies; those whom He justifies, He sanctifies. But, since the question concerns only righteousness and sanctification, let us dwell upon these. Although we may distinguish them, Christ contains both of them inseparably in Himself. Do you wish, then, to attain righteousness in Christ? You must first possess Christ; but you cannot possess Him without being made partaker in His sanctification, because He cannot be divided into pieces (1 Cor. 1:13). Since, therefore, it is solely by expending Himself that the Lord gives us these benefits to enjoy, He bestows both of them at the same time, the one never

1. Comm. on 1 Corinthians 1:30, CO 49, 331. Cf. also Comm. on Romans 8:9, & 13, CO 49, 144 & 147; on Romans 6:1, CO 49, 103; and Acta. Syn. Trid., CO 7, 448.

without the other."¹

It is eminently clear then that for Calvin the fruit of our union with Christ is not only justification but, inseparably linked with it, sanctification. The one grace is never found without the other. Yet while it is the case that justification is never accompanied without sanctification and vice versa, they are nevertheless distinct. Justification is not sanctification and sanctification is not justification. The two are neither identical nor interchangeable.² Thus, commenting on 1 Corinthians 1:30 (a key text for his understanding of the relationship of justification and sanctification), Calvin says, "While those two offices of Christ are united, they are yet distinguishable from each other. Therefore, we are not at liberty, indeed it would be wrong, to confuse what Paul expressly separates."³ To set this forward more clearly Calvin employs the excellent illustration of the light and heat of the sun. The sun, he says, gives both light and heat. Here is a mutual and indivisible connection. Yet while one is never accompanied without the other, they are still distinct. Reason therefore forbids us to transfer the peculiar qualities of the one to the other.⁴ Such also is the relationship between justification and sanctification;

1. Inst. III, 16, 1; Quum ergo haec beneficia, nonnisi seipsum erogando, fruenda nobis Dominus concedat, utrumque simul largitur; alterum nunquam sine altero; Cf. also Argument of Romans, CO 49, 4.
2. See the excellent discussion of this by Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, IV/2, op. cit., pp. 499 ff.
3. Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:30, CO 49, 331.
4. Inst. III, 11, 6; and Acta. Syn. Trid. CO 7, 448.

they are inseparable and yet distinct.

Before we turn to the separate treatment of both sanctification and justification, it might be well to ask whether for Calvin there is an ordo salutis between them. We had occasion to observe earlier that for Calvin faith and incorporation into Christ are not to be temporally separated. The same holds true of justification and sanctification. Throughout his discussion of this subject Calvin stresses the simul of the event of receiving Christ and the twofold grace of justification and sanctification. Both of them are bestowed at the same time and the one never without the other.¹ There can therefore be no question of an ordo salutis in the temporal sense. Is there, however, an ordo salutis in the sense that one is substantially prior to the other? Karl Barth has raised this question in connection with Calvin's doctrine.² He has shown that Calvin stressed both justification and sanctification in such a way that it is difficult to say which is prior and which is posterior. Thus the Third Book of the Institutio begins with a consideration of the sanctifying power of the Spirit, goes on to speak of faith, then of the Christian life, and only then takes up the doctrine of justification. All this would lead one to assume that Calvin gives sanctification a precedence over justification. Yet in his discussion of justification, Calvin speaks of it as "the main hinge on which religion turns" and says that it is the foundation on which we

1. Inst. III, 16, 1.

2. Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/2, E.T. cit., pp. 509 ff.

establish our salvation and upon which we build our piety toward God.¹ This would suggest that for Calvin justification is primary. According to Barth, Calvin gave sanctification a "strategic" precedence over justification and the latter a "tactical" precedence. He was able to do so, Barth adds, because he began at the place which is superior to both because it embraces both, namely, "the participio Christi given to men by the Holy Spirit."²

Sanctification

We shall follow Calvin's order of treatment and discuss sanctification first. For Calvin sanctification designates the life-long process by which the believer, participating in Christ's perfect and holy life, is renewed to the obedience of righteousness, so that inwardly and outwardly he becomes wholly devoted to the love and the service of God. Calvin employs other terms to describe this: poenitentia, regeneratio, conversio, and renovatio.

It is necessary to point out in connection with what was argued in Chapter Five, that for Calvin our sanctification is based upon and determined by Christ's sanctification of Himself for our sake. This is absolutely fundamental for everything which Calvin has to say about our sanctification. To recall briefly our earlier discussion: according to Calvin

1. Inst. III, 11, 1.

2. Church Dogmatics, Vol. IV/2, op. cit., pp. 510-11.

Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and sanctified in our humanity by the same Spirit, in order that He might impart His holiness to us. Moreover, during the whole course of His life and in His death, Christ consecrated Himself to the Father that His holiness might come to us. As a result we have been sanctified in and with Christ's sanctification: "For as the blessing is spread to the whole harvest from the first-fruits, so God's Spirit cleanses us by the holiness of Christ and makes us partakers of it. And not by imputation alone, for in that respect He is said to have been made to us righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30); but He is also said to have been made to us sanctification because He has, so to say, presented us to His Father in His own person, that we may be renewed to true holiness by His Spirit."¹ The holiness which we receive from Christ, through union with Him, is an actual holiness or, as Calvin says elsewhere, an actual purity (purete actuelle) and not merely one of imputation.² The imperative to form our lives to the obedience of righteousness is based upon and conditioned by the actual purity or holiness which we possess in Christ. To put it another way: we are not called to be obedient in order that we may be sanctified but because we have been sanctified we are called to be obedient.

If we relate sanctification to Christ's death and resurrection we can see that sanctification has two aspects: "Two

1. Comm. on John 17:19, CO 47, 385.

2. Twenty-Ninth Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 360.

things come to us by our participation in Christ. For if we truly partake in His death, 'our old man is crucified by His power, and the body of sin perishes' (Rom. 6:6), that the corruption of original nature may no longer thrive. If we share in His resurrection, through it we are raised up into newness of life to correspond with the righteousness of God. Therefore, in a word, I interpret repentance as regeneration, whose sole end is to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam's transgression."¹ These two aspects of repentance or sanctification Calvin calls mortificatio and vivificatio.² The first consists in self-denial.³ Since all the emotions of the flesh are at war with God, "the first step toward obeying His law is to deny our nature."⁴ Vivificatio is "the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth; as if it were said that man dies to himself that he may begin to live to God."⁵ The fruits of renewal are righteousness, judgement, and mercy.⁶ They are the work of the Holy Spirit who "so imbues our souls, steeped in His holiness, with both new thoughts and feelings, that they can be rightly considered new."⁷ On the analogy of Christ's death and resurrection this can be expressed by saying that our old man has been put to

1. Inst. III, 3, 9.

2. Inst. III, 3, 3 ff.

3. Cf. particularly Inst. III, Chapters 7 & 8.

4. Inst. III, 3, 8.

5. Inst. III, 3, 3. Compare the statement of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's: "When Christ calls a man He bids him come and die."

6. Inst. III, 3, 8.

7. ibid.

death by Christ's death and by His resurrection we have been raised into newness of life. We must understand this statement as both an indicative and an imperative. Christ's death is efficacious in slaying the old man, and we are actually delivered from the thralldom of sin.¹ Nevertheless, the process of mortification is a continual one and therefore we are daily called to mortify our flesh.² Similarly by the resurrection of Christ we are reborn into righteousness.³ But here again there is an imperative which is based upon the indicative, to strive daily to be renewed in mind and body.

The work of sanctification is gradual and one which continues throughout the entire course of our life. It is not completed in us "straight away, but rather it is for our own good to go on making a daily practice of penitence, and to go on being cleansed of our sins, which make us liable to the punishment of God, until at last we put off, with 'the body of death' (Rom. 7:24), all the uncleanness of sin."⁴ In other words, sanctification has an eschatological character. It is never completed in this life but only in the next when God will bestow upon us the perfect life of heaven.⁵ Nevertheless, "it is befitting that some progress be daily made in purity, and something be cleansed away from our pollution so

1. Comm. on Romans 6:4 & 6, CO 49, 105 & 107-8.

2. Comm. on Romans 6:7, CO 49, 108.

3. Inst. II, 16, 13 and on Romans 6:4, CO 49, 105.

4. Comm. on 1 Cor. 1:8, CO 49, 312; Inst. III, 3, 8 & 9.

5. Sermon on Job 8:13-22, CO 33, 402. Cf. W. Niesel, op. cit., pp. 128-30; Cf. also Comm. on John 17:17, CO 47, 385; Inst. III, 6, 5.

long as we live in the world."¹

It is not possible to present all that Calvin has to say on the subject of sanctification. We have indicated some of its salient features and what we now propose to do is to select and concentrate briefly upon a particular emphasis of Calvin's doctrine, which relates specifically to our theme: namely, Calvin's understanding of sanctification as renewal to the obedience of righteousness. It was pointed out in Chapter One that, for Calvin, the covenant which God instituted and established with Israel had two parts: first, the gratuitous adoption of the race of Abraham into a life of perfect fellowship with God, and secondly, the demand or the obligation of obedience. This demand was made explicit in the law which God delivered to His people and by which He showed that there is nothing more acceptable to Him than obedience. Ceremonies were appended to the law so that the people might be trained unto holiness. The law, however, was unable to form the heart to obedience. It prescribed the rule of a good life but it was powerless to change the heart to a righteous obedience of it. The law, therefore, had to give way to the Gospel. "In vain does God proclaim His law by the voice of man unless He writes it by His Spirit on our hearts, that is, unless He forms and prepares us for obedience ... In short, we then only obediently embrace what God commands when by His Spirit He changes and corrects the natural depravity

1. Comm. on 1 Thess. 5:23, CO 52, 179.

of our hearts; otherwise He finds nothing in us but corrupt affections and a heart wholly given up to evil."¹ What the law was unable to do, was accomplished by the new covenant in Christ's blood. In Christ we have the perfect fulfilment of all that was only shadowed forth under the law: the gratuitous remission of sins and the renovation of the heart. By His birth, life, death and resurrection, Christ has accomplished all the parts of our salvation and renewed us so that we might devote ourselves wholly to the love and service of God. He has given us His Spirit "for sanctification in order that He may bring us, purged of uncleanness and defilement, into obedience to God's righteousness."² In Him we become new men and "the 'new man' ... is that which is renewed by the Spirit of Christ to the obedience of righteousness, or it is nature restored to its true integrity by the same Spirit."³ The purpose of our election and calling is thus fulfilled; "God sanctifies us by effectual calling; and this is done when we are renewed to an obedience of His righteousness and when we are sprinkled by the blood of Christ, and thus are cleansed from our sins; - our salvation flows from the gratuitous election of God; ... it is ascertained by the experience of faith, because He sanctifies us by His Spirit; and then ... there are two effects of our calling, even renewal into obedience and ablution by the

1. Comm. on Hebrews 8:10, CO 55, 102. Cf. also on Hebrews 8:7, CO 55, 100-101.

2. Inst. III, 3, 14.

3. Comm. on Colossians 3:9, CO 52, 121.

blood of Christ; and ... both are the work of the Holy Spirit."¹ It is this end at which the Gospel aims - that we may be sanctified. This has been accomplished in and with Christ's sanctification. On this basis then, namely, that we have been renewed unto obedience, we are to practice obedience in our lives. This will be the subject of Chapter Nine.

Justification

The other grace which we receive through union with Christ is justification. While for Calvin sanctification refers to the work of the Holy Spirit in communicating to us, initially and progressively, the fruits of Christ's obedient and holy life, justification for him means the once-for-all "acceptance with which God receives us into His favour as righteous men."² This is a total and absolutely unconditional acceptance which has no reference to our works - to what we can accomplish or what we can become. It involves the remission of sins and the imputation of Christ's righteousness.³ The verb "to justify", Calvin says, "means nothing else than to acquit of guilt him who was accused, as if his innocence were confirmed. Therefore, since God justifies us by the intercession of Christ, He absolves us, not

1. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:1-2, CO 55, 208-9; Cf. also Comm. on 1 Thess. 4:3, CO 52, 161.

2. Inst. III, 11, 2: acceptationem qua nos Deus in gratiam receptos pro iustus habet.

3. ibid.

by the confirmation of our own innocence but by the imputation of righteousness, so that we who are not righteous in ourselves may be reckoned as such in Christ."¹

This acceptance, or judgement concerning us, must be seen as "in Christ". Calvin, never considers justification as a purely extrinsic judgement concerning us. We are justified because Christ, clothed with His righteousness, is united with us. Thus Calvin writes: "We do not therefore contemplate Him outside ourselves from afar in order that His righteousness may be imputed to us but because we put on Christ and are engrafted into His body - in short, because He deigns to make us one with Him. For this reason, we glory that we have a fellowship of righteousness with Him."² For Calvin, justification is not a "legal fiction". Rather it means that we have a fellowship of righteousness (societas iustitiae) with Christ, or in other words, that we share positively in the righteousness of Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. "For in such a way does the Lord Christ share His righteousness with us that, in some wonderful manner, He pours into us enough of His power to meet the judgement of God. It is quite clear that Paul means exactly the same thing in another statement ... 'As we were made sinners by one man's disobedience, so we have been

1. Inst. III, 11, 3; Comm. on Romans 8:33, CO 49, 163-4.

2. Inst. III, 11, 10: Non ergo eum extra nos procul specularum, ut nobis imputetur eius iustitia: sed quia ipsum induimus, et insiti sumus in eius corpus, unum denique nos secum efficere dignatus est: ideo iustitiae societatem nobis cum eo esse gloriamur.

justified by one man's obedience' (Rom. 5:19). To declare that by Him alone we are accounted righteous, what else is this but to lodge our righteousness in Christ's obedience, because the obedience of Christ is reckoned to us as if it were our own?"¹

It is this particular line of thought - that we are justified by Christ's obedience - which we wish to consider more fully here. Once again it will be helpful to keep in mind the distinction between the active and passive obedience of Christ. There are two sides to Christ's work and the one is as essential to justification as the other. With regard to His passive obedience, Christ bore our sins and therefore purchased forgiveness for us. With regard to His active obedience, He fulfilled all the claims of the divine will and therefore procured righteousness for us. To say then that we are justified by the obedience of Christ means not only that our sins are forgiven and not imputed against us but also that we receive Christ's righteousness and possess it as our own.

Although Calvin does not use the terms, "active" and "passive" obedience, we can see this twofold emphasis in his statements about the obedience of Christ. On the one hand Calvin emphasizes that the obedience of Christ covers our iniquities,² blots out our sins,³ and wipes out our rebellions.⁴

1. Inst. III, 11, 23.

2. Fifth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 655.

3. Second Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 21.

4. Eighteenth Sermon on Harmony of the Gospels, CO 46, 219.

righteousness has also been procured for us by Christ's resurrection. Christ was raised for our justification and therefore has obtained righteousness and life for us.¹ The obedience of Christ justifies us therefore in this twofold sense: first, by remitting our sins, and secondly, by obtaining righteousness for us. Calvin brings together both aspects of the matter in the following statement taken from one of his sermons: "The purpose of His obedience is to abolish all our rebellions and to win righteousness for us."²

Some of the other features of Calvin's doctrine of justification will come out more clearly if we consider his controversy with Osiander. The issue, between himself and the Lutheran theologians, as Calvin saw it was whether we are justified by the essential righteousness, which Christ possessed in virtue of His divine nature, or by the obedience which Christ performed in our humanity. Accordingly, Calvin says of Osiander's doctrine: "Although he may make the excuse that by the term 'essential righteousness' he means nothing else but to meet the opinion that we are considered righteous for Christ's sake, yet he has clearly expressed himself as not content with that righteousness which has been acquired for us by Christ's obedience and sacrificial death, but pretends that we are substantially righteous in God by the infusion both of His essence and of His quality."³

1. We only refer to this point here as we have discussed it in Chapter Seven. Cf. pp. 305.ff.
2. Seventh Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 680.
3. Inst. III, 11, 5.

To say, as Osiander has, that we become righteous when God is united to us in essence means nothing else than that the work of Christ in our flesh - His obedience and His sanctification of Himself for our sakes - is of no significance for our justification. Such a doctrine of justification, Calvin says, "leads us away from the priesthood of Christ and the person of the Mediator."¹

We must not assume, in opposing Osiander's view that Christ justifies us by the power of His divine nature only, that Calvin took the contrary view that Christ justifies us only as He is man. Calvin's position is rather that Christ justifies us as He is both God and man. This is most clearly stated by him in his comments on Isaiah 53:11: "He (i.e. Isaiah) teaches that Christ justifies us, not only in that He is God, but also in that He is man; for He acquired righteousness for us in His flesh. For he does not say 'the Son', but 'my servant', that we may not only regard Him as God, but may also grasp His human nature, in which He discharged that obedience by which we are acquitted before God."² What we have to do with in justification is a whole and undivided Christ and a whole and undivided work. Osiander said that Christ justifies us as He is God. Calvin agrees. "Now we do not divide Christ", he says, "but confess that He, who, reconciling us to the Father in His flesh, gave us righteousness,

1. Inst. III, 11, 8.

2. Comm. on Isaiah 53:11, CO 37, 265; Cf. Sixth Sermon on Isaiah's Prophecy, CO 35, 666.

is the eternal Word of God, and the duties of the Mediator could not otherwise have been discharged by Him, or righteousness acquired for us, had He not been eternal God."¹ If Christ had not been true God He could not have fulfilled the office of priest because this work far surpasses the power of human nature.² But we must not neglect the other side of the matter, that Christ justifies also as He is man. Osian-der's doctrine, that Christ has been given to us as righteousness only in respect to His divine nature, Calvin charges, "deprives Christ's human nature of the office of justifying."³ Christ accomplished His work for us as the Mediator, that is, as God manifested in the flesh. This means first "that Christ was made righteousness when 'He took upon Him the form of a servant' (Phil. 2:7); secondly, that He justifies us in that He has shown Himself obedient to the Father (Phil. 2:8). Therefore, He does this for us not according to His divine nature but in accordance with the dispensation enjoined upon Him. For even though God alone is the source of righteousness, and we are righteous only by participation in Him, yet, because we have been estranged from His righteousness by unhappy disagreement, we must have recourse to this lower remedy that Christ may justify us by the power of His death and resurrection."⁴

Expressed in another way, the dispute between Calvin

1. Inst. III, 11, 8.
2. Inst. III, 11, 9.
3. Inst. III, 11, 12.
4. Inst. III, 11, 8.

and Osiander was concerned about the way in which the divine righteousness comes to us. We showed in Chapter Five the important mediatorial significance which Calvin ascribed to the humanity and the flesh of Christ not only in virtue of the fact that it was in our humanity that Christ was obedient unto death but also that through the flesh of Christ the life of the exalted Christ is poured out upon us. To recall very briefly Calvin's argument: if Christ were the Author of life only as the Eternal Word of God, this would be of no value to us. We are under the bondage of death and estranged from the source of life. It was therefore necessary that life should be manifested in our midst; that is, that it should be manifested in our flesh. It is this same argument which Calvin urges against Osiander in terms of Christ's righteousness. We are estranged from God's righteousness. It was therefore necessary that righteousness should be manifested in our flesh.¹ "For if we ask how we have been justified, Paul answers, 'By Christ's obedience' (Rom. 5:19). But did He obey in any other way than in taking the form of a servant? (Phil. 2:7). From this we conclude that in His flesh, righteousness has been manifested to us. In other words ... Paul has established the source of righteousness in the flesh of Christ alone."² The way then in which we receive the righteousness of God is through the flesh of Christ. We will

1. It is unfortunate that Calvin speaks of this as a "lower remedy", Cf. Inst. III, 11, 8. What he, of course, means is that we have no immediate or direct access to God's righteousness.
2. Inst. III, 11, 9.

quote this important passage almost in its entirety: "For this reason also, when Christ would seal the righteousness and salvation that He has brought us, He sets forth a sure pledge of it in His own flesh. Now He calls Himself 'the bread of life' (John 6:48), but, in explaining how, He adds that 'His flesh is truly meat, and His blood truly drink' (John 6:55). This method of teaching is perceived in the sacraments; even though they direct our faith to the whole Christ and not to a half Christ (ad totum Christum non dimidium), they teach that the matter both of righteousness and of salvation resides in His flesh; not that as mere man He justifies or quickens by Himself, but because it pleased God to reveal in the Mediator what was hidden and incomprehensible in Himself. Accordingly, I usually say that Christ is, as it were, a fountain, open to us, from which we may draw what otherwise would lie unprofitably hidden in that deep and secret spring, which comes forth to us in the person of the Mediator. In this way and sense, I do not deny that Christ, as He is God and man, justifies us; and also that this work is the common task of the Father and the Holy Spirit; finally, that righteousness of which Christ makes us partakers with Himself is the eternal righteousness of the eternal God..."¹ For Calvin our righteousness or justification consists in participating in Christ's obedient humanity. This we are enabled to do by the power of the Spirit who is like a channel so that the righteousness which resides in Christ's flesh flows to us.

1. Inst. III, 11, 9.

There was another important point involved in the dispute; namely, the relationship of justification and sanctification. We have alluded to this matter earlier; here we must discuss it more fully. First, it should be pointed out that we would be quite unfair to Osiander if we did not see that his doctrine of justification was in part motivated by a sound theological aim. He attempted to overcome the weakness of those statements of the Reformation doctrine which represented justification as a purely extrinsic act. Thus he rightly objected (and Calvin saw this point) that it would be insulting to God to say that He justified a man and yet that man remained wicked.¹ But in attempting to overcome this weakness, Osiander, according to Calvin, erred not only in saying that Christ is our righteousness in respect to His divine nature but also in confusing justification and sanctification. Calvin agreed with Osiander on two points: first, that we must never think of justification apart from union with Christ.² That is, justification is not a purely extrinsic judgement but rather we share a societas iustitiae with Christ. This "fellowship of righteousness", however, is with the whole and not just a half Christ. Secondly, Calvin agreed that justification cannot be separated from sanctification. Those whom

1. Cf. Inst. III, 11, 11 & 12.

2. Cf. Inst. III, 11, 10: "Now, lest Osiander deceive the unlearned by his cavils, I confess that we are deprived of this utterly incomparable good until Christ is made ours. Therefore, that joining together of Head and members, that indwelling of Christ in our hearts - in short, that mystical union - are accorded by us the highest degree of importance, so that Christ, having been made ours, makes us sharers with Him in the gifts with which He has been endowed."

God justifies He also sanctifies. Nevertheless justification is not the same thing as sanctification: "... because it is very well known by experience that the traces of sin always remain in the righteous, their justification must be very different from reformation into newness of life. For God so begins this second point in His elect, and progresses in it gradually, and sometimes slowly, throughout life, that they are always liable to the judgement of death before His tribunal. But He does not justify in part but liberally, so that they may appear in heaven as if endowed with the purity of Christ."¹ Justification is total; sanctification is partial. If we merge justification into sanctification and confuse the two then justification becomes dependent not upon the grace of God and the obedience of Christ, which is its sole cause, but upon the degree of new life which is to be found in us. If justification depends on renewal, and renewal in this life is never complete, then we are only partially righteous; But "no portion of righteousness sets our consciences at peace until it has been determined that we are pleasing to God, because we are entirely righteous before Him."² Once we know this total judgement concerning us then we have a sure foundation on which to establish our salvation and to build our piety toward God.³

Finally, it will be instructive to consider, if only

1. Inst. III, 11, 11.
2. Inst. III, 11, 11.
3. Inst. III, 11, 1.

briefly, Calvin's insistence that we are justified by faith alone. The meaning which Calvin gives to this much abused phrase comes out clearly in his polemic against Osiander and the Council of Trent. Faith, Calvin stresses, does not of itself have the power of justifying. It is not a work by which we merit our salvation. "Faith brings nothing to God. On the contrary it sets man before God empty and poor that He may be filled with Christ and His grace."¹ Thus it can be rightly compared "to a kind of vessel; for unless we come empty and with the mouth of our soul open to seek Christ's grace, we are not capable of receiving Christ."² If we understand faith as passivity or receptivity then we shall be able to see what is meant by the phrase "justification by faith alone". It is particularly against the teaching of the Council of Trent that Calvin stressed that justification is by faith alone. The Fathers of Trent stated that we are justified not by faith alone but by faith working through love. Calvin replied: "when we say a man is justified by faith alone, we do not fancy a faith devoid of charity, but we mean that faith alone is the cause of justification."³ The faith which justifies is not a dead faith; it is always accompanied by love. But when it comes to the decisive matter of justification, it is faith alone which justifies. Calvin states this with characteristic lucidity, commenting on 1 Corinthians 13:13: "But it is strange how self-satisfied the Papists are, in

1. Comm. on John 6:29, CO 47, 141.

2. Inst. III, 11, 7.

3. Acta. Syn. Trid., CO 7, 476.

proclaiming in tones of thunder that if faith justifies, therefore love, which is described as greater, does it much more.... Supposing we grant that love is pre-eminent in every way, what are we to say to this kind of argument that says that because it is greater, it is more effective for justifying men? According to that way of thinking, a king will plough the land better than a farmer, and will make a better job of a shoe than a shoemaker, because he is a man of nobler birth than both of them together ... If the power to justify depended on the worth or merit of faith, perhaps we ought to pay heed to what they say. But we do not teach that faith justifies because it is more valuable or holds a more honoured place, but because it receives the righteousness which is offered freely in the Gospel. Greatness or worth has no part to play in this and counts for nothing here."¹

1. Comm. on 1 Cor. 13:13, CO 49, 515-6; Cf. also on Galatians 5:6, CO 50, 246-7.

CHAPTER NINE: THE OBEDIENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN

The importance of the category of obedience for Calvin's doctrine of reconciliation and for his doctrine of justification has been made clear. Obedience is an equally important notion for Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life. In this final chapter, it will be our task to consider Calvin's teaching about the Christian life in terms of the Christian's offering of a life of obedience and service to God in faith and love for His mercy and grace. At the same time, we shall attempt to relate this to what we have said about the work of Christ, seen and understood as Christ's act of obedience to the Father. It will not be our intention to give a complete account of all that Calvin has to say on the subject of the vita hominis christiani. A full discussion would entail a consideration of such themes as the Church and the Sacraments, the Christian and Society, the Christian and the State, and so on. Clearly, this would take us beyond the scope of this present study. Our intention is instead a more modest and limited one; namely, to show that for Calvin the 'obedience of faith' constitutes the true character of the Christian life. While it will not be possible to discuss Calvin's doctrine of the Church, we must make it clear that for Calvin the service of the Christian is his service as a member of Christ's Body, the Church. Calvin knows of no individualistic Christianity. To participate in Christ means to participate along with others in His Church; and to belong to His Church means to belong to a fellowship

which in the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and in the disciplined lives and actions of its members, manifests to the world the reconciliation of man with God, accomplished in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. Therefore, all that we shall have to say about the obedience of the Christian will presuppose his membership in the Church.

We shall begin with a few general remarks about the relation of dogma and ethics in Calvin's theology. The strong emphasis which Calvin laid upon the knowledge of God and consequently upon dogma is well enough known so as not to require argument here. What has not always been seen with sufficient clearness is that for Calvin the knowledge of God is never an abstract or purely intellectual matter, but has from beginning to end profound ethical implications. Whether it be the Institutio, the Commentaries, or Sermons, which we consult, the ethical or practical character of Calvin's theology is unmistakable. For instance, we do not have to read very far into the first book of the Institutio to see that this is the case. The second chapter has as its title, "What it is to know God and to what purpose the knowledge of Him tends." Here Calvin states with great brevity but with sufficient point that God is not truly known unless He is obeyed. "For how can the idea of God penetrate your mind," Calvin asks, "without instantly giving rise to the thought that since you are His handiwork, you have been made over and bound to His command by right of

1. Inst. I, 2: Quid sit Deum cognoscere, et in quem finem tendat eius cognitio.

creation, that you owe your life to Him? - that whatever you undertake, whatever you do, ought to be ascribed to Him? If this is so, then it undoubtedly follows, that your life is wickedly corrupted unless it is framed in obedience to Him, since His will ought to be the law of our lives." The knowledge of God and the service of God, or in other words, dogma and ethics are indissolubly united. So concerned was Calvin to emphasize this point that he could say that "not only does faith, full and perfect faith, but all correct knowledge of God originate in obedience."²

The above passages occur in the context of Calvin's discussion of the "Knowledge of God the Creator." But it is the same emphasis which we encounter in Calvin's discussion of the "Knowledge of God the Redeemer" in Book Two and "The Way we receive the Grace of Christ" in Book Three. The Gospel, Calvin³ reminds us, "is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life." We have not finished with it when we have discussed it and in our minds resolved some of its problems. It must also be lived out in our lives. If we have only done the former and not the latter then we have barely begun. In reality, we have not begun at all. For it is not as if we start with doctrine and only after we have mastered it, proceed to its practical application. To believe means to obey. Dogma and ethics are in-

1. Inst. I, 2, 2.
2. Inst. I, 6, 2: omnis recta Dei cognitio ab obedientia nascitur.
3. Inst. III, 6, 4: Non enim linguae est doctrina, sed vitae.

separable from beginning to end. In this respect, theology, according to Calvin, is distinguished from other subjects of study: "It is not apprehended by the understanding and memory alone, as other disciplines are, but it is received when it possesses the whole soul, and finds a seat and resting place in the inmost affections of the heart."¹ If we begin with doctrine, it is because a proper understanding of the Christian faith is necessary for the Christian life. But to begin with doctrine is to go on immediately to the living of the Christian life. The doctrine of the Gospel "must enter our heart and pass into our daily living, and so transform us into itself, that it may not be unfruitful for us."² To make the Gospel a matter of theoretical knowledge only, is to trifle with it. The Gospel "tends to this that it may induce us to serve and obey God. . . . No one, therefore, is properly converted to God, but the man who has learned to place himself under subjection to Him."³

Another matter should be made clear at the outset. It is the relation of the doctrine of justification by faith alone to Christian ethics in Calvin's theology. Professor Wilhelm Pauck has said that while Calvin was a true disciple of Luther's doctrine of justification, "he added to this interpretation of the Christian faith something very characteristic

1. Inst. III, 6, 4.

2. ibid.

3. Comm. on Thess. 1:9, CO 52, 144: Ergo huc tendit evangelii doctrina, ut nos in cultum obsequiumque Dei traducat. . . . nemo rite ad Deum conversus est, nisi qui se illi totum in servitutem tradere didicit. Cf. also on 2 Cor. 10:6, CO 50, 116.

of his own religious nature: the religious life, he taught is one of complete obedience to God. What God's will is, is laid down in the law, the law of the Old as well as of the New Testament. That the fulfilment of this law in terms of absolute obedience is the highest good, was guaranteed to Calvin by faith in the merciful God, who in His revelation in Christ shows to anyone who believes that He is not only just but also forgiving." With these few well-chosen words, Professor Pauck has gone to the heart of the matter. It will be necessary for us, however, to draw this out a little more in detail to make the point clear. This can be done by expressing the matter in the following way: first, when Calvin speaks of the justification of the sinner by the obedience of Christ, he does not mean that the Christian has been thereby exempted from a life of obedience; and secondly, when Calvin speaks of the obedience of the Christian he does not forget or leave behind the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

First then, justification by faith alone does not set aside or in any way diminish the ethical concern. The knowledge of justification does not provide the Christian with a licence to continue in his sin that grace may abound. Nothing could be more inconsistent, according to Calvin, than for the man who has been justified to continue wantonly in sin. "Christ does not reconcile believers to the Father that they may wanton

1. Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation. Glencoe: Free Press, 1950, p. 58.

with impunity, but that by governing them by His Spirit, He may keep them under the hand and rule of His Father. Whence it follows that Christ's love is rejected except by those who prove by true obedience that they are His disciples." We are absolved from our sins and restored to the favour of God, not that we may sin with greater freedom² but that raised up by His grace we may take His yoke upon us. Justification does not mean less ethical concern but more. Karl Barth has rightly said: "There can . . . be no doubt that, as Calvin saw it, the Reformation did not wish to give the problem of the vita hominis christiani, of penitence and good works, any less but a much greater and more serious and penetrating attention than was done either by the Humanists (who followed Erasmus) on the one side or contemporary Romanists on the other. In the context in which it was set by him the sola fide³ obviously could not become a comfortable kiss of peace."

If we have said that the doctrine of justification by faith alone does not diminish the seriousness with which Calvin views the injunction to live a good and holy life, it must now be made clear that when he speaks of the obedience to which the Christian is obligated, he does not slip back into the legalism of medieval Christianity - the legalism which the Reformation so strongly rejected. For Calvin, the obedience of the Christian

1. Comm. on John 15:10, CO 47, 343. Cf. also on Romans 6:2, CO 49, 104.
2. Comm. on Matthew 11:29, CO 45, 321-2.
3. Church Dogmatics IV/2, op. cit., p. 506.

does not in any way, compete with or contradict the doctrine of justification by faith alone. "When Christ treats of the desire to live a good and holy life," Calvin says, "He does not at all exclude the chief ¹ article in His teaching, the free imputation of righteousness." The obedience of the Christian is not a new striving after a works righteousness. Participatio Christi and the fruit of that participation, means that we have been delivered from the vain attempt to achieve our salvation by obedience, but rather are obedient in order that we may conform to Christ, who was obedient for our sakes. "When we hear mention of our union with God", Calvin says, "let us remember that holiness must be its bond; not because we come into communion with Him by virtue of our holiness! Rather we ought first to cleave unto Him so that infused with His holiness, we may follow whither He calls."²

Thus when Calvin thinks and speaks of the obedience of the Christian, it is always in the context of sola gratia.³ God's adoption of us is the primary cause of obedience. The obedience which believers render to Him during the course of their lives "is not so much the cause of His continuing His love towards them as the effect of His love."⁴ The whole of the Christian life stands under the sign of grace. This means that justification is not only the starting-point of the vita hominis christiani but also the point to which the Christian

1. Comm. on John 15:10, CO 47, 343.
 3. Comm. on Hebrews 2:13, CO 55, 31.
 4. Comm. on John 15:10, CO 47, 343.

2. Inst. III, 6, 2.

will continually return in his attempt to live a good and holy life, for his obedience will never be perfect and he will continually be in need of forgiveness. Thus, in endeavouring to do the will of God, we have this confidence that God not only accepts us but also our poor and feeble obedience. The 'obedience of faith', Calvin says, "although imperfect, is nevertheless approved by God. The will of God is first shown to us in the Law. But as no one satisfies the Law, no happiness can be hoped for from it. But Christ meets the despairing with a new aid, for He not only regenerates us by His Spirit so that we may obey God, but also brings it to pass that our endeavour,¹ of whatever kind, obtains the praise of perfect righteousness."² God justifies both us and our works. This is the source and the impetus ~~of~~ our obedience. It is important to emphasize this as there still seems to be an impression about that Calvin diluted the doctrine of justification by faith alone and gave rise to a legalistic interpretation of Christianity, which obscured the evangelical truth for which Luther and the other Reformers had contended. This charge is as unjust and as unfounded as the Roman Catholic criticism that the doctrine of justification by faith alone means that the matter of the Christian life is treated with less seriousness. For Calvin the doctrine of justification was as central as it was for Luther. In no way and in no part did he compromise or obscure it. Calvin's particular genius lay in the fact that he was able,

1. Comm. on 1 John 2:17, CO 55, 320. Cf. on 1 John 2:3 & 3:11, CO 55, 311 & 338; on Hebrews 11:7, CO 55, 150-2; and Inst. II, 7, 4.
2. Comm. on 2 Cor. 5:10, CO 50, 65.

both theoretically and practically, to give justification and sanctification an equal emphasis, and to avoid, on the one hand, the danger of a new legalism, and on the other hand, the danger of antinomianism.

To believe in Christ is to obey Him. Simply and briefly stated, this is, for Calvin the sum of the matter. It is true that faith is not obedience any¹ more than obedience is faith, but just as we cannot have obedience to God without faith so we cannot have faith which is devoid of obedience. For Calvin this basic truth is expressed in the Pauline phrase 'the obedience of faith'. ¹ Faith presents us before God that we may be ready to obey Him. Moreover, ² "faith is properly that by which we obey the Gospel." Looked at in this way, faith is not a cold and detached intellectual attitude. "In understanding faith," Calvin says, "it is not merely a question whether God exists, but also - and this especially - of knowing what His will toward us is. For it is not so much our concern to ³ know who He is in Himself, as what He wills to be toward us." In other words, faith grasps God, not in His naked divinity, but as He makes Himself known to us as Lord and Redeemer and as the One who has the right to command and to receive the obedience which we owe to Him. Thus "faith is more of the heart than of the brain and more of the disposition than of the understanding. For this reason it is called 'the obedience

1. Comm. on Luke 1:38, CO 45, 33
2. Comm. on Romans 1:5, CO 49, 11. Cf. on Titus 3:3, CO 52, 427.
3. Inst. III, 2, 6.

of faith' and the Lord prefers no other obedience to it."¹
 Faith alone teaches us obedience. Consequently, 'the²
 obedience of faith' is the chief sacrifice which God demands.³

If it is faith alone which presents us before God that we may be ready to obey Him, what rule are we to follow that we may render a perfect obedience? According to Calvin, the law is the basic rule of the Christian life. "His will ought to be the rule of our lives."⁴ What God's will is, has been declared in the law, and therefore, he who seeks to be obedient to God, will regulate his life entirely by His commandments. This will be an obedience to the spirit rather than the letter of the law. "In ordering our life", Calvin says, ". . . our first study ought to be to approve ourselves to God; and we know that what He principally requires is a sincere heart and a pure conscience. Whoever neglects uprightness of heart, and regulates his outward life only by obedience to the law, neglects this order. For it ought to be remembered that the heart, and not the outward mask of works, is chiefly re-⁵garded by God, to whom we are commanded to look."

The law is to be the rule of our lives. But according to Calvin, the perfection which the law requires is to be found in Christ. Therefore, to conform our lives to Christ is to

1. Inst. III, 2, 8.
2. Comm. on Hebrews 11:7, CO 55, 151.
3. Thirty-Second Sermon on Ephesians, CO 51, 651.
4. Inst. I, 2, 2.
5. Comm. on Luke 1:6, CO 45, 10.

Keep the law and to obey the will of God. "The sum of the whole law, and of all that God requires of us, is . . . that His image should shine forth in us . . ." This happens when our lives conform to Christ, who, not only as the Eternal ² Word but also as the Mediator, is the lively Image of God, and therefore, the perfect Pattern for our lives. The life of the Christian man will thus consist in the imitatio Christi. ". . . God the Father, as He has reconciled us to Himself in Christ, has in Him stamped for us the likeness to which He would have us conform. . . . (He) has been set before us as an example (exemplar) whose pattern we ought to express in our life. What more effective thing can you require than this one thing? Nay, what can you require beyond this one thing? For we have been adopted as sons by the Lord with this one condition; that our life express Christ, the bond of our adoption. Accordingly, unless we give and devote ourselves to righteousness, we not only revolt from our Creator with wicked perfidy but we also abjure our Saviour Himself."³

The notion of imitatio Christi has fallen into disrepute and the very mention of it leads to the suspicion of a false practice of piety. It is therefore necessary to make clear what Calvin did and what he did not mean by it. We will consider the negative aspect first. For Calvin "the imitation

1. Comm. on 1 Peter 1:14, CO 55, 221
2. Comm. on John 17:22, CO 47, 338: "Our happiness lies in having God's image, which was blotted out by sin, restored and reformed in us. Christ is not only, as the eternal Word of God, His lively image, but even on His human nature, which He has in common with us, the imprint of the Father's glory has been engraved, that He may transform His members to it."
3. Inst. III, 6, 3.

of Christ" does not imply a program of action which will seek to reproduce every aspect of Christ's life on earth. "It is necessary to know", Calvin says, "in which respect Christ is to be our example. He walked on the sea, He cleansed the leprous, He raised the dead, He restored sight to the blind: to try to imitate Him in these things would be absurd. For when He gave these evidences of His power, it was not His object that we should thus imitate Him."¹ If we are to imitate Christ then we must know that we cannot imitate Him in every² respect. We are to exercise a right judgement in these matters. Calvin was severely critical of the imitatio Christi piety of the medieval Church which had instituted the Caresme or forty-day fast to imitate Christ's fast in the wilderness,³ and which held an annual ceremony of feet-washing to imitate Christ's washing of His disciples feet.⁴ According⁵ to Calvin, this is not imitating Christ but aping Him. The true imitation of Christ will consist in acting according to the spirit which motivated Christ rather than in a slavish reproduction of the details of His outward life.⁶

And now to put the matter positively, to imitate Christ according to Calvin, means to imitate Him in what relates to the service of God,⁷ to faith and obedience, patience and humility. Christ made obedience His life-characteristic and

1. Comm. on 1 Peter 2:21, CO 55, 249.
2. ibid.
3. Comm. on Matthew 4:1, CO 45, 128ff.; Cf. Inst. IV, 12, 20.
4. Comm. on John 13:15, CO 47, 309-10.
5. ibid.
6. Cf. R. S. Wallace, op. cit., p. 43.
7. Forty-Ninth Sermon on Harmony of Gospels, CO 46, 607-8.

and therefore, we, who are His followers, must make it our life-characteristic. Thus Calvin writes: "As we have been elected in Christ, so in Him the lively image of our calling is exhibited to us. And so He justly puts Himself forward here as a pattern, to the imitation of which all the godly may be conformed. He says, 'In me shines the similitude of what I demand from you; for you see how sincerely I am devoted to obedience to my Father and keep on this course. . . . We must always keep this conformity between the Head and the members before our eyes, not only that believers may endeavour to form themselves to the pattern of Christ, but that they may trust to be reformed daily for the better by His Spirit so that they may walk unto the end in newness of life.'" ¹ And commenting on Hebrews 10:7, Calvin says: "Christ is a pattern of perfect obedience for this end, that all who are His may contend with one another in imitating Him, that they may together respond to the call of God, and that their life may exemplify this saying, 'Lo, I come.'" ²

Christ is also set before us as a perfect pattern of humility, patience, and love and we shall consider this in due course. It is important to emphasize here that for Calvin the imitatio Christi is based upon and proceeds from the participio Christi. Commenting on the Johannine passage, "Hereby we know that we are in Him; He who says He abides in

1. Comm. on John 15:10, CO 47, 343.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 10:7, CO 55, 125.

Him ought himself to walk even as He walked," Calvin says; "Now he calls us also to Christ, to imitate Him. Yet he does not simply exhort us to the imitation of Christ, but from the union we have with Him, proves we should be like Him. He says that a likeness in life and actions will prove that we abide in Christ."¹ Because we abide in Him we are to be like Him. This is the foundation of the Christian life. Imitatio Christi does not consist in imitating a distant and far-removed Ideal but in daily conforming our lives to Christ to whom we are united by an inseparable bond. In more modern, and consequently less suspect language, "the imitation of Christ" for Calvin means nothing other than a life of costly discipleship - dying to ourselves and living unto Christ, taking up the cross and following Christ where He may lead us.²

Before we consider the two main aspects of imitatio Christi, namely, self-denial and bearing the cross, it will be instructive to consider what Calvin has to say about the motive for the Christian life. According to Calvin the strongest motive for the vita hominis christiani is God's great mercy and His redemptive work in Jesus Christ. Thus he says: ". . . until men really apprehend how much they owe to the mercy of God, they will never with a right feeling worship Him, nor be effectually stimulated to fear and obey Him. It

1. Comm. on 1 John 2:6, CO 55, 312.

2. Compare Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Nachfolge. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1952. There are many striking similarities between Calvin's conception of imitatio Christi and Bonhoeffer's notion of discipleship. Cf. particularly the chapter on "Der einfältige Gehorsam", pp. 33ff.

is enough for the Papists, if they can extort by terror some sort of forced obedience, I know not what. But Paul, that he might bind us to God, not by servile fear, but by the voluntary and cheerful love of righteousness, allures us by the sweetness of that favour, by which our salvation is effected; and at the same time he reproaches us with ingratitude, except we, after having found a Father so kind and bountiful,¹ do strive in our turn to dedicate ourselves wholly to Him." The more abundantly God's grace and goodness has been shown and revealed to us, the more are we bound to serve and obey Him.² Since God has more fully revealed Himself in the Gospel our devotion and consecration to Him ought to be greater than that of the Old Testament fathers. "God ought always to be heard with equal attention whenever He may speak and yet . . . the fuller He reveals Himself to us, it is but right that our reverence and attention to obedience should increase in proportion to the extent of His revelations; not that God is in Himself less at one time than at another, but His greatness is not at all times equally made known to us."³ Gratitude lies at the basis of true discipleship. The Christian is a disciple because out of love and gratitude he cannot be anything else.

It is interesting to note in passing, that according to Calvin, it is in this respect that the Christian ethic is dis-

1. Comm. on Romans 12:1, CO 49, 233.
2. Comm. on 1 John 3:1, CO 55, 329.
3. Comm. on 2 Corinthians 9:7, CO 50, 108.

tinguished from moral philosophy. At several points, Calvin points out the difference between the two. "And this is the main difference between the gospel and philosophy:" Calvin says, "for though the philosophers speak excellently and with great judgement on the subject of morals, yet whatever excellency shines forth in their precepts, it is as it were, a beautiful superstructure without a foundation; for by omitting principles, they offer a mutilated doctrine, like a body without a head."¹ Moral philosophy can provide no real or solid basis for the good life. "For whatever the philosophers may have ever said of the chief good, it was nothing but cold and vain, for they confined man to himself while it is necessary for us to go out of ourselves to find happiness."² The moral philosophers counsel ~~want to live according to nature,~~³ or else "they set up reason alone as the ruling principle in man, and think that it alone should be listened to; to it alone, in short, they entrust the conduct of life. But the Christian philosophy bids reason give way to, submit and subject itself to, the Holy Spirit, so that the man himself may no longer live but hear Christ living and reigning within him (Gal. 2: 20)."⁴ The Christian ethic draws its "exhortation from the true fountain"; namely, what God has done in Jesus Christ, and calls us to subject ourselves, body, mind, and soul to the Lordship of Christ and daily to conform our lives more and

1. Comm. on Romans 12:1, CO 49, 233.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 4:10, CO 55, 48.

3. Inst. III, 6, 3.

4. Inst. III, 7, 1.

5. Inst. III, 6, 3.

more to Him.

For Calvin the Christian ethic is the ethic of the cross. Accordingly, he refers frequently to our Lord's saying, "If any man₁ will be my disciple let him take up his cross and follow me." Discipleship has two aspects: self-denial and bearing the cross. Thus Calvin writes: "Presenting Himself to everyone as an example of self-denial and of patience (He) invites every member of His body to imitate Him. . . . The meaning is that none can be reckoned to be the disciples of Christ unless they are true imitators of Him, and are willing to pursue the same course. He lays down a brief rule for our imitation, in order to make us acquainted with the chief points in which He wishes us to resemble Him. It consists in two parts, self-denial and a voluntary bearing of the cross."² We shall consider these two aspects of discipleship in turn.

Self-denial is the first part of discipleship. According to Calvin our conformity to Christ in this aspect is based on the fact that we are not our own masters, but that we belong to the Lord. "If we, then, are not our own but the Lord's, it is clear what error we must flee, and whither we must direct all the acts of our life. We are not our own; let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans and deeds. We are not our own; let us therefore not set it as our goal to

1. Matthew 16:24.
2. Comm. on Matthew 16:24, CO 45, 481. Compare W. Niesel, op. cit., pp. 143 ff.

seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh. We are not our own; in so far as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely, we are God's; let us therefore live for Him and die for Him. We are God's; let His wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions. We are God's; let all the parts of our ¹life accordingly strive toward Him as our only lawful goal."

It should be pointed out, as it were in parenthesis, that man is truly free, when he no longer is his own master, but belongs to the Lord. For Calvin, it is no contradiction to say that we belong to the Lord and that we are free. To be free is to have the right Lord and not to be 'lordless' or our own masters. "Those are free," Calvin says, "who serve God. It is obvious, hence, to conclude, that we obtain liberty in order that we may more promptly and more readily render obedience to God; for it is no other than a freedom from sin; and dominion is taken away ²from sin, that men may become obedient to righteousness." This is essentially what Calvin means when he ³says that Christian freedom is an appendage of justification. To be free is to be delivered from ourselves and also from bondage to the law, so that willingly we may obey God's will. True freedom consists in the service of God. It is, Calvin says, "a free servitude and a serving ⁴freedom." Perhaps no other phrase could describe it.

1. Inst. III, 7, 1.
2. Comm. on 1 Peter 2:16, CO 55, 246.
3. Inst. III, 19, 1 & 2.
4. Comm. on 1 Peter 2:16, CO 55, 246; Cf. also Comm. on John 8:32, CO 47, 203.

better than this one which Calvin uses.

But to return to our discussion of self-denial. According to Calvin, the self-denial which God requires of us is "very extensive and implies that we ought to give up our natural inclinations, put away all the covetous desires of the flesh, and become as nothing that God may live and reign in us." We have referred to this earlier as mortificatio, which involves a dying to the self so that we may live unto the Lord. Self-denial is the inward aspect of mortificatio; bearing the cross is its outward aspect.

Self-denial has a double reference: partly and chiefly to God and partly to man. In its orientation to God, self-denial means that we will submit ourselves completely to Him, denying whatever our reason and will dictate. Only in this way will we be able to put off our old nature. Calvin quotes the expression, "a world of vices is hidden in the soul of man" and he adds, "And you can find no other remedy than in denying yourself and giving up concern for yourself, and in turning your mind wholly to seek those things which the Lord requires of you, and to seek them only because they are pleasing to Him." Clearly, what Calvin is enjoining here is not self-denial for the sake of self-denial. We are not to renounce ourselves because there is any particular virtue in

1. Comm. on Matthew 16:24, CO 45, 481.
2. Comm. on Phil. 3:10, CO 52, 50.
3. Inst. III, 7, 2.

self-renunciation as such, but that we may submit ourselves more completely to Christ. It is in so denying ourselves that we become more and more conformed to Christ and also realize our true happiness. Accordingly Calvin says: ". . . man becomes happy by self-denial. For what else is to cease from our works, but to mortify our flesh, when a man renounces himself that he may live to God? For here we must always begin, when we speak of a godly and holy life, that man being in a manner dead to himself, should allow God to live in him, that he should abstain from his own works, so as to give place to God to work. We must indeed confess, that then only is our life rightly formed when it becomes subject to God. But through inbred corruption this is never the case, until we rest from our own works; nay, such is the opposition between God's government and our corrupt affections, that He cannot work in us until we rest."¹

If self-denial is oriented to God and to Christ, it is also oriented toward our neighbour. Here Calvin lays particular emphasis upon the Pauline exhortation, "in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."² We are not to be devoted to ourselves but rather to prefer or to count the other person better than ourselves. In other words, we are to practice true humility in our lives. Accordingly, we will even esteem those persons who are below us in rank

1. Comm. on Hebrews 4:10, CO 55, 48.

2. Philippians 2:3.

and position as better than ourselves. We will acknowledge¹ whatever gifts God has bestowed upon them. At the same time we will employ ourselves in detecting and correcting our² own faults and this will give us abundant cause for humility. There is only one path³ to true gentleness: "a heart imbued with lowliness and with reverence for others." In Christ, we behold the perfect pattern of humility. Therefore we are to have the same disposition which was found in Christ, who though He was equal with God, made Himself of no reputation for our sakes, and who "humbled Himself, and became obedient⁴ unto death, even the death of the cross."

Self-denial toward our neighbour will also mean that we will have his good welfare constantly before us. Here Calvin counsels a proper stewardship of God's gifts: "The lawful use of all benefits consists in a liberal and kindly sharing of them with others. No surer rule and no more valid exhortation to keep it could be devised than when we are taught that all the gifts we possess have been bestowed by God and entrusted to us on condition that they be distributed for our neighbour's benefit . . . Let this, therefore, be our rule for generosity and beneficence: We are the stewards of everything God has conferred on us by which we are able to help our neighbour, and are required to render account of our stewardship. Moreover, the only right stewardship is that which is

1. Inst. III, 7, 4.
2. Comm. on Phil. 2:3, CO 52, 24.
3. Inst. III, 7, 4.
4. Cf. Comm. on Phil. 2:4-8, CO 52, 24-7.

tested by the rule of love. Thus it will come about that we shall not only join zeal for another's benefit with care for our own advantage, but shall subordinate the latter to the former."¹ But it is primarily love for our neighbour which must rule our stewardship for we may perform all the outward duties which are required of us and yet come far short of doing what is required, because love is lacking.² Again, it is in Christ that we behold the perfect pattern of love. Commenting on 1 John 3:16, "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren," Calvin says: "As the perfect rule of love, he sets before us the example of Christ; for He testified how much He loved us by not sparing His own life. This is the goal which he tells us to aim at. The sum of it is that our love is approved when we transfer the love of ourselves to our brethren, so that each one, forgetting himself in a way, consults the good of others."³

Finally, it is necessary to point out that Calvin resisted all attempts to draw up what might be called a program of self-denial. It is true that self-denial involves something wholly concrete and specific, as for instance helping our neighbour in specific ways in specific situations. But we cannot lay down a program for such action. The call of the Gospel to forsake all and to follow Christ is also a wholly concrete and

1. Inst. III, 7, 5.
2. Inst. III, 7, 7.
3. Comm. on 1 John 3:16, CO 55, 340.

specific but here again we cannot turn it into a program. Thus commenting on our Lord's saying, "Everyone of you who forsakes not all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple," (Luke 14:33), Calvin says: "It would be absurd to insist on a literal interpretation of the phrase, as if no man were a disciple of Christ, till he threw into the sea all that he possessed, divorced his wife, and bade farewell to his children. Such idle dreams led foolish people to adopt a monastic life, as if those who intend to come to Christ must leave off humanity. Yet no man truly forsakes all that he possesses till he is prepared at every instant to leave all, gives himself free and unconstrained to the Lord, and, rising above every hindrance, pursues his calling." Christ may demand something like this of us, as for example, when He commanded the Rich Young Ruler to give up his riches. What is required is that we be prepared to yield such obedience - "to agree without delay whenever and whatever He commands."

The second aspect of imitatio Christi or discipleship is bearing the cross. Christ not only subjected His will to the Father and thus denied Himself, but He also bore the cross. Since the servant is not greater than the Lord, the obedience of the Christian will involve his spending his whole life under the cross, that there may be a true conformity between the Head and the members. God has determined that all whom He

1. Comm. on Luke 14:33, CO 45,
2. Comm. on John 13:7, CO 47, 306; Cf. also on Acts 8:26, CO 48, 188-89.

has adopted should bear the image of Christ and this "gratuitous adoption, in which our salvation consists, is inseparable from the other decree, which determines that we are to bear the cross; for no one can be an heir of heaven without being conformed to the image of the only-begotten Son of God."¹

The cross is an inescapable element of the Christian life. We are called to a life of hard and strenuous obedience. "For whomever the Lord has adopted and deemed worthy of His fellowship ought to prepare themselves for a hard, toilsome, and unquiet life, crammed with very many and various kinds of evil. It is the heavenly Father's will thus to exercise them also as to put His own children to a definite test. Beginning with Christ, His first-born, He follows this plan with all His children. For even though that Son was beloved above the rest and in Him the Father's mind was well pleased (Mt. 3:17 & 17:5), yet we see that far from being treated indulgently or softly, to speak the truth, while He dwelt on earth He was not only tried by a perpetual cross but His whole life was nothing but a sort of perpetual cross. The apostle notes the reason: that it ~~be~~²lieved Him to "learn obedience through what He suffered" (Heb. 5:8)."

Christ's Sonship involved an obedience unto death. We who are sons by adoption therefore cannot exempt ourselves

1. Comm. on Romans 8:29, CO 49, 160.
2. Inst. III, 8, 1.

from the condition to which Christ our Head had to submit. It is only right that we should also by His example, be taught by various sorrows, and if necessary by death itself, to render obedience to God. It is by means of the cross - which for Calvin is something wholly concrete and specific - that God teaches us obedience. Accordingly, Calvin writes: "This benefit, which arises from the cross ought to allay its bitterness in our hearts; for what can be more desirable than to be made obedient to God? But this cannot be effected but by the cross, for in prosperity we exult as with loose reins; nay, in most cases when the yoke is shaken off, the wantonness of the flesh breaks forth into excesses. But when restraint is put on our will, when we seek to please God, in this act only does obedience show itself; nay, it is an illustrious proof of perfect obedience when we choose the death to which God may call us, though we dread it, rather than the life which we naturally desire."¹ The obedience of Christ and the obedience of the Christian, in the bearing of the cross, are intimately related. Calvin puts this very strongly when he says: "If then we desire that Christ's obedience should be profitable to us, we must imitate Him; for . . . its benefit shall come to none but to those who obey."²

There are, according to Calvin, several benefits which proceed from bearing the cross. We shall consider four such benefits. First, the bearing of the cross restrains our

1. Comm. on Hebrews 5:8, CO 55, 63.

2. Comm. on Hebrews 5:9, CO 55, 64.

self-confidence and pride and makes us conscious of our weakness and frailty. God proves to us by experience the great incapacity and also frailty under which we labour. "Therefore, He afflicts us either with disgrace or poverty, or bereavement, or disease, or other calamities. Utterly unequal to bearing these, in so far as they touch us, we soon succumb to them. Thus humbled, we learn to call upon His power, which alone¹ makes us stand fast under the weight of afflictions." Even the most holy persons need to be so disciplined by the cross. The bearing of the cross makes us aware of our incapacity to endure the struggles of life, cleanses us of our self-reliance, teaches us to put our trust completely in God, and also brings us to a deeper knowledge of Him.

Secondly, the cross tests our patience and trains us to obedience. "The Lord", Calvin says, "also has another purpose for afflicting His people: to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience. Not that they can manifest any other obedience than what He has given them."² Afflictions produce patience; and faith is proved³ by tribulations as gold is tested in a fiery furnace. ". . . Were not God to try us, but to leave us free from trouble, there would be no patience, which is no other thing than fortitude of mind in bearing evils."⁴ Afflictions also teach us obedience. If everything

1. Inst. III, 8, 2.

2. Inst. III, 8, 3.

3. Comm. on James 1:3, CO 55, 384-5; and Inst. III, 8, 3.

4. Comm. on James 1:3, CO 55, 385.

went according to our own liking, then we would not know what it is to follow God. Calvin mentions that Seneca, in exhorting men to endure adversities, recalled the old proverb, 'Follow God,' and he adds "By this the ancients hinted, obviously, that a man truly submitted to God's yoke only when he yielded his hand and his back to His rod. But if it is most proper that we should prove ourselves obedient to our Heavenly Father in all things, we must surely not refuse to have Him accustom us in every way to render obedience to Him."¹

Thirdly, we are chastened by adversities. Christ has born the punishment which we deserved, but there are, according to Calvin, lesser punishments, which the Christian will have to bear. The true follower of Christ will not complain that he does not deserve such punishment. If we reflect upon our lives "we shall doubtless find that we have committed something deserving this sort of chastisement."² The punishments by which our sins are corrected are proofs not of the wrath of God for our destruction, but of the love of God for our salvation.³ "Therefore, also, in the very harshness of tribulations we must recognize the kindness and generosity of our Father toward us, since He does not even then cease to promote our salvation. For He afflicts us not to ruin or destroy us but rather to free us from the condemnation of the world."⁴

1. Inst. III, 8, 4.

2. Comm. on 1 Cor. 11:32, CO 49,495.

3. ibid.

4. Inst. III, 8, 6.

Fourthly, to follow Christ, may mean to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. Discipleship inevitably involves some kind of persecution. "Therefore, whether in declaring God's truth against Satan's falsehoods or in taking up the protection of the good and innocent against the wrongs of the wicked, we must undergo the offenses and hatred of the world, which may imperil either our life, our fortunes, or our honour."¹ The follower of Christ will seek to be conformed to Christ rather than to this world and this will often involve him being at odds with the world. But Calvin's words also have a specific situation in mind - the persecution of the Protestants in France. To follow Christ may involve death and the true disciple will be prepared to make this ultimate sacrifice in his obedience to Christ. Thus Calvin writes: "for although all believers, both by thier obedient life and by their death, are victims or offerings acceptable to God yet martyrs are sacrificed in a more excellent² manner, by shedding their blood for the name of Christ."

The disciple who learns in the school of Christ to bear his cross, will however, not be like the stoic, who attempts to remove all feeling of pain by the practice of ἀπαθεία . "To bear the cross patiently," Calvin says, "is not to be utterly stupefied and to be deprived of all feeling of pain."³

1. Inst. III, 8, 7.
2. Comm. on 2 Timothy 4:6, CO 52, 389.
3. Inst. III, 8, 9.

There would be no sense in bearing adversities if we treated them with stoic indifference. Our Lord did not possess an iron heart which felt nothing. On the contrary, in His Agony in the Garden and His suffering on the Cross, He felt the most acute sorrow and pain. Therefore, "Christian patience differs widely from philosophical obstinacy and still more from the stubborn and fierce sternness of the Stoics. For what excellence were there in patiently enduring the cross, if there were in it no feeling of pain and bitterness. But when the consolation of God overcomes that feeling, so that we do not resist, but on the contrary give our back to the endurance of the rod we in that case present to God a sacrifice of obedience that is acceptable to Him."¹

It is in bearing the cross that we become true companions of Christ.² Since Christ was afflicted and suffered for our sakes, when we are afflicted and suffer for His sake, our fellowship with Him is confirmed.³ Thus Calvin writes: "Let us therefore learn to connect these two things, that believers must bear the cross in order to follow their master; that is, in order to conform to His example, and to abide by His footsteps like faithful companions."⁴ By suffering we become partners with Christ and nothing better can be desired than this partnership.⁵ In accordance with Colossians 1:24, Calvin

1. Comm. on Phil. 2:27, CO 52, 41; Inst. III, 8, 9.
2. Comm. on Matthew 10:38, CO 45, 294.
3. Inst. III, 8, 1.
4. Comm. on Matthew 10:38, CO 45, 294.
5. Comm. on Colossians 1:24, CO 52, 93.

emphasizes that by our suffering we fill up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions, or in other words "as Christ has suffered once in His own person, so He suffers daily in His members, and in this way there are filled up those sufferings¹ which the Father has appointed for His body by His decree."

Calvin is careful to point out that in no way do our sufferings have an expiatory or redemptive value. Thus Paul "refers that lack or that supplement not to the work of redemption, satisfaction, and expiation but to those afflictions with which the members of Christ - namely, all believers - must be exercised so long as they live in this flesh. Therefore, Paul says that of the sufferings of Christ this remains: what once for all He suffered in Himself He daily suffers in His members. And Christ distinguishes us by this honour, that He accounts and makes our afflictions His own. Now, when Paul adds 'for the church,' he does not mean for redemption, for reconciliation, or for satisfact²ion of the church, but for its upbuilding and advancement."

The life of the Christian, however, is not just a perpetual course of trouble and suffering. Otherwise the Christian life would be a gloomy matter. The Christian, however, is prepared to meet numerous afflictions in this life for he knows that at the end of all this there is everlasting blessedness. Therefore, he is gladly and willingly a partaker of the cross

1. Comm. on Colossians 1:24, CO 52, 93.
2. Inst. III, 5, 4. Cf. also on Colossians 1:24, CO 52, 93-5; and on 2 Tim. 2:10, CO 52, 364.

of Christ that he may enjoy fellowship with Him in a blessed resurrection.¹ By being conformed to the image of Christ, we shall one day be united with God, which is the chief blessedness. "The chief good of man," Calvin says, "is nothing other than union with God. This is attained when we are formed according to Him as our exemplar."² The Christian life begins with the participatio Christi and presses on toward its ultimate goal, namely, union with God. "Let us then mark", Calvin says, "that the end of the gospel is to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us."³ This of course does not mean that our nature will pass into and be swallowed up by the nature of God. Rather "we shall be partakers (consortes) of divine and blessed immortality and glory, so as to be as it were, one with God as far as our capacities will allow."⁴ This is the goal of the Christian life and the sum of all happiness.

1. Comm. on Colossians 1:24, CO 52, 93.
2. Comm. on Hebrews 4:10, CO 55, 48.
3. Comm. on 2 Peter 1:4, CO 55 446: quasi deificari, ut ita loquamur. Cf. also on Romans 5:2, CO 49, 89ff; and on 1 John 3:2, CO 55, 331-2.
4. Comm. on 2 Peter 1:4, CO 55, 447.

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