

making the ephah small, and shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? (Amos viii, 5).

“Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? (Micah vi, 11).

“And I beheld, and lo a black horse: and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.” (Rev. vi, 5).

Libra, the Balance, is one of the twelve constellations of the Zodiac.

CALVIN AND THE REFORMATION

BY BIRGER R. HEADSTROM

IN its development under Luther, the Reformation gradually acquired a temper that would eventually have defeated its own purpose had not Calvin, according to the scheme of things, bridled its tempestuous spirit and by understanding and power prevailed upon a confused world to accept it as an inspired escape from the bondage of Catholic Christianity.

For this task, of leading the world out of the religious darkness into which it had been plunged by Luther and of confirming the work begun by the Wittenberg monk, Calvin was eminently fitted. Of a depth of mind which enabled him to think clearly on almost every subject, scientific and methodical, and endowed with the systematic power of order, he was able to give expression to his views in a clear and simple manner yet with such force as to command attention: this, together with the ardent zeal with which he could plunge into the mysterious depths of the Godhead, although he cared little for the outward works of nature, a sublime piety founded on the deep consciousness of guilt, an earnest impressive sentiment, a faith supported by the conclusions of the understanding, and a passionate abhorrence of whatever seemed to obscure the

glory of the Lord, were the qualities which distinguished him in the work he was destined to perform. In a word, he was an exact contrast to Luther, yet this antithesis was necessary, for his commission was one of peace. Where Luther had aroused, Calvin tranquillized; where the watchword of one had been war, that of the other was order. In a sense, one stormed, the other furnished the citadel of God. In that Luther had, so to speak, uprooted life, Calvin felt drawn to effect a reconciliation among all around him, to establish the Reformation on a firm foundation, and especially to defeat the spirit of Antichrist which he saw growing up among the protestants.

When Calvin undertook his office in Geneva, though he was aware to some extent of the work he was to do, he did not at that time realize its importance. As an instrument of God he wanted to do his duty; and this duty he felt consisted in securing the religious freedom, gained after so bitter and long a struggle, by church government and discipline. With the example of Zurich in mind, he recognized the need of subverting the various heresies of the age as well as the means to satisfy this end. What more proper scene for his efforts could be found, then, than the little state of Geneva where the rude licentiousness and antichristian disposition of the age were more prevalent than anywhere else? And as the capital of the Reformation, commanding the attention of the world, it can readily be seen, when after the death of Luther and the convulsions in the German church Calvin was to stand alone and become the center of all observation in connection with the great historical events of the time.

That his mission was in fulfillment of the plans of Providence is proved by the great influence which his doctrine exerted. The world needed and expected him; and this explains the rapid diffusion and easy victory of his system. It was for him to effectually oppose, by the development of protestant Augustinism, the catholic power of the deep-rooted errors of Pelagianism, in which mankind had become too deeply absorbed, and which the Lutheran and Zwinglian Augustinism had not been sufficiently powerful to break, as well as to perfect the work begun by Luther and Zwingli and to establish a more spiritual understanding of the Lord's Supper. That he had a difficult problem to solve is testified by the opposition which he encountered, yet at all times he felt instinc-

tively impelled to uphold his principles. And that Calvinism actually influenced the civilization of Europe can be discerned through the exaltation of believing souls at one time, and at another, through the practical effects by which it was attended, the sound eloquence, and the careful criticism and study of language. Calvin's exegetical method, especially, founded upon philosophical and scientific knowledge, startled France and Geneva, and awakened the spirit of reflection. In fact, he inspired to a large extent that spirit of inquiry which has been so successfully cultivated by modern times, and by means of which so many errors and abuses have been banished.

Though Calvin's most effectual efforts were for France, his influence extended far beyond its borders, to Holland, England, and Scotland, where Knox displayed the true courage of a reformer, and even to Germany, where the weaker spirit of Zwingli, or the vacillating voice of a Cranmer were powerless to contest so salutary a doctrine, whose appearance was viewed by so many as the support and comfort of needy souls. And what secured to this spirit so comprehensive an authority, was the power with which it not only propounded, but supported by argument as well, the grandest principles of Christian doctrine; it impressed upon the soul the sublimest notion of the living God and of eternal salvation. And though it directly opposed the ruling principles of the age, and the prevailing ideas of the godhead, so darkened by scholasticism and vain imaginings, it was precisely the powerful operation of this element which the world needed. Many souls longed for it and were happy to embrace a doctrine that seemed to come from God.

In Holland, especially, this desire for the spiritual influence of Calvinism went far towards promoting the establishment of the Calvinistic doctrines, an end which was finally accomplished by the famous synod of Dort; and to whose solemn decree even the Huguenots in France felt compelled to yield. This victory of Calvinism, however, achieved through the political disturbances which marked the country's destinies at that time, revealed, not only the blending of politics with the pure Calvinistic element—an essential blending, for the theocratic spirit of Calvin required the state's assistance in the government of the church—but as well the dangerous influence of the new power, disclosed so impressively by the remarkable history of England at the time of Cromwell, when the per-

verted view of the doctrine of election led to so many horrible excesses. Yet, equally, when rightly understood, it gives peace and order to the world, for when the storm was spent and the Calvinistic system in Scotland remained victorious in its holiness, it has continued to bestow upon the people the greatest and surest blessings.

In Germany, the divine influence of that pure spirit was more clearly demonstrated, where it gave a new life to the old, dead form of Lutheranism by the instruction and practical character which appeared in the schools of Calixtus and Melancthon. And even to-day, we may discover the operation of that powerful Calvinistic spirit, founded upon conviction and producing conviction, especially in the manifestations of Methodism, diffusing the severest doctrines of Calvinism. In fact, in the history of the reformed churches we find this powerful spirit present in all its phases, and everywhere meet with traces of the man by whose indefatigable labours in the cause of order the opposition in protestantism was finally overcome and a unification of the churches accomplished. And it is by this influence, which he has continued to exert through the centuries, that his position in the Reformation is measured.

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