JOHN CALVIN: CULTURAL REVOLUTIONARY

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The theology of John Calvin, while not differing primarily in substance from traditional Reformation thought, was revolutionary in its impact on the cultural life of the believer. For Calvin, Christ was the Cosmic Redeemer through whom all of life was effected. Nothing in the life of the believer therefore was secular. Society, as a whole, was but a reflection of the grace of God and hence was an arena of concern for all people. Consequently, Calvin, the man, and Calvinists, later took an active role in the temporal life of man, concerning themselves with the governing of the state as well as the church, and the propagation of the arts and sciences.
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The Protestant Reformation of the Sixteenth Century had its inception in the search for the answer to a question typically medieval yet relevant still: the means for the salvation of the soul and the proper conduct for the life of the Christian. Martin Luther, after much prayer, meditation and study answered the question in a doctrinal system that threatened to undermine the Church. The entire structure of Western Christendom was by 1500 in such a state of delicate equilibrium that the interjection of any serious controversy might tip the scales and lead to widespread revolution. The Church had lost much of its status since the time of Innocent III, when it dominated virtually all aspects of life. The Reformation was, accordingly, an upheaval in nearly every sphere of thought and action. It did not merely seek to cleanse the Church and deliver it from doctrinal errors, but it sought the restoration of the whole of life. This entailed freeing man's natural life and the various spheres in society from the overlordship of the Church. Whereas the Humanists sought freedom from the individual by means of autonomy from the Church and in a few cases, God, the Reformers, though not entirely successful,
sought the liberty of man through subservience to the Word of God in every aspect of living. For it was precisely this bondage to Christ that allowed the believer true deliverance both from the world and from self. One must lose his life to gain it.

Indeed, the Protestant message, as a whole, was a revolutionary one. Sixteenth century man was burdened by a guilty conscience, the result of too many sermons about sin and arbitrary pronouncements concerning forgiveness. The sacrament of penance, which gave birth to forgiveness, was the only sacrament which did not operate automatically, for the priest's pronouncement of absolution was only effective given certain arguable conditions within the heart and mind of the sinner. The humanists, such as Erasmus and Rabelais, had both derision and advice for the Christian and for the Church, but had no finger on the means of individual power. It was left for Luther, the restless Augustine monk, to wrestle with his own sinfulness and the words "The just shall live by faith" until he understood that the individual believer stood alone before God, accountable directly and only to Him. Not by ritual piety nor by rigorous self-flagellation does the Christian purchase his freedom from guilt, but it is the free gift of God believed through faith by a penitent sinner. This message to the Sixteenth-century man was wonderful and freeing and yet necessitated a life wholly given to Christ. The Christian
was bound by this message of freedom, for it required not less than everything. It demanded submission in all spheres of life.

Yet this revolutionary message was and continued to be interpreted in a variety of ways. The problem for the Christian resided in the command to be in the world but not of the world. For example, the Anabaptists, in the quest for personal salvation and immunization against evil were anxious to build a kingdom of God on earth wholly separated from the world. For Luther and Calvin, however, the natural man was holy as well as the spiritual, just as the work of the Father in creation was equally important as the work of the Son in redemption. Christ was, for them, a cosmic Redeemer, the one through whom all things are restored to the Father. The Reformers advocated a strong and virile Christianity within the world; a world which was better being embraced than fled. Indeed, they took sin more seriously than the medieval Church, believing that the whole of man had fallen and that the world was under the curse because of sin. However, while differing to the degree, they did not condemn things natural as though they were unholy and unworthy of the Christian's involvement. They, particularly Calvin, believed in the restoration, purification and consecration of the natural, not its denial. Through the Reformation the mechanical relation between nature and grace was superceded by an ethical one, so that
the restoration of the law of God in every sphere of life became the concern of the believer.

Within the mainstream of Reformation Protestantism, however, the degree to which Christ effected culture was greatly disputed. The German Reformation was primarily the restoration of true worship and the office of the whole of life, in home, school, state and society. For Luther, the Bible was indeed the source of saving truth, but for Calvin Scripture was the norm for the whole existence. Luther told his disciples that Christ came not to change anything in the external world but rather in the hearts of men. "My gospel has nothing to do with the things of this world. It is something unique, exclusively concerned with souls."² The believer, consequently, confronted a system of duality, where there was no final reconciliation of his being, the essence of which was taken from this world by death. The grace of God was sufficient for salvation then, yet limited from its effect in the everyday affairs of the believer. Hereby, Luther restricted the power of the Gospel and minimized the grace of God. The grace unto salvation must be sufficient unto living. Recreation stood alongside of creation as a testimony to the ongoing grace of God in both man's natural and spiritual life.

For Calvin, grace was total. It must guide the believer after he had accepted God's mercy and forgiveness. He stepped beyond the revolutionary impact of his spiritual
father, Luther, who felt that God's law was primarily a threat which drives man to God's mercy. And with that man endured his natural life in hopeful expectation of the life to come. Calvin's revolutionary concept did not end there, it encompassed the whole of man. And it did not stop with the believer. Society, as a whole, was but a reflection of the grace of God and hence was an arena of concern for all. It was for this reason that Calvin was more concerned than Luther to tell soldiers how they must fight--no rape, pillage, or harassment of noncombatants--and also more concerned to instruct the Genevan City Council how it should govern.

Calvin saw more clearly that the nature of man and hence the religious and cultural life of man could not be separated without suffering loss, both to the individual and to society. Salvation to him was the renewal of the whole man and the restoration of all the works of God. Scripture was then one grand unfolding of God's perceptive will for man's instruction while on earth. There were those who denied that scripture presented a system of doctrine or truth but maintained that it consisted merely of God's speech in existential situations. Calvin, however, viewed scripture as authoritative. Further, he saw that revelation could and did conform to logic, systematization and order. Calvin's logical mind saw an order and unity in the self-disclosure of God, although he abhorred all
speculation. The decretive will of God, as found in the scriptures, was for Calvin the source of all life; it was not narrowly concerned with the church and the salvation of the soul, but with the social, political, scientific, juridical, aesthetic, and the moral spheres as well as the spiritual. For this reason, Calvinism has been designated as a world-view, Weltanschauung, since it speaks significantly of man's relationship to God, to man, and to the cosmos. Abraham Kuyper in his "Stone Lectures" placed Calvinism alongside of Paganism, Islamism, Romanism and Modernism as one of the five main thoughts in the history of civilization.\(^3\) H. C. Minton, foremost scholar of Calvinism, stated that the name of Calvin

is not linked, like that of Luther, with any great branch of the Christian Church; it is more appropriately associated with a great system of thought, and that system is so comprehensive, so pervasive, and so polygonal that, from one point of view, it is a solid body of doctrine embracing all the great truths of religion and life.\(^4\)

Calvin and Calvinism, as a consequence, produced a vision, not only for personal salvation, but for the whole of man's being. For the Calvinist all things were spiritual, be they concerned with church, family, business, art and science of politics. The spiritual and natural nature of man remained a unity. The impact on the generations that followed this tradition has been revolutionary indeed.
ENDNOTES

1 The negative attitude among Christians was based primarily on I John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world . . ." (NASB). The Pauline admonition, contrarily, is derived from I Corinthians 10:26-31, "For the earth is the Lord's, and all it contains . . . whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (NASB).


CHAPTER I

CALVIN'S DOCTRINE OF COMMON GRACE AND
MAN'S CULTURAL MANDATE

For a proper evaluation of the Christian's role in culture, according to Calvin, one must be mindful of two essential doctrines. First, Calvin held a high view of Scripture; that is, that Scripture is the verbal-plenary Word of God. It is the revealed thought of God to the minds of its authors. The Scripture then is inspired (recorded without error), the canon is perfect and complete, and God's people are so illuminated by the Spirit as to understand the Word, and upon correct discernment, it is an absolute guide for both faith and conduct. Calvin did not contend, however, that the Bible spoke to every issue, for the mysteries of God were not yet fully revealed, but that, rather, it spoke completely enough, at least by general principle, to guide the believer in every aspect of his existence.¹

Scripture did not merely reveal the way of salvation from sin. For the believer it was also his source-book as a cultural creature. It delineated the guiding principles for his whole being. In Scripture the origin, nature, and goal of the world, of man and of God were set forth. The Bible, then, became regulative, rather than corrective; its basic
principles, therefore, constituted the basic elements in a Calvinistic cultural philosophy. This did not mean that the Calvinist would substitute the Bible for the facts of science and history. One who devoted himself to politics, or science or art must naturally devote himself to study whatever facts are available. It was the Word of God, however, which was normative and gave man the ultimate truth about every fact. Calvin held that God revealed himself in nature and history and in the very constitution of man himself. However, the true meaning of this revelation was not correctly understood without the guiding authority of Scripture. With this guiding authority, however, man, through study of the world around him completed the overall structure of universals presented in Scripture with the particulars of himself and his relationship to God. Understanding the particulars, therefore, led to the glorification of God through the support they lent to the universal truths of Scripture. Thus, cultural advancement was ordained by God as a means of coming to the Truth.

Secondly, and most importantly, in considering the Calvinistic concept of culture is religious anthropology; the depravity and dignity of man, and the role of special grace and common grace effective in the world. Historically, Calvin's view of man has been perverted through an incomplete understanding of the Scriptural principle of total depravity. When Calvinists spoke of man as being
totally depraved, the adjective "total" did not mean that each sinner is as totally or completely corrupt in his actions or thoughts as it is possible for him to be. Rather the word *total* was used to indicate that the whole of man's being has been affected by sin. No aspect of his being, mind, will, or soul could attain unto God without grace. Yet every aspect of his being was capable of great good. This good, however, was a product of God's common grace operative in the world and not a means of salvation. Calvin understood the Fall to be complete. Unlike Aquinas, who held that only the will of man was fallen and not the intellect, Calvin held to the "total depravity" of man. It is this view, of course, that necessitated the doctrine of justification by faith alone.

Calvin began the section on religious anthropology in his most elaborate treatise on an optimistic note revealing his humanistic learning and his proper view of man as told by Scripture.

We must now treat of the creation of man, not only because he exhibits the most noble and remarkable specimen of the Divine justice, wisdom, and goodness, among the works of God, but because, as we observed in the beginning, we cannot attain to a clear and solid knowledge of God without a mutual acquaintance with ourselves.

While there is much credibility to the position that Calvin's overall view of human nature was pessimistic, the proper understanding of the entirety of his anthropological view is essential in ascertaining the relative relationship
between man and his culture. Calvin continued that man was created in the image of God.

I retain the principle that the likeness of God extends to the whole excellence by which man's nature towers over all the kinds of living creatures. Accordingly, the integrity with which Adam was endowed is expressed by this word, when he had full possession of right understanding, when he had his affections kept within the bounds of reason, all senses tempered in right order, and he truly referred his excellence to exceptional gifts bestowed upon him by his Maker.

There was no doubt that Adam, when he fell from this state, was by this defection alienated from God, although by no means was God's image totally annihilated nor destroyed in him. Because of his fall into sin man did not change into something less than man. He did not lose his humanity. Man did not become an animal or a devil when he transgressed the covenant of God. Indeed, he did become ethically alienated and morally depraved, but he retained his spiritual nature and his sensus deitatis (God-consciousness). Essentially, in the structure of his creaturehood, man remained the same, but functionally he departed from his original rectitude. The direction of his life was changed; he no longer sought God as his chief joy. Man's relationship to God became strained, and, in fact, turned into one of enmity, and consequently man became a stranger to himself. His focus shifted from the Creator to the created leaving man struggling for a definition under which he could find himself complete.
Yet, God has furnished the soul of man with a mind capable of discerning good from evil, and justice from injustice; and "of discovering, by the light of reason, what ought to be pursued or avoided . . . . To this he has annexed the will, on which depends the choice." God, in his grace, did not leave man totally void of "mannishness."

Should any one object, that this divine image has been obliterated, the solution is easy; first, there yet exists some remnant of it, so that man is possessed of no small dignity; and, secondly, the Celestial Creator himself, however corrupt man may be, still keeps in view the end of his original creation; and according to his example, we ought to consider for what end he created men, and what excellence he has bestowed upon them above the rest of living beings.

And so while confessing the depravity of man, Calvin remained optimistic concerning the dignity of man and his innate excellence bestowed by God. Indeed, man still functioned in this world as a rational, moral, and cultural creature, for sin did not destroy the image of God in man altogether. Calvin spoke of man's natural life and divided it in this manner:

In the first class are included civil polity, domestic economy, all the mechanical arts and liberal sciences; in the second, the knowledge of God and of the Divine will, and the rule for conformity to it in our lives.

It is significant that Calvin reserved a place in the natural life of man for the knowledge of God and of Divine will. While they were better apprehended by our spiritual nature they were extremely applicable to our natural lives.
This unity of nature was in contrast to Luther's dualism. 10

Calvin then proceeded to define the natural side of man with regard to his cultural status.

Now, with regard to the first class, it must be confessed, that as man is naturally a creature inclined to society, he has also by nature an instinctive propensity to cherish and preserve that society; and therefore we perceive in the minds of all men general impressions of civil probity and order . . . Next follow the arts, both liberal and manual; for learning which, as there is in all of us a certain aptitude, they also discover the strength of human ingenuity.

While not all men could learn every art, it was sufficient proof, according to Calvin, of common grace, that almost all individuals exert themselves in some particular art. "These instances, therefore, plainly prove, that men are endued with a general apprehension of reason and understanding." 12

Man, indeed, has not lost his cultural urge, his instinct to rule, his desire for power, his ability to form and mold matter after his will, his love of beauty and his ability to create it. Man found satisfaction in work and in exercising dominion over the works of God, for it brought nature to fruition. To those that would say culture was impossible in a sin-sick world, Calvin would respond that an all-powerful God, the determiner of man's destiny, was causing his purposes to be fulfilled even through man's rebellion. The cultural mandate to subdue the earth and multiply held despite Adam's fall.
Not only did sin fail to abolish the duty or destroy the urge toward cultural activity, but the cultural milieu also remained. Not only the physical earth but also time remained as the enveloping structure in which history was made. Hence, this life was to be embraced and improved wherever possible. Calvin took the point of view that believers should accustom themselves to such a contempt of the present life, as may not generate either hatred of life, or ingratitude towards God. For this life, though it is replete with innumerable miseries, is yet deservedly reckoned among the Divine blessings which must not be despised.  

Here Calvin reflected a world-transcendence that was not contrary to responsibility in this life. This fact has been emphasized by Nels Ferre, professor of Philosophical Theology at Vanderbilt University, when he stated that "Calvinism has been of creative importance for the advance of responsibility and creative civilization." This entire Calvinistic concept of culture was not limited to the believer, as opposed to the unbeliever. Calvin stated that the "invention" and "methodical teaching" of the arts and excellent knowledge of them, belong "to both the pious and the impious."

Whenever, therefore, we meet the heathen writers, let us learn from that light of truth which is admirable displayed in their works . . . If we believe that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we shall neither reject nor despise the truth itself, wherever it shall appear, unless we wish to insult the Spirit of God. 

Shall we, Calvin asked, deny the light of truth to the ancient lawyers, who delivered such just principles of civil
order and polity? Shall believers say that the philosophers were blind in their "exquisite contemplation" and in their "scientific description of nature." And what of those who by the art of logic have taught us to speak in a manner consistent with reason or doctors who by their study of medicine have improved the condition in which we live? On the contrary, Calvin answered, "we shall not be able even to read the writings of the ancients on these subjects without great admiration; we shall admire them, because we shall be constrained to acknowledge them to be truly excellent."¹⁶

That excellent goodness can come from those who have not experienced the saving grace of the Almighty is explained by Calvin's distinction between special grace and common grace. Special grace was that which God gave to the elect, and by it they received his salvation. Common grace was given to all men. It was not a saving grace, but it permitted a sinful man contact with good, which is God. It made possible the development of civilization, the effectual pursuit of the arts or sciences, and so on. It gave to man what is unique in him his "mannahness," which enabled him to live above the beasts, and to live well. Because common grace was a gift of God it must be utilized and appreciated. Both the elect and the non-elect received this grace which was the basis of man's cultural mandate.

For without the common grace of God, no culture was forthcoming. The world, because of sin, would have been
destroyed if the common grace of God had not intervened. As such, common grace was the foundation of culture, since God's great plan for creation was achieved through it. Common grace, although non-saving and restricted to this life, has its source in Christ as mediator of creation since all things existed through the external Word. Hence, the point of departure for common grace was creation and the sphere of the natural:

that some sparks continue to shine in the nature of man, even in its corrupt and degenerate state, which prove him to be a rational creature and different from the brutes, because he is endued with understanding.\(^1\)

But it may also be called supernatural because it was God's longsuffering mercy to which man had no right. As such it was a glimmer of light in the midst of darkness.

Abraham Kuyper gave to common grace the independent role of developing creation and making history and culture possible. For through the action of common grace the power of sin and its results were arrested and restrained. This was the constant action of common grace, which was always the same and operated irrespective of human action and reaction. While this was Calvin's basis for cultural optimism it did not obscure his eschatological anticipation. Thus man's life in this world was not something that stood alongside of his religion, for everything in this world belonged to Christ and was claimed by him.\(^2\)
Calvin's concluding statement, then, on the role the nonelect play in the cultural development of society revealed the scope of study which must be considered valid and the response that the believer should adopt if he was to properly understand God's workings through man.

Now, if it has pleased the Lord that we should be assisted in physics, logic, mathematics, and other arts and sciences, by the labour and ministry of the impious, let us make use of them; lest, if we neglect to use the blessings therein freely offered to us by God, we suffer the just punishment of our negligence.\(^{19}\)

Quirinus Breen, scholar of Calvinism, interpreted this to mean that the non-elect as beneficiaries of common grace were of no real concern but merely valuable for the gifts they imparted to society.\(^{20}\) Calvin, while he did not directly refute such a potential accusation by defining common grace as an eventual means to the salvation of the individual, did clearly state that the gift to humanity was so significant because it displayed a Divine image in man. This Divine image "distinguishes the human race in general from all other creature."\(^{21}\) Hence, it glorified man by virtue of glory given to the Creator. Therefore, the discovery of physics, logic or mathematics, for example, was only important, in an ultimate sense, as a means of exhibiting in man the image of God.

Let us conclude, therefore, that it is evident in all mankind, that reason is a peculiar property of our nature, which distinguishes us from the brute animals, as sense constitutes the difference between them and things inanimate.\(^{22}\)
It may be assumed that because reason, in mankind, was a mark of the Divine image, the gifts of genius given to the non-elect were not merely valuable in themselves but served to direct ones affections to the Divine.

Beyond the doctrine of common grace there lies, of course, the doctrine of special grace. Special grace was that gracious inclination of God toward elect sinners, with whom he has reconciled himself for the sake of Christ's vicarious atonement on Calvary. This redemptive plan and process was effectuated in the lives of God's people through his Spirit, by regeneration, sanctification, and preservation. By this operation of special grace sinners were renewed in the center of their being through the Spirit and were grafted into Christ's spiritual body, so that they were then subject, in every aspect of their lives, to Christ and were dominated by the expulsive power of a new affection. The new creation thus formed belonged to Christ.

It is only by his Spirit that he unites himself with us; and by the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members; that he may keep us under himself, and we may mutually enjoy him.  

Calvin continued speaking of the regenerate: "In the regeneration of his children, God does indeed destroy the Kingdom of sin in them, but though it ceases to reign, it continues to dwell in them."  

Although the church was the instrument of special grace in the realm of common grace, one must not yoke the
Calvin was greatly concerned with keeping culture secular, by which he meant, simply, free from the domination of the church. There was no wish on his part to return to the medieval social-religious structure of the Corpus Christianum, a society dominated by the church. The question of how special grace effected common grace presupposed for Calvin the independent goal of common grace to develop culture by cultivating and preserving the creation of God. However, there was a two-fold influence of special grace upon common grace.

Indirectly, the Christian faith had caused life to flourish. The appearance of the Word and of the church strengthened, enriched, and elevated life in general. The direct influence of special grace came through the cultural subject, the regenerated man whose spiritual-ethical nature had been changed by regeneration, so that he became a new creature. This new humanity was then, for Calvin, the church; the church as both a collective and individual organism functioning in the area of common grace to fulfill the creative will of God. Special grace, although directed in origin and goal to the spiritual, permeated one's whole being. Not only the core, namely, the heart, but all of the believer's life, including his activity in politics, education, marriage, industry, and the whole gamut of social relationships was thus affected. Consequently the Kingdom of Heaven not only appeared eschatologically at the fruition
of history, but here and now as the believer lived and attempted to fulfill the cultural mandate given by his Lord.

It was true that man in his cultural striving would not attain unto perfection either individually or culturally in a world that existed in the state of sin. This would be utopianism, which man has repeatedly tried and failed. Of this, history gives us a long record, as witness Plato's *Republic*, More's *Utopia*, Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Rousseau's return to nature, Saint Simon's social Christianity and Marx's classless society. Man could not reconstruct the perfect world of Paradise, in which sin was not known. As well, the Kingdom of Heaven was not established by man's cultural striving, simply by subduing the earth and making humanity free from want, since culture was not the opposite of depravity.

Consistent in thought and in life, Calvin, the theologian and reformer, believed in the restoration of the whole man in Christ, to whom the whole world has been given under Christ. Hence for him the Christian life was a cultural life converted by the regeneration of man's spirit. It was his solemn goal to bring every thought and action into captive obedience to the will of Christ, for he believed passionately, "All things are yours . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."
ENDNOTES


2Ibid., 1:69-70, 83-84.

3Ibid., p. 268.


6Ibid., p. 208.

7Ibid., p. 214.


9*Istitutes*, 1:294.

10"Yet the two natures, body and soul, form one entity and being, and this despite the fact that there are two distinct natures . . . But the body has an entirely different nature from that of the soul, and the soul has a nature different from that of the body." Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Juroslav Pelikan, Helmut T. Lehmann, and Hilton C. Oswald, 55 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 22:327.


12Ibid., p. 295.

13Ibid., p. 779.

Institutes, 1:296.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 293.


Institutes, 1:299.


Institutes, 1:299.

Ibid., p. 298.

Ibid., p. 593.

Ibid., p. 660.

I Corinthians 3:21, 23.
CHAPTER II

CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF THE STATE

While the content of Calvin's political ideas has and continues to be disputed, the importance of his political legacy is guaranteed. His critics contend that he offers no political program beyond a few general statements and that in practice his example within Geneva was one of harsh tyranny. The supporters of Calvin hold that he not only had well developed political principles, but that political theories that now govern the world have been framed with these principles as a basis. Equally disputed has been the position of the magistracy in Geneva. The basis of this discussion almost invariably rests on the theme that Geneva was or was not a theocracy; that Calvin did or did not overstep his own bounds as leader of the Church in Geneva; or that, in general Calvinism is in practice and theory, authoritarian or democratic.

A. M. Fairbairn writing in the *Cambridge Modern History*, indicates one prevalent view of Calvinism's importance in political history:

Calvin's chief title to a place in history rests upon his success as a legislator. As a theologian he was a follower, as a legislator he was a pioneer. His system of doctrine was derived, while his political economy broke new ground and
based the social edifice on new principles. Certainly he is entitled to the credit of having established a political and legal system on a model of its own, which has profoundly influenced, directly or indirectly, all subsequent democratic institutions.

The Frenchman, Jean Jacques Rousseau pays Calvin this high tribute:

Those who consider Calvin only as a theologian fail to recognize the breadth of his genius. The editing of our wise laws, in which he had a large share, does him as much honor as his Institutes. Whatever revolution time may bring in our religion, so long as the love of country and liberty is not extinct among us, the memory of this great man will be held in reverence.

While it is true that Calvin enunciated political principles which "broke new ground," he did not devote an entire work to it in which he developed a Calvinistic theory of the State. This was left for future generations of Calvinists to accomplish. The first to present such a well-developed theory of the State based on Calvin's principles, was the unknown author of Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos, a political document circulated in France among the French Huguenots of the seventeenth century. The beginnings of a Calvinistic theory of the State are also to be found in a document attributed to Theodore Beza, entitled De Jure Magistratum.

During the same general period, in Scotland, there may be found a political theory developed upon the principles of Calvinism by George Buchanan, a celebrated political leader of the reign of Mary Stuart. His work is entitled De Jure Regni Apud Scotos. The writer who presents the most
elaborate systematic treatise of the Calvinistic theory of the State, however, during this period of history, is the German Calvinistic scholar, Johannes Althusius. In the eighteenth century there is a decline of formal works published based entirely on Calvinistic principles. Men like Hugo Grotius and John Locke, however, still used the terminology of the older Calvinists and many of their political ideas may be said to be derived from their Calvinistic heritage. As well, of course, the Calvinists and their theories continued to exert a marked influence upon political history; witness particularly, the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution.

The nineteenth century saw a revival of Calvinistic political activity. In England the Anglican statesman, Gladstone, sought to revive the Christian view of the State largely on a Calvinistic basis. It is especially in Holland that this system has been revived through the work of Groen Van Prinsterer, Abraham Kuyper, and Savornin Lohman. Kuyper was not only an influential scholar, but served as Prime Minister of the Netherlands, as well as heading the Antirevolutionary Party. Twentieth century writers have further inflamed the passions aroused on both sides of the issues and questions that surround Calvinism. Extremes include George Bancroft who contended that a fanatic for Calvinism was a fanatic for liberty. While George Sabine stated emphatically that Calvinism lacked all leaning toward liberalism, constitutionalism or
representative principles; and that Geneva was, in fact, a theocracy which was "illiberal, oppressive, and reactionary." With regard to Calvin's influence on modern day democracy, there is, indeed, a plethora of opinion. Emile Doumergue, in his seven-volume work on Calvin, states emphatically that Calvin was a great propagator of democracy who tried only to ward off its abuses and excesses. Doumergue was convinced, that by virtue of representative delegates to the Church, Calvin established the basis of the representative system. Marc-Edouard Cheneviere, author of La pensee politique de Calvin, took a more moderate approach, suggesting that Calvin mixed democratic elements with aristocratic constitutions, yet remained completely foreign to the dogmas of modern democracy: popular sovereignty and individual rights. In complete contradiction to Doumergue, Georges DeLagarde refuted the notion that Calvinistic conceptions were the origin of the representative system. He contended that one searches in vain to find in Geneva any principles that could be viewed as precursors of democracy.

It is indeed, of interest to note the lack of objectivity which characterizes most of the writings on Calvin and Calvinism, be they of a political nature or not. While scholarship has been extensive and of a high quality it has not been without passion and bias. Witness John T. McNeill's History and Character of Calvinism:
If in our time the realm of politics is to be redeemed from corruption and triviality and snarling partisanship, the church has a function to perform that it has too much neglected. It will not be a waste of time to sit for awhile at Calvin's feet.

There is little question, however, that the religious momentum of Calvinism has placed it among the greatest forces of Western Civilization, not merely because it pruned the branches and cleaned the stem but because it reached down to the very root of human life. Indeed, the Reformation, as a whole, was not a matter of the periphery, but a question of the heart, out of which are the issues of life. The Reformers addressed themselves to man's relationship to God, which was determinative for all other relationships of life. In this sense the Reformation was universal in its impact on the whole life of society. Although the restitution of the true church was the primary goal, the divine glory of God's work in Christ shed its light abroad into every sphere of life. For Calvin, this included the structure and function of the state and the role of the believer within. In order that the full influence of Calvinism on political development may be understood, one need only to examine those fundamental political conceptions for which Calvinism opened the door and how these political conceptions arose from Calvin's primary principle.

This principle in Calvin's theology was not soteriologically, justification by faith but, in the widest sense cosmologically, the sovereignty of the Triune God over
the whole cosmos, in all spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible. That is a primordial Sovereignty which extended itself in mankind as a threefold deduced supremacy: (1) the Sovereignty in the State, (2) the Sovereignty in Society, and (3) the Sovereignty in the Church.

First, then there was a deduced sovereignty in the political sphere which was defined as the state. The formation, of which, arose from man's social nature. God might have created men as disconnected individuals, standing side by side without genealogical coherence. However, man was created from man, and by virtue of his birth he was organically united with the whole race. Together humanity formed a whole, not only the living, but all the generations that had passed and all that were yet to come. The human race was from one blood. The conception of States, however, which subdivided the earth did not harmonize with this idea. Only if one State existed which embraced all of humanity would the organic unity of our race be realized politically. Had not then sin intervened, no doubt, this would have actually been so. If sin, as a disintegrating force, had not divided humanity into different sections, the organic unity of humanity would doubtlessly have been preserved. For without sin there would have been neither magistrate nor state-order; but political life, in its entirety, would have evolved itself, after a patriarchal fashion, from the life of the family. What purpose would rules, ordinances, and
laws serve where there was no ability to act contrarily? Each man in a sinless world, however, would have as his individual task, to develop the image of God in himself and to work at his cultural task insofar as it concerned his own personal labors. According to Calvin, consequently, the appearance of sin in the world had not fundamentally altered man's cultural mandate but served rather to complicate it.

Every State, every assertion of the power of the magistrate, every mechanical means of compelling order and of guaranteeing a safe course of life was therefore always something unnatural—something against which the deeper aspirations of our nature rebel. It was for this reason that the State could become both the source of a dreadful abuse of power, on the part of those who exercised it, and of continuous and bloody revolt on the part of the multitude. Thus originated the battle of the ages between authority and liberty. And as such, all true conceptions of the nature of the State and of the assumption of authority by the magistrate, and on the other hand all true conception of the right and duty of the people to defend liberty, depended on what Calvinism placed as the primordial truth, that God instituted the magistrates by reason of sin. Consequently, the magistrate ruled mechanically and as such unharmoniously with man's nature. His rule was mechanical in that it was an unnatural control or power over an
individual whose nature was created to be ruled over by none but Christ. However, for a sinful humanity without division in states, without law and government, and without ruling authority, existence on earth would be a veritable hell. Calvinism, then, taught two fundamental ideas. First, that the State and its magistrate was a blessing from God, as a means of preservation. Second, that by virtue of our natural impulses, man must watch against the danger, inherent in the State, of losing his personal liberty.16

Nations, as humanity, existed for the glory of God. The right to rule was possessed by Him alone. Authority over men, then, did not arise from men. It was not a matter of the strong ruling the weak but rather of the Almighty creator disseminating power into the hands of those He willed to rule. All authority of governments on earth originated from the Sovereignty of God alone. Thus the word of Scripture stood: "By Me Kings reign," or as the apostle had elsewhere declared: "The power, that be, are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God."17 The magistrate was, for Calvin, an instrument of common grace to thwart all license and outrage and to shield the good against the evil. That justice might be maintained God gave to the State the terrible power of life and death. Therefore, all the powers that be, ruled by the grace of God, without which there would be no authority. For this reason every citizen was
bound to obey, not only from dread of punishment but for the sake of conscience.

Further, Calvin expressly stated that authority, as such, was in no way affected by the question of how a government is instituted and in what form it revealed itself. He personally preferred, as is well known, a republic, and cherished no predilection for a monarchy. Indeed, without sin, God would have remained absolutely monarchical. With the introduction of sin, however, Calvin favored cooperation of many persons under mutual control. Although he saw value in both a monarchy and an aristocracy, he insisted that no one on earth could claim authority over his fellow-men, unless it be laid on him "by the grace of God." Therefore, the ultimate duty of man, politically, was obedience, obedience imposed not by man, but by God himself.

The question of how those persons, who by divine authority were to be clothed with power, could not, according to Calvin, be answered alike for all peoples and for all times. And yet he did not hesitate to state, in an ideal sense, that the most desirable conditions exist "where the people themselves choose their own magistrates." Where such a condition existed, he thought, that the people should gratefully acknowledge the favor from God. In Calvin's Commentary on the Book of Samuel he admonished such people: "And ye, 0 peoples, to whom God gave the liberty to choose
your own magistrates, see to it, that ye do not forfeit this favour, by electing to the positions of highest honour rascals and enemies of God." Where no rule existed or where the existing rule had fallen away popular choice gained the day. Wherever new States had been founded, except by conquest or force, the first government was founded by popular choice. Contrarily, Calvin asserted however, that God, the sovereign giver of power, could take from a people this most desirable condition or never bestow it at all.

None of this, however, is a theocracy. A theocracy was only founded in Israel, because in Israel, God intervened immediately. The Calvinistic confession of the sovereignty of God holds good for all the world, is true for all nations, and is the force behind all authority. It is therefore a political faith which may be summarily expressed as follows:

1. God only was possessed of sovereign rights in the destiny of nations, because He alone created them, maintained them and ruled them by His ordinances;

2. Sin had, in the realm of politics, broken down the direct government of God. Consequently, the exercise of authority had been invested in men as a mechanical remedy; and

3. In whatever form this authority manifested itself, man never can possess power over his fellow man in
any other way than by the authority which descended upon him from God.  

The Sovereignty of God extended itself, secondarily, into mankind as a Sovereignty in the sphere of society. From the Calvinistic point of view the family was the primary unit of society and did not owe its existence to the State. It did not derive its law from the superiority of the State. The family, then, ruled independently, obtaining its authority from God as He ruled the conscience. Thusly, an antithesis is created between the State and Society. Both had no higher authority than God, yet each maintained their independence and sovereignty. The State, according to Calvin, may not interfere in the individual unit of Society, as expressed between man or family and God.  

Highest priority was placed on the Sovereignty of the society by Calvin because society was an organic creation intended by God. As has been shown, the State was a mechanical means of maintaining order amidst sin. The family, the fundamental unit of society, originated naturally after the Fall of man, even as it did before. There was nothing mechanical about it. Sin, had indeed, exerted its influence into this social unit (family) but through God's common grace, it was not destroyed. Though many perverted expressions of the family unit may exist, the fundamental character of it remains as it was originally.
The case for the powers of government was wholly different. For though it be admitted that even without sin the need would have asserted itself of combining many families in a higher unity, this unity would have internally been bound up in the Kingship of God, which would have ruled directly and harmoniously in the hearts of all men. Thus, no state would have existed, but only one organic world-empire. It was exactly this, however, that sin eliminated from human life. This government of God could no longer assert itself. The governments thusly ordained then ruled as a mechanical head rather than a natural one. Common grace, however, prevented the dissolution of the organic relationship individually between man and God.

The principle characteristic of government for Calvin was the right of life and death. According to the apostolic testimony, the magistrate bore the sword, and this sword had a threefold meaning. It was the sword of justice, to disperse corporal punishment to the criminal. It was the sword of war to defend the rights of the State against its enemies. And it was the sword of order, to thwart at home all forcible rebellion.26

The right of taking life belonged only to Him who could give it, God. And therefore, no one on earth was vested with this authority, except it be given by God. The highest duty of government remained therefore that of
justice. In the second place it had to care for the people as a unit. At home its purpose was to cherish and support the external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the Church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of men, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and tranquility.

Abroad, it must protect the national existence lest the above be put in jeopardy. The consequence of this was that on the one hand, in a nation, all sorts of organic life arose among the people—a life which was in itself sovereign—that is it had no higher authority than God. On the other hand, above these, as a protecting force, was the State, mechanical and sovereign, yet, removed from the social life of its people. From this arose friction. The government was often inclined, with its mechanical authority, to invade social life and often to restrict and subjugate it. Contrarily, social life endeavored to shake off the authority of the government. Calvinism found in the struggle between these two the healthy balance for a nation and its people. For just in the proportion that Calvin honored the authority of the magistrate instituted by God, he lifted up that "second sovereignty" which had been implanted by God in the social spheres. Each demanded independence in its own arena, checked by each other, accountable to God, the giver of all authority. It was, of course, this idea that has left its legacy in the
conception of constitutional law in countries with a Calvinistic heritage.

Because God ruled in social spheres just as supremely and sovereignly as he did in the dominion of the State, Calvin insisted that government is, therefore, bound by the divine mandate neither to ignore nor modify nor disrupt the social sphere. This, however, did not mean that the government had no right whatever of interference in these autonomous spheres. It possessed a threefold duty:

1. To compel mutual regard for the boundary-lines of the respective social spheres;

2. To defend individuals and the weak, in those spheres, against the abuse of power from the rest;\(^31\)

3. To coerce all to bear the financial burdens for the maintenance of the State.\(^32\)

This final duty must not, however, rest unilaterally with the magistrate, but be written into the law. The law here must indicate the rights of the individual citizens over their purses. This right then becomes the check on the power of the government.

This limitation, therefore, was the foundation of the demarcation line between the sovereignty of the State and the sovereignty of the social spheres for respect, mutual consideration and regulation. Calvin's basic idea of "magistratus inferiores" was to assure that all people, all classes and all interests were provided with a legal and
orderly influence in the making of the law and the working of the government. Both State and Society, thus, maintain their individual sovereignty, yet, are forced to work together for the good of all. To Calvin, the resignation of sovereignty in the social sphere of any particular domain (i.e., the university or the family) in favor of the State was as grave an offense as the obtaining of such by violent means. For each sphere was endowed by God with the responsibility to maintain its autonomy for the purpose of glorifying God through fulfilling its cultural mandate.

Finally, Calvin addressed the sovereignty of the Church within the State. The Church, like the State, and unlike the spheres within society, did not arise out of the normal life of creation. Had life developed normally without sin there would have been no Church any more than there would have been a need for a mechanical means of governing. The Church arose as a result of sin and is an institution of God's special grace. As such, the Church had its own task assigned it by God, and a corresponding authority, upon which no State or other outside power could infringe. For Calvin, in the case of the Church, the authority was even more specifically safeguarded by Scripture than for any other sphere. The Bible expressly and repeatedly stated that in the sacred sphere of the Church, Christ, and He only, was sovereign. Although it was true that before the Fall God originally revealed His will in nature,
specifically by writing that will within the hearts of men, with the advent of a mechanical means of order, the written Word of God became necessary to correct and guide a fallen man. All man's natural impressions became tainted and his vision blurred, necessitating a mechanical and revealed will of God. It followed, for Calvin, that both the Church and State, as "abnormal" creations of sin, were in need of normative and eternal principles which were embedded in the Word of God. These principles then formed the common basis for Church and State as God in his sovereignty established both as effective means of mirroring through mankind the Divine Image, via his cultural mandate.

Calvin addressed two issues fundamental to the problem of the sovereignty of the Church within the State. Firstly, the duty of the magistrate regarding things spiritual, and secondly, the relation between the government and the visible Church. Regarding spiritual things; that is, towards God, towards the Church, and towards the individual, magistrates were and remained God's servants. They were obliged to recognize God as the Supreme Ruler, from whom they derived their power. They were to serve God by ruling the people according to his ordinances. They were to restrain blasphemy where it directly affronted the character of the Divine.34

In order that they might govern according to the holy ordinances of God, every magistrate was by duty bound to
investigate the right of God, both in the natural life and in His Word. He was not subject himself to the decision of any church but must seek for himself the knowledge of the Divine Will. As regards blasphemy, the right of the magistrate to restrain it rested in the knowledge each man innately possessed concerning God and His holy character; the duty to exercise this right flowed from the realization that God was supremely Sovereign over every State and every nation. For this reason, blasphemy was not subject to the Church alone, but it was the duty of the State to suppress this attack upon the foundation of public law, upon which both State and government rested.  

Calvin, at this point, made note of the difference between States which were absolutely governed by a monarch and those which were governed constitutionally; or even wider still, a republic, where there would be an extensive assembly. In the absolute monarch the consciousness and the personal will were one, and thus this single person was called to rule his people after his own personal conception of the ordinances of God. When, contrarily, the consciousness and the will of many cooperated, the unity was lost and the personal will must become the corporate will. In such a case, the subjective conception of the ordinances of God could only be indirectly applied. But whether one were dealing with the will of a single individual or the will of many men, in a decision arrived at by a vote, the principal
issue remained that the government was to judge independently. The sphere of the State stood itself under the majesty of the Lord and not that of the Church. In that sphere, therefore, an independent responsibility to God was to be maintained. The sphere of the State was not profane.

Those who are not restrained by so many testimonies of Scripture, but still dare to stigmatize this sacred ministry [magistrate] as a thing incompatible with religion and Christian piety, do they not offer an insult to God himself, who cannot but be involved in the reproach cast upon his ministry? And in fact they do not reject magistrates, but they reject God.

Both Church and State must independently obey God and serve His honor.

It is important to note that "consciences" of State officials or of citizens were not, in themselves, the guiding rule in civic affairs. While the consciences were the means, they were not the end. The objective and unassailable end for civic affairs was and remained the Word of God. This was, however, to be determined through the consciences of the officials and citizens.

Of course, where political leaders become unbelievers, they were not open to influences from the Word of God. But God, nevertheless, remained Sovereign in the State, and his ordinances and the duty of governments to conform to these ordinances remained. This was a point which the Christian could never yield. As a result, it was the duty of the Christian to operate as a leaven in the State. Christians who faithfully performed their duty promoted
conformity by the State to the revealed will of God. It was for this reason that God condemned the Israelites for having been too submissive to their King, Jeroboam, when they complied with his impious edict to worship the golden calves. 

Calvin responded,

so far is any praise from being due [to the Israelites] to the pretext of humility, with which courtly flatterers excuse themselves and deceive the unwary, when they deny that it is lawful for them to refuse compliance with any command of their kings; as if God has resigned his right to mortal men when he made them rulers of mankind.

The obedience, therefore, due to Kings was not unconditional. In the final section of the Institutes Calvin spoke to the conditional exception. Underlying his argument was the dictum that "We ought to obey God rather than men." To be seduced from obedience to God, "to whose will the desires of all Kings ought to be subject," was "preposterous." For it was the Lord who was King of Kings, it was He who was to be heard alone, above all, and before all. If the magistrate "command any thing against him, it ought not to have the least attention; nor, in this case, ought we to pay any regard to all the dignity attached to magistrates." 

Finally, in the life of the believer all subservience must be to the Living God. For all legitimate subservience, be it to spouse, parents, Church or the State, was worship of God, as he was the only legitimate dispenser of authority.

It may be seen then how Calvin's political teachings, on the one hand, produced a ferment of democratic ideas,
while on the other, moved in a conservative direction towards the support of established authority. The germs of both tendencies were inherent in the Calvinistic system. These considerations are helpful in appreciating Ernst Troeltsch's statement.

All the Calvinistic peoples are characterized by individualism and by democracy, combined with a strong bias towards authority and a sense of the unchangeable nature of law. It is this combination which makes a conservative democracy possible . . .

Of an entirely different nature is the second question, what should be the relation between the government and the visible Church. It was not the will of God to maintain the formal unity of the visible Church. Had it been, this question would be answered quite differently. Man was, consequently, confronted with the reality that the visible Church had been split and that in no country whatever was the absolute unity of the visible Church maintained. What then was the duty of the Government? It was not, according to Calvin, to form a judgment as to which of those many churches was the true one. The duty of the government was to suspend its own judgment and to consider the multi-form complex of all of the denominations as the totality of the manifestation of the Church of Christ on earth. This was not from a false idea of neutrality, as if Calvinism could ever be indifferent to what was true and what was false, but because the government lacked the data of judgment and because any magisterial judgment here infringed
upon the sovereignty of the Church. For if the government were an absolute monarchy the result could be the "cuius regio eius religio" of the Lutheran princes. If, contrarily, the government rested with a plurality of persons, the Church which yesterday was counted the false one could today be considered the true one, according to the decision of the vote. Thus all continuity of the state-administration and church-position would be lost. A remark, at this point, must be made with regard to Michael Servetus.

The case of Servetus remains a glaring inconsistency in Calvin's record. All that may be said is that a system of thought must be judged more for what it accomplished than what it failed to accomplish. To be sure, Servetus appears to contradict the spirit of Calvinism as set forth by Calvin himself. Calvin fully acknowledged his part in the detention of Servetus and in the preparation of charges of heresy against him. He added, however, that he never moved to have him punished with death. In addition, it must be remembered that the Catholic Church was seeking him, and the same fate awaited Servetus with the Lutherans and Anabaptists.

For the protection of religion, therefore, the Church must have her own King. Her position did not rest upon the permission of the government. She had her own organization with her own office-bearers. The Church, likewise, possessed her own gifts to distinguish truth from lies.
Therefore, the Church, and not the State, determined the characteristics of the true Church and proclaimed her own confession of that truth. If in this position she was opposed by other churches, she would contend against these with spiritual weapons; but the church denied and contested the right of everyone whomsoever, including the government, to pose as a power above the different institutions. The government did not possess the "sword of the Spirit" which decided spiritual questions. The sovereignty of the individual and the sovereignty of the Church remained and restricted the power of the State in matters pertaining thereunto.  

The relation between these two spheres should be one of harmony and cooperation. Both were institutions of God; both were intended to curb sin, the Church in the sphere of special grace. Both, positively, were designed to promote the ethical ideal of society, and thus advance the Kingdom of God; the State, indirectly, by removing hindrances from the pathway of the Church in establishing this Kingdom, the Church, directly. Both, as institutions, would cease to exist at the end of time, while the Church, as a living organism, embodied in the Kingdom of God, would continue throughout eternity. Church and State should, therefore, labor for the realization of their God-given tasks in the greatest possible harmony.
According to Calvin the State owed several duties to the Church. The State may not be neutral with respect to religion in general. Such a stand would violate the Sovereignty of God in all spheres of life. The State may never institute a State-Church of any form. Such an act would be to overstep its own proper boundary. The State was not the God-given institution for the propagation of religion. Its duty rested within the sphere of maintaining law and order in human society and of promoting the natural common good. The State was to have authority with respect to the Church only insofar as it concerned matters circa sacra, not in sacra. That is the State shall have authority with regard to the externalities of the Church and afford it organization in society. It may not, however, assume the right to frame laws determining the religious views of its citizens or the government of the Church. Freedom of conscience, and, hence, freedom of religion, should be guaranteed to all citizens, including unbelievers.

Not only did the State have a duty to fulfill to the Church, but the Church, likewise had a vital duty to fulfill to the State. The Church should not presume to dictate how a State should fulfill its God-given duty. Such a procedure would be an encroachment upon the domain of the State. The State was to be guided by its own conscience in determining what God's Word demanded for matters relating to its own domain. The Church could rightfully and should only seek to
exert influence upon the State indirectly by influencing the consciences of officials and citizens. The more these consciences were Christianized, the greater would be the conformity in matters of religion and morals by the State to the law of God. The sovereignty of the State and the Church existed side by side, and they mutually supported and limited one another.

Finally, what was the duty of the State as regarded the sovereignty of the individual person? With Calvin, the basis of the sovereign individual rested in the necessity of the conscience never being subject to man but always and ever to God. The sovereignty of the Church found its natural limitation, the, in the sovereignty of the individual. The Church could not be forced to tolerate as a member one whom she felt obliged to expel; but on the other hand, no citizen of the State must be compelled to remain in a church which his conscience forced him to leave. The State must, as well, therefore, practice what it demanded of the Church, by allowing to each citizen liberty of conscience. For it is, in Calvinism, this liberty of conscience which is the primordial and inalienable right of all men. In all spheres, man must be free to be bound by Christ.
ENDNOTES


The threefold deduced supremacy of the sovereignty of the State, the individual, and the Church were running themes throughout the writings of Calvin. In the Institutes of the Christian Religion, book IV, chapters 5, 11, and 20 are particularly directed toward the abuses administered both by the Church and the State at various points in history. Calvin established within these chapters clear demarcation lines for the various spheres. In addition, the freedom of the conscience (sovereignty of the individual) is inherent in the concept of the priesthood of the believer.


14 Ibid., 2:771-72.

15 Ibid., p. 798.

16 Ibid., pp. 772-73.

17 Romans 13:1; Institutes, 2:774.

18 Institutes, 2:778.

19 Ibid., p. 774.

20 Ibid., p. 779.


22 Institutes, 2:777.

23 Ibid., pp. 770-71.

24 Ibid., p. 781.


26 Institutes, 2:779-82.

27 Ibid., pp. 781-82.

28 Ibid., p. 772.
Ibid., p. 779.

30 Meeter, Calvinism, 1:159.

31 Institutes, 2:784-86.

32 Ibid., p. 786.

33 Ephesians 5:23-29.

34 Institutes, 2:773.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid., p. 777.

37 Ibid., pp. 780-81.

38 Ibid., pp. 798-800, 805.

39 Ibid., p. 805; Hosea 1:11.

40 Institutes, 2:805.

41 Ibid.


43 Institutes, 2:487-88.

44 Ibid., p. 489.


46 Ibid., p. 483.

47 Ibid., p. 773.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid., p. 803.

50 Ibid., p. 772.
"In nothing, perhaps, has Calvin been more misjudged than in the view that he lacked any aesthetic sense."¹

This opinion, stated by one of Calvin's more renown biographers, John T. McNeill, has grown out of unrealistically negative scholarship, in many cases, and the lack of research, in others concerning Calvin's aesthetic views. Most scholars assumed that whatever Calvin's views, they were undoubtly negative. He was often thought to have been dour, morose, an enemy of pleasure, in short, the "First Puritan." From such a man, it was assumed, no aesthetic theory worth researching was forthcoming. More recent scholarship, however, such as that of McNeill's, has done considerable to change that view. Leon Wencelius has written, for example, an extensive and detailed study of Calvin's attitude towards the arts, in which he states Calvin to be sensitive to beauty, aware of joy, and very self-conscious about literary style. Wencelius, in fact, finds the attitude concerning Calvin and aesthetics to be quite odd because even a slight reading in Calvin's works suggests that he was intensely aware of loveliness and beauty. He thought in terms of God Himself as beauty, as
dwelling in splendor whose presence was light and song. The creation displayed God's majesty. The cosmos was ordered and symmetrical, both attributes of the aesthetic. The angels were lovely, man's own body told of line and form, the stars declared God's glory, and the harmonies of natural law were His handiwork. To all this man ought to respond in awe, adoration, humility, and praise. He ought to sing and rejoice. All this, Wencelius states, is so evident to Calvin that it was surprising so few had honestly dealt with it before.²

Wencelius has ushered in a new stage in Calvinistic scholarship with regard to Calvin's aesthetic principles. Prior to his work, the only positive study done dealt with Calvin's literary style. There has been no dissension among scholars as to the excellence and lasting contribution by Calvin to the field of French literature; a subject to be taken up later. In general, it has been recently recognized that Calvin's views concerning beauty were worthy to be reckoned with, and, in fact, necessary to obtain a proper understanding of the unity of that system of thought known as Calvinism.

To appreciate Calvin's doctrine concerning the beautiful, it must be remembered that Calvin did not serve a paper-god called the Bible. Rather he served the living God and walked before him in fear and wonder. Calvin's ideas about music, sculpture, language and form were always
determined by a consciousness that all beauty was nothing more than the shining forth of the majesty and glory of God. There was, therefore, no beauty divorced from God that did not in some sense become idolatry. This was the actual result of the fall of man, whereby creation lost its ethical contact with God; that is, man was ethically and morally separated from the Father. Man then lost his sense of true order and true beauty and found only apparent beauty. Simply to behold beauty in this world did not bring man into a personal relationship with God, although beauty was still the first guide to God. For beauty revealed His attributes of goodness, wisdom, omnipotence, and righteousness. Therefore, for Calvin, all men partook of the Divine by virtue of the beauty and order of the created universe and the innate ability within man to duplicate the same. Thus, all men could know the true and living God.

To be sure, the lawful use of art was not opposed, but encouraged and even recommended, by Calvin himself. When the Scripture mentioned the first appearance of art, in the tents of Jubal, who invented the harp and the organ, Calvin emphatically reminds us that this passage speaks "of the excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit." He declared that in the artistic instinct God had enriched Jubal and his posterity with rare and wonderful endowments. And he openly declared that these inventive powers of art prove most evident testimonies of the Divine bounty. Further, in
his Commentary on The Book of the Prophet Isaiah, he stated that "all the arts came from God and are to be respected as Divine inventions." According to Calvin, these precious things of the natural life we owe originally to the Holy Spirit. In all liberal arts, in the least as in the most important, the praise and glory of God are to be enhanced. The arts were given for comfort and enjoyment in the present fallen state which man finds himself. True art must react against the corruption of this life, reminding man of the perfect reality that was and is to come. When his colleague, Professor Nicholas Cop, at Geneva, took up arms against art, Calvin purposely instituted measures, which, as he stated, restored this foolish man to sounder sense and reason. The blind prejudice against sculpture, on the grounds of the second commandment, Calvin declared unworthy of refutation. He exulted in music as a marvelous power to move hearts and to ennoble tendencies and morals. Among the excellent favors of God for man's recreation and enjoyment, music occupied the highest rank. Even when art condescended to become the instrument of sheer entertainment to the masses, he asserted that this sort of pleasure should not be denied them. Of this view, it may be said, that Calvin esteemed art, in all its ramifications, as a gift of God; that he fully grasped the profound effects worked by art upon the life of the emotions; and that he appreciated the end for which art has been given. Its purpose then, was
to glorify God, ennoble human life, become the fountain for higher pleasures and to disclose to man, beyond merely imitating nature, a higher reality which is offered beyond this corrupted world.⁹

That there does exist a higher reality beyond the realm of this present reality is the focal point and final criterion for Calvin's view of art. The forms and relations exhibited by nature are and ever must remain the fundamental forms and relations of all actual reality. It must not become an art which does not watch the forms of nature nor listen to its sounds, but arbitrarily dismisses it, deteriorates into a fantasy of nonreality. Contrarily, all idealistic interpretation of art is justified in opposition to the purely empirical, as often the empirical confines itself to mere imitation. The vocation of art rests not in merely observing everything visible nor hearing things audible but in discovering in the natural forms the order of the beautiful and, enriched by this higher knowledge, to produce a beautiful world that transcends the beauty of nature. This is what Calvin asserted in saying that art exhibits gifts which God has placed at our disposal, now that, as a consequence of sin, the real beauty has fled from us.⁰ The Calvinist confessed that the world was once beautiful, but by the curse had become undone, and by a final catastrophe would pass to its full state of glory, which would excel even the beauty of paradise.¹¹ Art, therefore, had the
the mystical task of reminding the patron of the beauty that was lost and of anticipating the perfect beauty which was to come, after which man longs. Calvinism realized the corrupting influence of sin, which leads to a higher estimation of the perfection that is to come when Christ reigns in splendor and righteousness. As well as recognizing now the extent to which beauty is possible in a fallen world, Scripture, even as it spoke to the inward redemption of the heart, prophesied the redemption of outward nature also, to be realized in the millenial reign of Christ on earth. From this standpoint, Calvin honored art as a gift from God and as a consolation in the present life, enabling man to discover in and behind this sinfulness, a life richer and more glorious.12

The sovereignty of God remained for Calvin, and for Calvinists generally, the unchangeable foundation for all of life. Its application to art is consistent. Evil cannot be the source of art, for Satan is destitute of every creative power. All he could do was to abuse the good gifts of God. Neither could art originate with man. Being a creature himself, man could not but employ the powers and gifts put by God at his disposal. As God remained sovereign, then art could work no enchantment except in keeping with the ordinances which God ordained for the beautiful. God also, therefore, imparted these artistic gifts to whom He willed. That artistic ability, as such, can have room in human
nature, mankind owes to his creation after the image of God, for He is the creator of everything and His alone is the power to produce new things. Therefore, He always continues to be the creative artist. God, alone, is original, mankind is simply the bearer of His image. Our capacity to create can only consist in the unreal creations of art. Man may imitate the handiwork of God but never recreate the original. And this because the beautiful is not the product of our own fantasy, nor of our subjective perception, but has an objective existence, being itself the expression of a Divine perfection. Thus, the sovereignty of God and our creation after His likeness, necessarily leads to a high interpretation of the origin and nature of art.

Perhaps had Calvinism developed an art style of its own, the aesthetic ideas of Calvin would have come into prominence earlier. Just as the Parthenon is boasted of in Athens, the Pantheon in Rome, Saint Sophia in Constantinople, or Saint Peter's at the Vatican, so also ought Calvinism to claim an impressive structure, embodying the fullness of its idea. However, in every phase of its existence, Calvinism has sought to graduate from the symbolical into the clearly conscious physical and spiritual life of the individual. Calvin's Geneva does not boast a structure which represents its high aspirations. Rather, Calvin's legacy, while perhaps not tangible, remains overwhelmingly significant. Also, the magnificent structures of Saint Sophia and Saint
Peter are only possible where that religion is imposed upon a whole nation, both by prince and priest. In such a case every difference of spiritual expression fuses into one mode of symbolic worship, where the union of the masses under the leadership of the magistrate and clergy furnish the possibility of defraying the expense of such a colossal structure. In nations, however, that have embraced Calvinism a multiformity of lifestyles have appeared which have necessitated both the division of worship into many forms, and the emancipation of religion from all sacerdotal and political guardianship. As a result of this, it abandoned the symbolic form of worship in favor of the invisible spiritual worship of the individual. For Calvin, the true Christian worshipped in spirit and truth.

In keeping with the primary doctrine of the sovereignty of each sphere of life, Calvin held art to be at its highest development when it existed independently from religion. Art and religion have each a life-sphere of their own. The richness of neither could be developed to its fullest potential while intertwined. Consequently, Calvinism was not able, nor even permitted, to develop an art-style of its own from its religious principle. It was, however, capable and indeed influential in encouraging the progress of the arts, both in principle and practice. By releasing art from the guardianship of the Church, it was able to recognize its independent existence. Initially, Christian
art tried to embody the maximum of spiritual essence in the minimum of form, tint and tone. It was not art copied from nature, exalting the Creator but art which invoked a mystical and often unobtainable spirituality, which bound music in the Gregorian chains and the pencil to ethereal cosmic creations. Calvinism, of course, was not the liberator of art. But with the liberation of art during the Renaissance the Church was forced back into the spiritual realm. Art had made her appearance in the social world, hitherto being confined to the holy spheres. "It is pure spiritual Religion which with one hand deprives the artist of his specifically religious art, but which, with the other, offers him, in exchange, a whole world, to be religiously animated." Calvinism, prompted by the guiding principles which govern the whole of life, continued to preserve the freedom of art from the tutelage of the church; and not only art, but the complete life of the individual was freed from the overlordship of the Church.

The importance, again, of the doctrine of common grace can not be overemphasized in the discussion of art. Calvin taught that all liberal arts were gifts of God which He imparted promiscuously to believers and unbelievers alike. In fact, Calvin states clearly that "these radiations of Divine Light shone more brilliantly among unbelieving people than among God's saints." The gift of art was not the result of special grace, but art
instincts were natural gifts and hence belong to those excellent gifts which, in spite of sin, by virtue of common grace, continued to shine in human nature. It followed, therefore, that both believers and nonbelievers could and should be partakers of art as God sovereignly imparted it. Again, this applied not only to art but to all activities of human life. Calvin illustrated this by comparing Israel to the other nations of the day. As far as holy things were concerned, Israel was chosen and was blessed above all nations. In the question of religion, Israel had not only a large share but stood alone as the possessor of Truth. Christ was not partially of Israel, but of Israel alone. However, just as Israel shone forth above the other nations in the domain of religion, so it was equally backward in comparison to the development of its art, science, politics, commerce and trade of the surrounding nations. 21

Calvinism, on the grounds of the Scriptures and history, arrived at the confession that unbelieving nations and unbelieving people, who yet remained outside of the arena of special regenerating grace, were called by God to a special vocation. This vocation served the purposes of God just as those who were called by His name. For even as Israel was called to receive as its holy heritage the Divine Revelation, so the Greeks also received a parallel election in the domain of philosophy and art, and the Romans in the domain of the law and the State. Thus Calvin was
comfortable in confessing that Greece was the primordial nation of art and that owing to this classical Greek development, art came into its own as an independent entity.\textsuperscript{22} Therefore, the Renaissance, being a return of art to her rediscovered fundamental lines, did not present itself to Calvin as a sinful effort but as a divinely ordered movement. He consequently encouraged the development of this art, consciously and with a definite purpose, in accordance with Calvinism's deepest principle.\textsuperscript{23}

Hence, supporting the arts was not merely an involuntary result of its opposition to the hierarchy of Rome, which bound the arts to itself, but this liberation was a consequence of Calvinism's world and life view. The world, because of the fall, was not a lost planet only surviving as a place for the church to fight her battles; and humanity was not a lost and aimless mass of people which only served to give birth to the elect. On the contrary, the world now, as it was from the beginning, was the theater for the mighty works of God and humanity remained a creation of His hand. Life on this earth was a mighty process, a historical development whose end was to glorify the name of the Almighty God. To this end, He ordained for humanity many kinds of "life-utterances," and among them art occupied a formidable position indeed. Art revealed aspects of creation which neither science, nor politics, nor religious life could bring to light.\textsuperscript{24} Art must, therefore, not
tarry but continue to develop its own richness at the same time pruning from herself that which did not glorify the object of its lifeblood. Art must loosen every unnatural tie and cleave to every tie that was natural, finding in her inward strength a source for the maintenance of her liberty. Calvin, therefore, did not estrange art, science, and religion from one another. On the contrary, he desired that life should be permeated by all of these vital powers.\textsuperscript{25}

It must now, of course, be proven that Calvin actually and in a concrete sense advanced the development of the arts. By virtue of its principles Calvinism built no cathedrals and no palaces, as has been stated. Indeed the merits of Calvinism with respect to art are to be found elsewhere, particularly in music. Prior to the Reformation the Church was the primary guardian of music. The common man was scorned not only for his attempt to create music, but also in his attempt to join in the oratory, which was considered "holy music."\textsuperscript{26} Thus, as art, music was almost entirely deprived of its independent standing, flourishing only insofar as it benefitted the Church. As in every department of life, the Reformation sought to unbridle music from the holy tutelage it confronted. Calvin, particularly, set himself to the task of freeing music so that the common man might enjoy and benefit from it.
Now among other things which are proper for recreating man and giving him pleasure, music is either the first, or one of the principle; and it is necessary for us to think that it is a gift of God deputed for that use.²⁷

Calvin's primary service to music has been, not its secularization, but rather its dissemination to the people and legitimization of its use for many purposes. Music, henceforth, would flourish, not merely within the narrow limitations of special grace but in the wide and fertile fields of common grace. In the sanctuary the people themselves began to sing, abandoning the choir as the only legitimate medium, forcing consistency with the idea of the priesthood of the believer. To be sure, the singing of psalms was one of the incontestable distinguishing marks of Calvinistic culture during Calvin's lifetime and beyond.²⁸

On January 16, 1537, Calvin laid before the Genevan Council certain Articles for the organization of the church and its worship. He recommended that the discipline of excommunication be introduced to preserve the integrity of the church and that the singing of psalms should be introduced into public worship. This was not an indifferent matter to him, but was, rather, essential. "Furthermore it is a thing most expedient for the edification of the church to sing psalms in the form of public prayers."²⁹ As well, singing privately was most acceptable as long as it stemmed from the heart. Calvin's overriding concern at the time was for the inner significance of singing over against any external
form. "The tongue without the heart is unacceptable to
God." The unique gift of man, according to Calvin, over
and against the birds, "is to sing knowing that which he
sings."31

The men who first arranged the music of the psalms
for the Calvinistic singing selected their melodies from the
free world of music. Calvin's versions of the "Song of
Simeon," the "Decalogue," and the "Credo" were put to music
by such notable composers as Matthus Greitter and Wolfgang
Dachstein.32 Calvin also prepared a French psalter for
his own congregation, so that they might know exactly what
it was they were singing. Within the psalter Calvin even
composed poetic versions of Psalms 46 and 25. All of the
psalms were put to music by Louis Bourgeois. Bourgeois, one
of Protestantism's most notable composers, lived and labored
in Geneva under the eyes of Calvin. It was Bourgeois who
had the courage to adopt rhythm and to exchange the eight
Gregorian modes for the two of major and minor from the
popular music. He also adopted the harmony of several
parts. The solfeggio, the singing by note, the reduction of
the number of chords by which the knowledge of music and
vocal technique was so much simplified, is all owed to this
Genevan composer.33

Calvin well understood the power of music and was
fully aware of the enormous potentiality for intensifying
the public's praise of God. "And in truth, we know from
experience that song has great force and vigor to arouse and inflame the hearts of men to invoke and praise God with a more vehement and ardent zeal." In addition,

There is hardly a power in the world which is so much in a position to lead the morals of men towards this or that side, as Plato had judged so intelligently. And indeed we experience that it has an unbelievable, hidden power to excite the hearts one way or another.

That Calvin was firmly convinced of this truth is apparent. Witness the college at Geneva which took the first hour after the mid-day meal for instruction in music. In many Huguenot schools, in addition, there were optional instrumental exercises in music and frequent special rehearsals on Saturdays. Frederick W. Sternfeld, writing in *Musica Disciplina*, stated that insofar as the average student in the general schools was concerned,

Calvin and his followers in the low countries and Great Britain made one great contribution: by demanding the participation of the congregation in the singing of the psalms they established the need for general musical instruction in Calvin's College in Geneva and in all other schools patterned after it.

Finally, Calvin possessed a toleration of music that was not strictly religious for the very reason that music is a gift of God and most holy. He stated clearly that music outside of the sanctuary singing of the congregation is acceptable. "And yet the practice of singing may extend more widely; it is even in the homes and in the fields an incentive for us as it were." Because music is a gift of God we ought to be moved to moderate the use of it and to
make it serve all honest things. Calvin warned that just as music may be used for good, it may also be used for evil. Music should never "become the instrument of lasciviousness nor of any shamelessness . . . Therefore we ought to be even more diligent in regulating it in such a way that it shall be useful to us and in no way pernicious." Calvin concludes the Preface to his Psalter by recommending music to each one who desires to enjoy himself honestly and according to God, for his own welfare and the profit of his neighbors.

Writing was also a high art for Calvin. His high regard for the Bible did not quench his enthusiasm for profane literature, which has a calling in the realm of common grace. Calvin held that God has adorned the pagans with talent of "acuteness and perspicacity" in investigating sublunary things. Therefore,

if it has pleased the Lord that we should be assisted in physics, logic, mathematics, and other arts and sciences, by the labour and ministry of the impious, let us make use of them; lest, if we neglect to use the blessings therein freely offered to us by God, we suffer the just punishment of our negligence.

It was not enough, however, to think well and to know the truth, one must also write well and disseminate the knowledge. Calvin, himself, left a rich heritage of literary excellence. John T. McNeill expressed shock that "so good a writer as Calvin" should be thought to possess no aesthetic sense. If there is, to be sure, any point on which
Calvin's critics agree, it is that his writing style was superb, both in Latin and French. Calvin's word choice reflected a trained sense of artistic fitness. His writings possess both simplicity and eloquence. The publishing of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* was in itself, an historic event. Ferdinand Brunetiere, French literary critic, says there is "no literary monument in French earlier that can be compared with it."\(^{44}\) The *Institutes*, according to him, was the first French work that can be said to be a classic.

It is equally so . . . by reason of the dignity of the plan, and the manner which the conception of the whole determines the nature and choice of details. It is so by reason of that purpose to convince or to move which, since it is its cause, brings about its internal progress, and the spirit of its attraction and rhetorical grace.\(^{45}\)

The influence of Calvin's writing, it is said by French literary critics, upon his successors, and upon the literary development of France cannot easily be overestimated. "With him French prose may be said to have attained manhood; the best of his contemporaries, and of those who preceded him did but use as a staff or as a toy that which he employed as a burning sword."\(^{46}\) Emile Faquet, stylist, author, and critic, contends that Calvin's style was the most impressive the sixteenth-century had know, and ranks Calvin, beyond doubt, as the founder of French prose.\(^{47}\)

Of the *Institutes*, he says,
From the philosophic point of view alone this book is one of the most beautiful intellectual monuments that has ever been constructed. It astonishes by its grandeur, the harmonious symmetry of its parts, the luminous clearness of its outlines.

Quirinus Breen contends that Calvin's own sense of literary style was, to be sure, derived from his humanistic learning.

Calvin also inherited from humanism a certain sophistication which may in a manner be called aesthetic. There were crudities that he could not stomach. A certain elegance lies upon all he wrote, the light of classical clearness. He knows the power of a well-turned phrase and eschewed a barbarism as a poison.

Calvin, as well, was a great admirer of humanistic literary style. He makes respectful mention of Valla, Bude, and Erasmus in the *Institutes* and uses their works as authorities on method. He in no way gave unqualified support to their conclusions, but his recognition and respect of these great humanists was well known. His style varied within the scope of his voluminous work but his quality was unwaiving. Besides the *Institutes*, Calvin wrote thirty volumes of commentaries on scriptures, catechisms, creeds, formularies for worship, popular tracts for instruction and thousands of letters. B. B. Warfield says of Calvin's controversial writings that no more effective controversialist ever wrote, and he cites the "Letter to Sadoleto" as the finest specimen of the most excellent precept for all controversial writers: *suaviter in modo; fortiter in re* (gentle in manner, strong in matter). That Calvin appreciated classical and
humanistic literature there is no doubt; that his own style reflected and even embellished that tradition speaks well of his attentiveness to God's common grace operative in the world.

With regard to painting Calvin's influence is certainly not as direct as with that of music and literature. Abraham Kuyper, Calvinistic scholar and former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, contended that Calvinism brought art, particularly that of painting, down from the position it held high above the common life to the so much richer life of the people. He cites for support the productions of Dutch art by brush and etching-needle in the 16th and 17th centuries, particularly mentioning such notables as Rembrandt. Rembrandt, known for his realism, was himself, firmly rooted in the Reformed Church: he was married in it, his children were baptized in it, he was buried in it, and just before his death stood as a sponsor in the church for his granddaughter's christening, a role permitted only to those who were sound in the faith. Not, of course, that all these artists were themselves staunch Calvinists, but Calvinism put its impress upon their surroundings and society, upon the world of perceptions, of representations and of thought. As a result, the new Dutch art-school made its appearance. Before the appearance of Calvinism in Holland, contended Kuyper, no account was taken of the people within the confines of art; they only were considered worthy of notice.
who were superior to the common man. The superior, of course, belonged to the high world of the Church and of the priests, knights and kings. Following the entry of Calvinism, however, the people came of age, and under the auspices of the same, the art of painting was the first to proclaim the people's liberation and development. By means of the doctrine of common grace it was seen that the non-Churchly life was also possessed of high importance and was in itself a motivator of artistic endeavor. It was a broad emancipation of the ordinary life and thereby captured the heart of the people inspiring in them a deep appreciation for the art that depicted their very existence.53 Art critic and historian, John Knipping, portrays pre-Reformation art in the Netherlands as "celestial" and "overly spiritual."

In former times the angel was primarily a companion on man's journey to the regions of everlasting life. He very seldom appeared in the work of Netherland painters as a companion simply on the common earthly road of mortals . . . However, since the late sixteenth century artists in the Low Countries began to render his protecting task in many, till then scarcely explored, ways.54

Kuyper remarked, moreover, that the idea of election by free grace contributed not a little toward bringing to the fore in art what was seemingly small and unimportant.55 If a common man, to whom the world pays no special attention, is valued and even chosen by God as one of his Elect, this must lead the artist also to find a
motive for his artistic studies in what is common and of everyday occurrence. As well, he finds meaning and significance in the emotions and the issues of the human heart. Consequently, the artist must interpret for the world at large the precious discovery he has made. Even the foolishness of man can become the motive for art productions, as it is part and parcel of the human heart and a manifestation of human life. The idealized figures of prophets, apostles, saints and priests which had been traced upon the canvass were now replaced with that of the wage-earner and the family man. For God, himself, had chosen this man and had created within each life an entire personality reflecting his own uniqueness. Ecclesiastical power no longer restrained the artist, nor was he chained solely to the gold of Kings. The artist was also a man discovering in and behind human life something quite different than found in the church or the palace, something which proved to be of even more value; the soul of the people. As H. Taine observed,

To Rembrandt, human life hid its face behind many sombre hues, but even in that chiaroscuro his grasp upon that life was profoundly real and significant. As the result therefore of the declaration of the people's maturity and of the love of liberty which Calvinism awakened in the heart of the nations, the common but rich human life disclosed to art an entirely new world, and, by opening the eye for the small and the insignificant, and by opening the heart for the sorrows of mankind, from the rich content of this newly discovered world, the Dutch school of art has produced upon the canvass those wondrous art-productions which still immortalize its frame,
and which have shown the way to all the nations for new conquests.

In summary, it must be acknowledged that Calvinism exercised over some arts only an indirect influence. Perhaps, Calvinism only afforded them the liberty to flourish in their own independence. Nevertheless, the spirit of Calvinism has been integrally responsible for the liberation and support of all the arts. In connection with that, it ought to be remembered that Calvin as the theologian of culture was concerned always to bring it under the rule of Christ through his Word. As in all spheres of life, freedom came only through bondage to Christ, and the meaning and worth of all things was inherent in them only to the degree that God so desired it. All art and science was to be used for the service of God and the enjoyment of man; to the extent that it accomplished the former. Culture was never to be an end in itself, yet it existed independently of religion and the State. The freedom extended to it, however, precluded license just as it precluded the renouncing of the world as evil. By faith man is justified and by regeneration he is renewed into the image of Christ: therefore, the sanctifying influence of the Word must extend to the whole of man's existence.
ENDNOTES


7 Institutes, 1:786.


9 Institutes, 1:786.

10 Ibid., 1:786-88; Calvin, Commentary on Genesis, 1:57.

11 Institutes, 1:202-04.


13 Calvin, Commentary on Isaiah, p. 85.

14 Ibid.


21. Ibid., pp. 279-311.

22. Ibid., pp. 296-97.


24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.


35 Calvin, Institutes, quoted in Garside, "Calvin's Preface to the Psalter," p. 572.


37 Ibid., p. 115.

38 Ibid., p. 121.


40 Ibid.

41 Ibid., p. 571.

42 Institutes, 1:297.


45 Ibid.


48 Ibid., p. 221.


52 Baily, Rembrandt's House, p. 129.

53 Kuyper, Gemeene Gratie, quoted in VanTil, p. 129.


CHAPTER IV

CALVIN'S THEOLOGY OF SCIENCE

The suspicion that Calvinism was naturally obscurantist, dogmatic, and narrow in outlook led easily to the conclusion that science could only have suffered at Calvin's hands. So natural, indeed, was this conclusion that Edward Rosen, traced through some eight writers, including Dean Inge, Bertrand Russell, and Will Durant, the confident assertion that Calvin rejected the heliocentric theory of Copernicus—only to discover that no one of the eight had referred to Calvin's works to substantiate the charge. Rosen concluded, in fact, that Calvin was ignorant of the Copernican theory and that consequently he had "no attitude" toward Copernicus.

Had Calvin heard of his distinguished contemporary, what might have been his attitude toward him? Rosen suggested that such an answer was not easily made. That Calvin gave some thought to astronomy is evidenced by passages in his Commentaries and Sermons. Commenting on Psalm 93:1, Calvin said,
The heavens revolve daily, and, immense as is their fabric and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we experience no concussion--no disturbance in the harmony of their motion. The sun, though varying its course every diurnal revolution, returns annually to the same point. The planets, in all their wanderings, maintain their respective positions. How could the earth hang suspended in the air were it not upheld by God's hand?

This was quite typical of many such references by Calvin. Interestingly enough, Calvin took the position that the Bible was sometimes couched in popular language in order that the uneducated might grasp its intent; and, therefore, he was not, Rosen argues, likely to have rejected the Copernican theory just because the Scriptures spoke of the rising sun, a fixed earth, or heavens and waters under the firmament.5

There were, indeed, those who asserted that Calvinism has in fact been a progressive influence upon the development of science. Among these were A. Lecerf, who in Estudes Calvinistes began by pointing out that religion did much to establish the "set" of mind with which men approached the understanding of the world. Calvin, he contended, appreciated not only the wonder and beauty of nature but also thought of it as created by God, sustained by His wisdom and power, and revelatory of Him. Calvin, therefore, expected to find order, law, system and rationality in nature—all characteristics science must assume to be true if there was to be science at all.6 Instead of enmity, then between Calvin and science, they shared a common pre-established
assumption. Further Calvin adopted an attitude of independent judgment, and the right of individual investigation, in regard to the Bible. Again, Lecerf pointed out that such an attitude was fundamental to the development of all the sciences. Even more in keeping with the scientific spirit, Calvin thought of the function of the mind as the discovery of structural relations among the truths of revelation; reason, therefore, had the task of coordinating the evidence it apprehended into such a system, as the Institutes reflected. This was, obviously, a pattern common to science as well. Finally, Lecerf insisted that Calvinism afforded the investigator the liberty of research which was essential to his work, unlike the Roman Church which had suppressed scientific studies as long as it was able to do so.  

This point of view, to varying degrees, has been adopted by other authors who have sought to clarify the relationship between Calvinism and science. Valentine Hepp's Calvinism and the Philosophy of Nature presented Calvinism as the only consistent world-view capable of salvaging order out of the chaotic condition of science. Because human reason was not considered an autonomous power, but a gift of God, it must always remain subject to the revelation of God. Knowledge, in the Calvinistic system, was not separated from faith, but it must itself be guided by faith. In conjunction with this view it has been asked by scholars whether or not a truly scientific spirit
can be harmonized with, for example, a literal view of the Genesis creation story. Dirk Jellema had written that Calvin did not take the creation story of Genesis as literally true. He contends that Calvin thought of the seven "days" not as twenty-four hour periods, but allowed for the possibility of long ages of development.⁹

No doubt the freedom of individual judgment propagated by the entire Renaissance-Reformation explosion opened the door to the rapid development of the sciences. Protestants, as a whole added more to the scientific explosion, according to statistics, than did non-Protestants. Lewis Spitz noted that in the Academy of Sciences in Paris, 1666-1866, there were six times as many Protestants as Catholics, within a Europe with twice as many Catholics. As well, in the Royal Society of London Protestants predominated over Catholics to become the world's greatest scientists. Says Spitz, "No one can deny the preponderance of Protestants among scientists after the 1640's. Lutherans, Anglicans, and preeminently Calvinists made more scientific discoveries than Catholics and appeared to be more flexible in putting them to use. Moreover, the most rigorous Calvinists contributed proportionately more scientists than did Anglicans . . . ."¹⁰ That Calvinism offered something specific beyond the general impetus appears to be well substantiated.
It may be contended that specifically Calvinism did foster a love for science, on the basis that it could do no other. Further, it restored science to its proper domain while delivering it from the unnatural bonds that sought its life. Finally, Calvinism may also be seen as having sought and found a solution for the unavoidable scientific conflict. Calvinism assumed, in its definition of science, the unity of both nature and spirit. The conception of nature as being the totality of everything that came within the scope of the senses, that which could only be counted, weighed or measured did an injustice to nature as well as to the spirit. The sciences could not be divided into the natural sciences and the spiritual sciences. Nature was ruled by the spirit, just as the head ruled the body while, at the same time was a part of the body. And such a divorce was equally as disastrous for the spirit, for the spirit, then, lost its form, its visibility and with it its vitality. Just as Calvinism demanded the unity of the material and spiritual within the individual, so it insisted upon the unity of the natural and spiritual sciences. The parts of God's creation, both in the human person and in the visible and invisible world, could not be understood apart from the whole. The physical and the metaphysical were one. Any attempt to deal with them separately must, according to Calvin, lead only to confusion and despair.\textsuperscript{11}
Firstly, then, there is found hidden in Calvinism an impulse, an inclination toward scientific investigation. Thus assuming the interconnection of all that exists, the essential principle in Calvinism which lent itself to the love of science must be proved. It is the belief in God's fore-ordination; the predestination of God's general decrees. Inherent in the belief of the fore-ordained existence of all things by God is the acceptance of, upon observation, the harmony of the entire cosmos. Instead of the universe being the evidence of caprice and chance, it obeyed laws and possessed order. To Calvin, this was nothing less than proof positive that there existed a firm will which carried out its designs both in nature and history.

Of the wonderful wisdom, both heaven and earth contain innumerable proofs; not only those more abstruse things, which are the subjects of astronomy, medicine, and the whole science of physics, but those things which force themselves on the view of the most illiterate of mankind, so that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to witness them. Adepts, indeed, in those liberal arts, or persons just initiated into them, are thereby enabled to proceed much further in investigating the secrets of Divine Wisdom. Yet ignorance of those sciences prevents no man from such a survey of the workmanship of God, as is more than sufficient to excite his admiration of the Divine Architect.

Such a unity of the cosmos forced upon ones mind the indissoluble conception of one all-comprehensive unity, and the acceptance of one principle by which everything was governed. Calvin saw in the created universe the stability
and regularity ruling all things. "The heavens revolve daily, and, immense as is their fabric, and inconceivable the rapidity of their revolutions, we experience no concussion--no disturbance in the harmony of their motion."\textsuperscript{13} He recognized that the cosmos, instead of being a heap of stones, loosely thrown together, presented itself to our minds, as a monumental building erected and governed in consistent style. The universe, then, became the evidence of God's pre-ordained will for his creation. The interconnection, the continuity, the development attested to the workings of the sovereign hand of God.

Calvinism had always stressed that there existed, within God, one supreme will, which was the cause of all existing things, subjecting them to fixed ordinances and directing them towards a preestablished plan.\textsuperscript{14} Calvinism could never accept the idea that the cosmos lay in God's foreordination as an aggregate of loosely conjoined decrees, but maintained, rather, that the whole formed one organic program of the entire creation as well as the entirety of history. Just as Calvin looked upon God's decrees as the foundation and origin of the natural laws, in the same manner, he also found in it the foundation and origin of every moral and spiritual law.\textsuperscript{15} Both of these, the natural and spiritual laws, formed together one high order, which existed according to God's command, and where God's
counsel was to be accomplished in the consummation of His eternal, all-embracing plan.

Faith in such a unity, stability and order of things, in a personal sense, predestination, and in a cosmological sense, the eternal decrees of God, could not but foster a love for science. With such a deep conviction of this unity, this stability and this order, science could go beyond mere conjectures. With this faith in the organic interconnection of the universe, there would be a greater impetus for science to ascend from the empirical investigation of the special phenomena to the general, and from the general law to the principle, which was dominant over all. It was to this principle that Calvin attributed all things. The very explanation of his existence hinged upon it and it was to this principle that the whole of life must be consecrated.16

Calvinism, as well as fostering a love for science, played a major role in restoring science to its proper domain. The role of science in the Middle Ages was almost nil, lost in the haze of a mystical spirituality. Aristotle, alone, it may be asserted, knew more of the cosmos than all the church-fathers taken together. Substantial proof existed as well, that under the influence of Islam, the cosmic sciences flourished more than in the monastic and cathedral schools of Europe.17 With the advent of the Renaissance and Reformation, and particularly
with the rise of Calvinism, science began to take its rightful place. The constant prompting within Calvinism to move from the Cross to creation helped to usher science in so that it might take its place of independence. Indeed, this principle, of the sovereignty of each sphere, along with the doctrine of common grace influenced, substantially, the development of science.

While Christianity remained, at its core, soteriological, Calvinism expanded its function into the realm of cosmology. "What must I do to be saved?" remained today, as it was throughout the ages, the ultimate question to which, religion, as such, addressed itself. However, losing sight of the temporal while addressing the eternal created the danger of anhilating the dual nature of man. There remained historically, the danger of losing sight of the interconnection between terrestrial and celestial and hence falsifying both by error or one-sidedness. Christendom in the Middle Ages did not escape this error. A dualistic conception of regeneration was the cause of the rapture between the life of nature and the life of grace. The Medieval Church, on account of its intense contemplation of celestial things, neglected to give due attention to the world of God's creation. The Church could, to be sure, be cited for negligence in the fulfillment of its temporal duties because of its exclusive love of things eternal.18 The care of the body was shunned in favor of the care of the
soul. This one-sided, unharmonious conception led to a mystical worship of Christ alone, to the exclusion of God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth. Calvinism would not tolerated the worship of Christ exclusively as the Savior, His cosmological significance must, as well, be exulted.¹⁹

The basis of this, for Calvin, rested clearly in the Scriptures. Calvin cited John when he described Christ as the "eternal Word, by whom all things are made, and Who is the life of men."²⁰ Paul also testified that "all things were created by Christ and consist by Him;" and further, that the object of the work of redemption was not limited to the salvation of individual sinners but extended itself to the redemption of the world.²¹ Calvin noted that Christ himself spoke not only of the regeneration of the earth but also of the regeneration of the cosmos.²² Paul declared: "The whole creation groaneth waiting for the bursting forth of the glory of the children of God."²³ The fulfillment of Christ's purpose then returned to the starting point of the world: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." In keeping with this, the final outcome of the future, foretold in the Scriptures, was not merely spiritual existence of saved souls, but the restoration of the entire cosmos, when God will be all in all under the renewed heaven on the renewed earth. It appeared from Calvin's writings, that this wide, comprehensive, cosmological meaning of the gospel was apprehended by him, not only as a result of a
dialectic process but by the deep impression of God's majesty experienced in his personal life.\textsuperscript{24}

During the plague, which tormented Geneva, Calvin acted wisely, for he not only cared for the spiritual needs of the sick but at the same time introduced into Geneva unsurpassed hygienic measures, whereby the plague was brought under control.\textsuperscript{25} Calvin, instead of treating nature as an accessorial item, as many theologians were inclined to do, saw nature as a means of deciphering divine thoughts. He wrote:

This study [astronomy] is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them. For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known; it cannot be denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God.\textsuperscript{26}

Nature was written by God, thus to pursue and occupy oneself with the study of it was not a vain endeavor. Indeed, man's attention may not be withheld from this important study without affronting the creative character of God. "Wherefore, as ingenious men are to be honoured who have expended useful labour on this subject [science], so they who have leisure and capacity ought not to neglect this kind of exercise."\textsuperscript{27} Consequently, the study of the body regained its place of honor beside the study of the soul and the social organization of mankind on earth was again looked upon as being a most worthy object of human science. It was with regard to this that Calvinism and Humanism shared
similarities. Insofar as the Humanist pleaded for the proper acknowledgment of the secular life, the Calvinist was his ally.

As in all areas of human existence and endeavor, the doctrine of common grace became applicable. The Calvinistic conception of the moral condition of fallen man took seriously the existence of sin yet explained that which was good in fallen man by means of common grace. Sin, according to Calvin, left unfettered, left to itself, would have led to a total degeneracy of human life. But God arrested sin in its course in order to prevent annihilation of His divine handiwork. He interfered in the life of the individual, in the life of mankind as a whole, and in the life of nature itself by His common grace. The nature of sin however remained destructive yet checked by God's operative grace.

Calvinism insisted therefore, that not only the church, but the whole world, belonged to God and both must be investigated. To limit oneself to theology and contemplation offered to the Master Architect an insult. The task of the believer was to know God in all his works, things terrestrial and celestial.

To be brief, therefore, let the readers know, that they have then truly apprehended by faith what is meant by God being the Creator of heaven and earth, if they, in the first place, follow this universal rule, not to pass over, with ungrateful inattention or oblivion, those glorious perfections which God manifests in his creatures, and secondly, learn to make such an application to themselves as thoroughly to affect their hearts.
Nothing, then, presented itself as a project unworthy of investigation, either in the life of nature or within human life, itself. Scientific progress and development for Calvin, therefore, was attributed to God's common grace.

The Calvinistic principle of the sovereignty of each area of life provided science with a place of liberty and safety from the overlordship of both the church and the state. In Calvinist nations science remained autonomous because the university generally had not come under the jurisdiction of external oppressive authority. Prior to and following the Reformation, the Church of Rome exercised pressure upon science by harassing, accusing and persecuting the innovators of scientific thought on account of their opinions and writings. This harassment impaired the liberty of science, because it submitted scientific questions, which could not be settled by ecclesiastical jurisdiction, to the judgment of the civil court. The right of free inquiry was little known. Calvinism realized that the intellectual reception of and reflection upon the cosmos existed in a sphere entirely separated from the church or the state. Science, according to Calvin, had the right to an independent existence as did the church, state and society. It may be added that in order for science to flourish, a demand for science had to be created. The Reformation, as a whole, and Calvinism particularly, emphasized the freedom of the individual conscience from the
overlordship of the Church and linked man's yearning for eternal salvation with a desire to understand the creation of his God. Calvin's emphasis on and writings about the blessedness of the present life contributed greatly to the freedom the mind was permitted to experience. In fact, because of Calvin's call to pursue all avenues of life, almost no vocation was henceforth considered unworthy for the believer.

There existed, finally, the dilemma of the so-called scientific conflict. It had been asserted that the emancipation of science must inevitably lead to a clash. The conflict appeared to arise among those who held the confession of the Triune God. However, the conflict, for Calvin, arose not between faith and science, for such a conflict did not exist as Calvin perceived the problem. Every science, after all, to certain degrees began with faith and throughout the scientific process presupposed faith. Faith manifested itself in the presupposition of the accurate working of our senses, in the correctness of our laws of thought, in the idea something universal lay hidden beyond the visible and special phenomena, and especially, science presupposed faith in the principles, from which it proceeded. In few fields of science did all the independent axioms, needed in a productive scientific investigation, come to man by proof, but they were established by judgments of the inner conception of a problem.
That faith and science were compatible is borne out by the early history of modern science. That Calvin, himself, saw no conflict is unmistakable. Calvin was quite comfortable with the new scientific discoveries taking place around him. His *Commentary on Genesis* is in itself sufficient support of this with many references to the teachings of Moses regarding creation and the knowledge of the men of science regarding the same. Calvin easily explained the seeming contradictions while leaving the world of science open to the Christian.32 In an article entitled "On Science and Culture," in *Encounter* in October, 1962, J. Robert Oppenheimer, expert on the structure of the atom and atomic energy, wrote that Christianity was the mother of science because of "the medieval insistence on the rationality of God."33 Widely respected mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, said at the Harvard University Lowell Lectures that the men of science had confidence "in the intelligible rationality of a personal being." Because, therefore, of the belief in the rationality of God, the early scientists had an

inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles. Without this belief the incredible labors of scientists would have been without hope."34

That is to say, that because the early scientists believed that the world was created by a reasonable God, they
operated under the assumption that man could discover something true about nature and the universe on the basis of reason. While it was the basic Christian world-view of the Middle Ages that lent support to the rationality of the universe as with all created matter, it must be remembered that the Church, proper, hindered much scientific investigation under its domain. This is not to say that all scientists were individually Christian, but that they did operated within a Christian worldview becomes apparent. Francis Bacon maintained in his work The New Organum: "let no man out of weak conceit of sobriety, or in ill applied moderation, think or maintain, that a man can search too far or be too well studied in the book of God's word, or in the book of God's works [nature]."35

Consequently, it followed that the conflict was, not between faith and science, but between the assertion that the cosmos, as it existed, were either in a normal or an abnormal state. This conflict existed primarily in the realm of scientific philosophy. The variance of presuppositional views dictated the Calvinists' and secularists' scientific outlook. If the cosmos were normal, then it moved by means of an eternal evolution from its potential to its ideal. But if the cosmos, in its present condition, were abnormal, then a disturbance had taken place somewhere in the past and hence, only a regenerating power could bring to fruition the realization of its goal. This was the
principal antithesis which separated opinions in the domain of science.

The points of departure between the two were many. Those that held to the "abnormal" state of the cosmos adhered to the primordial creation of all things over against eternal evolution of all species. They, including Calvinists, maintained the conception of man as an independent species, because in him alone was reflected the image of God. The secularist naturally believed that *homo sapiens* originated from the lower and preceding forms of life. Calvinists conceived of sin as the destruction of man's original nature and consequently as rebellion against God. For that reason, they postulated that the miraculous was the only means to restore the normal—the miracle of regeneration, the miracle of the Scriptures, the miracle of Christ, descending as God with his own life involved with man's. Thus, owing to this regeneration of the abnormal, Calvinists continued to find the ideal norm not in nature but in the Triune God. Secularists scoffed at the miraculous, and instead elevated natural law as the dominating principle. There was no sin and no need of regeneration, only an evolution from a lower to a higher moral position. The Scriptures, which could not be logically explained, were an errant human production. Christ was a necessary product of the human development of Israel and God, rather than being a Supreme personal being, became a pantheistic concept
existing in all things as the ideal reflection of the human mind.

The conflict lay, therefore, not within the circumference of science as viewed by a Calvinist or a secularist, but rather in an attempt to blend two antithetical presuppositions. Conflict arose when the scientist was inconsistent within his own framework. Calvinism demanded that every man of science, as well as every individual, whomever, proceed consistently from his own consciousness. Had the normal condition of things remained intact, all consciousness would emit the same sound.\(^{36}\) Man's consciousness, on account of the abnormal condition in which he found himself, however, was not all the same. The act of regeneration in the life of one man affected his view of sin, as opposed to another who had not experienced this regeneration.\(^{37}\) In one man the certainty of faith spoke and he must hear, whereas, another could not even accept it as a factor.\(^{38}\)

Where the Calvinist relied on the testimony of the Holy Spirit for guidance, another man would deny He existed.\(^{39}\)

To the Calvinistic scientist these elements, operative in his life, could not go unheeded, nor should they. They formed the basis of his worldview. Even so, the Calvinistic confession of the sovereignty of the individual consciousness must be maintained for those with different presuppositional views. Because the starting point of all science was each man's own consciousness, then the logical
conclusion must be, that it was an impossibility that both Calvinist and secularist should agree. And yet, because the Calvinistic system of the universe was open and wholistic—that is, it held to the concept of the uniformity of natural causes; that God had made a cause-and-effect universe of which man was outside, in which God could at any time interfere—it found no inherent conflict between its presuppositions and its conclusions. The conflict existed only in the whole of scientific thought, as was explained above. Thus the promotion of science by Calvinism may be understood. There was no contradiction between Christianity or the Christian Scriptures and scientific investigation.

That Calvin, himself, saw no conflict between science and the Bible is clear. It is necessary to distinguish between what Calvin considered to be the basis of Biblical interpretation and authority, and what he thought about the text of Scripture. The authority of the Bible was derived from the content of its message. Witness that the priority of Christ, its center, was maintained. Only through the work of the Spirit were both content and the authority of the Bible attested to the individual. Calvin stressed the literal or plain meaning of the text, but this meaning was still theological. Calvin, to be sure, interpreted the Bible in respect to scientific matters in such a way as to allow for possible acceptance of new theories. In his Commentary on Genesis, Calvin contended that Moses had no
intention of speaking scientifically about the stars:

For Moses here addressed himself to our senses, that the Knowledge of the gifts of God which we enjoy may not glide away. Therefore, in order to apprehend the meaning of Moses, it is to no purpose to soar above the heavens which God enkindles for us in the earth . . . . Moses wrote in a popular style things which, without instruction, all ordinary persons, endued with common sense, are able to understand; but astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend . . . Moses rather adapts his discourse to common usage.

And in a similar vein:

Nor did Moses truly wish to withdraw us from this pursuit in omitting such things as are peculiar to the art [astronomy]; but because he was ordained a teacher as well of the unlearned and rude as of the learned, he could not otherwise fulfill his office than by descending to this grosser method of instruction.

Calvin's only negative concern always remained the priority of pursuits within the life of the individual. The glorification of God was to be primary, always and forever. Following that, the study of God's creation or the amplification of His beauty was to be encouraged.
ENDNOTES


3 Nicolaus Copernicus, a contemporary of Calvin, lived 1473-1543.

4 John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, quoted in Rosen, "Calvin's Attitude", p. 438.

5 Rosen, "Calvin's Attitude," p. 441; Martin Luther, contrarily, commented in his Table Talks, concerning the Copernican theory, "But even though astrology has been thrown into confusion, I, for my part, believe the sacred Scripture; for Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, not the earth." Quoted in Spitz, The Renaissance and Reformation, p. 586.


7 Ibid.


12 Institutes, 1:64.

14 _Institutes_, 1:220.

15 Ibid., pp. 396-97.

16 Ibid., pp. 232-34.


20 Ibid., p. 223; John 1:3.

21 Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 1:3.

22 Matthew 19:28.

23 Romans 8:22-23.


27 Ibid., pp. 86-87.

28 _Institutes_, 1:199.

29 Will Durant, _The Age of Faith_, p. 988.

30 Spitz, _The Renaissance and Reformation_, p. 581.


32 Calvin, _Commentary on Genesis_, pp. 79-100.


36 *Institutes*, 1:204.

37 Ibid., p. 652.

38 Ibid., pp. 795-96.

39 Ibid., pp. 80-89.

40 Ibid., pp. 88-90.

41 Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, pp. 85-87.

42 Ibid., pp. 86-87.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Calvinism, in resume, did not stop at the creation of an organized system of theology, or at creating a church-order. As necessitated by the dominating principle, of the sovereignty of God in all areas of life, Calvinism expanded to become a life-system. It did not exhaust its energy in a dogmatic construction but created a world-view that was able to fit itself to the needs of every stage of human development, in every department of life. The Christian religion, as a result of the Reformation, transcended papal announcements and monastic walls to become viable and operative to the common person in their daily functions. Above and beyond, even, the general advancement of the Reformation, however, Calvinism itself gave birth to a church order which became preformation of state confederation. It proved, in many cases, to be the guardian of science and encouraged and emancipated art. Calvinism propagated a political scheme which gave birth to constitutional government, both in Europe and America. Calvinism, as well, has been credited with fostering agriculture, industry, commerce and navigation. It insisted upon the sacred rights of the family within a society and placed the
conscience of a man beneath no external or temporal power. Calvinism positioned all authority under the authority of God from whom its vitality was derived.

The ability of this system of thought to influence so multifariously was derived from its unique presuppositional foundation. Calvin sought to realize as his dominant thought in life the truth of Scripture: "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To whom be glory forever." This predominant theme has given the Calvinist the freedom to invest himself and his time in all the wonders of life. Consequently, no aspect of life could be segregated a secular, while another remained spiritual. The whole of man and his life, to the Calvinist was sacred. John Calvin, therefore, could reconcile his role as theologian, with his role as humanist, philosopher, supporter of the arts and sciences and concerned citizen of Geneva. Calvinism's influence in the post-Reformation world can be seen in both Puritan England and the Netherlands and in the inception and early history of the United States. And not merely was the religious history of these representative nations affected but the political and cultural as well. Calvinism had, indeed, raised itself to a place of dominance in several spheres of life.

Thus understood, Calvinism rooted itself in a form of religion which was peculiarly its own, and from this specific religious consciousness there developed a peculiar theology,
then a unique church-order, and then a form for political and social life. Further, Calvinism's stature as a complete world view yielded a framework for the interpretation between nature and grace, between Christianity and the world, between the Church and the State, and for the understanding of art and science. The Calvinist emphasis on the sovereignty of God in all spheres, a doctrine unique to Calvinism, has seen in history the widespread expression of its ideal.
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