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THE CHURCH AND STATE IN CALVIN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

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Page

I. INTRODUCTION 1

 Title and Purpose of This Study 1

 The Justification and Scope of This Study 2

 Summary of the Conclusions 3

II. SOURCES OF CALVIN'S POLITICAL THOUGHT 4

 Medieval Political Thought 4

 Reformation Movements 5

 Calvin's Classical Training 6

 Contemporary Reformers 17

III. CALVIN'S VIEW OF THE REGULAR AUTHORITY 27

 Divine Sanction of Monarchy 27

 Limits of the Civil Government 27

 Responsibilities of the Civil Authority 32

IV. CALVIN'S SEPARATION OF TWO SWORDS: SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL 34

 Explanation of Two Powers 34

 Close Interrelation Between Spiritual and Temporal 39

 The Different Views 42

V. CALVIN'S STRUGGLE FOR THE "BEST" FORM OF GOVERNMENT 54

 Monarchic Government 54

 Aristocratic Government, Aristocracy 59

 Calvin's Democratic Ideas for Modern Democracy 62

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABBREVIATIONS	v
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
Problem and Purpose of This Study	1
The Limitations and Sources of This Study	3
Summary of the Conclusions.	4
II. SOURCES OF CALVIN'S POLITICAL THOUGHT	6
Medieval Political Thoughts	7
Conciliar Movement.	9
Calvin's Classical Training	10
Contemporary Reformers.	19
III. CALVIN'S VIEW ON THE SECULAR AUTHORITY.	27
Divine Sanction of Rulership.	27
Task of the Civil Government.	37
Limitations of the Civil Authority.	46
IV. CALVIN'S SEPARATION OF TWO SWORDS: SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL.	52
Separation of Two Powers.	52
Close Interrelation Between Spiritual and Temporal.	56
Two Different Views	58
V. CALVIN'S SUPPORT FOR THE "ARISTOCRACY-DEMOCRACY" FORM OF GOVERNMENT	64
Theocentric Government.	64
Mixed Form of Government, "Aristocracy-Democracy".	65
Calvin's Democratic Ideals for Modern Democracy	71

	Page
VI. CALVIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD TYRANNY	77 ✓
Disapproval of Individual Rebellion	
Against Tyranny	82
Passive Resistance.	86
Obedience Only in the Lord.	92
VII. CALVIN'S STRUGGLES TO MAKE GENEVA THE MODEL CITY	96
Calvin's Entry into Geneva and Exile to Strasbourg (1536-1541)	100
Constant Struggles Between Church and State in Geneva (1541-1555)	108
Establishment of "Christian Common- wealth" under Calvin (1555-1564).	122
VIII. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	129

ABBREVIATIONS

Works of John Calvin

Commentaries

Calvin: Commentaries

Theological Treatises

Calvin: Theological Treatises

First Book of Moses

Commentaries on the First Book of Moses

Last Books of Moses

Commentaries on the Last Books of Moses

Joshua

Commentaries on the Book of Joshua

Psalms

Commentary on the Book of Psalms

Isaiah

Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah

Jeremiah

Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah

Ezekiel

Commentaries on the Prophet Ezekiel

Daniel

Commentaries on the Prophet Daniel

Twelve Minor Prophets

Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets

Matthew, Mark, Luke

Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke

John

Commentary on the Gospel According to John

Acts

Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles

Romans

Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans

Philippians, Colossians Thessalonians

Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians

Galatians, Ephesians

Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians

Timothy, Titus, Philemon

Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon

<u>Hebrews</u>	<u>Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews</u>
<u>Catholic Epistles</u>	<u>Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles</u>
<u>Institutes</u>	<u>Institutes of the Christian Religion. Vol. XX-XXI of the Library of Christian Classics</u>
<u>Institutes</u> (Beveridge)	<u>Institutes of the Christian Religion. Translated by Henry Beveridge</u>
<u>Institutio</u>	<u>Institutio Christianae Religionis</u>
<u>CR</u>	<u>Corpus Reformatorum</u>
<u>Letters</u>	<u>Letters of John Calvin</u>
<u>Selection</u>	<u>A Selection on the Most Celebrated Sermons</u>
<u>Tracts</u>	<u>Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith</u>

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem and Purpose of This Study

The relationship between church and state has been a problem for many centuries and still is today. Coming from the Reformed background, the writer was first interested in Calvin's view on church and state in connection with Luther's view on the same subject encountered in the Luther Studies Course. The writer soon found differences of opinion among historians as to how Calvin considered the church in relation with the state. Further research led to the understanding that there are two main problems involved in this study: the separation between church and state and the interpretation of Calvin's democratic ideals.

Therefore, the areas of this research centered on two points: first, what did the reformer actually believe in the separation of the spiritual power from the temporal and how did he carry this out in a Christianized city of Geneva; secondly, what were some of the democratic and republican ideals in his political thought which are very significant for later development of democracy?

These two questions in Calvin's political thought do not bring ready answers for two main reasons: the historical situation of the sixteenth century in which the

reformer handled the relationship between church and state, and the use of terminologies both by the reformer and by the historian of the twentieth century with different shades of meanings.

First, Calvin was just coming out of the medieval Christian influence and was basically dealing with Christian nations in his time. The basic thesis of his political thought and practice, therefore, was the medieval conception of Corpus Christianum. But today this conception of Corpus Christianum is totally foreign because of the secularization of the world, multiple religions, population explosion, and other factors existing in the world. Nevertheless, for Calvin, it was possible to establish a Christian society by mutual assistance between church and state. This is the reason why he could emphatically insist upon the separation of church from state on one hand, and then immediately turn to the state for the protection of the church and its pure doctrine on the other. It was perfectly legitimate for him to talk about the separation of the two powers in this fashion, but to the twentieth century man, Calvin's separation is not a separation at all.

Secondly, Calvin uses the same terminologies such as democracy, personal liberty, and separation of church and state which modern man today uses with different meanings. For example, the word "democracy" to Calvin means limited rule by a magistrate through constitutional means, not popular sovereignty rule as of today.

The Limitations and Sources of This Study

Calvin as a prolific writer penned most of his theological treatises in Latin, and his sermons were recorded in French, his native language. The Corpus Reformatorum which contains fifty-nine volumes of all of Calvin's opera in the original languages is the most extensive edition available for the study of Calvin, but his major works have been translated into English.

For the use of the primary sources, the Institutes of the Christian Religion directly deals with the subject of the thesis in Chapter XX of Book IV. Many Commentaries of Calvin were helpful in supplementing his political ideas found in the Institutes. Calvin's Institutes and Commentaries go hand in hand, because he quotes many Scriptural references in the former and elaborates on them in the latter. The Letters of John Calvin which contains six hundred letters provides sufficient materials from his personal experiences to prove his theoretical teaching on the relation of church and state which was discussed in the Institutes and Commentaries. His other writings such as Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith, Calvin: Theological Treatises, and On God and Political Duty are also occasionally used whenever they provide needy information.

The Latin works of the Corpus Reformatorum and of the Institutes are often used in comparison with English

translations. Particularly some important political thoughts of Calvin which are discussed by the secondary sources and which are not in the English translation are examined or translated from the Corpus Reformatorum. The limitation in the use of original sources for the thesis was that the writer of the thesis did not get into the Latin work of Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clemencia and Calvin's sermons in French which are in the Corpus Reformatorum. Nevertheless, the author felt that he had enough materials for the purpose of this thesis.

In terms of secondary authorities, representative works on this area of Calvin's political thought were read. Since Calvin was a Frenchman, there has been much study done among French scholars including Marc-Edouare Chenevière and François Wendel, whose works are translated into English. In Germany Joseph Bohatec and Hans Haushen are eminent Calvinist scholars. Recently, American Calvinist scholars, particularly John McNeill and Hans Baron, have stimulated the study of Calvin in America.

Summary of the Conclusions

On the basis of the following study on Calvin's view on church and state, the writer comes to this conclusion. For Calvin the state is divinely sanctioned for the protection of the people and the church and for the promotion of pure doctrines. There is a twofold aspect of relationship between the two: first, there is a clear distinction

between church and state as to their spiritual and temporal jurisdiction in which each authority must be recognized respectively, and there must be no interchange of offices between the two powers; secondly, there is also a close interrelation between church and state in their mutual assistance for the establishment of Corpus Christianum, because God is the supreme head over the church as well as the state. For the establishment of the "Christian commonwealth," in Calvin, the aristocratic-democratic form of government which is represented by people through election is considered to be the best; this mixed form of government avoids tyrannical absolutism. This principle of Calvin's view on church and state was faithfully carried out in Geneva. In short, Calvin's influence in Geneva was basically spiritual, moral, and intellectual rather than temporal.

CHAPTER II

SOURCES OF CALVIN'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

The growing conflict for power between the church and state during the Middle Ages greatly influenced Calvin's political thought. The papacy claimed that the church with its hierarchial structure had both spiritual and temporal power over the state, because the commonly accepted political theory of the Middle Ages by the church was based upon the theologico-political interpretation of the traditional conception of unity and order in the universe. The church considered the universe as an organic unity in which everything was interrelated and structured according to its position and rank. Since the universe was divinely arranged in order by God, the criterion to judge the moral and intellectual values must be a theological one, and the pope who was the spiritual head of the church, therefore, mediated the authority of God to the emperor. This medieval practice of papal supremacy over the state had met with much opposition within the state and even within the church.

Historically, after a century-long papal humiliation by the Holy Roman Emperors from Otto I of the middle of the tenth century to Henry III of the middle of the eleventh century, papal power accelerated very rapidly from the time of Hildebrand, or Pope Gregory VII, who

ruled from 1075 to 1085 and reached its peak during the time of Pope Innocent III from 1195 to 1216.

After Pope Innocent III papal authority began to decline for various reasons: the failure of the Crusades, emerging nationalism, growing secularism, the rise of capitalism, and the increased power of the nobility. Princes and emperors had contributed to growing controversies between the secular and spiritual powers and to the weakening of the papal position. The conflicts between Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire and Pope Gregory IX and later Pope Innocent IV over the emperor's meddling in the affairs of Italy greatly humiliated the papacy during the first half of the thirteenth century. At the end of this same generation the papacy suffered another setback because of the humiliation of Pope Boniface VIII by Philip IV of France and Edward I of England. Consequently, Boniface VIII pronounced his famous decree of Unam Sanctam in 1302 which reaffirmed the Pope's supremacy over the state. After the disgraceful downgrading of the papacy by Philip IV, spiritual and imperial struggles continued between Pope John XXII and Louis IV of Bavaria during the first half of the fourteenth century in which the pope was expelled from Rome by the conquest of the king in 1328. Subsequently, the papacy from the fourteenth century on did not recover its previous prestige and authority.

From the beginning of the fourteenth century,

eminent political and religious writers called pamphleteers had arisen and challenged papal superiority over the church and state. For example, Dante Alighieri, a Florentine politician and poet, maintained the thesis in his De Monarchia (ca. 1311) that the church and the state received their respective power from God. This same emphasis concerning the independent power of the state directly from God apart from the church was also supported by John of Paris, a Dominican priest in France in his De Potestate regia et papali (1302-1303). The first real offensive attack upon papal authority came from the Defensor Pacis (1324) of Marsilius of Padua, who, as a statesman from Italy with William of Ockham, supported Louis IV of Bavaria against Pope John XXII. Marsilius taught that the real authority of the state lay on the whole people as they formed a corporation. This corporation conception was also applied to the church in the spiritual realm. He denied papal supremacy within the church and furthermore, over the state.¹

This breakdown of the medieval ecclesiastical structure was not only caused by the external changing circumstances during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries but also by the internal schisms and corruption of the church. The Babylonian Captivity (1309-1378) and the

¹Alan Gewirth, Marsilius of Padua, The Defender of Peace (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), II, 100.

Great Schism (1378-1417) weakened the prestige of the church and degraded papal power.

Initiated by Marsilius of Padua, the conciliar movement began to grow within the church.² Most active through the church councils, the conciliar movement during the fifteenth century made an indelible mark in the history of political thought and diluted the power of the pope. The Conciliar theologians such as Henry of Langenstein, Peter d'Ailly, John Gerson, and Nicholas of Cusa stressed the importance of "harmony and consent" between papal power and that of the Council.³

Nicholas of Cusa, an ecclesiastical diplomat and statesman, in his significant work, De Concordantia Catholica, in 1433, affirmed that the government was a cooperative enterprise on the basis of harmony or "concordantia" and was not a hierarchial body whose authority came down from a sovereign head.⁴ This political theory challenged the hierarchically oriented papal authority in the government, and prepared the way for Calvin's theory of localized ecclesiastical authority. These various reasons, complicated and yet challenging, helped to pave the way for the birth of the Reformation.

²Gewirth, I, 286.

³George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 175.

⁴Ibid., p. 321.

It was in this political and ecclesiastical background that Jean Calvin, or Cauvin, was born at Noyon, France, on July 10, 1509. One might consider that his earliest political contact started at childhood when the throne of Noyon was occupied by Charles de Hangest. Wendel considers this detail of importance, for Calvin had kept in contact with several members of this family, and at the age of fourteen, went with three of the Hangest young men to attend the University of Paris. To one of them, Claude, Abbe of St-Eloi at Noyon, Calvin dedicated his first book, Commentary on Lucius Anneas Seneca's Two Books on Clemency, written in 1532.⁵ This association with the Hangest family may have furthered "

Calvin's fundamentally aristocratic character (which appears at every opportunity; he shows himself to be hostile to the crowd, which he thinks is naturally seditious, destitute of reason or discernment.⁶

Calvin's education, his training for the priesthood and for law, and his exposure to eminent humanists, contributed to his political thoughts and practice.

Calvin's father at first wanted his son to study for the priesthood, but after Calvin gained the degree of

⁵Francis Wendel, Calvin, translated by Philip Mairet (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), p. 16. See also John T. McNeill, The History and Character of Calvinism (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1962), p. 104. Throughout the thesis Seneca's De Clementia represents his Two Books on Clemency.

⁶Wendel, p. 30. See Infra, p. 68.

Master of Arts, he was withdrawn from the study of philosophy to study law at Orleans.⁷ While he did not feel personally committed to law as a career, he was influenced by the brilliant jurist and faculty member, Pierre de l'Estoile at Orleans University.⁸ A conservative of the traditional faith, de l'Estoile was open-minded towards the efforts of the humanists, and Calvin was profoundly impressed with his professor's penetrating mind, his skill, his experience in law, and with his religious and scrupulous character.⁹

Another humanist who awakened Calvin's interest as Pierre de l'Estoile had never succeeded in doing, in a number of juridicial problems, was the famous Alciat, professor of Roman law at Bourges, where Calvin matriculated in 1529 after he left Orleans.

When Calvin returned to the University of Paris, he came under the influence of the writings of eminent contemporary humanists, particularly Guillaume Budé and Erasmus. In speaking of the humanists' contributions to Calvin's commentary on Seneca's De Clemencia, Calvin called Budé "the first ornament and pillar of literature"

⁷Ibid., p. 21.

⁸John T. McNeill, "Calvin," Encyclopedia Americana (New York: Americana Corporation, 1966), V, 238.

⁹Wendel, p. 22.

and Erasmus as "the second ornament of literature."¹⁰

As a French humanist, Budé mastered Greek, philosophy, theology, medicine, and law, served the French king Louis XII as secretary and traveled with Francis I.¹¹ His influence upon the young reformer, Calvin, was conspicuous in Calvin's Seneca Commentary. Besides citing the name of Budé seven times in his text, modern historical investigation shows some ninety quotations or clear parallels between Calvin's and Budé's writings.¹²

Budé's two later major writings, The Annotations in Pandectas and its continuation, Annotations Reliquae in Pandectas and De Asse et Partibus eius, provided the main source material which Calvin used from Budé for his Seneca Commentary.¹³ From these two treatises, Calvin drew the legal terms which Budé himself transmitted from the Roman law: "manum iniicere, index (indicium), fidem

¹⁰G. E. Duffield, ed., John Calvin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), p. 40. Calvin called Bude "a matchless ornament and crown of literature, by whose contribution today our France lays claim to the palm of erudition." John Calvin, Calvin: Commentaries, translated and edited by Joseph Haroutunian, Vol. XXIII in The Library of Christian Classics (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 27.

¹¹John J. Delaney & James E. Tobin, "Guillaume Bude," Dictionary of Catholic Biography (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1961), p. 184.

¹²Duffield, p. 42.

¹³Ibid., pp. 42-44. Bude's L'Institution du Prince, posthumously published in 1547, may not have been known to Calvin at the time of writing his first political treatise in 1532 but could have been used for the Institutes in

Praestare, hereditatem adire/ cernere; aestimare litem."¹⁴

Budé with other humanists like Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457) and Erasmus (1466-1536) also influenced Calvin's methodology of historical criticism.¹⁵ Since Budé was well-versed in Greek and Latin, he did an extensive work on the comparison of the Roman texts. At the college which King Francis I of France founded for royal lecturers which later became the College de France, Budé became the most eminent professor in the classical studies. He brought other Greek and Latin scholars to the college; Pierre Danes and Jacques Toussain were invited to teach Greek. Calvin who had studied under Melchior Wolmar, continued his studies under Danes, but his emphasis fell on Latin rather than on Greek.¹⁶ This was why Calvin did not handle the Greek language as efficiently as Budé, but rather dealt largely with the Latin translations of Greek writers.

With this critical methodology, Calvin studied ancient

1536. McNeill suggests that Calvin could easily have obtained this book through Budé's family with which he was well acquainted. John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. XXI of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, translated by Ford L. Battles (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1960), I, xxxi, n. 3.

¹⁴Duffield, p. 43.

¹⁵Commentaries, p. 27.

¹⁶Jean Cadier, The Man God Mastered, translated from the French by O. R. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1960), pp. 30-31.

political writers such as Plato, Cicero and Seneca and the contemporary writers of Bude related to the Roman political institutions. Calvin was well versed on Budé's extensive discussions on the office of dictator, quaester, centurion, tribune and other offices of the Roman government.¹⁷ As to the formulation of Calvin's political philosophy both in his commentary on Seneca's De Clementia and the Institutes, Professor Ford L. Battles comments:

But there is good evidence that the Christianised Plutarch of Budaeus, with Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic elements (as well as material from Cicero) was determinative in forming Calvin's political philosophy. The Seneca Commentary is an important link between Budaeus' ideas in the Annotationes in Pandectas and Calvin's fully formed views at the beginning and end of the Institutio. Among the themes common to all three works are the following: rulers as ministers of God or as images of God; Budaeus' understanding of the relation of the ruler to the law is carried over, by way of the Seneca Commentary, to the Institutio.¹⁸

Erasmus' influence upon Calvin was also very significant. Calvin discussed Erasmus and his various works in his Seneca Commentary. Erasmus' name was cited five times in relation to his text, but Dr. A. M. Hugo, the co-worker with Professor Battles on the new edition of the Seneca Commentary, has found at least sixty-eight places where Calvin discussed Erasmus' thoughts and adopted them as

¹⁷Duffield, p. 43.

¹⁸Ibid.

his own.¹⁹ Although Calvin also mentioned Erasmus' Adagia three times by name, one can find twenty-six places where the Adagia (1528) influenced Calvin's thinking. Erasmus' Apophthegmata was directly quoted six times. Erasmus' Education of a Christian Prince (1515-1516) which used source material from the Greek and Roman writers included Seneca's De Clementia on the matter of princely office. It was more oriented toward the moral and spiritual teachings of Christianity in politics and provided much food for thought for Calvin.²⁰

Apart from Budé and Erasmus, Philippus Beroaldus the Elder also provided a very significant literary influence upon Calvin. His short treatise on the princely office, De Optimo Statu Libellus (1509), other commentaries on the classical writers such as Suetonius, Apuleius, and Cicero who wrote Lives of the Caesars, Golden Ass and Tusculan Disputations respectively gave much impetus to Calvin's political ideas. Summarizing Beroaldus' effects upon Calvin it is said:

Beroaldus provided a store of references which Calvin not only used directly but through which he was led to still others; second, the Suetonius Commentary was the backbone of Calvin's comparative study of the historians of the early Empire; third, the form and method of Beroaldus' commentaries taught Calvin a great deal. He did not fall into

¹⁹Ibid., p. 41.

²⁰Ibid.

the vices of Beroaldus' excessively archaizing style or penchant for long digressions, but the types of notes--historical, rhetorical, philosophical, lexical--of Beroaldus were taken into account by Calvin in developing his own format.²¹

Calvin's interest in humanism led him to study the classical works of the ancient Stoic philosophers, particularly Seneca and Cicero. Seneca, who lived approximately a century later than Cicero, was a Roman moralist during the reign of Nero. Calvin valued him with these words, "Our Seneca was second only to Cicero, a veritable pillar of Roman philosophy and literature. . . . a man of vast erudition and signal eloquence."²² As Seneca appealed to Emperor Nero in his De Clemencia for the clemency of the emperor upon the people, so did Calvin appeal to King Francis I for his leniency upon the Protestants in his Institutes. Calvin's chief indebtedness to Seneca was the latter's emphasis on the moral duty of a good man to his government and his rejection of the Epicurean's extreme individualism and apathetic attitude toward public affairs.²³ Calvin simply substituted Seneca's stoic morality for Christian morality.

If Seneca was considered "the second pillar," Cicero was regarded as the "first pillar of Roman philosophy and

²¹Ibid., p. 47.

²²Ibid., p. 48.

²³Sabine, p. 175.

literature."²⁴ In the Institutes Calvin heavily depended on the works of Cicero,²⁵ particularly in Institutes I, i-v, and II. ii. 15.²⁶ In Calvin's Seneca Commentary Cicero's works were cited as the primary materials over that of any other author.²⁷

The concept of the state in Calvin, for example, is directly from Cicero. Calvin's definition of the state as a convention of people in which good and just laws are practiced was expressed as:

What is the state? Actually it is a council or assembly of men allied by law; therefore, every society is not a state but that which applies approved customs and just laws is a state. No doubt those who do not observe laws are not citizens, but separated from the legal body of the state.

The state is a legally assembled union or gathering of people. Not every gathering makes a state but only those that live in good manners and under righteous laws.²⁸

²⁴Duffield, p. 49.

²⁵Institutes, II, 1607-1608. Throughout the thesis the Institutes is listed according to its volume and page number instead of its division of books and chapters.

²⁶Duffield, p. 38.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 49-50.

²⁸Josef Bohatec, Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche (Scientia Aalen, 1961), p. 1. "Quid enim est civitas? Nempe concilium coetusve hominum iure sociatus . . . si igitur non omnis societas est civitas, sed ea tantum, quae probis moribus et aequis legibus vivat nimirum qui legibus non obtemperant, cives non sunt, sed ex corpore legitimo civitatis abrupti.

Der Staat ist eine rechtlich vergesellschaftete V

For Calvin, the law, both divine and human, was intimately related to the magistrates as well as the people. The constitutional limitation of the magistrate by the law which was a thought found in Calvin was derived from Cicero. Calvin quoted Cicero as maintaining that the laws were souls without which the magistrates could not govern, for "the law is a silent magistrate; the magistrate, a living law."²⁹

the magistrate, who is the protector and guardian of the laws; the laws, according to which he governs; the people, who are governed by the laws and obey the magistrate.³⁰

Some other ideas of Cicero such as the equality of all men and the Stoic moral obligation of man to the government which the Scriptures itself confirms were also seen in Calvin's works. Cicero evidently was the man who played an important part in the intellectual formation of Calvin's life.³¹

Besides the major influences from Cicero and Seneca, Calvin also used directly many other Latin and Greek classical authors, that is, prose writers, poets,

Vereinigung oder Verbindung der Menschen. Nicht jede Gesellschaft bildet einen Staat, sondern nur diejenige, die in guten Sitten und unter gerechten Gesetzen lebt." Translation is done by the writer of the thesis.

²⁹Institutes, II, 1502.

³⁰Ibid., p. 1488.

³¹Duffield, p. 51. See also Institutes, I, 368, n. 5; II, 1511, n. 49.

historians and rhetoricians in his Seneca Commentary and the Institutes.³²

Summarizing the influences of these classical writers on Calvin's Seneca Commentary, Professor Battles states:

the number of authors used in their original published form by Calvin is far smaller than the impressive list of 74 Latin and 22 Greek alluded to in the Commentary. The basic catalogue of these prime authors is further reduced³³ by the large proportion of derived citations.

Thus, Calvin's education under the noted humanists of the time, and his intensive study of the classics helped to fashion his ideas on the church and state.

Calvin was not only a humanist, but was also a religious reformer. As a reformer in Geneva, he came to know the activities of other reformers, particularly of those in Germany. Martin Luther, Calvin's senior by twenty-six years, made a significant impact upon Calvin. Calvin himself acknowledged his great indebtedness to the German reformer, calling him "much respected father."³⁴ Although Calvin did not meet Luther in person, he was

³²Duffield, pp. 52-53.

³³Ibid., p. 54. See also Commentaries, p. 21.

³⁴John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin, compiled from the original manuscripts and edited with historical notes by Jules Bonnet (Phil.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), I, 440. In his Letters, Calvin mentioned Luther several times and wrote a letter directly to him on January 21, 1545.

well acquainted with Luther's writings.³⁵ Luther, like Calvin, believed in the divine ordination of the ruler, strong passive obedience to the king, a Christ-centered oriented government, and the separation of church and state. Luther emphasized in his Commentary on Psalm 101 the distinctive and peculiar nature and commission of the state which he considered God-ordained and not as the secular arm of the church. He was proud of the fact that

the Reformation had brought with it a new respect for what has been called the "sacredness of the secular," and especially³⁶ for the divine origin and character of government.

In his treatise of 1522-1523, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," Luther condemned the ecclesiastical and secular authorities of the day for the exchange of their responsibilities.³⁷ It seems that Luther's emphasis on separation was more historically than Scripturally conditioned for a necessary ethical defense of temporal government against the prevailing Roman Catholic teaching that the church was the source

³⁵Luther himself acknowledges reading of Calvin's books with "special delight," in November, 1539. Letters, I, 167.

³⁶Martin Luther, "Psalm 101," Luther's Works, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, translated by Alfred von Rohr Sauer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), XIII, 146, n. 1.

³⁷Martin Luther, "Temporal Authority: To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed," Luther's Works, ed. Walter I. Brandt, translated by J. J. Schinbel (Phil.: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), XLV, 109.

of all earthly powers. There is no doubt that the separation of the two powers was a real problem to Luther for a long time, for some ten years later he said in his Commentary on Psalm 101:

Constantly I must pound in and squeeze in and drive in and wedge in this difference between the two kingdoms, even though it is written and said so often that it becomes tedious.³⁸

Recent historians somewhat differ in their interpretations of Luther's separation of church and state. Some scholars like Ernst Troeltsch, Karl Miller, and Rudolf Sohm sided Luther more with the medieval concept of church and state; and on the other hand, Hans von Schubert, Henry Tode, G. von Below and J. L. Neve emphasized Luther's distinctive separation of the two powers.³⁹

It is noteworthy, nevertheless, to see how a historian divides Luther's political thought into four different periods and interprets each period independently and chronologically.⁴⁰ The first was Luther's optimistic period, which was expressed in his Address to the Christian Nobility of 1520 and in which he had hoped to bring political and social help to Germany by

³⁸Luther, "Psalm 101," XIII, 194.

³⁹William Mueller, Church and State in Luther and Calvin (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1954), pp. 36-38.

⁴⁰Cyril C. Richardson, "Prophecy and Politics: A

appealing to the emperor. The second phase started to form when he became a pariah at the Diet of Worms in 1521. His Concerning Secular Authority of 1532 showed the tendency of a sharp separation between the church and the state and emphasized passive obedience and non resistance to the secular government. The third stage was shaped by the events of the day, expressed in his writings at the time of the Schmalcaldic League in 1531, and emphasized God's judgment upon the emperor through wars and rebellions. The last period was characterized by Luther's personal involvement in politics in his later years. His instructions for the Saxon Lutheran Church and the consistories gave birth to territorial Lutheranism (Landesherrliche Kirchenregiment).

These four elements of Luther's political thought can also be found in Calvin's writings, even though they did not occur in the same chronological order in Calvin's life. Parallels in Calvin's thoughts included Calvin's appeal to Francis I for his clemency upon the Protestant Church (preface of Institutes), the separation of the two powers,⁴¹ passive obedience,⁴² his emphasis of the judgment of God upon the tyrant through means of wars,

Study in Martin Luther, " The Review of Religion, (January 1937), I, 136-137.

⁴¹Institutes, II, 1485-1488.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 1509-1517.

pestilences, and rebellions,⁴³ and his political influences and struggles through the organization of the Consistory in Geneva. Thus, although the political and religious situations which existed in Germany and France differed, both reformers had close resemblances in their thinking concerning the relationship between church and state.

To disregard, however, any differences between the two would in effect be obscuring the total picture. Even though both believed in the divine ordination of civil authority and its ultimate responsibility to God, Luther saw reason as the prime prerequisite for civil orders, as he said, "To the ordering of earthly affairs, the reason, which is given by God, is sufficient, so that herein, the Holy Spirit is not necessary."⁴⁴ On the other hand, Calvin applied a more direct influence of God in government through Divine Providence.⁴⁵ For him the authority of the civil government was exercised as the will of God was exercised.⁴⁶ Professor Niesel further amplified this principle of Divine Providence as to be interpreted in the light of Calvin's doctrine of the Christo-centric

⁴³Ibid., pp. 1517-1521.

⁴⁴Weimar Ausgabe, L, 553, quoted in C. Bergendoff, "Church and State in the Reformation Period," Lutheran Church Quarterly, III (January 1930), 57.

⁴⁵Institutes, II, 1489.

⁴⁶Bergendoff, p. 57.

view of civil government.⁴⁷

David Schaff gives the differences of these two reformers in general.

Calvin went beyond the German Reformer. He was original in the department of administration. He was the founder of a form of Church government and has become the father of representative institutions in the modern world. Here he had genius where Luther was lacking, was constructive where Luther was a child. Calvin was a legislator and a disciplinarian. His mind ran in the direction of rules. It demanded a system; Luther had no taste for administration. No "civitas dei" lay in his mind as an ideal ^{to}₄₈ be realized in an outward organized institution.

Another reformer whose influence upon Calvin cannot be overlooked was Martin Bucer, the famous theologian, humanist and statesman in the Strasbourg city state. Bucer was often called "the father of Calvin,"⁴⁹ Some of Calvin's doctrines such as the "Sovereignty of God," "The Lord's Supper," and the emphasis on the Old Testament were preached by Bucer in Strasbourg before Calvin. The Letters of John Calvin shows that Calvin had a life

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, translated by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), p. 232.

⁴⁸ David S. Schaff, "Martin Luther and John Calvin, Church Reformers," The Princeton Theological Review, XV (October 1917), 541. ✓

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Pauck, "Calvin and Bucer," The Journal of Religion, IX (September 1929), 256, quoted by Hans Baron, "Calvinist Republicanism and its Historical Roots," Church History, VIII (March 1939), 31.

time intimate relationship and correspondence with Bucer. Calvin also visited Bucer in Strasbourg during his exile from Geneva in 1538. Bucer's opposition to absolute power and tyranny expressed in his Lectures on the Book of Judges especially influenced Calvin:

Wherever absolute power is given to a prince, there the glory and the domination of God is injured. The absolute power, which is God's alone, would be given to a man liable to sin.⁵⁰

Calvin's propensity toward an elective monarchy and not toward a hereditary reign was also held by Bucer. It has been said that Calvin was the person who translated the German constitutional conceptions of Bucer into the legal language of the western European countries.⁵¹

In summary, Calvin's political thought was influenced by the times in which he lived with the conflict between the church and state for power. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France, the king's control over the church had been strengthened through the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438) and the Concordat of Bologna (1516), and by the time of King Francis I, France was under political absolutism. Calvin, therefore, tried to safeguard the church from the threat of the state by writing a personal letter to the King in the preface of his Institutes. Calvin's acceptance of the basic

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 38. Baron quotes Bucer. Infra, p. 90.

⁵¹Ibid.

conception of the medieval Corpus Christianum, a Christian society, interpreted both the church and the state as God's instruments to achieve God's purpose for man.

The conciliar movement further prepared the way for Calvin's theory of localized ecclesiastical authority. His father's ambition enabled Calvin to mingle with the aristocratic Hangest family, study theology, then law. These affected his future views on politics. At the universities, he was impressed by the contemporary humanists de l'Estoile, Alciat, Budé, Erasmus, and Beroaldus and the classical writers, Seneca and Cicero.

Fellow reformer, Martin Luther reinforced Calvin's Scriptural view of man's obligation to man and of the divine origin and character of government. Calvin utilized his law background to translate and utilize Bucer's constitutional conceptions against absolute power and tyranny.

Basically, Calvin's concentration on Scripture added a new dimension to political thought as McNeill says in his introduction to Calvin's On God and Political Duty:

We cannot understand the political element in Calvin's teaching . . . without being aware that it hangs upon his scriptural conception of the reaction of God to man⁵² and of the consequent obligation of man to man.

⁵²John Calvin, On God and Political Duty, ed. John T. McNeill (Indianapolis: The Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1956), p. vii. See also Institutes, I, 69-74.

CHAPTER III

CALVIN'S VIEW ON THE SECULAR AUTHORITY

Divine Sanction of Rulership

Calvin, a firm believer in the divine ordination of the ruler, emphasized the importance of this doctrine more than any other tenet. To him God was the "author" of civil government;¹ he is the one who appointed rulers to the high position of government.² Calvin also maintained that the ruler is a "minister of God (Dei minister),"³ "the representative of God (lieutenant),"⁴ "servant(s) of God (servant),"⁵ "vicar(s) of God, (Dei vicarios),"⁶ even

¹John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, translated by the Rev. James Anderson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), III, 102.

²John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin, compiled from the original manuscripts and edited with historical notes by Jules Bonnet (Phil.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), III, 376.

³John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. XXI of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1960), I, 12; II, 1506.

⁴Ioannis Calvinii, Corpus Reformatorum, ediderunt C. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (Brunsvigae: Apud C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1863-1900), VII, 83.

⁵Ibid., p. 84.

⁶Institutes, II, 1491, 1495. Henry Beveridge

called as "gods (Dii),"⁷ and as

a father of his country, and, as the poet expresses it, shepherd of his people, guardian of peace, protector of righteousness, and avenger of innocence-- he who does not approve of such government must rightly be regarded as insane.

The word "gods" was used in Psalms 82:1 and 6 to refer to rulers or judges of the day.⁹ In John 10:34-5 Jesus used the same word, "gods," referring to earthly rulers and emphasized the higher rank of the Son of God in comparison with "gods."¹⁰

Calvin thought it imperative to have a government in order to maintain a decent and orderly society. In his comments on Jeremiah 30:9 he said,

It would, indeed, be better for us to be wild beasts, and to wander in forests, than to live without government and law; for we know how furious are the passions of men.¹¹

translates "vicars" as "vice-gerents." John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962), II, 655, 658.

⁷Institutes, II, 1489.

⁸Ibid., pp. 1511-1512. "ille scilicet patriae pater et (ut Poeta loquitur) pastor populi, custos pacis, praeses iustitiae, innocentiae vindex; insanus merito iudicandus sit, cui tale non probetur imperium." Ioannis Calvini, Institutio Christianae Religionis, edited by A. Tholuck (London: Berolini, apud Cullelmum Thome, 1846), p. 491.

⁹Psalms, III, 334.

¹⁰John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, translated by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), p. 336.

¹¹John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet

This was Calvin's reason for calling the magistrate's office as "the most sacred and honorable"¹² calling, and his lawful duty being "presided over" by God.¹³

In other commentaries on the Scriptures Calvin expounded this same idea of the divine sanction of the ruler. Two obvious passages in the New Testament where this light is shed are Romans 13:1-8 and 1 Peter 2. Of Romans 13:1-8 Calvin maintained that the authority of kings excelled the authority of the ordinary man, but did not surpass the authority of God:

And it seems indeed to me, that the Apostle intended by this word [higher powers] to take away the frivolous curiosity of men, who are wont often to inquire by what right they who rule have obtained their authority; but it ought to be enough for us that they do rule; for they have not ascended by their own power into this high station, but have been placed there by the Lord's hand. And by mentioning every soul, he removes every exception, lest anyone should claim an immunity from the common duty of obedience.¹⁴

In commenting on 1 Peter 2:17, "Honour all men, love the brotherhood; fear God. Honour the king," Calvin

Jeremiah, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1950), IV, 14.

¹²John Calvin, On God and Political Duty, edited by John T. McNeill (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950), xiii.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, translated and edited by the Rev. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1947), p. 478.

claimed that the fear of God was the foundation for man's obedience to his king, and interpreted this passage as, "Whosoever fears God, loves his brethren and the whole human race as he ought, will also give honor to kings."¹⁵

With vivid illustrations of judges, kings and prophets, numerous other passages of the Old Testament have the same train of thought as Romans 13:1-8 and 1 Peter 2. In Isaiah 49:23 Calvin compares kings and queens respectively as guardians of children and "nurses" who offer their services.¹⁶ In Daniel 2:12 he teaches that God is the one who ordains, institutes and sustains kings.¹⁷ This divine ordination of government extends also to all varieties of government regardless of their good or bad qualities.¹⁸ For example, when the five wicked kings of Canaan, according to Joshua 10:18, fled from Joshua's army into the cave of Makkedah, Calvin said, "It is

¹⁵John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), p. 85.

¹⁶John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, translated by the Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), II, 39.

¹⁷John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel, translated by Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 143.

¹⁸Institutes, II, 1494.

certain that they had lately been raised by divine agency to a sacred dignity, and placed on a royal throne."¹⁹

Another example is found in Ezekiel 17:20 in which Calvin comments that even an impious ruler like Nebuchadnezzar was ordained and used of God in order to fulfill God's redemptive purpose:

And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon, and will enter into judgment with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.²⁰

In Daniel 2:3-7, Daniel spoke to King Nebuchadnezzar as the one to whom the God of heaven gave a kingdom, power and strength, and glory.²¹ According to Hosea 13:11 when Israel sinned against God, God anointed a wicked King Jeroboam as His wrath upon the sinful Israelites.²² Calvin's commentary on Isaiah 3:4, "I will appoint children to their princes," also bears the same witness that even weak and feeble princes like children were enthroned by the appointment of God.²³

Calvin strongly reacted against the left-wing

¹⁹ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of Joshua, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), p. 159.

²⁰ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Prophet Ezekiel, translated by Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 20.

²¹ Daniel, I, 123-128.

²² Institutes, I, 469-470.

²³ Isaiah, I, 129.

reformers for their apathy and opposition toward Christian participation in governmental offices. The Schleitheim Confession (1527) of the Anabaptists states in the Sixth Article that political offices are "carnal" and that the sword of the magistrate is "outside the perfection of Christ" and is to be rejected by Christians.²⁴ When Calvin commented on Luke 22:25-26, "The Lord said to his disciples that the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over Gentiles, but it is not so among the disciples, where he who is first ought to become the least," he declared that "by this saying; they tell us all Christians are forbidden to take kingdoms or governments;"²⁵ here he was referring to the Anabaptists, against whom he later wrote Instruction contre la secte des Anabaptistes in 1544.²⁶

In Calvin's political thought, the chief axiomatic foundation of his divine interpretation of the political institution lay on the belief that Jesus Christ whom God appointed as the Eternal King ruled the world as the supreme ruler.²⁷ As Christ is the mediator between God and man and the vicar of Christ, so are magistrates whose office is like "a symbol of the kingly authority of our Lord Jesus

²⁴Institutes, II, 1487. n. 7. ✓

²⁵Ibid., p. 1492.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., I, 12.

Christ."²⁸ Therefore, all magistrates must subordinate themselves to the person of Christ, as Christ was obedient to the Father: "Kings are ordained to serve Christ,"²⁹ and "to serve the Lord with fear."³⁰

God is the supreme ruler and holds the supreme power over kings as Calvin explains, "Kings may lift up their heads above the clouds, but they, as well as the rest of mankind, are under the government of God."³¹ Calvin quotes a poem:

Kings rule their subject flocks; great Jove
O'er kings themselves his reign extends,
Who hurl'd the rebel giants from above;³²
At whose majestic nod all nature bends.

God with his secret counsel, controls and directs mundane affairs! Consequently, it is no less than God who ordains and removes rulers from their positions according to His own providence.³³ Therefore, kings and princes must rule their subjects according to the princi-

²⁸ Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, translated by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), p. 231.

²⁹ Psalms, I, 22.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 24.

³¹ Ibid., III, 329-330.

³² John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), III, 173. "Regum timendorum in proprios greges, / Reges in ipsos imperium est Jovis, / Clari giganteo triumpho, / Cuncta supercilio moventis." Horatii Carm. Liberiii, Ode i. Boscawen's Translation.

³³ Isaiah, I, 129. John Calvin, Commentaries on the

ples of the Word of God.³⁴

This doctrine of the divine sanction of rulership was aptly expressed in the various Reformed confessions during the sixteenth century. The Genevan Confession of 1536 and the Genevan Catechism of 1537 both of which seemed to be the work of Calvin and Farel explicitly discussed the subject of the magistrate.³⁵ Calvin said under Article XXI of the Genevan Confession:

We hold the supremacy and dominion of kings and princes as also of other magistrates and officers, to be a holy thing and a good ordinance of God. And since in performing their office they serve God and follow a Christian vocation, whether in defending the afflicted and innocent, or in correcting and punishing the malice of the perverse, we on our part also ought to accord them honour and reverence, to render respect and subservience, to execute their commands, to bear the charges they impose on us, so far as we are able without offence to God.³⁶

The Genevan Catechism affirms this same idea of the divine sanction of the magistrate:

The Lord has not only testified that the office of the magistrate is approved of Him and pleasing to Him, but he has also greatly commended it to us. . . .

Twelve Minor Prophets, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1950), I, 471.

³⁴Jeremiah, II, 172.

³⁵Arthur Cochrane, ed., Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1966), p. 137.

³⁶Ibid., p. 126. Wendel dates the Genevan Catechism on 1535 prior to the Genevan Confession (1536). The Catechism is largely drawn from The Institutes, while the Confession is a summary of the Catechism. Francois Wendel, Calvin, translated by Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1963), p. 52.

Their command is the command of God.³⁷

Even before Calvin's Genevan Confession (1536) was written, some reformed confessions treated this subject:³⁸ Articles XXXV through XLIII of Zwingli's Sixty-seven Articles in 1532, the Tetrapolitan Confession in 1530, and the First Confession of Basel in 1534.

On the other hand, Calvin's influence in this doctrine on other reformed groups in various countries can be explicitly seen in other reformed confessions such as the Lausanne Articles (VIII) in 1536, the Catechism of 1545, the Confessions of La Rochelle and the Netherland,³⁹ The Confession of Faith of the English Congregation at Geneva (IV) in 1556, the First Helvetic Confession (XXVI) in 1536, the Gallican Confession or the French Confession of Faith (XXXIX) in 1559, the Scottish Confession of Faith (XXIV) in 1560, the Belgic Confession of Faith (XXXVI) in 1561, and the Second Helvetic Confession (XXX) in 1566.

In holding to the doctrine of the divine sanction of rulership, Calvin always demanded the subjects' passive obedience to their magistrates. Their obedience did not rest on the fear of punishment but rather on the divine

³⁷William Mueller, Church and State in Luther and Calvin (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 137.

³⁸Cochrane, pp. 40-229.

³⁹Mueller, p. 137.

ordinance⁴⁰ and for the sake of conscience.⁴¹

Romans 13:1-8 teaches not only the divine ordinance of the king but also demands obedience from the subjects to their king. In commenting on Romans 13:5 he said,

We must not only obey, because we cannot with impunity resist the powerful and those armed with authority; but we ought to obey willingly, as⁴² conscience through God's word thus binds us.

Calvin further developed this conception into the definite duties of subjects:

that they are to hold them in esteem and honour-- that they are to obey their edicts, laws, and judgments⁴³--that they are to pay tributes and customs.

1 Peter 2:13 was also used by Calvin to prove his point of obedience to rulers.⁴⁴

On the passage Genesis 16:8-9 in which the angel of the Lord appeared to Hagar, a servant of Abram on her flight, and told her to return to Sarah and to obey her, Calvin commented on the ruler-subject relationship:

It is to be inferred also, from the circumstance of the time, not only that civil government is to be maintained, as a matter of necessity, but that lawful authorities are to be obeyed for conscience sake.⁴⁵

⁴⁰Institutes, II, 1510.

⁴¹Ibid., I, 848; II, 1181.

⁴²Romans, p. 482.

⁴³Ibid., p. 483.

⁴⁴Catholic Epistles, p. 81.

⁴⁵John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses,

Calvin stated that in Joshua 4:14 the people of Israel demanded the same kind of honour, reverence and obedience for Joshua as they had accorded to Moses.⁴⁶ This idea of subjection to rulers is also expressed in Calvin's letter to the king of France in 1557⁴⁷ and in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Geneva in 1541.⁴⁸

Calvin's passive obedience to the magistrate, however, had a certain limitation when his demand was in contradiction with God's Word. Since for Calvin the ultimate purpose of the civil government was the glorification of God, any imposed law, edict or demand which contradicted God's purpose and glory must not be obeyed; the magistrate must be obeyed "in the Lord."⁴⁹ This question of the subjects' disobedience to their tyrannical magistrates will be further dealt with in Chapter VI.

Task of the Civil Government

The state has certain responsibilities both to God and man, expressed in the two tables of the Law.⁵⁰

translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 431.

⁴⁶Joshua, p. 72.

⁴⁷Letters, III, 376-377.

⁴⁸Philip E. Hughes, editor and translator, The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), p. 7-8.

⁴⁹Institutes, I, 403.

⁵⁰Ibid., II, 1495. This same idea of the magistrate's

There is a close interrelationship between spiritual and physical responsibilities. Calvin succinctly stated in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2:2:

We must always hold by this principle, that magistrates were appointed by God for the protection of religion, as well as of the peace and decency of society, in exactly the same manner that the earth is appointed to produce food.⁵¹

As the church received from the Lord spiritual gifts to administer to its people with the Word and the Sacraments, so the civil government received authority from God to protect the physical and spiritual welfare of the people.

First of all, Calvin, according to the second table of the Law, was concerned with tranquillity, freedom and order in society. He said that magistrates are "ordained protectors and vindicators of public innocence, modesty, decency, and tranquillity, and that their sole endeavor should be to provide for the common safety and peace of all."⁵²

The political absolutism of the time, particularly in France and the Holy Roman Empire created much friction

two-fold responsibility to God and man is also described in his Romans Commentary. (Romans 13:4).

⁵¹ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, translated by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), p. 52.

⁵² Institutes, II, 1496. "Videmus ergo publicae innocentiae, modestiae, honestatis et tranquillitatis protectores statui ac vindices, quibus studium unum sit, communi omnium saluti ac paci prospicere." Institutio, p. 482.

in the relationship between church and state. As a result, there were many disturbances in France and the Holy Roman Empire and in their influential neighboring provinces, including Geneva. Protestants both in France and the Holy Roman Empire suffered by the hands of the king and the emperor who persecuted them in order to get support from the Roman Catholic Church.⁵³ Calvin appealed to the king of France for clemency for the Huguenots in order that God might give peace and freedom to His people. This was one of the chief reasons why Calvin dedicated his Institutes to Francis I.⁵⁴ In writing to Farel in 1540, Calvin said that he had written a letter to the Queen of Navarre, Marguerite, a sister of Francis I, for her help on behalf of the Protestants in France, because she was a sympathizer of Protestantism.⁵⁵ In 1557 Calvin again appealed for clemency in a letter to the King, Henry II, who was persecuting Christians in France.⁵⁶ Throughout the chapter⁵⁷ dealing with the civil government in his Institutes, Calvin's desire for religious freedom is one of his basic underlying theses.

The high moral standards of the people was another

⁵³Institutes, I, 62, 148-149.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 9.

⁵⁵Letters, I, 207.

⁵⁶Ibid., III, 377.

⁵⁷Book IV, Chapter XX in the Institutes.

area of responsibility to the magistrery along with the provision of peace and safety by the magistrates.⁵⁸ The magistrate must apply laws not only to his subjects but also to himself in order to achieve a healthy, moral status. God grants him the authority and privilege of bearing the sword to punish evil doers.⁵⁹ Calvin's comment on 1 Timothy 2:2 throws further light on this matter: "If they (magistrates) did not restrain the hardihood of the wicked men, every place would be full of robberies and murders."⁶⁰

Calvin demanded high qualities of the magistrate who should lead an exemplary life before people. Besides being humble before God, he had to display wisdom and prudence before men⁶¹ and a capacity to make righteous judgments.⁶² In commenting on Jeremiah 22:3, Calvin declared that the prophet should encourage kings and rulers to execute "judgment and righteousness."

It is righteousness (justice) to take charge of the innocent, to defend and avenge them, and set them

⁵⁸Marc-Edouard Chenevière, "Did Calvin Advocate Theocracy?," The Evangelical Quarterly, IX (April 1937), 166.

⁵⁹Romans, p. 481.

⁶⁰Timothy, Titus, Philemon, p. 51.

⁶¹Jeremiah, II, 182; III, 141.

⁶²Psalms, III, 103; Deut. 1:16 quoted by Institutes, II, 1496; Ps. 82:3,4 quoted by Ibid.

free; it is judgment to withstand the audacity of the wicked,⁶³ to repress their violence, and punish their faults.

On the basis of Psalm 72 Calvin listed some basic earthly qualities of rulers and attacked their unworthy, evil, and lenient characteristics:

It is therefore requisite for a king to be a man of wisdom, and resolutely prepared effectually to restrain the violent and injurious, that the rights of the meek and orderly may be preserved unimpaired. Thus none will be fit for governing a people but he who has learned to be rigorous when the case requires. Licentiousness must necessarily prevail under an effeminate and inactive sovereign, or even under one who is of a disposition too gentle and forbearing. There is much truth in the old saying that it is worse to live under a prince through whose lenity everything is lawful, than⁶⁴ under a tyrant where there is no liberty at all.

Since God ordained the magistrate's office as "the highest gift of his beneficence,"⁶⁵ his concern must be for the total affairs of all people; here the conception of the "commonweal" of people is clearly brought out in Calvin's political thought.⁶⁶ Therefore, the magistrate must not seek his own interests but the interests of others for the common good.

In addition to the maintenance of a peaceful, moral, and orderly society, the state also has duties in the matters of the first table of the Law. According to

⁶³Jeremiah, III, 74-77; Institutes, II, 1496.

⁶⁴Psalms, III, 105-6.

⁶⁵Institutes, II, 1512.

⁶⁶Niesel, p. 239. See also Romans, p. 481.

Calvin, there were two duties of the secular government in maintaining free worship: first, the state ought to preserve freedom and peace for the uninhibited promulgation of the Gospel.⁶⁷ Secondly, the state ought also to assist in preserving the pure and true church of Christ against heretics and to help pastors in time of need. The civil government

prevents idolatry, sacrilege against God's name, blasphemies against his truth, and other public offenses against religion from arising and spreading among the people. . . . Let no man be disturbed that I now commit to civil government the duty of rightly establishing religion, which I seem above to have put outside of human decision. For, when I approve of a civil administration that aims to prevent the true religion which is contained in God's law from being openly and with public sacrilege violated and defiled with impunity, I do not here, any more than before, allow men to make laws according to their own decision concerning religion and the worship of God.⁶⁸

That the punishment of the state against heretics was justifiable in Calvin's thinking is illustrated by the burning of Servetus as a heretic at the stake.⁶⁹

If the government did not decide to help the church in this matter, it was considered as against Christ. There was no middle ground; the state was either for God or against God. Calvin cited Isaiah 49:23 as an example

⁶⁷Institutes, II, 1488.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Wendel, p. 176.

that "kings shall be nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers" to the church of Christ,⁷⁰ and gave examples from Old Testament characters such as Moses, Joshua, the Judges, David, Josiah and Hezekiah.⁷¹ In this world where evils prevail, it is the will of God for the church to expect and receive help and protection from the temporal power, as Calvin stated:

So when the earthly judges consecrate their work by promoting the kingdom of Christ, I say that its nature is not changed. But, although the power of the whole world is opposed, Christ wished his Gospel to be proclaimed by his disciples. Still he exposed those people armed with the Word as sheep to the wolves.⁷²

This conception of the state as the protector of the true church had been taught and practiced during the Middle Ages. Charlemagne considered himself as the defender of the Holy Catholic Church as he proclaimed in his letter to Pope Leo III in 796:

It is our part with the help of Divine holiness to defend by armed strength the holy Church of Christ everywhere from the outward onslaught of the pagans and the ravages of the infidels, and to strengthen within it the knowledge of the Catholic Faith.⁷³

⁷⁰Isaiah, II, 39-40. See Infra. p.

⁷¹Institutes, II, 1490.

⁷²CR, XXIV, 357. "Atqui dum promovendo Christi regno consecrant suam operam terreni iudices, nego propterea eius naturam mutari. Quanquam autem adversante totius mundi potentia evangelium suum voluit Christus promulgari a suis discipulis, eosque sola voce armatos exposuit tanquam oves lupis." English translation is done by the writer of the thesis.

⁷³Sidney Ehler and John B. Morrall, Church and State

This basic conception of Charlemagne's protection of the pure church had been preserved through the Carolingian Period,⁷⁴ Gregory VII's "Dictatus Papae,"⁷⁵ Innocent III's Papal "Plentitudo Potestatis,"⁷⁶ and Boniface VIII's "Unam Sanctam."⁷⁸ The only difference among these men was in the degree of intimacy between the church and state, but their basic thought of the state as the defender and protector of the true church was the same.

Calvin, who was also influenced by the medieval political thought, had adopted the same idea:

For, seeing the church has not, and ought not to wish to have, the power of compulsion (I speak of civil coercion,) it is the part of pious kings and princes to maintain religion by laws, edicts, and sentences.⁷⁹

The reformer, however, carefully stated the limitation of temporal power over spiritual matters; in fact, he tried to reduce to a minimum the influence of the state on the church.

Through the Centuries (London: Burns & Oates, 1954), p. 12.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 13-15.

⁷⁵Hughes, pp. 43-44.

⁷⁶Ehler and Morrall, p. 64.

⁷⁷Brian Tierney, The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300 (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964, p. 167.

⁷⁸Ehler and Morrall, p. 89.

⁷⁹Institutes, II, 1229.

While Calvin was in Geneva, he wrote many letters to the princes and kings of countries in Europe such as the princes of the Holy Roman Empire, the king of Navarre, the Queen of Navarre, King Edward IV of England, Lord Somerset of England, the King of Poland, and other leaders of the cities of Geneva and Bern to admonish them on the protection of the church. An example of such a letter from Calvin and his fellow ministers to the senate of Bern in September, 1554, follows:

Wherefore we hope that as faithful Christian princes you will aid us in this cause and will not allow the Church of God to be dissipated under your protection or that the Gospel be maligned, for we abstain from making trouble and hence have peaceable recourse to you, rendering service to his glory⁸⁰ by honoring the authority which he has given you.

Therefore, this twofold duty of the secular government for God and for men was basically rooted in medieval political thought, but the interrelation between church and state in Calvin was not extreme as that of the middle ages. This subject of separation of power in Calvin will be further discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

With regard to Calvin's view of the task of the civil government in relation to the church, Chenevière's summary statement succinctly represents a general overview of Calvin's belief:

The Church's mission is to bear testimony among the people to Christ and to Christian faith; the State's highest function is to cause this mission to be

⁸⁰Mueller, p. Taken from CR, XV, 140.

respected.⁸¹

However, how to make the twofold duty of the ruler successful was still another matter.

Limitations of the Civil Authority

Calvin's affirmation of divine sanction of rulership does not mean that the magistrate has unlimited power within himself, for his authority is legitimate only within the bounds of God's laws. Since the authority of his office is derived from God, he is responsible and accountable to God. He is to rule according to the commandments of God in the Scriptures and "on the authority of God who commands it."⁸²

In regard to the law Calvin mentions Moses' three-fold aspect of the law of God: moral, ceremonial, and judicial. Calvin stresses the moral law, summarized in the Ten Commandments and in the Commandment of Love. This moral law, or the law of God, is:

nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men. Consequently, the entire scheme of this equity of which we are now speaking has been prescribed in it. Hence, this equity alone⁸³ must be the goal and rule and limit of all laws.

Therefore, the importance of the Decalog in Calvin's political thought cannot be minimized. Calvin here

⁸¹Chenevière, p. 167.

⁸²Institutes, II, 1497.

⁸³Ibid., II, 1504.

probably follows St. Augustine's view that "in the highest and greatest law in the state was the commandment of God."⁸⁴

Calvin's concept of constitutional law is another important area to study. The reformer himself fully supported a limited idea of constitution both in religion and in government. He did not oppose the idea of ecclesiastical constitutions, although he bitterly attacked the Roman Catholic constitutions as against God.⁸⁵ Declaring that ecclesiastical constitutions are good if the bishops who make them are good, Calvin also maintained that if the Roman bishops are wicked, their constitutions have no authority.⁸⁶ Since Calvin rejected his contemporary Roman Catholic constitutions, he only approved the secular constitutions and said, "Consequently it behooves me to declare that I approve only those human constitutions which are founded upon God's authority, drawn from Scripture, and, therefore, wholly divine."⁸⁷

The reasoning behind his approval of constitutions is based on the natural law. If the church wants to be effective in its work, it needs "a well-ordered consti-

⁸⁴ Albert Hyma, Christianity and Politics (Phil.: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1938), p. 88.

⁸⁵ Institutes, II, 1187-1198.

⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 1184-1185.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 1207.

tution,"⁸⁸ and without this there is no church. Calvin claimed, "no organization is sufficiently strong unless constituted with definite laws; nor can any procedure be maintained without some set form."⁸⁹ He further commented on Jeremiah 30:9: "It is better that the devil should rule men under any sort of government, than that they should be set free without any law, without any restraint."⁹⁰

The pragmatic purpose of the human constitution is to protect the community from wicked ones,⁹¹ to guarantee the freedom of people,⁹² and to check tyrannical powers.⁹³ Calvin considered the law "like a halter to check the raging and otherwise limitlessly ranging lusts of the flesh;"⁹⁴ in another place he said, "Nothing truer could be said than that the law is a silent magistrate; the magistrate, a living law."⁹⁵ For instance, in a letter to the king of France in 1557, Calvin pointed out to him the importance of constitutionalism for the betterment

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 1205.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Jeremiah, IV, 15.

⁹¹Institutes, I, 358.

⁹²Ibid., p. 1518.

⁹³Ibid., p. 1517.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 359.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 1502.

of the world.⁹⁶

Historically, Calvin's conception of constitutionalism was not new, for one could find some basic constitutional elements in the political thinkers from the ancient times to his own day. In ancient Greece and Rome, Aristotle and Cicero already believed in constitutionalism; in the medieval period, English constitutionalism, particularly during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as the Constitutions of Clarendon (1164) and the Magna Carta (1215) left significant impacts upon later constitutionalism both in the church and state. Marsilius of Padua's Defensor Pacis in 1324 was the supreme example of later medieval constitutionalism.⁹⁷

While Calvin taught the supremacy of constitutional law over the princes, he also advocated in his commentary on Seneca's work of clemency that the princes were over the law, legibus solutus; they are not bound by laws. Here Calvin was influenced by Seneca's thought on Roman laws:

He (Seneca) properly proposed that a prince is certainly freed from laws; but the worthy word is that the prince says he is bound by laws because of the majesty of the ruler. And indeed it is rather a matter of the-right-to rule (imperium) that the principate submit to laws, as it says in the Rescript of Valerius and Theodosius, Chapter de

⁹⁶ Letters, III, 376.

⁹⁷ Alan Gewirth, Marsilius of Padua, The Defender of Peace (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), II, xxx.

legibus (on laws) and in the Rescript of Severus and Antonius: although we are not subject to laws, nevertheless we live by laws.

These two statements of Calvin seem to be paradoxical, and his lack of clarification on the relationship between the prince and the law in the Institutes and the Commentaries caused differences of opinion among historians about his view point.⁹⁹ M. Triwunatz, in his Guillame Budes De'l'institution du Prince (Erlangen and Leipzig, 1903) held that Budé had the idea of legibus solutus as well as the law "above the prince," and his ideas might have crossed Calvin's path.¹⁰⁰

Therefore, for Calvin secular authority is sanctioned by God and demands passive obedience by the subjects as as it does not contradict God's Word, because God has

⁹⁸CR, V, 23. "Bene adiecit, tanquam: quia princeps quidem legibus solutus est: sed digna vox est maiestate regnantis, legibus alligatum se, principem fateri. Et re vera maius imperio est submittere legibus principatum: ut est in rescripto Valer. et Theodos. C. de legib. et in rescripto Servi et Antonini legitur: Licet legibus subditi non simus. legibus tamen vivimus." Translated by the author of the thesis. The same idea is expressed later as, "Bene ergo quod principes legibus soluti, legibus tamen vivunt. Imo vero lex ipsa sunt." Ibid., V, 67. See also Josef Bohatec, Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche (Scientia Aalen, 1961), pp. 38-39.

⁹⁹John T. McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," Church History, XVIII (September 1949), 154.

¹⁰⁰Ibid. It is not quite sure whether Budé's Institution du Prince actually influenced Calvin's commentary on De Clemencia and the Institutes (1539) because it was written approximately in 1516 and published in 1547.

imposed upon the magistrate heavy responsibilities of bringing peace and moral strength into society, and of preserving the true and pure church against heretics. Nevertheless, the magistrate's power is limited both by God's Law and the constitutional laws.

CHAPTER IV

CALVIN'S SEPARATION OF TWO SWORDS: SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL

Anyone who attempts to understand Calvin's view on the relationship between church and state has to analyze it in the light of the existing political condition of Calvin's time. From the eleventh century to the beginning of the fourteenth century the real issue in Europe was how the state should avoid the manipulating power of the church meddling in its affairs, but at the time of Calvin the situation was just reversed in that the church was under the domination of the state and tried to be released from the pressure of the state on moral and doctrinal issues. This was the reason why Calvin was very emphatic in his view on the separation of the two powers. In contrast, however, he also believed in a close inter-relationship of these two realms because of his belief that God is the supreme ruler over both temporal and spiritual authorities.

First of all, in regard to the conception of the separation of the temporal from the spiritual, Calvin made explicit claims concerning this distinction in the Institutes:

Therefore, in order that none of us may stumble on that stone, let us first consider that there is a twofold government in man: one aspect is spiritual, whereby the conscience is instructed in piety and in

reverencing God; the second is political, whereby man is educated for the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men. These are usually called the "spiritual" and the "temporal" jurisdiction (not improper terms) by which is meant that the former sort of government pertains to the life of the soul, while the latter has to do with the concerns of the present life--not only with food and clothing but with laying down laws whereby a man may live his life among other men holily, honorably, and temperately. For the former resides in the inner mind, while the latter regulates only outward behavior. The one we may call the spiritual kingdom, the other, the political kingdom. Now these two, as we have divided them, must always be examined separately; and while one is being considered, we must call away and turn aside the mind from thinking about the other. There are in man, so to speak, two worlds over which¹ different kings and different laws have authority.

He later claims that anyone who knows how to distinguish between the intangible soul and tangible body, "will without difficulty know that Christ's spiritual Kingdom and the civil jurisdiction are things completely distinct."²

Calvin repudiates both the magistrate's interference in the internal affairs of religion³ and the ecclesiastical claim of authority in the secular government; he rather condemns those who confuse this matter:

In this they are mistaken because they do not notice how great a difference and unlikeness there is between ecclesiastical and civil power. For the

¹John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. XXI of the Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1960), I, 847.

²Ibid., II, 1486.

³John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the

church does not have the right of the sword to punish or compel, not the authority to enforce; not imprisonment, nor the other punishments which the magistrate commonly inflicts.⁴

For example, a drunkard may be punished by civil jurisdiction, but his admittance to the Lord's Supper would be totally dependent upon the ecclesiastical decision of whether he really repented.

In objecting to secular authority in religion, Calvin cites examples from Old Testament characters. In Genesis 14:18 Melchizedek is pictured as the image of Christ who holds the office of the king and priest; here Calvin distinguishes the kingly office from the priestly one by saying that "under the law, these two offices were so distant, that it was unlawful for kings to usurp the office of the priesthood."⁵ King Uzziah was another one who was punished by God when he tried to bear the ark of God.⁶ Calvin thought that no king or priest should be in control over all until Christ's return.

On the other hand, Calvin's bitter attacks on the papacy for its involvement in secular rule is very conspicuous in his writings. He traces the history of the development of the bishops' aggrandizement of power in the secular offices.⁷ For example, to Calvin the Henry IV-

Reformed Faith, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), III, 173. ✓

⁴Institutes, II, 1215.

⁵Ibid., I, 389.

⁶Tracts, I, 266.

⁷Institutes, I, 1222.

Hildebrand controversy was a clear violation of the Scriptural principle;⁸ he cites Ambrose frequently to denounce the ecclesiastical authority for the negligence of separation of power: "To the emperor belong the palaces; to the priest the churches."⁹ Commenting on Matthew 20:25-26, "The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them . . . but you do not do so," he said not only that "the office of pastor is distinct from that of prince but also that the things are so different that they cannot come together in one man."¹⁰

The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Geneva in 1541 also solidifies this conception of the separation of two swords:

All this is to be done in such a way that the ministers have no civil jurisdiction and wield only the spiritual sword of the Word of God, as St. Paul commands them (cf. Rom. 13:1ff), and that there is no derogation by this Consistory from the authority of the Seignury or the magistracy; but the civil power shall continue in its entirety. And in cases where there is need to administer some punishment or to restrain the parties, the ministers together with the Consistory having heard the parties and administered such reprimands and admonishments as are desirable, shall report the whole matter to the Council, which thereupon shall take steps to set things in order and pass judgment according to the requirements of the case.¹¹

⁸Ibid., p. 1225.

⁹Ibid., p. 1221.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 1220.

¹¹Philip E. Hughes, editor and translator, The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), p. 49.

The register of the eighty-eight pastors of Geneva between 1555 and 1562 shows that there was no violation of this principle of the separation of the two in Geneva. In fact, Calvin himself had no political ambition and did not hold any political office throughout his life, although his influence upon the secular government in Geneva was very significant.

Seemingly paradoxical to the separation of two powers, Calvin also believed in the close interrelation between church and state from the belief that the church and state have the same Lord and the same goal. This is the reason why Calvin treats the church, Word, sacraments, and the civil government under Book IV of his Institutes as the means by which God maintains our communion with Him. Since the church does not have any earthly coercion and power as the state has, it needs protection and assistance from the state through laws, edicts and judgments;¹² in this sense Calvin fully accepts Ambrose's thought, expressed as: "For what is more honorable than for the emperor to be called a son of the Church? For a good emperor is within the church, not over the church."¹³

Calvin himself declared:

Church and State are not opposed like fire and water, but so closely related to each other, according to

¹²Institutes, I, 1229.

¹³Ibid., II, 1216.

God's will, that if one suffers, the other suffers too.¹⁴

Consequently, the mutual assistance between church and state not only permits the state to correct corruptions of the church,¹⁵ but also supports the church to provide the spiritual and moral direction for the state; for the latter Calvin even advocates discipline applied to "Christian" princes and kings for the purpose of correction, as exemplified in the life of Emperor Theodosius.¹⁶

As a result of this intimate interaction between church and state in Calvin's thought, many struggles and much friction ensued in Geneva. When Calvin found certain decisions of the Genevan Councils which contradicted spiritual and moral principles of the Scriptures, he fervently protested against them through the organization of the Consistory which was constituted by both clergymen and elders of the city. Hence, his influence was strongly felt not only over the church but also over the state in Geneva; he has been often called by some historians as "the tyrant of the city."¹⁷

The extent of Calvin's influence over church and state is debatable among historians. One group of

¹⁴ Adolf Keller, Church and State on the European Continent (London: The Epworth Press, 1936), p. 166. Keller quotes Calvin.

¹⁵ Tracts, I, 265.

¹⁶ Institutes, II, 1215, 1235.

¹⁷ Hughes, p. 10.

scholars views Calvin as a man whose teaching on the separation of the two powers was only in theory and not in practice. George Hunt says,

Calvin separated in thought the two entities, church and state, but assumed and provided for their mutual interaction.¹⁸

He had in mind a constantly intimate interaction between the two as partners in service to the people's needs.¹⁹

Another historian, Georgia Harkness, compares Calvin with Hildebrand and comes to the conclusion that these two Christian leaders had approximately the same political thought except for the derivation of the secular authority; for the reformer, the Bible was considered as the sole source of authority; for Hildebrand, the Pope had the final authority.²⁰ Sabine added another difference to that of Harkness': while Calvin gave authority to clergy and laity, Hildebrand did the same to the bishops.²¹ Ernst Troeltsch was another Protestant historian who taught that Calvin's separation of the two powers was

¹⁸George L. Hunt, ed., Calvinism and the Political Order (Phil.: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 41.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Georgia Harkness, John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), p. 21.

²¹George H. Sabine, A History of Political Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961), pp. 363-366.

only in theory and not in practice.²²

Certainly, there is much resemblance between Hildebrand and Calvin in their struggles to maintain the spiritual influence upon the state. However, according to Hildebrand's "Dictatus Papae," a papal document of 1075 which lists twenty-seven points of papal supremacy over the church and state, one finds in him differences from Calvin in the church-state relationship particularly in these points:

2. That the Roman Pontiff alone is rightly to be called universal.
8. That he alone may use the imperial insignia.
9. That the Pope is the only one whose feet are to be kissed by all princes.
12. That he may depose Emperors.
18. That no sentence of his may be retracted by any one; and that he, alone of all, can retract it.
20. That no one shall dare to condemn a person who appeals to the Apostolic See.
22. That the Roman Church has never erred, nor ever, by the witness of Scripture, shall err to all eternity.
27. That the Pope may absolve subjects of unjust men from their fealty.²³

If one substitutes Calvin's authority of the church for the papal authority of Hildebrand in the above points of the "Dictatus Papae," he will come to the conclusion that Calvin would not say that the church has such authority over the state as Hildebrand claimed. Of course, the historical situation was different between

²²Ernst Troeltch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches, translated by Olin Wyon (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1949), p. 112.

²³Sidney Ehler and John Morral, Church and State Through the Centuries (London: Burns & Oates, 1954), pp. 43-44.

the eleventh century and the sixteenth century; for the former period the papal power was growing stronger, while during the latter period, power had declined. Calvin, therefore, never thought that the church had the power to depose the emperor; against the papal appointment of bishops and lay investiture, Calvin rather advocated the election of ministers and bishops by the people.²⁴ Therefore, to Calvin, the church must be independent in selecting its own ministers and be free from the state on other ecclesiastical matters.

Contrary to the former group of historians, other scholars believed that Calvin's influence in Geneva was purely spiritual and intellectual. For example, Philip Schaff contends that regardless of Calvin's strong influences upon the city state of Geneva, Calvin was not the leader of Geneva: "It is a mistake, therefore, to call him the head of the Republic, except in a purely intellectual and moral sense."²⁵ Calvin opposed the idea of any interference by the state in the matters and discipline of religion, and also attacked the ministers' role in governmental offices. But he interrelates these two for the purpose of establishing the Corpus Christianum in the belief that God is the Lord over the earth as well

²⁴Institutes, II, 1079.

²⁵Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), VII, 464.

as the heaven. In this way, Schaff, on one hand, sees much resemblance between Calvin and Hildebrand, and yet he, on the other hand, lists some distinctive points of difference between the two. First, Calvin's political thought rested on the foundation of Scripture, and not on tradition and canon laws. Secondly, Calvin's political authority was derived from the lordship of Christ and not from papal authority. Thirdly, Calvin's view of the state was much higher than that of the Roman Church. Lastly, God's sovereignty and the general priesthood of all believers were the bases for Calvin's political theory; the exclusive rule of the priesthood was eliminated.²⁶

Schaff's thesis is recently supported by The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin. This Register shows clearly how the ministers of the church in Geneva had reacted in their struggles with the councils. For example, the Council of Two Hundred which was one of three councils of Geneva along with the Little Council and the Council of Sixty voted for the right of the civil government to dominate over the Lord's Supper in 1538 and seized the excommunication right from the Consistory in 1543; these actions brought strong oppositions from Calvin and his associate pastors. When Philibert Berthelier, son of a noted patriot in Geneva, who had been excommunicated

²⁶Ibid., pp. 472-474.

for his attacks on Calvin, tried to receive communion with permission from the Council and not from the Consistory in September, 1553, the pastors carefully set the position of the Consistory straight in relation to the authority of the Council,

Illustrious Seigneurs, we shall not protest at length the desire which we have to obey you, as we are bound to do, because we prefer to give proof of this by our deeds, as you have always been aware; so much so, that we can truly say that we endeavour, as far as we possibly can, to conform to your will. But if there are times when our conscience forbids us to comply with your injunctions, we pray you, in the name of God, to receive our excuses indulgently and to give heed to pleas that are backed by good and just reasons, so that we may be able to fulfil the duties of our office faithfully, both towards God and towards you. For we shall never serve you with a loyal and free spirit if we do not uprightly and openly follow God's commands without turning to the right hand or the left.²⁷

Calvin's view of the relation between church and state is very much similar to that of Thomas Aquinas. Like Calvin, Aquinas believed in the separation of two swords in which each was autonomous and independent from the other and denied that secular authority was derived from the ecclesiastical. On the other hand, Thomas also had the conception of intimate interrelation between the two powers under the one headship of Christ in order that they mutually assist each other for a Christian community.

The spiritual and the secular power are both derived from the divine power; and therefore the secular power is under the spiritual only in so far as it has been subjected to it by God: namely, in those things

²⁷Hughes, pp. 286-287, 291. ✓

that pertain to civil good, the secular power is to be obeyed rather than the spiritual, according to the saying in Matthew 22: (21), "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."

Unless, perhaps, the secular power is joined to the spiritual, as in the pope, who holds the apex of both authorities, the spiritual and the secular.²⁸

From the Register of the Genevan pastors and Calvin's own writings, two things may be concluded: first, he made a distinct separation between spiritual and temporal powers and opposed the intermingling of offices; secondly, he also closely interrelated the two for the sake of the Corpus Christianum. However, although Calvin's impacts in the civil government were very significant, his influence in Geneva was basically spiritual and moral rather than civil. The real problem in his political thought lay on the distinction of what was spiritual and what was temporal, because almost every affair in the state was in a way indirectly related to the spiritual.

²⁸Thomas Aquinas, Commentum in IV Libros Sententiarum (1253-55), trans. E. Lewis, Medieval Political Ideas (New York, 1954), pp. 566-67, quoted by Brian Tierney, The Crisis of Church and State, 1050-1300 (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 171. See also F. C. Copleston, Medieval Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), pp. 167-171.

CHAPTER V

CALVIN'S SUPPORT FOR THE "ARISTOCRACY-DEMOCRACY" FORM OF GOVERNMENT

There have been several labels given to Calvin's form of government: "theocracy," "bibliocracy," "Christocracy,"¹ "Pneumatocracy,"² "aristocracy," and "aristocracy-democracy."³ Both "bibliocracy" and "Christocracy" are used in the sense that Calvin's political theory was based on the Scriptures and Christ; however, "theocracy" was not used in the sense of the Old Testament theocracy,⁴ because Calvin denied the possibility of the Old Testament theocracy applying to all other nations.⁵ The question, whether the Genevan form of government was theocratic or not, depends on the definition of the word, "theocracy." If one accepts the definition of "theocracy" given by Chenevière, he can certainly say that Calvin's system of

¹George Hunt, ed., Calvinism and the Political Order (Phil.: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 35.

²John T. McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," Church History, XVIII (September 1949), 165.

³John Calvin, On God and Political Duty, edited by John T. McNeill (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950), p. xxiv. See also John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, Vol. XXI of The Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, translated by Ford L. Battles (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1960), II, 1493.

⁴Institutes, II, 1502.

⁵Ibid., p. 1505.

politics is "theocratic."

From this point, but from this point of view only, it may be said that human society, as conceived by Calvin, is a theocratic society in which all power proceeds from God and in which all power is exercised by His representatives; an observation that is obviously not valid for theocracy in the popular sense of the term.

In other words, Calvin's political thought is basically theocentrically oriented in which the sovereign God ordains and operates human government through His representatives, kings, and princes.

In discussing the specific forms of government, Calvin mentions three different varieties; for him, no single form of government was the best. He was trying to avoid the two extremes of government, tyranny which rules without any restriction⁷ and anarchy which destroys order and government by people.⁸ The reformer rather favored aristocracy with "popular government," a mixed form of government, namely an "aristocracy-democracy."⁹

First of all, in regard to the monarchical government, Calvin sees a danger of this falling into tyrann. "Monarchy is prone to tyranny."¹⁰ Nevertheless, he considered the

⁶Marc-Edouard Chenevière, "Did Calvin Advocate Theocracy?" The Evangelical Quarterly, IX (April 1937), 160.

⁷Institutes, II, 1494, 1517-1521.

⁸Ibid., pp. 1490, 1494.

⁹Ibid., p. 1493.

¹⁰John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1962), II, 656.

monarchical government as the best form of government for the people of Israel, because it was given to them by God. In commenting on Genesis 49:8, Calvin says, "Hence we gather, that when God would institute a perfect state of government among his people, the monarchical form was chosen by him."¹¹ Within the monarchical form of government, Calvin prefers the elected monarchy over the hereditary succession of monarchy. In continuing his comments on Genesis 49:8, he says;

And whereas the appointment of a king under the law, was partly to be attributed to the will of man, and partly to the divine decree; this combination of human with divine agency must be referred to the commencement of the monarchy, which was inauspicious, because the people had tumultuously desired a king to be given them, before the proper time had arrived.¹²

Along these same lines his commentary on Micah 5:5 expresses his opposition to the hereditary succession of the monarchy and favors government by popular consent.

For when anyone by force usurps the supreme power, it is tyranny; and when men become kings by hereditary right, it seems not consistent with liberty. We shall then set up for ourselves princes, says the Prophet; that is the Lord will not only give breathing time to his Church, and will also cause that she may set up a fixed and well-ordered government, and that by the common consent of all.¹³

¹¹ John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Book of Moses, translated by John King (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), II, 450.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ John Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets, translated by the Rev. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1950), III, 309.

Historians differ as to the question of Calvin's attitude toward the monarchy. Scholars such as Gisbert Beyerhaus and Emile Doumergue assert that Calvin was hostile to and opposed the monarchical principles; on the other hand, Joseph Bohatec and Marc-Edouard Chenevière deny this charge and argue that Calvin's disfavor toward the monarchy was due to monarchical evils and misbehavior and not the office itself. Chenevière, an eminent French Calvinist scholar, states:

If France had been ruled by a king favorable, or even simply neutral, toward the French Reformed, the sermons and commentaries of Calvin would probably have contained no complaint on the subject of monarchy. The aristocratic preferences of Calvin do not mean ipso facto rejection of the monarchical form of government.¹⁴

McNeill places himself on the middle ground of these two groups, with an inclination toward the first. His discussion is primarily based upon Calvin's Sermons on Deuteronomy (1555-56) which points out the misbehavior and evils of the kings and encourages the election of rulers. McNeill, of course, does not deny the fact that Calvin fully accepted the Old Testament kings who were appointed by God and gave an encomium on King David's behalf for his masterpiece of the Psalms.¹⁵ It seems that McNeill's position is more adequate in representing Calvin's attitude toward the monarchy than other historians. For example,

¹⁴Marc-Edouard Chenevière, La Pensee Politique de Calvin, Part IV, chapter VI (pp. 226-229) quoted by McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 160.

¹⁵McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's

Calvin favorably preferred elected judges and magistrates over the kings and princes:

When (in the days of the Judges) God gave such a privilege to the Jews, he ratified thereby his adoption and gave proof that he had chosen them for his inheritance, and that he desired that their condition should be better and more excellent than that of their neighbors, where there were kings and princes but no liberty. . . . If we have the liberty to choose judges and magistrates, since this is an excellent gift let it be preserved and let us use it in good conscience.¹⁶

The strongest passage for Calvin's propensity for the aristocratic-democratic form of government over the monarchical is found in his Institutes:

For if the three forms of government which the philosophers discuss be considered in themselves, I will not deny that aristocracy, or a system compounded of aristocracy and democracy, far excels all others Therefore, men's fault or failing causes it to be safer and more bearable for a number to exercise government, so that they may help one another, teach and admonish one another; and, if one asserts himself unfairly, there may be a number of censors and masters to restrain his willfulness. This has been both proved by experience and also the Lord confirmed it by his authority when he ordained among the Israelites an aristocracy bordering on democracy.¹⁷

Thought," pp. 159-160.

¹⁶ John Calvin, Sermons on Deuteronomy, I, in the Corpus Reformatorum, ediderunt C. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (Brunsvigae: Apud C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1863-1900), XXVII, 411 quoted by McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 159.

¹⁷ Institutes, II, 1493-4. "Facit ergo hominum vitium vel defectus, ut tutius sit ac magis tolerabile, plures tenere gubernacula, ut alii aliis mutuo sint adiutores, doceant ac moneant alii alios, ac, si quis plus aequo se efferat, plures sint ad cohibendam eius libidinem censores ac magistri." Ioannis Calvinii, Institutio Christianae Religionis, ed. by A. Tholuck (London: Berolini, apud

Although there is an ambiguity in Calvin's view concerning the monarchy in relation to aristocracy, it seems that Calvin's heart was more for the aristocratic form of government within constitutional law and popular election than monarchical government. To him the monarchical absolutism in France and the Holy Roman Empire in his time greatly hampered the expansion of Christianity.

This representative government by popular election is certainly important in Calvin's political thought. He prefers decisions of the lawful assembly of representatives elected by their own people, rather than of one man control,¹⁸ and highly eulogizes the examples of Greek and Roman elections in the ancient time.¹⁹ Calvin applies this principle of election not only to the temporal but also to the ecclesiastical government. Bishops of the church ought to be elected by the people, clergymen and magistrates,²⁰ and Calvin refers to Pope Leo I and Pope Gregory VII as the best examples.²¹ In his letter to the

Cullelmum Thome, 1846), II, 480. The plurality of rulers is clearly favored in this passage over monarchy.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 1217.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1066.

²⁰Ibid., p. 1072.

²¹Ibid., pp. 1079-1081.

French Church at Frankfort, Calvin also encouraged Christians to apply the principle of election for the betterment of society.²² For Calvin the mutual intercourse among various classes of people from judges and senators down to teachers is very important to help each other and to promote peace of the country.²³

Calvinist scholars are divided into three main groups in regard to Calvin's aristocratic character of government. Men like F. W. Kampschulte, Francis de Crue, and George Fazy believe that Calvin advocated a pure form of aristocracy. In the second group, Joseph Bohatec and Hans Hausherr view Calvin's aristocracy in a more limited fashion; the final group of scholars such as Ernst Troeltsch, Hans Baron and John McNeill maintains that Calvin preferred the mixed form of government which was seen in ancient Israel.²⁴ The thesis of this first group of historians neglects the democratic spirit and the republican ideals which Calvin practiced in Geneva; the second group is essentially accurate, but they neglect Calvin's strong appeal to the representative government of the Israelites in the Old Testament. It seems that the final group of scholars represents the view closest to

²²John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin, ed. by Jules Bonnet (Phil.: Presbyterian Board of Pub., 1858), III, 273.

²³Institutes, I, 130. Calvin commented on Is. 3:4.

²⁴William Mueller, Church and State in Luther and Calvin (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman Press, 1954), p. 160.

Calvin's political thought with his mixed form of government as exemplified in the nation of Israel of the Old Testament.

The democratic element in Calvin's political thought is quite different from the modern understanding of democracy; for him it was monstrous to give sovereign authority to the people, for it would lead to sedition and anarchy.²⁵ Anarchy, according to Calvin, is always associated with confusion and turbulence, as he says, "for no one can introduce anarchy (ἀναρχία) into the world without introducing disorder (ἀταξία)."²⁶ He also added, "All who strive to produce anarchy, fight against God,"²⁷ and considered even the "pope's tyranny better than anarchy."²⁸

Calvin's opposition to the extreme form of democracy is clearly shown in his attack on Jean Morelli, a Paris minister, who urged support for the further democratization of the French government. Consequently, at the national synod of Orleans in 1562, Morelli's proposition was rejected, and he himself was excommunicated by Pope

²⁵Institutes, II, 1493.

²⁶John Calvin, Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), p. 401.

²⁷First Book of Moses, I, 382.

²⁸John Calvin, Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah, translated by John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1950), IV, 15. See also First Book of Moses, III, 847.

Pius IV.²⁹

The conception of popular sovereignty was not new to Calvin, for more than two centuries before him this democratic thought was advocated by Marsilius of Padua in a startling way in the conflict between the papal and secular powers. For this late medieval political thinker, the whole populace was involved in electing magistrates and in making the law. Marsilius quoted Aristotle and fully accepted his idea:

that the legislator, or the primary and proper efficient cause of the law, is the people or the whole body of citizens, or the weightier part thereof, through its election or will expressed by words in the general assembly of the citizens³⁰

Walter Travers, a contemporary of Calvin, also expressed the same idea of popular sovereignty in A Full and Plain Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline (1574) in discussing the relationship of authority between the people and magistrates and between the people and ministers.

all the power is in the people's hands, who of their free will choose magistrates unto them under whose authority they may after be governed; and afterwards not all the people, but only the magistrates chosen by them administer and govern the affairs of the Commonwealth. So it come to pass in the establishing of the Church: so that when as yet there were none set over them, all the authority was in all men's hands: but after that they had once given

²⁹McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 169.

³⁰Alan Gewirth, Marsilius of Padua, The Defender of Peace (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1951), II, 45.

the helm into the hands of certain chosen men, this power no longer belonged unto all, but only to those who were chosen³¹ by them to steer and govern the Church of God.

The constitutional elements of democracy, republic, and public election of Calvin have created controversial discourses in our modern political scholarship. The traditional view has been that Calvin and Calvinism caused a breakdown from the old tyrannical government to provide the foundation for modern democracy until current increasing skepticism has challenged such a theory.³²

This traditional view is expressed by Wilhelm Pauck:

To Calvinism democracy is especially indebted primarily because the Calvinist form of Protestantism, begun in the republican environment of Geneva, was developed by way of reaction against political and religious tyranny in France, Holland, Scotland, and also England.³³

In contrast with this traditional view George Sabine says:

In its initial form Calvinism not only included a condemnation of resistance but it lacked all leaning toward liberalism, constitutionalism, or representative principles. Where it had free range it developed characteristically into a theocracy, a kind of oligarchy maintained by an alliance of the clergy and the gentry from which the mass of the people was excluded and which was, in general, illiberal, oppres-

³¹Walter Travers, A Full and Plaine Declaration of Ecclesiastical Discipline etc. (n. p., 1574), pp. 44, 45, 53, 54, 55, quoted by George Mosse, Calvinism: Authoritarian or Democratic? (New York: Rinehart & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 12.

³²Mosse, p. 1.

³³Wilhelm Pauck, The Heritage of the Reformation (Glencoe, Ill.; The Free Press, 1950), pp. 213-214, quoted by Mosse, p. 1.

sive, and reactionary. This was the nature of Calvin's own government in Geneva and of Puritan government in Massachusetts.³⁴

Nevertheless, it certainly is not difficult to see some of the real differences between Calvin's democratic elements and modern Western democracy. McNeill examines Calvin's political thought in the light of three aspects of modern democracy, "liberty, equality, and fraternity," and asserts that the reformer would assent to the first and the last terms, but not to the second; "'Democracy' is not a term in favor with Calvin."³⁵

Chenevière also differentiated Calvin's democratic flavor from the modern western type of democracy which exists today, because Calvin's "populares magistratus" put the total responsibility of a magistrate upon God alone and not upon the people.³⁶

Nevertheless, as one looks at Calvin's influence upon political thought, he cannot minimize the importance of this reformer on the idea of republicanism and constitutionalism, in spite of certain undemocratic elements which were present in Calvin's Geneva. The idea of constitutional limitation of tyrannical powers, popular election, personal liberty, and other characteristics of democracy and republicanism in Calvin and later Calvinism

³⁴George Sabine, A History of Political Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 363.

³⁵McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 169.

³⁶Ibid., p. 163. See also Sabine, p. 367.

left a great impact upon the development of Western democracy.

Hans Baron succinctly summarizes Calvin's influence:

Yet Calvinist political thought helped more than any other tendency of the time to prevent a full victory of absolutism, and to prepare the way for constitutional and even republican ideas.³⁷

Modern scholars generally give credit to Calvin not for the establishment of modern democracy but for the "consolidation of personal liberty and the establishment of democracy."³⁸

In summary Calvin's whole political thought rests upon the belief that God is the supreme and sovereign ruler of both spiritual and temporal realms, and from this point of view Calvin's political idea is called "theocentric" or "theocratic," but not in the sense of the Old Testament theocracy. The political form which Calvin prefers to be the best is a mixed form of government: Aristocratic-democracy. Concerning monarchical forms of government, Calvin approves them for Israel, but not for all nations, and yet further warns of the dangers and weaknesses of a monarchy falling easily into tyranny. As to the democratic form of government, Calvin fears confusion and sedition of the extreme form of democracy, called anarchy. He rather wants a representative government by

³⁷Hans Baron, "Calvinist Republicanism and its Historical Roots," Church History, VIII (March 1939), p. 41.

³⁸Mueller, p. 159.

election in which a number of chosen magistrates govern the state according to God's Word and constitutional law for the benefit of people. In comparison with modern democratic ideals, Calvin's democratic thought is certainly limited. Nevertheless, Calvin's political thought is very significant in laying the foundation for modern democracy.

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CHAPTER VI

CALVIN'S ATTITUDE TOWARD TYRANNY

Each generation has produced tyrants and their subsequent oppressions upon people. The sixteenth century was no exception; Calvin had to face autocratic rulers in his own country, France, and the Holy Roman Empire. His dealings with the despots King Francis I and King Henry II of France caused his immediate concern for the liberation of his compatriot Protestant Christians from their persecutions.¹ He had an ill-flavored feeling toward tyrannical rulers and explicitly listed their nefarious crimes against the people:

But it is the example of nearly all ages that some princes are careless about all those things to which they ought to have given heed, and, far from all care, lazily take their pleasure. Others, intent upon their own business, put up for sale laws, privileges, judgments, and letters of favor. Others drain the common people of their money, and afterward lavish it on insane largesse. Still others exercise sheer robbery, plundering houses, raping virgins and matrons, and slaughtering the innocent.

¹Calvin considered not only wicked kings and princes to be tyrannical, but also the pope as a tyrant because of his damaging effect on man's soul as well as body. John Calvin, Commentary upon the Acts of the Apostles, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), I, 423. See also Acts, I, 459.

Calvin also labeled the pope as "a thief and a sacriligious robber." John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin, ed. by Jules Bonnet (Phil.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), II, 187.

²John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion,

When worldly kings desire to enlarge their dominions, and to increase their power and ambition, pride, fierceness, cruelty, exactions, rapine, and violence, are the horses and chariots which they employ to accomplish their ends.³

Calvin also calls tyrannical kings "proud hypocrites,"⁴ and "robbers"⁵ whose eyes are blinded by their pride of greatness,⁶ and who are swift to shed blood.⁷ Against such tyrants he pronounces God's judgment and condemnation with the words of Solomon in Proverbs 16:12, "It is an abomination among kings to do iniquity, for the throne is established in righteousness."⁸ Calvin's other writings, particularly Sermons on Job (1554), Sermons on Deuteronomy (1554-1555) and Lectures on Daniel (1561) have a strong anti-tyrannical flavor against the kings of the Old Testament.⁹ One of the supreme examples of the

Vol. XXI of the Library of Christian Classics, ed. John T. McNeill, translated by Ford L. Battles (Phil.: Westminster Press, 1960), II, 1512.

³John Calvin, Commentary on the Book of Psalms, translated by James Anderson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 142.

⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah, translated by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 142.

⁵Institutes, II, 1499.

⁶Isaiah, I, 440; Psalms, III, 112.

⁷Psalms, III, 196.

⁸Institutes, II, 1498.

⁹John T. McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," Church History, XVIII (September 1949), 159.

tyrants in the Old Testament is Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel; his personal anger against the Chaldeans for their impotence to find and interpret the king's dream caused a threat upon their innocent lives.¹⁰

Usually tyrannical kings and princes oppose the Christian Gospel, and, in consequence, create persecutions against Christians,¹¹ because their self-seeking personal interests are often contrary to the teachings of the Scripture. Commenting on Psalms 69:12, "I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me," Calvin interprets the drunkard as rulers and wealthy men who despise the servant of God and his religion.¹² When the servant of God speaks against their evil deeds, they often defend themselves by appealing to their gods in order to rationalize their misbehavior.¹³ For example, King Nebuchadnezzar appealed to his gods and images to reaffirm his authority against the God of Israel and the three friends of Daniel, Shadrach, Meschach, and

¹⁰John Calvin, Commentaries on the Prophet Daniel, translated by Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1948), I, 125-6. Calvin's comment on Dan. 2:5.

¹¹John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), III, 427-8. Tyrants can do harm on the physical body, but not on the soul, because God is the only one who ultimately controls both body and soul.

¹²Psalms, III, 59.

¹³Ibid., p. 331. Calvin's comments on Ps. 82:2.

Abednego.¹⁴

In spite of the atrocities of tyrants, Calvin argues that the worst form of tyranny is still better than anarchy and maintains that oppressive absolutism is "more bearable than no order at all."¹⁵ Of Romans 13:3 Calvin holds the same idea that even the worst government is still better than no government because it performs some positive functions for men and society: "There can then be no tyranny which does not in some respects assist in consolidating the society of men."¹⁶ The reason for God to permit tyranny in the world is to show His sovereign and disciplinary power upon the evils of men.

Calvin interprets the reign of despots as the wrath and judgment of God upon the people. It is not the people, but God, who raises and destroys kings of the earth, as he says,

For since a wicked prince is the Lord's scourge to punish the sins of the people, let us remember that it happens through our fault that this excellent blessing of God is turned into a curse.¹⁷

Calvin cites the examples of despots from the Old Testament

¹⁴Daniel, I, 217.

¹⁵Ioannis Calvini, Corpus Reformatorum, ediderunt C. Baum, E. Cunitz, and E. Reuss (Brunsvigae: Apud C. A. Schwetschke et Filium, 1863-1900), LIII, 131. Quoted by Wilhelm Niesel, The Theology of Calvin, translated by Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), p. 242.

¹⁶John Calvin, On God and Political Duty, ed. by John McNeill (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1950), p. 86.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 85-86. Calvin's comment on Rom. 13:3.

and shows how God used them to accomplish his purpose. For example, Calvin quotes Jeremiah 27:5-8, 17 in the Institutes to prove that God raised Nebuchadnezzar to govern the nations, including Israel:

I have made the earth and men, says the Lord, and the animals which are upon the face of the earth, with my great strength and outstretched arm; and I give it to him who is pleasing in my eyes. Now, therefore, I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar . . . my servant. . . . All the nations and great kings shall serve him . . . until the time of his own land comes. . . . And it shall be that any nation and kingdom that will not serve the king of Babylon, I shall visit that nation with sword, famine, and pestilence. ¹⁸ . Therefore, serve the king of Babylon and life.

Another illustration of this is found in the life of King Saul; when he rebelled against God and committed evils, God raised the Amalekites to destroy Saul and his kingdom, and ordained David to be his successor.¹⁹

Since God is the sole ruler of the affairs of this world, according to Calvin, obedience is the key word for the individual subject toward his ruler regardless of whether the ruler is good or bad. Calvin, however, does not totally deny the possibility of passive resistance against tyranny. First of all, he denies the validity of the tyrannical government which seems to contradict his views of the divine ordination of the government: "For though tyrannies and unjust exercise of power, as they are

¹⁸Institutes, II, 1514.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1515-16. From 1 Sam. 24:9-11.

full of disorder, are not an ordained government, yet the right of government is ordained by God for the well-being of mankind."²⁰ Here he uses the word "ordain" in two different ways; first it is used in the sense that the nature of government, that is, the right to govern, is ordained of God regardless of its different qualities; and secondly, it is used in the sense that the out-workings of an evil magistrate are not ordained by God even though the office itself is ordained. Tyrants are hated not only by God but also by the people,²¹ and their lives are in constant danger and fear.²² It is difficult to persuade people to obey their rulers who are tyrannical.²³

As Calvin comes to the matter of actual resistance to the autocratic government, he starts with the conception that no individual resistance is allowed against any rulers.

Accordingly, he (the tyrant) should be held in the same reverence and esteem by his subjects, in so far as public obedience is concerned, in which they would hold the best of kings if he were given to them.²⁴

He adamantly opposes the idea of popular revolt by the low class against their superiors; considers it as the "most

²⁰ Calvin, On God and Political Duty, p. 84. Calvin's comment on Rom. 13:1.

²¹ Isaiah, I, 439.

²² Psalms, II, 346.

²³ Institutes, II, 1512.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 1513.

preposterous"²⁵ of all things in which modesty and order are jeopardized, but he admits that the popular rebellion, shameful as it is, is a necessity in a violent political revolution, "and yet this spectacle, so shameful and revolting, must unavoidable be exhibited when civil government has been overthrown."²⁶

Regarding the ills and violence of this popular revolt, Calvin's negative attitude toward it is not only expressed through his pen, but also clearly revealed in his refusal to cooperate with the Huguenots' clandestine conspiracy of Amboise. After the death of Henry II in 1559, Francis II, a teen-age king who was the husband of Mary Stuart, succeeded to the French throne for a short period until his death in December 1560. The actual power of the government rested on the hands of the Duke of Guise. The increasing persecutions of Christians by the French government necessitated their defensive plan against the enemies, and a conspiracy under the leadership of La Renaudie was formed in association with the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé. When they sought military support from Geneva, Calvin, who was well acquainted with the whole plot, rejected the request, but some sixty Frenchmen who had been residing in Geneva left the city to join the

²⁵Isaiah, I, 132.

²⁶Ibid.

conspirators.²⁷ Even before the news of the actual outbreak and failure of the uprising on the twentieth of March reached Calvin, he wrote to his friend, Johannes Stürm, a Protestant reformer and educator under Bucer's influence in Strasbourg, that he was displeased by the conspirators and their undertaking:

When I was at first consulted by those who were the prime instigators in this business, I frankly replied that their whole manner of proceeding displeased me, but that the transaction itself was what incurred my greatest disapprobation . . . I had advised them not to make a public demonstration before the royal progress of the court; now their precipitancy will engender greater disturbances.²⁸

A few weeks later, on the eleventh of May, he also wrote to Heinrich Bullinger, the successor of Zwingli at Zurich, expressing the same concern and opposition to the whole idea of the conspiracy. When La Renaudie spread false rumors throughout Geneva that Calvin did not disapprove of the conspiracy, Calvin hastily tried to defend himself that he had no part in the plot and called La Renaudie as the "needy wretch" who told a "barefaced lie."²⁹

On the same day that he sent a letter to Bullinger, Calvin also wrote to Peter Martyr of Zurich expressing fears over the whole matter. When Calvin heard from the

✓ ²⁷Letters, IV, 106.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 91-92. Taken from CR, XVIII, 3174. See also George Hunt, ed., Calvinism and the Political Order (Phil.: The Westminster Press, 1965), p. 27.

²⁹Letters, IV, 105.

conspirators that the Prince de Condé, brother of the king of Navarre, who held the highest position in the royal council, promised to help them and planned to present the Huguenot Confession to the council, he was very much concerned with the possibility of an outbreak of bloodshed.³⁰ He also told Admiral Coligny, an eminent Huguenot layman, in his letter on the sixteenth of April, 1561, that he was falsely accused of taking a part in the conspiracy and would not support Condé in case of a bloody revolution in France. Speaking of the Protestants' lamentations and opposition to the cruelties of the Romanists, Calvin said,

I replied simply to such objections that if a single drop of blood were spilled, floods of it would deluge Europe; that thus it were better we should perish a hundred times, than expose³¹ Christianity and the gospel to such opprobrium.

This kind of passive obedience in Calvin to the ruler also corresponds to his earlier teaching in the Instruction and Confession of Faith (1537) in which he states that the subject's passive obedience must be rendered even to despotic rulers, "until we be freed from their yoke."³²

³⁰Ibid., pp. 106-108.

³¹Ibid., p. 176. Taken from CR, XVIII, 426. See also Georgia Harkness, John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), p. 233.

³²Hunt, p. 31. See also McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 167.

While Calvin denies private disobedience and armed rebellion against despots he approves political resistance by the "magistrates of the people,"³³ or as Sabine comments "inferior magistrates"³⁴ to curb the tyrannical powers. Calvin states that God used two ways for bringing down the power of absolute rulers in the Old Testament. First, He raised some avengers among His servants such as Moses, Othniel and the Judges to bring His justice upon the land.³⁵ At other times, God used men and nations having purposes in opposition to God, yet accomplishing God's purposes without knowing it. In explaining the changing of governments from one to another Calvin said:

Thus he tamed the pride of Tyre by the Egyptians, the insolence of the Egyptians by the Assyrians, the fierceness of the Assyrians by the Chaldeans; the arrogance of Babylon by the Medes and Persians, after Cyrus had already subjugated the Medes.³⁶

For Calvin, the only possibility to resist arbitrary iron rule is through constitutional means by magistrates

³³Institutes, II, 1519. The Beveridge edition translates it as "popular magistrates." (p. 675)

³⁴George Sabine, A History of Political Theory (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1961), p. 367. Hans Baron thinks Calvin's "magistratus populares" comes from Bucer's idea of "magistratus inferiores," i. e., "the leaders of local self-administration." Hans Baron, "Calvinist Republicanism and its Historical Roots," Church History, VIII (March 1939), 38.

³⁵Institutes, II, 1517.

³⁶Ibid.

and princes. In his letter of 1557 to the King of Navarre, Antoine de Bourbon, who was the father of Henry IV of Navarre and the sympathizer of the Protestant Reformation, he admonished the king to restore justice and true doctrine in France as God's chosen instrument;³⁷ and when Francis II died in 1560, Calvin wanted to see King Antoine of Navarre succeed to the regency in France. From several letters of the reformer to his friends and to the king of Navarre himself, Simon Sulzer (October 1 and December 11, 1560),³⁸ Bullinger (October 1, 14, and December 4, 1560),³⁹ John Sturm (November 5 and December 16, 1560),⁴⁰ and the King of Navarre (January 16, 1561 and several other letters),⁴¹ it has been known that Calvin had a close relationship with King Antoine through letters and particularly through the mediation of Beze of Strasbourg.⁴² Calvin wanted to remove tyrannical power through the lawful process of the church and of magistrates, not through violence.⁴³ In a letter to Bullinger, he said, "I never approved of deciding our cause by violence and arms."⁴⁴

³⁷Letters, III, 386.

³⁸Ibid., IV, 130, 150.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 133, 142, 148.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 146, 152.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 161, 194, 207, 212, 247.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 132, 137, 141, 148.

⁴³Ibid., I, 412.

⁴⁴Ibid., IV, 138. See also Hunt, p. 28.

Knowing the necessity of transferring the tyrannical ruler and the atrocities of violent revolution,, he sets the condition of passive resistance to the ruler in his letter to Admiral Coligny:

I admitted, it is true, that if the princes of the blood demanded to be maintained in their rights for the common good, and if the Parliament joined them in their quarrel, that it would then be lawful for all good subjects to lend them armed assistance.⁴⁵

There have been attempts among historians to disprove Calvin's opposition to the conception of popular rebellion against the government, because his theoretical teaching that the church should suffer under tyranny and not revolt against oppression was proved to be inconsistent with his own practices. For example, Hans Preuss, a professor of Church History at the University of Erlangen, declares that Calvin himself planned to assist a military revolution of the Huguenots in the Conspiracy of Amboise against their king. Stating the significance of Luther's Reformation in revitalizing the Scriptural teaching of justification by faith which led the reformer to fight against the Roman Church, Preuss regards Calvin and Calvinism as another dynamic force to restore true Christianity and remarks:

Thus Calvinism became an aggressive form of Protestantism, in contrast to the Society of Jesus which was growing at the same time. Everything ought to happen for the high glory of God. The world must be laid at the feet of God. Calvin himself helped to plan

⁴⁵Ibid., IV, 176.

the military campaign of the Huguenots at Loire, There he knows no mercy when the glory of God is involved, as he understands it. He resembles the angry Elijah who let the fire rain down upon his enemies, or the furious Moses of Michelangelo, in fact the Protestant inquisitor, for the investigation of the sinner belongs to the ordinances of his church.⁴⁶

Preuss lacks proof and footnotes for his thesis. From all the evidences which have been cited above from Calvin's various writings, it is difficult to support Preuss' view in this matter.

The political theory of resistance through constitutional means was not foreign to Calvin, because it was taught outside of Geneva in Europe. There were numerous writings against absolute monarchy and tyranny by Calvin's contemporaries. John Major, a Scottish conciliarist, who taught Calvin, Knox, and Buchanan, attacked the system of absolute monarchy in the church and the state in his

⁴⁶Hans Preuss, "Calvin und Sein Gesetzgebung," Kirchliche Zeitsehrift (Columbus, Ohio: Verlag des Lutheran Book Concern, June, 1936), pp. 324-325. "Und so ward der Calvinismus zur aggressiven Gestalt des Protestantismus-- ein Gegenstück zu dem gleichzeitig aufkommenden Jesuitenorden. Alles soll geschehen zur höheren Ehre Gottes. Die Welt muss Gott zu Füssen gelegt werden, auch mit Gewalt. Calvin selbst arbeitet an einem Feldzugsplan der Hugenotten an der Loire. Dabei Kennt er Kein Erbarmen, Wenn es die Ehre Gottes, wie er sie auffasst, gilt. Er gleicht dann dem zurnen den Elias, der das Feuer herabregnen liess auf seine Feinde, oder dent grimmen Moses Michelangelos, ja einem protestantischen Grossinquisitor, denn das Aufspüren der Sünder gehört ja mit zu den Ordnungen seiner Kirche." Translation by the author of the thesis.

History of Great Britain (1521) and Disputation on the Authority of a Council (1529) and declared that the final authority rested on the people and not on the kings.⁴⁷

Martin Bucer, an intimate friend of Calvin in Strasbourg, taught the possibility of resisting the superior authority through the "magistratus inferiores" in the early part of the 1520's, contended against the absolute power (absoluta potestas) of the prince, and preferred the elective rather than the hereditary monarchy. Hans Baron, therefore, maintains that Calvin adopted Bucer's political thought based on this point.⁴⁸

Subsequently, other writings for the instigation of rebellion and revolution by the oppressed against their evil rulers appeared in the later years of Calvin's life. The Magdeburg Bekenntnis (1550), which was put out by the Lutheran ministers, approved the authority of lower magistrates against their evil emperor. John Ponet, Bishop of Winchester, while in exile in Strasbourg during the reign of Queen Mary, wrote his Short Treatise of Politike Power (1556) and encouraged rebellion against evil government which departed from the principles of laws of nature and of Scripture.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Hunt, p. 15.

⁴⁸McNeill, "The Democratic Element in Calvin's Thought," p. 164. See also Baron, p. 36, 39.

⁴⁹Hunt, p. 14.

The followers of Calvin in both Scotland and France adopted the idea of political resistance against existing governments with the rationalization that it served to promote religious reformation; John Knox in Scotland is the outstanding example of a clear departure from Calvin's teaching.⁵⁰ Knox in his First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women and Appellation in 1558 condemned as idolatrous Catholic Queen Mary of Scotland and Mary Tudor of England, and justified Christian rebellion as duty against such wicked sovereigns.⁵¹ Christopher Goodman, who was exiled to Geneva from England became a loyal colleague of John Knox during the Marian persecution. In his How Superior Powers Ought to be Obeyed (1558), Goodman describes inciting depressed people to revolt against their dominating autocrats for God's justice.⁵² The Huguenot's theory of rebellion, although it departed from Calvin's teaching of submission, did not go to such extremes as Knox, but rather took a milder form, because their prime objective was not to overthrow the monarchy but to gain freedom of worship.⁵³

This same idea of popular resistance to absolutism and tyranny was expressed in the following generations in

⁵⁰Sabine, pp. 362-3.

⁵¹Harkness, pp. 140-1; Hunt, p. 14.

⁵²Hunt, p. 14.

⁵³Harkness, p. 243.

such works as Thomas Cartwright's Admonition to Parliament (1527),⁵⁴ George Buchanan's The Law of Scottish Kingship (1579), Francis Hatman's France-Gallia (1573), Claude de Seyssel's The Grand Monarchy of France (c. 1513), Vindiciae contra Tyrannos (1579), partly written by Philip de Plessis Mornay, William of Orange's Apology (1581), John Althusius's Politics Methodically Set Forth (1603), Hugo Grotius's Right of War and Peace (1625), Pierre Jurieu's Sighes of France Enslaved and Aspiring Toward Liberty (1689-90), and Jean Jacques Rousseau's Social Contract (1762),⁵⁵ There is no doubt that later Calvinistic justification for rebellion against tyrannical authority was clearly proven by Knox in Scotland, the Puritans in England and the Huguenots in France, but the extent of influence on these later political thinkers by Calvin is still another subject to study.

For both Luther and Calvin, the Word of God checks the authority of the king; therefore, they teach that man must obey his ruler and all his superiors in the Lord. Calvin quotes Acts 5:29: "We ought to obey God rather than man," and remarks that any king or ruler who dishonours God and His authority must be considered as nothing but a man and whose commands which are contrary to the command-

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 233.

⁵⁵Hunt, pp. 16-18.

ment of God ought not to be obeyed.⁵⁶ In Acts 17:7

Calvin further comments that the disobedience of Christians in accordance with their conscience to the evil demands of the king who dishonours Christ and hampers true worship of God is not considered rebellious against the authority.⁵⁷

For example, the prophet Daniel's disobedience to King Darius' idolatrous decrees in Daniel 6 is interpreted by Calvin as a righteous deed because the king's command is directly against the commandment of God.⁵⁸

In the Institutes, Letters, and Tracts and Treatises, Calvin repeatedly expresses the same teaching in different ways. Since God who is in control of man's body and soul is the perfect lawgiver, man must first follow God's righteousness.⁵⁹ Calvin again says in the Institutes:

The Lord, therefore, is the King of Kings, who, when he has opened his sacred mouth, must alone be heard, before all and above all men; next to him we are subject to those men who are in authority over us, but only in him. If they command everything against him, let it go unesteemed. And here let us not be concerned about all that dignity which the magistrates

⁵⁶ John Calvin, Commentary Upon the Acts of the Apostles, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1949), I, 214-215.

⁵⁷ Ibid., II, 138.

⁵⁸ Institutes, II, 1520.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 1186. Calvin also said in his letter to Farel in May 1540, "Christ is the only legislator to whom we owe obedience." Letters, I, 185.

possess; for no harm is done to it when it is humbled before that singular and truly supreme power of God.⁶⁰

Calvin's own experiences in persistently opposing the Consistory, the Councils of Geneva for the right of administering the Lord's Supper and of pronouncing excommunication sufficiently prove his teaching of God's superiority over the kings and princes.⁶¹

In summary, Calvin's attitude toward the tyrannical ruler has positive as well as negative aspects. Positively, Calvin considers even the tyrannical government to be ordained of God, although God does not approve of the evil practices of the rulers which are contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, the subjects must obey their rulers regardless of their wickedness. Calvin interprets the rise of wicked kings as the judgment of God upon the world decreed by God Himself.

Negatively, while Calvin rejects the individual resistance or conspiratorial rebellion, he endorses the orderly transfer of power from the tyrant through constitutional means; in other words, the magistrates of the

⁶⁰Institutes, II, 1520. Also see Tracts, II, 135; Institutes, II, 1519. On the passage of Eph. 6:1, "Obey the parents in the Lord," Calvin brings out the thought of obedience not only in child-parental relationships but also subject-ruler relationships. Institutes, I, 403.

⁶¹Philip Hughes, ed., The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1960), p. 287.

people can remove the despot from his regency lawfully without bloodshed. As to the question of the practicability of this political theory of Calvin for the actual removal of a despot, it is extremely dubious and uncertain. For Calvin the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is very important in the affairs of man, and God who has control over man's spiritual and physical needs commands His people to obey Him first and other human superiors in accordance with the Lord's will.

CHAPTER VII

CALVIN'S STRUGGLES TO MAKE GENEVA THE MODEL CITY

Since the fall of Julius Caesar, Geneva was known as one of the important cities in the Roman Empire; at the fall of the Roman Empire, it became the capital city of the Burgundian kingdom. In the early part of the twelfth century, the city came to be known as an "imperial city" under the protection of the Hohenstanfen emperors. During this period Geneva also experienced power struggles between the secular counts and the spiritual bishops of the city in which ecclesiastical authority won the conflict.¹ In 1285 Amadeus V of Savoy helped those in the secular power in Geneva overthrow the spiritual rule of the bishops, and this Savoy protection of the city lasted until the time when the Genevan citizens revolted against Savoy in 1519.

The bishop in 1290 lost the position of "vice dominus," a power through which he used to assign ecclesiastical duty for temporal administration. Savoy-supported counts controlled this authority. Genevan burgers, dissatisfied with foreign dominance in 1385, received the "franchises" from Savoy which gave constitutional sanction to the city. These constitutional rights provided for

¹Williston Walker, John Calvin (New York: C. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), p. 159.

the people's General Assembly, the Little Council, the larger Council of fifty members, and the Council of the Two Hundred. The number of the larger Council increased to sixty in 1457. Thus, Geneva had been under three different authorities, "the bishop, the vice dominus and the citizens." Therefore, the bishop came under the control of temporal power from the time of Savoy's invasion to its expulsion from Geneva in 1527. From the latter half of the fifteenth century on, bishoprics were won by Amadeus VIII of Savoy and his grandsons.²

Geneva had a population of approximately thirteen thousand permanent residents at the time of Calvin. Since it lay at the crossroads of Europe, the city also served as the center of trade for several of these countries as well as a haven for religious refugees. Religious activity flourished in this commercial area; Geneva was divided into seven different parishes, and monasticism had a stronghold with the orders of Benedictines, Dominicans, Franciscans, Augustinians; there was also a nunnery of the Clarissines.³

Unrest and dissatisfaction of the citizens against the dominating influence of Savoy increased in Geneva, and subsequently two factions developed: one supporting

²Ibid., p. 161.

³Ibid., p. 162.

Genevan independence and the other adhering to Savoy's dominance. The former were called "Eidguenots" while the latter were known as "Mamelouks." The national party made an alliance with the burgers of Freiburg against Savoy in 1519, but Duke Charles III of Savoy forced the national party to repeal the alliance. He restored the power of the bishop and beheaded the leader of the rebellious party. In 1526, Geneva again made a formal alliance with two neighboring cities, Frieburg and Bern, against Savoy and won a final victory over the weak bishop giving her independence in 1527. Bern, which was one of the neighboring cities, embraced the Protestant Reformation by 1528, and began to spread her Protestant influences into other neighboring cities.

The political structure in the "Republic of Geneva" since 1527 consisted of four Syndics, three Councils and the General Assembly.⁴ The General Assembly annually elected the four Syndics,⁵ the chief magistrates, who were naturally members of the Little Council. Composed of twenty-five members, the Little Council was mainly responsible for the executive and legislative functions of the government. This was the most influential body among the

⁴ Francois Wendel, Calvin, translated by Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, Pub., 1963), p. 50. Also John Calvin, Letters of John Calvin, ed. by Jules Bonnet (Phil.: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1858), I, 344.

⁵ Calvin, Letters, III, 15. Also Philip E. Hughes, ed.,

three Councils. The Council of the Sixty dealt with matters usually concerning foreign policy which the General Assembly was not able to manage effectively and conveniently. A still larger council was the Council of the Two Hundred or Great Council which had the right to make important decisions on legislative matters and had a judiciary function also.⁶

The General Assembly of all citizens was the most influential in politics, but toward the end of the Middle Ages its power began to wane. The General Assembly eventually lost its voting right for the Little Council and the Council of the Sixty. The members of the Little Council were nominated by the Council of the Two Hundred, and in return, the Little Council appointed the Council of the Sixty and the Council of the Two Hundred. By this process the real political power in Geneva before and after Calvin's stay in the city rested on some aristocratic perpetual members of the Councils.⁷

With the strong Protestant influence from Bern, a neighboring ally, and the coming of Guillaume Farel, an itinerant evangelist, who was called the "Elijah of the French Reformation," into Geneva, the Protestant movement began to be felt.⁸ By 1532 Farel's ministry became

The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1966), p. 321.

⁶Walker, p. 161.

⁷Wendel, pp. 50-51.

⁸Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church (New

significant enough to raise opposition from the Council of the Two Hundred which passed a resolution forbidding anyone from preaching without permission. Open struggles between Roman Catholics and Protestants resulted. With political support from Bern, Protestantism in Geneva grew quickly. When a street battle broke out on March 28, 1533, the Council of the Two Hundred had to adopt a compromise truce.⁹ However, the religious struggle continued in Geneva until 1535 when the Roman party fell. The Council of the Two Hundred had to suspend the celebration of mass until further notice, and Roman clergymen, monks, and nuns, losing any hope of regaining power, left the city. By March 21, 1536, the citizens of Geneva voted to abolish all masses, images, and idols, and Geneva became Protestant largely through the influence of Farel.¹⁰

Calvin's Entry into Geneva and Exile to Strasbourg (1536-1541)

Before Calvin was invited to Geneva, he had been at Strasbourg and Basle in exile from France because of his Protestant faith. Officials had imprisoned him twice at Noyon his hometown prior to his departure from France in

York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), VII, 237.

⁹Walker, p. 171.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 170-179.

1535. At Basle the first edition of his Institution Chretienne appeared in Latin in June 1535, when he was 27.¹¹ It was very quickly accepted by the French Protestants as their doctrinal standard. Farel realized the necessity of having a youthful Christian scholar for the furtherance of Protestantism at Geneva. When Calvin visited Geneva in July 1536, he was persuaded by Farel to remain in the city; hence, his long years of struggle began.¹²

As soon as Calvin arrived in Geneva, his influence began to be felt throughout the city. Under the guidance of Farel, Calvin started to lecture on the Pauline Epistles at the Cathedral of St. Pierre and was appointed to be one of the preachers in a year. Since Geneva became free from the bondage of the Roman Church a year before, Calvin sensed the urgent necessity of forming the Reformed doctrinal statements for the church there. The reformer, therefore, published a little book, The Confession of Faith in 1536 which Beza called "a short-formula of Christian doctrine."¹³ He also published the Catechism Prior around this time.¹⁴

¹²Letters, I, 44-45.

¹³John Calvin, Tracts and Treatises in Defense of the Reformed Faith, translated by Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1958), II, 33. Also John Calvin, Calvin: Theological Treatises, Vol. XXII of the Library of Christian Classics, translated by J. K. S. Reid (Phil.: The Westminster Press, 1964), pp. 25-33.

¹⁴Theological Treatises, p. 83. The definite date for

Calvin's success thus far was not left unchallenged by his opponents, for there were political as well as religious repercussions. Theologically, he and Farel were accused of Arianism by Peter Caroli, semi-Protestant pastor of Lausanne, and this accusation was reported by Calvin in detail to his friends, Gaspar G. Megander, minister of the Church of Bern, and Simon Grynee, a theologian and rector of the Academy of Basle.¹⁵ Calvin, himself, wrote to his accuser, Caroli, on the tenth of August 1540,

You say that you had no other alternative but to proclaim us to be irreconcilable, (for this is your expression;) but consider, I beseech you, with yourself for a little, how ridiculous you make yourself, when it is clear you have sounded a blast of the trumpet in the midst of peace.¹⁶

However, the reformers defended themselves at the Synod of Lausanne under the ministers of Bern and were declared orthodox; the Synod, instead, condemned Caroli as a heretic. This action led him to return to the Roman Church.¹⁷

this publication is uncertain. After Calvin's return to Geneva from his exile, he reworked the catechism in the fashion of Luther's shorter catechism in 1545. Ibid., pp. 88-139.

¹⁵Letters, I, 47, 53.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 151.

In later occasions of Calvin's life, there were other accusations against his doctrines. For example, when Westphal, a Lutheran theologian, attacked Calvin's view on the sacraments, the latter wrote a letter of the "Consensus" to the former to defend the Reformed view of the sacraments.¹⁸ Some ministers of Bern also bitterly attacked Calvin on the diversity of ceremonies and especially his view on excommunication. The Bernese government which held the right to excommunicate opposed Calvin's idea that it should belong to the realm of ecclesiastical authority, because his doctrine was a direct threat to the authority of the Bernese government. Calvin said in his letter to Bullinger on September 8, 1554,

For the preachers of the Bernese territory denounce me from the pulpit for a heretic, worse than all the Papists put together, and the¹⁹ more snappishly each one falls foul of me

He was, therefore, very much concerned with the spread of rumors that he was a heretic.

Calvin's theological and moral standards in the Articles of Confessions for Geneva were not fully accepted by the people. He advocated the monthly observance of the Lord's Supper and stricter church discipline in order to

¹⁸Ibid., p. 74. The "Consensus Tigurinus" is the doctrinal agreement in 1549 between the Zwinglians and Calvinists on the matter of the sacraments. Wendel, p. 101.

¹⁹Letters, III, 74.

establish the purity of doctrines and of life.²⁰ After the reformers' party won the election in February 1537, the Little Council which had the most powerful influence in Geneva adopted the Articles of Calvin and demanded that the people observe all its rules. Many citizens of Geneva, especially the native "Libertines," who were the free thinkers and liberals of the day, were not ready to accept Calvin's rules and regulations. With the Catholic sympathizers, they began to retaliate against these foreign reformers in Geneva. By the end of 1537, there was popular resentment against Calvin and the Council, and the opposition party appealed to the Bernese government for help, for Bernese commissioners who leaned more toward Lutheranism were critical of the Confession. Farel and Calvin went to Bern to justify their doctrines and to persuade the Bernese to pay no attention to these appealers from Geneva. Meanwhile, Francis I of France was trying to cut off the close relation between Geneva and Bern by supporting the Libertines. In the February election of 1538, those opponents of the reformers won the election and demanded the state's dominance over the ritual of the church.²¹

Since Calvin and Farel could not assent to the acquisition of ecclesiastical authority by the new govern-

²⁰Ibid., I, 66.

²¹Walker, p. 205.

ment and refused to administer the communion on the day of Easter, they were finally banished on April 13, 1538. Both reformers went to Zurich to appeal to the deputies of the Reformed Swiss cantons who were having their meeting on the matter of union with the Lutheran Churches, but they gathered no results. Their banishment was finally confirmed by the assembly on May 26, 1538.²² While Farel went to Neuchâtel to take a pastorate, which eventually took his lifelong work until his death, Calvin was invited by Bucer to live in Strasbourg.²³ Here he spent three years of halcyon days from September of 1538 to his return to Geneva in September 13, 1541.²⁴

In Strasbourg he held a pastorate for a "little church"²⁵ of approximately four to six hundred refugees and preached four times a week. In July 1539, he became a citizen of Strasbourg.²⁶ While he was in Strasbourg, he had numerous correspondences with the Church of Geneva and tried to prove his innocence.²⁷ He also encouraged Bucer to negotiate with the Genevan magistrates²⁸ in order to restore peace and brotherly love in the Church

²²Letters, I, 68, 176.

²³Ibid., pp. 73, 75, 77.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 80, 284.

²⁵Ibid., p. 110. Walker, p. 220.

²⁶Letters, I, 293.

²⁷Ibid., p. 86.

²⁸Ibid., p. 80, 142.

of Geneva. Finally the deputies of Geneva came to Calvin in November 1540, and asked him to return to Geneva, and his final consent to the request was granted in May 1541.²⁹

Other important events took place in the reformer's life during his exile. He was appointed as one of the representatives by the city of Strasbourg for colloquies at Frankfurt, Hagenau (1540), Worms (1540), and Ratisbon.³⁰ The Emperor Charles V set up these colloquies in order to reunite the divided Protestant and Catholic Churches in Germany for the purpose of a united defense against the aggressive Turks. These successive colloquies brought rich experiences to Calvin and a close fellowship with Melanchthon and other German reformers. On May 19, 1539, Calvin wrote to Farel about his interest in getting married to Idelette de Bure,³¹ widow of one of his Anabaptist converts. The wedding took place in the next year. Meanwhile, Calvin spent much of his energy on his literary works including an enlarged edition of the Institutes, the Commentary on Romans, and the Reply to Sadoleto.³²

²⁹Ibid., pp. 218, 224, 259.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 116, 189, 206, 213, 237. Also Harold Grimm, The Reformation Era (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1954), p. 333. The Emperor transferred the conferences at Worms to Ratisbon.

³¹Ibid., pp. 141, 247.

³²Ibid., pp. 104, 162, 167.

While Calvin was in Strasbourg, the political struggle in Geneva continued. The minority pro-Reformation group under the leadership of Amy Perrin, who had voted against Calvin's exile, organized a political party known as the "Guillermins" after Farel's first name; the Guillermins fought the existing ruling party known as the "Antichants" or "Artichauds."³³ Street fightings occurred between the followers of these two factions. In the midst of this political turmoil, the Bernese government tried to make its political influence felt in Geneva. The Guillermins were able slowly to convince some councilmen that the best solution for the crisis was to re-invite Calvin to Geneva. With the Guillermins winning the election of February 1539, the power structure in Geneva was reversed and Calvin was therefore free to return. The deputies of Geneva came to ask him to return in October 1540,³⁴ but his response to this recall to Geneva was slow because he was hesitant to break with his halcyon days in Strasbourg and to plunge himself into a city of strife. But the final consent was granted in May 1541, and it took him almost a year to actually return to Geneva on September 13, 1541.

³³Wendel, pp. 66-68.

³⁴Letters, I, 218, 224, 259.

Constant Struggles Between Church and State in Geneva
(1541-1555)

The reception of Calvin's second entry into Geneva was quite different from that of his first one. The first invitation of Calvin was from a private person, Farel, but the magistrates of the city welcomed him with great excitement and expectations the second time. One of the council registers states the event of Calvin's return to Geneva:

He represented that it would be necessary to set about the work of ecclesiastical ordinances. Resolved, that they would apply themselves to it immediately, and for that purpose appointed, along with Calvin, Claude Pertemps, Amy Perrin, Claude Roset, Jean Lambert, Poralis, and Jean Balard. Resolved also to retain Calvin here always.--October 1541. The stipend of Calvin assigned at five hundred florins, twelve measures of corn, and two tuns of wine.³⁵

Although Calvin received willing support from the Councils for his proposal of the new ecclesiastical constitution, he was very careful that he did not offend the right of the civil government and some of their traditional customs. He took a moderate position in some minor matters; the Communion Service was held four times a year³⁶ instead of monthly which Calvin preferred, and the ordination of new pastors was done by a single prayer and a sermon instead of the laying of hands, a practice in Strasbourg.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., p. 284. This salary was double that of other pastors. See also Wendel, p. 70.

³⁶Hughes, p. 44.

³⁷Wendel, pp. 70-71.

Calvin tried to strengthen his position by reorganizing the Consistory or Presbytery. There was a clerical organization which was known as the Venerable Company which consisted of all of the pastors of the city, and which did not have any political power. The Consistory, on the other hand, was a combination of both six pastors and twelve lay elders, two of whom were chosen from the Council of the Sixty and the remaining ten from the Council of the Two Hundred. Within the Consistory the minority of clerical representation had more influence than the lay elders.³⁸

First of all, Calvin wanted to make the essential problems of the relation between church and state clear both to the magistrates and the ministers, because he had faced difficulties with this problem before his exile to Strasbourg in 1538. In September of 1541, he made the first draft of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances which was considered most important in ecclesiastical order and government, and submitted it to the Little Council and the Council of the Two Hundred; on the twentieth of November, 1541, it was accepted by the citizens of Geneva.³⁹ With the ecclesiastical authority recognized in this Ecclesiastical Ordinances, he desired to build a firm foundation for the church in Geneva.

But Calvin's honeymoon period after his return to

³⁸Schaff, p. 481

³⁹Letters, I, 292.

Geneva was soon over, and he began to have difficulties and struggles with the authority of the Councils. The first serious contention between the Councils and the Consistory occurred in the Spring of 1543 on the right of excommunication:

While we were met in consistory, the Syndic brought us word that the Senate retained in its own hand the right of excommunication. I immediately replied, that such a decree could only be ratified by my death or banishment.

In May of 1544, he had other problems over the "serious wranglings among my colleagues (pastors),"⁴¹ and the unwillingness of the opponents of Calvin to submit to the authority of the church. He expressed his exasperated feelings concerning the struggles to Farel, "For the second time, I now begin to learn what it is to dwell at Geneva."⁴² At the beginning of 1545, his further difficulties with the magistrates of Geneva were reported to a fellow theologian, Viret; Calvin prepared ten sermons against their evils.⁴³

Calvin's stringent regulations upon the people was one of the outstanding causes for the struggles in Geneva. Even before the reformer came into Geneva, many regulations had been in existence under both Roman and Protestant governments before and after Geneva's independence in 1527.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 377. Supra, Ch. IV. Also see Hughes, p.

48. ⁴¹ Letters, I, 416.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 450.

The regulations which Calvin established for Geneva were austere and seemed unthinkable for the church of the twentieth century. Some examples are cited from the Register of the Genevan Pastors in 1546:

Blasphemies

1. Any person who swears or blasphemes by the body or blood of our Lord, or in some similar way, shall have to kiss the ground on the first occasion; for the second there shall be a penalty of five sous; and for the last he shall be placed in the stocks for one hour.
2. Any person who curses or denies God or his baptism shall on the first occasion be placed on bread and water for nine days; and for the second and third occasions he shall be punished with a more rigorous physical punishment, at the discretion of Messieurs.

Drunkenness

1. People are not to invite one another to excessive drinking under penalty of three sous.
2. Taverns are to be closed during public worship, under penalty of three sous payable by the tavern-keeper; and anyone then entering a tavern shall pay the same amount.
3. If anyone is found drunk he shall pay three sous on the first occasion and shall be summoned before the Consistory; on the second occasion he shall pay the sum of five sous; and on the third he shall be fined ten sous and be put in prison.

Songs and dances

Anyone who sings indecent, dissolute, or outrageous songs or dances the fling or some similar dance shall be imprisoned for three days and shall then be sent before the Consistory.

Games

No one shall play dissolute games or any game for gold or silver or excessive stakes, under penalty of five⁴⁴ sous and the forfeiture of the money staked.

Likewise, Calvin dealt with other areas of worldliness

⁴⁴Hughes, pp. 57-58. Also see Letters, II, 62.

and evils such as: "Superstitions," "Contradiction of the Word," "Usury," "Disturbances," "Ill-will," and "Fornication."⁴⁵ He even went so far as to spell out the number of dishes at each meal, to prohibit certain books and plays, and to dissuade parents from giving their children names of certain Roman Catholic saints he considered superstitious.⁴⁶

In order to check on the citizens' observance of these rules, Calvin set up a committee of investigation which was comprised of Christian laymen, elders who were known as "commis" (delegates).⁴⁷ The delegates assembled once a week on Thursdays with the ministers to find out whether there were any violations of the rules in the city. This gave the Consistory precedence over the department of inspection; according to this system, if the Consistory found a person guilty, he would be sent to the secular government for punishment. Therefore, here is the heart of the whole problem in Calvin's political thought, for this close affinity between church and state assumed that all the citizens of Geneva belonged to the church and were obliged to keep regulations and disciplinary actions of the church.

⁴⁵Hughes, pp. 56-59.

⁴⁶Schaff, pp. 489-490.

⁴⁷Hughes, pp. 47, 59.

Calvin overwhelmingly approved the disciplinary practice in Geneva:

Therefore, discipline is like a bridle to restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ; or like a spur to arouse those of little inclination; and also sometimes like a father's rod to chastise mildly and with the gentleness of⁴⁸ Christ's Spirit those who have more seriously lapsed.

In his letter to the Duke of Somerset in England on the twenty-second of October, 1548, he also recommended the that the Duke punish with the sword disobedient agitators against the king of England and spiritual heretics:

For as doctrine is the soul of the Church for quickening, so discipline and the correction of vices are like the nerves to⁴⁹ sustain the body in a state of health and vigour.

There was to be no partiality; disciplinary measures were applicable to ministers as well as laymen. The ministers of Geneva were not free from civil jurisdictions, and were to be disciplined under the council in the case of civil offences in the same way as the people. For minor vices, they would be corrected by the church.⁵⁰ Calvin considered crimes of ministers more serious than those of common citizens, because they were to be good examples before men. For him, discipline, in case of

⁴⁸Institutes, II, 1230.

⁴⁹Letters, II, 197.

⁵⁰Hughes, p. 39.

excommunication, had a three-fold purpose: the protection of the honour of God and of the church against heresy and corruption, the promotion of ethical justice, and the restoration of an offender to God and to the church.⁵¹

The estimate of numbers that were punished under these stern regulations in Geneva was not small. Between 1542 and 1546, fifty-eight persons were put to death and seventy-six decrees of banishment were pronounced. During the year of 1545 alone, more than twenty men and women were burned alive for their accused witchcraft and a conspiracy to spread the plague.⁵² During the years of 1558 and 1559, there were at least four hundred and fourteen cases of punishment.⁵³ Capital punishment was perfectly legitimate in Calvin's political system.

The responses of the Genevan citizens to Calvin's intense disciplinary measures varied from praise to condemnation according to the people's divergent background and interests. As he had many followers, so he also had many opponents. Calvin had to meet two enemy fronts: political patriots, known as the Libertines, who were liberal in Christian life and religious liberals who were liberal in theology of whom Servetus was the supreme example. In other words, while the Libertines could not

⁵¹Institutes, II, 1232-1233; Also Schaff, p. 487.

⁵²Letters, I, 452.

⁵³Schaff, pp. 492-493.

get along with Calvin's strict regulations for living, Servetus opposed Calvin's trinitarian orthodoxy.

The native political leaders against Calvin detested foreign refugees like Calvin, whose increasing influence in the city threatened their control. Against these Libertines, Calvin wrote a small treatise, Contre la Secte Fantastique et Furieuse des Libertins qui se disent Spirituels⁵⁴ in 1544 which created a sharp cleavage between him and his opponents. In February of 1546 Cartelier, a Libertine, who was one of the violent opponents of Calvin was imprisoned for his invective against the reformer.⁵⁵

In the early part of 1546 there was another conflict between Calvin and Pierre Ameaux, a member of the Little Council. At a dinner party Ameaux, who became intoxicated and extremely glib, invected slurs on Calvin's character. Ameaux was finally brought in to the Little Council for his disgraceful action, and after all these Councils disputed over the method of punishment, he was castigated in an extremely humiliating fashion.⁵⁶

Another conspicuous opposition but on a larger scale, came from the Perrinist family and party. An influential member of the Guillermins, Amy Perrin had played a major role in bringing Calvin back to Geneva from exile,⁵⁷

⁵⁴Letters, I, 454.

⁵⁵Ibid., II, 33.

⁵⁶Walker, pp. 295-297.

⁵⁷Letters, I, 356.

but later became his outspoken critic. Perrin's father-in-law, Francis Favre, who was a wealthy man, and his son Gaspard, were men of loose morals. Both were convicted and punished; the grandfather for committing adultery and his grandson for disobeying the strict Sabbath rules. In addition the Captain-General, Perrin, his wife Francisea, and the Syndic Amblard Corna were also accused for dancing at a betrothal party. Corna apologized for his conduct, but the Perrinist family took a defiant attitude and became a real challenge to Calvin and the Consistory. Calvin's efforts to admonish Amy Perrin to be steadfast in the Lord bore no fruit.⁵⁹ The struggle continued between Calvin and Perrin's family. Francisea openly denounced the right of the Consistory on the matters of court and was finally arrested, imprisoned, but escaped. Perrin himself later was imprisoned for his attacks on the Consistory but also escaped from prison like his wife.⁶⁰

Coupled with the Perrinist-Calvin controversy, Jacques Gruet, a close Libertine friend of Amy Perrin, sided with Perrin against Calvin. A letter was found in the pulpit of St. Peter's in which the lives of Calvin and his associates were threatened unless they agreed to

⁵⁸Ibid., II, 53.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 57.

⁶⁰Ibid., II, 122, 114, 147.

become silent: "When you irritate us too much we explode. . . . When too much has been endured, revenge is taken. . . . We no longer wish to have so many masters."⁶¹ The investigation showed that it was Gruet's writing. Also found in his house was a similar letter of accusation in Latin in which "the whole of Scripture is laughed at, Christ aspersed, the immortality of the soul called a dream and a fable, and finally the whole of religion torn in pieces."⁶² He was arrested and finally decapitated on July 26, 1547.⁶³

Servetus's Sabellian teaching in his De Trinitatis Erroribus (1531) and Christianismi Restitutio (1553) created a storm of theological controversy in the Genevan Church. After he settled in Vienne, France, a correspondence developed between him and Calvin. Servetus was finally arrested and condemned to death by the French Catholic Inquisition. Calvin wrote Farel in Neuchâtel on February 13, 1546, that if Servetus passed through Geneva, he would not be able to leave the city safely.⁶⁴ With the help of his friends, Servetus escaped from prison and slipped into Geneva secretly, but he was noticed by the

⁶¹ Eugene Choisy, La Theocratie a Geneve au Temps de Calvin (Geneva, 1897), p. 92. Quoted by Georgia Harkness, John Calvin, The Man and His Ethics (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1931), pp. 36, 123.

⁶² Letters, II, 123.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 128.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 33.

Consistory and re-arrested in Geneva.⁶⁵

Calvin tried to explain the errors of Servetus,⁶⁶ but the latter's attitude toward the former was obstinate and rebellious.⁶⁷ Calvin then received permission from the Council to publish a pamphlet against Servetus which eventually gave the right to the magistrates to punish heretics with the sword.⁶⁸ After failing to persuade Servetus, the Consistory handed him over to the civil authority for trial. He was condemned to death.⁶⁹

It is interesting to note the supporting responses of the reformers throughout Europe. Calvin wrote to Farel, "I hope that the sentence of death will at least be passed upon him; but I desire that the severity of the punishment may be mitigated."⁷⁰ The same idea was also expressed by his fellow reformers: Bucer, Oecolampadius, Melancthon and Bullinger.⁷¹

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 33. Also see Harkness, p. 40.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 436. Also Letters, III, 35; Hughes, p. 19.

⁶⁷Letters, IV, 409.

⁶⁸Ibid., II, 447-448; III, 18, 20.

⁶⁹Ibid., II, 435; Hughes, pp. 223, 284, 290.

⁷⁰Letters, II, 417.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 436; III, 157.

Bucer commented, "Servetus deserved something worse than death."⁷²

Farel replied to Calvin:

In desiring to mitigate the severity of his punishment, you act the part of a friend to a man who is most hostile to you. But I beseech you so to manage the matter that no one whatever may rashly dare to publish new dogmas, and throw all things into confusion with impunity for such a length of time as he has done. When I read Paul's statement that he did not refuse to suffer death if he had in any way deserved it, I saw clearly that I must be prepared to suffer death if I should teach anything contrary to the doctrine of piety. And I added, that I should be most worthy of any punishment whatever, if I should seduce any one from the faith and doctrine of Christ.⁷³

Melanchthon wrote to Calvin, "In my opinion, your magistrates have acted justly, in putting to death a blasphemer, convicted by due process of law."⁷⁴ Viret and Beza also gave their consent to Servetus' death penalty.⁷⁵ Finally on October 27, 1553, Servetus was burned alive at Champel by the civil authorities.⁷⁶ Although this execution received support from the majority

⁷²John Calvin, A Selection on the Most Celebrated Sermons (Phil.: James A. Bill, 1849), p. 12. Quote is taken from the introduction extracted from John Mackenzie's Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Calvin.

⁷³Letters, II, 417.

⁷⁴Selection, p. 12.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Letters, II, 435; Hughes, p. 18.

of the people in the city, there was much criticism to the Consistory within and outside of Geneva.⁷⁷

The outstanding opponent of Servetus' execution was Sebastian Castellio, a Calvinist theologian and humanist whom Calvin converted to Protestantism in Strasbourg in 1540 and who became the rector of the college in Geneva. He was very critical of the idea of capital punishment against heretics; against Calvin's thesis that the kings ought to protect orthodox doctrines with the sword, Castellio argued in his Reply to Calvin's Book:

To kill a man is not to defend a doctrine, but to kill a man. When the Genevans killed Servetus they did not defend a doctrine; they killed a man. The defense of doctrine is not the affairs of the magistrate but of the doctor.

He again quoted from The Plea of David Joris for Servetus to prove his opposition to Calvin:

If the aforesaid Servetus is a heretic or a sectary before God . . . we should inflict on him no harm in any of his members, but admonish him in a friendly way and at most banish him from the city . . . that he may come to a better mind and no longer molest your territory. No one should go beyond this

⁷⁷Walker, p. 343.

⁷⁸Sebastian Castellio, Concerning Heretics: Whether They Are to be Persecuted and How They Are to be Treated. A Collection of the Opinions of Learned Men Both Ancient and Modern, edited and translated by Roland H. Bainton, (New York: Octagon Books, Inc., 1965), p. 271. Anonymous work attributed to Sebastian Castellio.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 307-308.

The executions of Gruet and Servetus intensified the struggle between the Perrinist party and Calvin's supporters. Street riots and fighting often broke out between these two factions.⁸⁰ At one of the street riots on May 18, 1555, a Perrinist threw a stone and injured a member of the Little Council who was pro-Calvin. The attacker and his associates were arrested and executed by the civil government.

Meanwhile, Calvin and the pro-Calvin Councils thought that one of the ways to strengthen their position in the struggle was to admit more French Protestant refugees and to grant them citizenship. The Councils which had a majority support for Calvin also realized the importance of drastic action lest the struggles might result in civil war, so they made a rapid decision to arrest the Perrinists⁸¹ and later confiscated their properties.⁸² With three others, Perrin fled and his party was finally extirpated from the city.⁸³ Consequently, Calvin's influence became dominant in Geneva from the latter half of 1555 on.

⁸⁰Letters, III, 185, 192.

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 192-196, 205.

⁸²Ibid., p. 309.

⁸³Ibid., p. 198; Harkness, pp. 47-49.

Establishment of the "Christian Commonwealth" under
Calvin (1555-1564)

Calvin's victory over his opposition and enemies brought the final peak of his Genevan "theocracy." Throughout the last nine years of his life, his scope of ministry was very much wider than before. While he was struggling with political and religious opponents up to 1555, he was busy in defending his religious convictions against the Libertines and the heretics in Geneva; now with much freedom he was corresponding with other cities and countries such as Frankfort, Paris, Wittenburg, Poland, Navarre, and Italy for the establishment and edification of the Reformation Church. With its spiritual outreach, Geneva was used as the center of Reformed Protestantism in Europe.

For the city of Geneva itself Calvin concentrated his effort on further moral purification with a tightening of ethical codes. The rules and regulations of the Genevan Church were carefully carried out. The Councils of Geneva were in one accord with Calvin and fully supported his ecclesiastical activities. There might have been some inward dissatisfaction in some members of the Councils, but the authority of Calvin was not outwardly challenged. On Christmas Day 1559, he received the honor of citizenship of Geneva from the Magistracy (for the recognition of his outstanding work.⁸⁴

⁸⁴Harkness, p. 53.

During the last nine years of his life, Calvin spent much time and effort on the Genevan Academy. Although this institution was founded in 1541, it had its formal inauguration in 1559.⁸⁵ He imported Theodore Beze and Pierre Viret,⁸⁶ who were expelled from Lousanne under the Bernese government, and other professors as Francois Berauld for Greek, Jean Tagaut for philosophy and Antoine Chevalier for Hebrew.⁸⁷ Beze was the right-hand man to Calvin and succeeded to the reformer's work after his death.

The Genevan Academy became the educational center of the Reformed Church in Europe, for many students came to the Academy from all parts of Europe and spread the Reformation in their countries. With this Christian educational institution Geneva supplied ministers to Paris and neighboring cities.⁸⁸

Calvin devoted his last few years to preaching, lecturing and writing various commentaries and tracts,⁸⁹ but his long ill-health from the fall of 1558 to the spring of 1559 kept him from active engagements and left

⁸⁵Walker, pp. 361, 363.

⁸⁶Letters, IV, 21; Hughes, pp. 331, 342.

⁸⁷Walker, pp. 363-364.

⁸⁸Letters, III, 127, 392; IV, 242; Hughes, pp. 318-319.

⁸⁹Wendel, pp. 376-377.

him a sick man for the remaining years.⁹⁰ By April of 1564, completely broken down physically, he penned his last letter to Farel, "I draw my breath with difficulty, and every moment I am in expectation of breathing my last breath."⁹¹

The establishment of the "Christian Commonwealth" in Geneva was directly due to Calvin's spiritual leadership and discipline. There have been various comments on Calvin and his Geneva from criticism to praise: some criticized him as the "pope or king or caliph" of Geneva, while others praised him for establishing the ideal Christian city.⁹² John Knox highly lauded Calvin for the spiritual city of Geneva where "is the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the Apostles."⁹³ Regardless of these different opinions on Calvin's Geneva, the city certainly had become a model of a Christian city in Europe which showed both conflicts and harmonies between the spiritual and temporal powers.

⁹⁰Letters, IV, 31; Walker, p. 434.

⁹¹Letters, IV, 364.

⁹²Schaff, p. 518.

⁹³Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

In the political thought of Calvin the Scriptural view of the state as the divinely sanctioned institution is the foundation upon which he builds his political ideas. God through the means of the state protects His people and the Church of Jesus Christ on earth and requires man's passive obedience to the state. It is God Himself who rules through the agency of the state over the affairs of man with His sovereign power; man is His instrument to fulfill His divine purpose.

Historical background of the sixteenth century also affected Calvin's view on the relationship between church and state. The political absolutism of France and the Holy Roman Empire of the sixteenth century drove him to the conviction that the church must be separated and freed from the dominant influence of the state; he strongly emphasized the clear separation of the spiritual realm from the temporal. Furthermore, conflicts and confusion from the medieval doctrine of the papal supremacy over the state strengthened the reformer's conviction of the separation of two powers. To Calvin the church must be independent in its own spiritual and moral affairs from the pressure of the temporal government and should not exchange offices with the state.

On the other hand, Calvin still was under the

influence of medieval political thought that the state with its coercive power must protect the church and its pure doctrine. He was dominantly influenced by the medieval conception of Corpus Christianum. This latter thought is seemingly paradoxical to the former to the modern political mind. For Calvin, in the establishment of a Christianized city, the church and state ought to work together assisting each other. While the state provides physical protection of the church with coercive power, the church provides the spiritual and moral fiber. It was acceptable to Calvin because he was basically dealing with the Christian nations of Europe.

Historians differ in their interpretations of Calvin's view on this matter. However, their differences of opinion do not rest on the reformer's theoretical teaching on the distinctive separation of the spiritual and temporal jurisdictions but rather on the question of whether he had really carried out this principle in practice in the Christianized city of Geneva. Some historians state that Calvin in reality practiced his authority not only over the church but over the state as the "pope or the tyrant" of Geneva, but others believe that Calvin's influence in Geneva was purely spiritual, moral, and intellectual rather than temporal.

Calvin was deeply convinced that the church ought to keep the authority over the spiritual and moral affairs, and was willing to give his life for that principle. This

was aptly expressed in his conflict with the Council of Two Hundred over the right of excommunication. This right of excommunication was explicitly stated in the Ecclesiastical Ordinances that it belonged to the authority of the church but it was taken away by the Council in 1537 and was returned to the church in 1555.

Moral discipline, according to Calvin, was another area which was under the jurisdiction of the church because it had to do with the purity of the church. The church had to judge whether a person was guilty of moral sins, and the delinquents had to be sent to the Consistory for trial. If he was guilty, he was handed over to the temporal power for punishment, because the church had no coercive power. This whole idea of moral discipline was in the medieval tradition and brought very serious conflicts between the Libertines and Calvin and the heretics and Calvin.

The Consistory, constituted by six pastors and twelve laymen, was the representative organization of the spiritual power in Geneva which showed the close inter-relationship between spiritual and temporal authorities and exhibited mutual assistance for the purpose of establishing a Christian society.

Although Calvin believed in both elements of the church-state relationship, the separation and interrelation, his whole motivation was purely spiritual and moral rather than temporal. Even after he became the dominant

figure in Geneva from 1555-1564 he did not have any ambition to hold any political office or any greed for temporal power. He wanted to execute spiritual principles and moral purity to make Geneva a truly Christian city.

Calvin favored the aristocratic-democratic form of government, that is the aristocratic form with a limited power through popular election, and considered constitutionalism against absolutism most important. This mixed form of government was exemplified in Geneva. But he vigorously opposed the idea of popular sovereignty in democracy, because it would create confusion and anarchy. He did not object to the elected monarchical government of Israel, because God instituted it for His chosen people, but he saw a great danger in monarchy falling into the form of tyranny and absolutism.

Modern political scientists recognize the importance of Calvin's democratic spirit taught in his writings and exemplified in Geneva, but they differ again on the question of how much Calvin and Calvinism have influenced modern democracy. There is no doubt that Calvin's democratic spirit is quite different from democracy today. This question provides a whole new area of research for Calvin scholars, but this much can be said that his political thought is very significant in helping the development of modern democracy.

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