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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

CALVIN'S ETHICS.

AN ABSTRACT FROM THE GERMAN OF LIC. THEOL. P. LOBSTEIN,
UNIV. STRASBURG.

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[PREFATORY NOTE.—The tract of which the following Article is an abstract is styled “A Contribution to the History of Christian Ethics.”¹ It is furnished with copious notes, including both quotations from Calvin’s writing and numerous references to them, in substantiation of the author’s positions. It would therefore afford valuable aid in the prosecution of further researches upon this subject.

The subject of ethics as viewed by German scholars, and treated in this Essay, does not correspond to what we call moral philosophy. Ethics are viewed as a part of systematic theology, and are derived from the Scriptures. “The science of morals,” says Tholuck (*Encyclopaedia, Bib. Sac.*, Vol. i. p. 189), “is the representation of a Christian life as it is regulated by doctrinal faith.” Ethics as viewed by our author explain how the Christian life, originating in the divine election, develops itself, what is its law, what its fruits, what its aim. This may be styled a practical way of treating the subject, and may be employed as a source of homiletical material. But the question, In what does virtue consist? or, What principle entering into an act makes it virtuous? is never fairly raised, and never explicitly answered. It would be a valuable service to philosophy if some one would subject Calvin’s works to an examination with a view to obtaining his answer to this question, and thus do scientifically what our author does practically.]

¹ Die Ethik Calvins in ihren Grundzügen entworfen. — Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der christlichen Ethik von Lic. Theol. P. LOBSTEIN, Priv. Doc. an der Universität Strassburg. Strassburg: C. F. Schmidt (Friedr. Bull), 1877, p. 151.

THE great activity which the new theology has displayed in the department of Christian ethics has not extended to the history of that department. For this little has been done, and it still remains far behind the history of doctrines. Even the preliminary work is not yet done, and there is need of special and thorough investigations among the original authorities, for only in this way can a complete and practical exhibition of the history be rendered possible. Such is the contribution to the history of Protestant ethics which the following essay would make. With the exception of isolated remarks, nothing has yet been written upon the fundamental principles of Calvin's ethics. That such an investigation will profit us, it is hoped the following pages will show. Certainly it ought to be profitable to gain a clear idea of the ethical principles of a man who through the moral character of his theology and his church polity exercises so significant an influence, and who has so ineffaceably stamped his own individuality upon his followers.

The materials for the following investigation have been drawn from various sources. Calvin has no treatise explicitly upon ethics, unless we thus denominate certain chapters of the Institutes (iii. 6-10). These chapters are of great value, and must be viewed and estimated as the foundation of every exposition of Calvin's ethical system; yet there are additional ethical materials even in the Institutes. The explanations of the Decalogue, of penitence, of prayer, of predestination, spread before us ideas of great weight and critical value. But we must not confine our investigation to the Institutes. Calvin's polemic and dogmatic writings, which, in consequence of their opposition to errors of Romanism and of Libertinism of an ethical as truly as of a dogmatic nature, exhibit his peculiar views; his polemic and dogmatic works published in the Corpus Reformatorum, his commentaries, and finally his homilies and sermons, are all sources of valuable materials.

The specially ethical chapters of the third book of the Institutes teach us that *the subject considered by ethics* is not

man in general, as possessed of a moral nature, but the believing and regenerated Christian. The motives which draw us to the love of righteousness; the laws of the Christian life; self-denial, in which the life of the Christian peculiarly consists, and which reaches its summit in the bearing of the cross; reflection upon and preparation for the future life; and, finally, the right use of the present life and its good things,—these are the fundamental thoughts which Calvin discusses in these two chapters. True, they form in no way a complete system of ethics, but they display the essential features of a system considered from the specifically Christian point of view.

Calvin is on his guard all along against confounding Christian ethics with the philosophic systems of morals. In maintaining this guard, he is assisted by the direct opposition which he sustains to the heathen philosophy. He never speaks of the Cynics except with derision and contempt. Aristotle is as little honored; he is always the cold advocate of the error of *liberum arbitrium*. The Stoics receive no less sharp and decided treatment. Plato alone, and occasionally Cicero, find grace with the stern judge of heathenism. Calvin does not deny that Plato, like the Scriptures, puts the highest good in likeness to God. He confesses that that heathen, while groping in the darkness, has gained an imperfect view of the highest idea of the beautiful, the full knowledge of which will fill man with irrepressible enthusiasm; but he remarks that this semblance of truth, these right thoughts only make Plato more inexcusable and responsible. He has no sure ground of faith; his wisdom is only “flame and smoke”; his virtue is as defective as his wisdom.

The *method* of Calvin, which is the method of the Scriptures, is less affected and rigid than that of heathen ethics, or that of the scholastics. It first teaches us how the love of righteousness is instilled into our hearts, and then unfolds to us the law—the decalogue—as the rule of life.

The *contents* of the discussion may be distributed under the three heads, Principle, Purpose, and Motive.

With the philosophers the *principle* of virtue is the free will (*liberum arbitrium*). They know nothing of the power of a fall and of a fundamental perversion and corruption of man's nature. They are ignorant of the necessity of a new birth originating with the Holy Spirit. And so they are able only to point man back to himself, and direct him to follow reason or nature, though the former is blind, and the latter sinful.

The philosophers are also ignorant of the true *purpose* of the moral conflict. This is to glorify God. This is the specifically religious element of the case, and this it is which Calvin misses in philosophic ethics, and which is to be found only in that system of morals revealed by God himself.

Finally, the *motives* for action over which philosophy is engaged are entirely powerless and ineffective. How unproductive are exhortations to live according to nature or reason! or, rather, how do they serve to confirm man in error! On the other hand, how powerful and strong is the true divine instruction! How grandly does Christianity understand how to lead us to the love of righteousness! The holy Scriptures teach us to know God as the Holy One; they reveal him as our Father in Christ; they move us to thankfulness through the benefits conferred upon us in the Redeemer; they set before us in Christ a perfect example. This example is not a condemning ideal, which stands over us, ever unattained; for God himself imparts to us the power to follow Christ. Christianity is never really received by a man till it descends into his soul, has its seat in his inmost heart, and transforms him into likeness to itself. Such a reception of the truth into the innermost life of the soul, by which it is renewed and born again, is possible by the grace of God. God shows us our duty, and he confers power to perform it.

Adopting, now, an arrangement suggested by Calvin himself, let us plunge at once into the subject.

I. THE OBJECTIVE FOUNDATION OF THE NEW LIFE, OR ELECTION.

In the ethical chapters of the Institutes Calvin lets fall certain remarks upon the relation of predestination to ethics. These remarks are of great importance; for, as the eternal election is the divine principle of faith in man, it becomes also the objective foundation of the new life in the Christian. It is, therefore, in accordance with the demands of our subject that we begin with election.

It is evident that with Calvin the doctrine of predestination has not arisen from philosophic needs, but from religious interests. In this doctrine he sees the only adequate expression of the truth that the salvation of man is founded exclusively in the grace of God. Only by the doctrine of election is the mercy of God set forth in its full light, and honored in a way worthy of God. No doctrine is so humbling to man as this. And no doctrine is more truly a doctrine given, in complete distinction from all philosophy, by revelation, and one specifically Christian.

But though the doctrine of election corresponds to the pious consciousness of the believer, which refers his own volition and action to the good pleasure of God, and lays his eternal salvation in the hand of the Almighty Maker and the All-good Father, are not the equally important interests of the moral consciousness compromised by it? How does predestination harmonize with the commands of conscience? Calvin must himself acknowledge that such questions do not arise entirely from an idle desire for controversy, or perverse irreligion, but may press hard upon earnest and upright souls. Such inquirers he directs to Augustine's writings, and attempts himself to soothe and satisfy them. And yet he sometimes forgets what he has elsewhere acknowledged, and charges such questionings upon the impure and impious motives of the questioners.

Of the three principal objections which Calvin answers, the first is the following:

1. If we are from eternity ordained to salvation or condemnation, all spontaneity and independence in human affairs are entirely removed; for who can change the absolute, irrevocable decrees of God, or cause them to be retracted? What becomes of the moral responsibility of the individual, if his acts are not to be ultimately ascribed to his own determination, but must be referred to the operation of God, who determines all things?

Calvin does not seek the solution of this difficulty in the "figment" of the divine foreknowledge, which pretends to recognize fully the freedom and responsibility of man. He decidedly rejects such an answer as a superficial evasion. God does not foresee our deeds and works (there is only an eternal now for the eternal God who rules superior to time), but determines and ordains them. He has not merely foreseen the fall of the first man and the ruin of the race, but positively willed and decreed it. None the less has man through his own guilt drawn eternal condemnation upon himself; for the ground of the same is the corruption of man's nature. The perdition of men depends upon the predestination of God in such a way that the material cause is found in men themselves: Man falls under the providence of God, but falls by his own fault. The antinomy expressed in these words should be removed, or at least relieved, by the thought that the God-ordained necessity in consequence of which reprobates sin does not exclude voluntary and deliberate evil purpose. Men follow their evil and ungodly desires. Their ungodliness God directs to the fulfilment of his judgments. The same is true of the elect. Their acts also bear a double character, and present a twofold appearance; for all virtues which they practise are God's works, and Augustine says well that God, when he rewards the pious, crowns in them his own work.

It need scarcely be remarked that, in spite of these explanations and limitations, the difficulty is not resolved, and that, incontestably, the foundations of Calvin's ethics are insecure. As Calvin himself says, in combatting the Liber-

tines : " This point conceded, we must either impute sin to God, or conclude that there is no sin in the universe, since there is nothing which is not done by God."

2. The second objection is closely connected with the first. Many in wanton self-deception imagine that they may remain calm and secure in their sins and lusts. If they belong to the elect their sins will be no hinderance to their salvation ; for the decree of God must be unfailingly executed. " ' God knows,' say they, ' what he has once decreed concerning us. If he has decreed salvation, he will lead us to it in his own time ; if he has assigned death, we shall in vain strive against it.' "

Against such a misuse of divine grace Calvin exclaims with great warmth : " Such men are not to be taught, but to be smitten with severe reproaches as with the blow of a mallet." The whole order of gracious election is wantonly perverted. We are elected by God expressly in order that we may live a holy and unspotted life. Holiness of life cannot be separated from the grace of election ; on the contrary, the latter reveals, exhibits, and proves itself by the fact that it awakes in the elect a new zeal for holiness. For God justifies and renews those whom he has elected, while he imparts to them the powers of a godly life. The decree of the eternal election of grace does not remain external to, and impending over the elect ; but it develops itself in their life, and becomes a spiritual force within them. Where holiness is lacking, its presupposition, election, must necessarily be absent. He who would separate the former from the latter is as foolish as those who would separate the light from the sun.

3. The third " calumny " which is brought against the doctrine of predestination in the name of ethical science is this, that if the dogma of election is true, all exhortations to a pious life are useless.

The answer to this objection has already been given in the preceding lines. In further answer we may refer to the apostle Paul. He, like a true herald of the divine glory, has

continually proclaimed the eternal election, in defiance of motives of policy, or rational considerations; was he in consequence feeble and cold in his moral exhortations and admonitions? And when Jesus himself declares, No man can come to me, except it be given him of the Father, does he therefore put less emphasis upon the duty of faith? "Let therefore that preaching which leads men to faith have free course, and let it continue to the end."

The preaching of the gospel must preserve its full power. The Christian proclamation of salvation so far from being in the least nullified by the divine election, is greatly assisted and strengthened by it. Election works itself out through calling; but the calling comes to individuals through the preaching of the gospel, to the elect unto blessing and salvation, to the reprobate unto indifference and eternal condemnation. Yet preaching is not degraded through election to a meaningless, powerless act, — it is the God-ordained means of the calling, for we are most certainly to seek and find our election and calling, our justification and sanctification, not apart from Christ, but in him alone.

It is evident from this defence of the doctrine of election from the point of view of ethics that the divine election according to Calvin's view gives no advantage to moral indifference, but on the contrary, furnishes a very powerful motive for holy life and conduct. The argument from the fact of regeneration to the eternal gracious election of God is continually and emphatically employed alike as the method of self-examination, and of assurance of salvation to the believer. "To know that we are elected of God we are to inquire whether the Spirit has sanctified us." "God has elected us "to dwell in us by his Holy Spirit, and to unite us to himself in perfect righteousness." And history affords confirmation and illustration of these remarks. Those churches which were controlled by Calvin's influence, and upon which he has imprinted the stamp of his spirit and his doctrine, exhibit a multitude of princely characters, in whom the heroism of the man and the humility of the child are united in so high a

degree that they exhibit in unclouded splendor the moral beauty of Christian virtue. The unity and compactness of moral character formed under the influence of the doctrine of perseverance exhibit the working of that doctrine upon the individual. It directs the Christian's eye ever to the object of his election, because Christians are the witnesses and the agents of divine grace, and lays upon him the task of making word and deed, life and death, correspond to his glorious calling.

We see clearly now that to Calvin and his contemporaries the misuse of the doctrine of predestination must appear not only impious, but also senseless. The excited tone in which Calvin in particular contends against the arguments of his adversaries presented above, arises not from his own secret difficulties, but rather from holy indignation, — yes, from surprise and astonishment at the perverted sense of those unfortunate men whose blindness is a sin, a work of the "liar from the beginning." From them is this sacred mystery hidden; but to those who are saved is it the substance of the proclamation of the whole gospel, the ground of their expectation and fruition of salvation, the God-implanted root of their new life. To this election — to the eternal decree of the merciful God — the believer refers his faith, and the regenerated his regeneration. It is the objective foundation of his whole life and work.

II. THE SUBJECTIVE PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW LIFE, OR FAITH.

Calvin's whole discussion of this subject is so controlled by his contest with the Romish church that he has failed to give us a critical judgment upon the psychological and ethical relations of faith and works. The psychological criticism is always merged in the presentation of the religious doctrine of justification.

1. The question before us is: How do good works spring from faith? The first answer is this, that Christ, received by faith, is given to us by God not only for justification, but also for sanctification. In consequence of its importance we here translate the principal passage in full.

“You cannot apprehend the righteousness of Christ by faith except you apprehend also his sanctification. For he was given to us for righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, redemption (1 Cor. i. 30). Therefore Christ justifies no one whom he does not at the same time sanctify. These benefits are connected by a perpetual and inseparable bond, so that he redeems those whom his wisdom illuminates; whom he redeems, them he also justifies; whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies. But since the question is only of justification and sanctification, let us confine ourselves to these. Though we distinguish between them, yet Christ contains both in himself. Do you wish to obtain righteousness in Christ? You ought first to possess Christ. But you cannot possess him except you are made a partaker of his sanctification, because he cannot be separated into portions. Since, therefore, the Lord gives us these benefits to be enjoyed only by bestowing himself upon us, he gives them both at the same time, never one without the other. Thus clear is it how true it is that we are justified not without works, nor yet through works, since in partaking of Christ sanctification is involved no less than justification.”

The answer given in this passage to our question how the Christian becomes a partaker in the righteousness and sanctification of Christ is that Christ received through faith into consciousness becomes the motive and the principle of good works in the believer. The remark that faith is the root of good works is therefore only a figure of speech. Faith is not itself the power and impulse to the new life. It renews and sanctifies only in so far as it is the organ of Christ, who renews and sanctifies. Yet the psychological means of connection between faith and works is not given. Not even does the Geneva Catechism — which retains the formula, Faith is the root of which are produced good works — attempt to explain it.

2. The second answer to our question is afforded by an idea common to both Luther and Calvin, but more frequent in the latter. With both the starting-point is justifying faith.

This faith makes our works good, that is, pleasing to God. If we are declared righteous by God upon the ground of our faith, so are also our works good in God's sight, because of the righteousness of faith. After our sins are forgiven, our good works derive so much from Christ, and their imperfection is so compensated by his purity, that they are reputed just. These works which *pass* for righteous, *are* righteous, and the title "good works," may be applied to them in full right. The great principle of Luther: "It is impossible that a work should be good, before the person is good and acceptable," lies at the foundation of Calvin's whole argument, and is often expressly declared.

We now see that faith is the principle of the new life, and of good works so far as it makes our person acceptable before God, and, in consequence of this, gives our works favor in God's eyes. Faith is conceived in this, as in the trains of thought already considered, as a merely receptive organ, and this phase of the idea Calvin frequently and intentionally presents. Yet it is not made clear how good works necessarily flow from faith, for though Calvin carries over forensic imputation from the person of the believer to his works, yet he does not explain how far faith of itself advances the new life, and how far it is not only a receptive form, but also an efficient principle. His "middle term,"—the ingrafting into the body of Christ,—does not help us. It forms the necessary condition of justification and also of the new birth, but it does not resolve our difficulty. Calvin, as well as Luther and Melancthon, is unsatisfactory at this point, and his remarks are only unproved statements.

It was highly unfortunate that Calvin summed up the material of morals under the conception of good works. On the one hand the plural form of this expression prevented him from conceiving the problem of life as a closely connected whole, and on the other the conception of works confined the attention to the most external side of morals. Calvin, also, attempted to dismiss his adversaries, with their objection that gratuitous justification was a morally perilous

doctrine, too easily and simply. His doctrine of the necessary efficiency of faith was left incomplete and shorn of its effectiveness. He is compelled to fall back upon the lives of his followers to secure the support which the theoretical development of his system should have supplied.

III. THE CONDITION AND PRESUPPOSITION OF THE NEW LIFE, OR CHRISTIAN FREEDOM.

The freedom of the Christian is the condition and presupposition of the new, Christian life in so far as this, that only he who is declared righteous, and received into the company of God's children by divine grace, is able and inclined to fulfil the law, and perform the obedience demanded by God. And this freedom, as it develops itself in obedience to Christ, becomes the means of glorifying our life, and converting it into a free service of God.

We are by nature children of wrath and excluded from the kingdom of God. Our reception into this kingdom is, upon God's side, a free act of grace, an adoption founded in his eternal decree of love. Subjectively, adoption is secured through faith, in consequence of which the believer is engrafted into the body of Christ. The believer becomes thereby pleasing to God through Jesus Christ, and the blessed consciousness of sonship arises within him. Upon the ground of the divine decree of salvation, made effective in Christ, he knows that he is eternally beloved by and reconciled with God. In association with the Redeemer his condition is no longer one of servitude, but of the freedom of sons.

In the first edition of the Institutes Calvin did not treat of Christian freedom in connection with the doctrine of justification and the new birth. Subsequent editions remedied this fault, but freedom is everywhere presented in a purely negative sense, and restricted to release from sin and the law. The three constitutive elements of Christian freedom, — freedom of conscience from the law as a condition of acceptance with God ; freedom from the law as a galling yoke ; freedom in respect to external observances, — comprise only negative

freedom from the dominion of the law over the conscience. This reduces freedom to an appendix of justification.

Of special importance for ethics is the third point which Calvin unfolds in his treatment of Christian freedom, — freedom in respect to external observances. This is treated practically rather than theoretically, and in this connection the topic of *σκάνδαλα*, — stumbling-blocks, — is introduced. While Calvin remarks that freedom in and of itself, and the use of freedom, are two distinct things, he confines himself principally to the methods of treatment of the apostle Paul. He emphatically disapproves of those who in the exercise of their freedom pay no attention to the conscience and the faith of their weak brethren. He makes a distinction between the kinds of offences, or motives which lead to falling and sinning. Scandal is said to be *given* in anything in which the fault proceeds from the author of that thing; scandal is said to be *taken* when a thing occurring in some way not of evil design, nor unsuitably, is seized upon thorough malevolence, or some sinister and evil disposition of the mind, for an occasion of offence. With scandals of the latter kind the Christian need not trouble himself. It is enough that he takes care to discover who are the honest but weak brethren, and who are the Pharisees who spy out our liberty to reduce us to slavery. Only towards the former is loving indulgence a duty. Thus the use of our freedom has in the well-being and edification of our neighbor its standard and boundaries.

But Calvin will not have these boundaries extended too widely. The Christian must not out of love to his neighbor diminish or abandon the right or the honor of God. If he live among the Papists he is not to acquiesce in superstition and error out of indulgence to the weak. They who do these things are self-deceived.

Calvin must now answer a twofold objection. On the one hand the Papists maintained that the talk about freedom was only a pretext for licentiousness, while contempt and disregard of the commands and prohibitions of the church opened the door for all kinds of excesses. These attacks Calvin

met with a double reply : first, the apostles themselves did not know of these churchly rules, so the objection raised against evangelical Christians applies to them ; again, experience would show that the representatives and followers of the pure gospel, are in no respect indifferent to the moral advance of Christendom. But a second danger menaced the church from the attack of the Libertines, Fanatics, and Anabaptists. These fancied themselves called to a liberty which gave an open door to the flesh, and so took Christian freedom as a mantle for their lusts and excesses. Calvin declared that these men did not understand the freedom of the gospel. The freedom offered to us by Christ not only releases us from the yoke and the curse of the law, but also sets us free from the power of sin and from the dominion of our lusts and passions, which strive against the soul. It is a spiritual good, whose power and effect consists in the soothing of the conscience. In reply, Calvin's opponents urge that in their sense freedom is the necessary consequence of that abrogation of the law effected in the death of Christ and proclaimed by Paul.

By this reply, as well as by the fact that Calvin includes the whole circumference of his doctrine of duties and virtues — that is, his whole ethics — in the decalogue, are we naturally brought to the decalogue as our next topic. But let us observe, ere we pass on, that Calvin never attains a positive definition of Christian freedom, and that, in consequence, the ethical result of this doctrine remains unmeaning and ineffective. With Calvin Christian freedom never comes to its full rights.

IV. THE RULE OF THE NEW LIFE, OR THE DECALOGUE.

As is well known, the Reformers limit their treatment of ethical materials, for the most part, to what they have to say in explanation and development of the decalogue. This holds a very prominent place in their teaching, and consequently the materials for this portion of our investigation are much more abundant than for those points already treated of.

Of all the Reformers Calvin most strongly presents the decalogue as the sum and substance of all ethics. The ten commandments are the rule of life which God prescribes for us. In them we have the perfect standard of all righteousness. They embrace all that belongs to piety and virtue. Through obedience to them is our moral task entirely fulfilled. Their high importance appears from this, — that in the Pentateuch God emphatically repeats the law given upon Sinai, and pledges himself to judge the world at the last day thereby. And though the writings of the prophets and the apostles, and even the words of our Lord himself, contain more ample directions than those given in the decalogue, they never make any real addition to the decalogue, but only develop and unfold the contents of the Mosaic law, and bring us back to it from every seeming departure.

Calvin appeals to the fact that Christ himself summed up the whole duty of man in love to God and love to man. To this twofold duty correspond the two tables of the law, since the first contains our duties toward God; the second, those toward men. Calvin attaches great weight to the division of the law into two tables. On the one hand, he sees in the fact that our duties toward men are placed below those toward God the chief distinction of the Christian system of morals from the systems of heathenism, which are content with securing an honorable life among our fellow-men. On the other hand, he reproaches the Papists with having slighted our duties toward our fellow-men by having improperly exalted the first table, and particularly by their purely external conception and practice of the technical "service of God." The two facts of a distinction and of a union of the two tables of the law under one will of God, show, farther, how religion and morality are connected, and how they proceed side by side. True, this last point is not clearly and sharply expressed by Calvin; but it lies at the foundation of his whole view of the subject.

It was made possible for Calvin to refer all Christian duties and virtues to the Mosaic law, or to derive them from

it, by the system of *interpretation* which he applied to it. To these purely negative precepts he gives a positive contents. To commandments which are specifically limited he ascribes a universal application. Entirely external statutes are expanded into spiritual laws, and the moral law becomes substituted for the statutory judicial law. All this is done by means of a system of interpretation derived from the Sermon on the Mount. For example, the first commandment of the second table commands us to honor our father and mother. This duty of honor is extended by Calvin to include the duty of obedience toward all magistrates by the following logical argument. The law is the perfect standard of moral life. If it contained no direction in reference to magistrates, it would be incomplete. But this conclusion cannot be admitted, and therefore the fifth commandment must embrace the duties toward magistrates. In like manner, the sixth commandment is shown to include all the positive duties of love to our neighbor. Since it may be objected that all these commands are peculiarly limited and external in their form, Calvin replies that God explicitly names and forbids the greatest sins, in order to excite in us a wholesome horror, which shall preserve us from lesser sins. Similar examples occur in Calvin's treatment of the Pentateuch; and he displays particular skill in tracing back to the decalogue the most narrow commands and those most evidently given to the Jews alone, and in ascribing to them a universal ethical force. Finally, we must remark that to him all commands of the decalogue have an equal religious and moral value. This appears particularly in his judgment in respect to the law of the Sabbath, which he transfers to the Christian Sunday, and for which he claims the fullest authority. Yet, in spite of this high estimation of the law, there appears in Calvinism a limitation of our longing for freedom not to be overlooked, which limitation will appear more clearly yet in Calvin's doctrine of the use of the law.

In the Institutes Calvin sets forth a threefold use of the law. (1) First, the law reveals to us our weakness, sin, and

condemnation. It reveals to us the will of God, and, like a glass, shows us our unrighteousness and shame. We are deprived by it of every answer and every right before God; for God looks not upon what we *can*, but what we *should*, do, — not upon our *ability*, but upon our *duty*. Feeling our weakness, and burdened with the curse of God, we are thrown upon the undeserved love and mercy of God. This is our only refuge, our trust, and our hope. Since this use of the law, revealed to us by God himself in his word, was unknown to the philosophers of heathenism, Calvin calls it *the theological use of the law*. (2) Secondly, the law is a bridle; for it should frighten the godless by its threats and punishments, curb them, and restrain them within the limits of external propriety. True, this does not make men better or more righteous before God; but every restraint laid upon the godless by the law is healthful and necessary to maintain order, to secure peace, and to protect the community from disturbance. (3) The third use of the law is the most important, and corresponds most closely to the peculiar aim of the commands of God. It displays itself particularly in those in whose hearts the spirit of God already works and rules. They truly bear the law of God in their hearts. They are inspired and ruled in soul by the Spirit of God, so that they are willingly and gladly obedient to God's commands. Yet the law is necessary for them in two respects: On the one hand, they learn by its means to know and understand the will of God better every day; on the other, it is a powerful motive, confirming their inborn impulse to good, and urging their wills on to the fulfilling of duty and virtue.

It is clear that these threefold uses do not apply to the moral law in the same way. The second use belongs exclusively to the legal sphere of the secular legislative action. To co-ordinate the three is, therefore, only to give a farther proof of the vacillation into which all the Reformers fell between the judicial law and the moral law. Finally, the so-called political use of the law is not included in the ex-

planation of the moral contents of the ten commandments, and the working of the law becomes only a twofold one, upon unbelievers and believers, which comprehends the first and third uses above mentioned.

We have only to do at present with the use of the law applying to believers. Calvin holds fast to this, with especial reference to the attacks of the Libertines and Anabaptists. The doctrine of the apostle Paul concerning Christian freedom does not mean that the Christian may live without law, according to his pleasure, after his lusts and passions. Not the law as giving instruction and making moral demands, only the curse of the law is lifted off from believers.

From this absolute binding force of the law over Christians Calvin infers the untenableness of the Romish distinction between the *precepts* or *commands* of the law and the evangelical *counsels*. The mistake of the Papists consists in this — that they measure the obligation of the moral demands by the powers of man, and not by the will of God. What corresponds to the average powers of man's nature is commanded; what rises above these is a mere piece of counsel, obedience to which lays the foundation of an especial perfection. But, asks Calvin, are there really in the law of God some commands which are more important, others which are less important? Must we not admit that the fulfilling of any divine command is for our powers an entire impossibility? We could not think a good thought, nor lift a finger to do good, without God! Besides, the Romish distinction leads to another error, which cannot be fully set forth till we come to the doctrine of Christian perfection. It is said that the so-called counsels do not apply to all men; they sometimes have only a special aim, a purely personal cause; as, for example, the command given to the rich young man to sell his goods, or, as in many particular cases, celibacy. But in such special cases the demand is no counsel, but a command, a strongly commanded duty, whose neglect incurs guilt, but whose observance in no respect establishes an inferior grade of perfection.

If we compare Luther's doctrine with Calvin's, the characteristic of the former will be found to lie in its conceiving the law from the Pauline point of view as a correlate of the fact of sin. The experiences of Luther during his monastic life, his struggle between law and grace, his impressions of the intimate connection of law and sin, found their scientific expression in his own teaching, and in his labors for the church were elevated into universal and fundamental rules for the experience of all men. This influence of the personality of Luther, as well as a narrow adherence to the Pauline forms of expression, gave rise to the mistake of supposing that the law did not pass over into the realm of faith, and consequently did not control believers. This inference was introduced into the system of Luther, as is well known, by Agricola.¹ The occasion of this mistake undoubtedly, lay in the fundamental position of Luther that the condemning work of the law was its only attribute, and that when this attribute was lacking there was no more law. Where Luther finds a voluntary acquiescence in the law, the law entirely vanishes, or takes on a form to which the universal conception of the law no longer applies. Calvin, on the contrary, explains the law under two distinct and opposite characters, with and without condemnatory effect. The believer is not released from the law as such, but only from the curse of the law. Calvin goes on emphatically to state that while the law is written by God's finger upon believers' hearts, they need the objective commandment of God none the less as a means of instruction and a motive to good. While, therefore, with Luther the particular use of the law is for sinners, Calvin applies the law first of all to believers, for whom, however, the curse is removed. The hate of our sin and the knowledge of our blameworthiness Calvin derives from the effect of the gospel, and not the

¹ Johannes Agricola (1492-1566), while a colleague of Luther in the University of Wittenberg, began to teach that though the unregenerate were still under the law, Christians were entirely free from it, even from the decalogue, being under the gospel alone. The contest with Luther which succeeded, became so sharp that Agricola was obliged to leave Wittenberg for Berlin. — F. H. F.

law. The distinction between the two doctrines is exhibited in the following remarks. The law to Calvin is so far from being a mere correlate of the fact of sin, whose peculiar office is to reveal God's wrath and curse, that it is grounded rather in the divine decree of salvation. He frequently remarks upon the fact that the decalogue was imposed at the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt. God will declare himself as our Lawgiver at the same time that he reveals himself as the God of our salvation. This thought constitutes one of the chief excellences of Calvin's doctrine of repentance.

All the Reformers fail in making a sharp and safe distinction between the moral law and the judicial law. All feel the difference; but they have no established standard of judgment for determining either. Even in commenting upon the decalogue the moral law passes over insensibly under their treatment into a judicial law.

Meanwhile, there is, without doubt, observable in the Reformers' ethics a continual effort to elevate the purely external judicial law into a moral law, ruling the inward disposition. This appears in their interpretation of the decalogue. In his sermon upon the sixth commandment Calvin remarks: God has given us not merely a civil law, that we may live honorably, but he has given us a law agreeable to his own nature. We know that he is Spirit, and wills that we serve him in spirit and in truth. Upon the seventh commandment he says: We must always recur to the nature of God, that is, to know that he is not an earthly legislator, that he does not forbid the external act only, and permit us to cherish evil affections; for God will not be served with eye-service, and has not only forbidden the adulterous act, but also all evil desires and affections. Another attempt at a distinction between the moral law and the judicial law lies in the remark frequently made that God will write his law, once graven upon stone, upon believers' hearts. Calvin does not unfold this thought and set it forth in its full importance; but he is evidently speaking not of the

so-called law-giving conscience, nor of a natural, inborn sense of the difference between good and evil, but of the law written by the Spirit of God in the hearts of *believers* — of his *sons*. So we must not infer that Calvin ascribes to the natural man a sure knowledge of good and evil. He employs the witness and instructions of nature, in order to proceed by way of argument from these lower matters to the higher revelation of God. Yet this natural knowledge is not only inoperative, but so incomplete and dark that when the conscience of man is not enlightened by the Spirit of God every pretended excellence of man's nature only serves to make him doubly guilty. There must be, and there is, an express standard of action, — the ten commandments, — from which no one can depart without reducing his virtue to mere appearance, and becoming a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Such virtue may be brilliant in the eyes of men; but God is displeased with it, and curses it.

The roots of Calvin's fundamental positions in ethics are firmly planted in his religious views. The so-called independent ethics are with him a nonentity. His ethics are as truly religious as his fatalism; and though the relations of both moments of his doctrine are not scientifically expressed, they are none the less inseparable, like the two self-conditioning poles of his spiritual life.

V. THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW LIFE, OR REPENTANCE.

Calvin's statement of the doctrine of repentance underwent some changes in successive editions of the Institutes. The distinguishing features of the first statement are his vacillation in regard to the relation of mortification and faith, of initial repentance and that repentance which stretches through one's whole life, and his entirely negative conception of repentance as mortification. Afterwards repentance was set forth as a fact fulfilling itself within the sphere of the Christian life, and this view in the other works of Calvin becomes the standard and permanent one. Let us keep this

new form of the doctrine in mind while we explain the origin, the constitutive elements, and the further development of repentance.

Repentance is no longer confined to the negative element of mortification. It is defined as regeneration, conversion to God, beginning in a sincere and serious fear of God, and consisting in a mortification of the old man, and a quickening of the spirit. Sometimes it is defined as a grief arising from sin, and displacency with one's self and all one's depraved nature. Calvin frequently says that repentance follows faith, and proceeds from faith. "No one can seriously pursue repentance except he knows that he is God's. But no one will be persuaded that he is God's except he has laid hold of God's grace."

These differing expressions are by no means irreconcilable. The sinner would feel neither abhorrence of sin nor sorrow for the same did he not turn his thoughts to God, and view him especially as a God of holiness. This is the true and sincere fear of God of which Calvin speaks in the *Institutes*. But this fear and remorse of conscience are only the means ordained by Christ to prepare one for striving after holiness. Fear of God retains its full, effective contents, and penitence becomes thereby effective, only when the sinner in specifically Christian faith knows and acknowledges God as the God of his salvation. Otherwise the sinner justifies himself or falls into despair.

These positions do not conflict with what has already been said about the use of the law. For, if Calvin allows that the knowledge and hate of sin arise from the law, he expressly teaches that the knowledge of the Lawgiver as such is grounded upon faith in the God of our salvation.

If we compare these positions with those already presented, we shall undoubtedly find a consistent and complete theory of repentance so far as this, that all Calvin's statements unite in representing repentance as having its sphere of action within the Christian life. It is, therefore, thoroughly logical in the Reformer to set forth repentance as the joint labor of the whole Christian life.

The ground and the motive of mortification and vivification (wherein regeneration consists), is participation in Christ. "If we truly share in his death, by virtue of it our old man is crucified, and our body of sin dies. If we are partakers of his resurrection, by it we are raised to newness of life, which corresponds to the righteousness of God." Vivification, Calvin remarks further, is frequently understood of the trust which flows from faith, of the soothing of the troubled conscience, of the experience of the grace which is proffered and obtained through Christ, of the restoration of the soul which wakes from death to the new life. This conception, which evidently corresponds to the meaning of Melancthon's teaching, Calvin will not acknowledge, for, taking vivification in a more comprehensive sense, he explains it as zeal for a pious and holy way of life, and in fact identifies it with sanctification. In the third edition of the Institutes Calvin takes occasion from the expression *mortification* to refer to the difficulty of the task laid upon the Christian, since it concerns itself with nothing less than the destruction of our old nature.

Calvin explains his meaning in reference to mortification as follows, that the formal side of our nature remains unchanged, but that the material contents of our faculties, and the object of our powers and our strife, becomes another and a new thing. Consequently, in this inner change the activity of man is not destroyed by the influence of the Holy Spirit. In what, then, conformably to this, consists the activity of God in his children's hearts? "When he erects his kingdom within them, he restrains their will by his Spirit, that it may not be driven hither and thither, at the inclination of nature; that it may incline to holiness and righteousness, he bends it to the standard of his own righteousness, composes, forms, directs it; that it may not totter and fall, he strengthens and confirms it by the strength of his own Spirit."

By these words we find ourselves brought face to face with the great problem of the relation of grace and freedom, of the divine and human wills. In our present attempt the question does not belong to the topic now before us. We

have now only to do with this special point: What is the difference between the *ethical* conception of conversion, — conversion viewed as a spontaneous act of the human will, — and the *religious* conception of the same, — of conversion considered as God's activity?

This question is not fairly answered by Calvin. He vacillates between two theories which run side by side, and often cross one another, but whose mutual relations are never fully explained. (1) On the one hand he knows that we must begin conformably to experience with the exertion of the will, and maintain the same steadfastly through the exertion of personal energy and activity, and so progress. (2) But on the other hand, he denies to man every power to good, every self-determination in the practice of virtue or the performance of duty so completely, he makes man so entirely a passive tool of grace, that one cannot see how the nerve of man's exertion is not severed, and how his zeal is not made lame and cold. These two views are not positively set forth by Calvin in their mutual relations, but both push themselves forward and appear side by side. From fear of ascribing merit to man he takes away the freedom of man's will in favor of the sole effectiveness of God's grace, only, however, to turn again to that will, as self-determining and morally responsible, with instruction and exhortation.

Turning now to Calvin's polemic efforts, let us consider his arguments against the Romanists.

The Catholic doctrine leads to an undeniable externality. This is Calvin's first objection. The Papists do not desire a complete, radical conversion and renewal of the innermost life of the soul, but only a doing of external works. But repentance has its seat, not in external ceremonies, but in the heart. It is an interior matter which comes forth into the external life, as a tree produces fruit from itself. True, Calvin would not despise or reject the external tokens and means by which repentance is partly set in motion, and partly urged forward. But these external practices and tokens have in themselves no moral character. Repentance does not come from wrap-

ping one's self in sackcloth, or tearing one's hair, but from the inner attitude of the soul, which lies at the bottom of every outward manifestation, from the perception and confession of our guilt, from sorrow for sin, and voluntary renunciation of it.

This externalizing of repentance springs from a lack of moral and religious earnestness and depth, which reveals itself particularly in a superficial observation and judgment of our fallen position. Since human nature is *entirely* dead and perverted, it must be not partly but *entirely* renewed and regenerated. Therefore the subject and the agent of this fundamental change, cannot be the will of man, but God alone must perfect this new birth in man. The Romish doctrine opposes this by its conception of *liberum arbitrium*.

Finally, remarks Calvin, the Catholic church in consequence of the indissoluble bond which unites repentance and faith must have a false view of the first, inasmuch as it incorrectly conceives the last.

A last topic upon which Calvin remarks is worthy of note, inasmuch as it refers equally to the Jesuitic and the pietistic practice of law-work.¹ As Calvin expressly names the Jesuits as well as the Anabaptists, this topic may be regarded as supplying the connecting link between the Romish doctrine and the "reveries" of the fanatic sects. "Destitute of all reason is the absurdity of those who prescribe to their neophytes, in order that they may begin with repentance, certain days upon which they may devote themselves to repentance. When these have been fulfilled they admit them to the communion of the grace of the gospel. Such fruits forsooth does their spirit of giddiness produce that it limits to a few short days what should be the work of the whole Christian life."

¹ The German is *Busskampf*. Köstlin says, in the new edition of Herzog's Real Encycl., that the pietists affirmed that true penitence requires an "inward contest of great power and continuing for a long time, a bitter contest (*herber Kampf*) with sin and the flesh, and a sorrow rising even to despair," and cites the term *Busskampf* as referring to ἀγωνίζεσθαι, Luke xiii. 24; cf. Matt. xi. 12 and Gal. v. 17. Köstlin says that Spener was far removed from such exaggerations, but some promoters of pietism insisted upon them.

In opposition to all this Calvin views conversion in its regular, God-ordained form, as an education in the church, and by the church. Hence, of course, the necessity of law-work is entirely removed, or rather its value is subverted and overthrown. The peculiar danger of such a theory is, that the Christian, having now arrived at a condition of special holiness, becomes careless of the leadings of the Spirit, and dares to be indifferent to the law. Calvin charges these "spiritual" men with blindness, delusive feelings of special sanctity, spiritual pride, and antinomianism. He replies to them with indignation that the spirit of which they boast cannot be the Spirit of God and Christ, the Holy Spirit. This is a spirit of discipline and order, of sobriety and truth, of chastity and humility. But their spirit leads them into direct opposition to these divinely commanded virtues. Wherefore we must always be contending against temptation, and never think that we are beyond the contest.

The conception of the Christian life as a connected whole is much easier upon Calvinistic ground than in the province of Luther and Melancthon according to their *later* doctrine. While here contrition and faith are set forth in their differences, the Lutheran doctrine excludes the thought of Calvin that contrition itself, in order to be effectual, must have love of the good, and faith in the redeeming grace of God at its foundation. The Lutheran theory of the law in its relation to sin applies only to those who have fallen from the sphere of the operation of grace, and its great use is to raise them again from contrition to faith under the stimulus of the law. But Calvin brings the law into the sphere of the Christian life, and grounds its authority upon the conception of God as our benefactor and Saviour.

Should we trace the matter further it would not be difficult to show psychologically that the pietistic practice of law-work must necessarily follow from the later Melancthonian-Lutheran conception of penitence, and the history of Orthodoxy and Pietism would confirm our logical argument.

VI. THE PROOF OF THE NEW LIFE, OR SELF-DENIAL.

The fundamental principle of the Christian life is that the believer brings himself to God as an offering, and that he seeks to devote himself to the true service of God. We are not our own, but God's. This surrender to God is completed in self-denial, in which man separates himself from himself, and subjects himself to God as his highest and only rightful aim, and gives himself to God as his peculiar possession for life and death, for man no longer seeks his own, but that which corresponds to the will of God, and advances the glory of God. If this purpose does not exist, instead of piety, only hypocrisy is to be found, or good is done only from vain, ambitious, and proud motives.

The philosophers of heathenism have never known this fundamental condition of the Christian life. They give to man as a guide only reason, they direct him to listen to this. They would be more nearly correct in so doing had not man lost through the fall the correct use of reason, and the original freedom of his will to the good. But now, first, reason itself, and the will of man must be brought again into the relation ordained by God and pleasing to him; both will and reason, and all the powers of man's soul, must be fundamentally renewed. If the reason is darkened and the will perverted, how can a right course of conduct, a new life, arise from subjection to such faculties?

In accordance with the two tables of the law we ought to practice self-denial in our relations to God as well as man. This appears in Calvin's remarks upon Tit. ii. 11, where Paul sums up all human virtues in sobriety, righteousness, and godliness. Righteousness includes our duties towards our neighbors; godliness embraces our duties towards God; sobriety in like manner, with chastity and temperance, suggests the pure and moderate use of the good things of earth, as well as the endurance of want. Other passages of this character may be found. They are worthy of notice as illustrations how Calvin could never define the difference between

the conception of virtue and the conception of duty. His view of ethics is too arbitrarily determined by the form of the decalogue. He does not know what to do with that member, — sobriety, — which does not directly belong to either table. He can make no clear definition or division of duty.

In the practical presentation of his subject Calvin does better than in the theoretical. Here he manifestly speaks out of his own experience. He puts the bearing of the cross high among the means of education by which God instructs, purifies, and perfects us. This is because he knows by experience what it is to bear the cross. As he remarks in his introduction to David's Psalms, "his own experience has given him the key" to the meaning of affliction. There beats in his breast the heart not of a stoic, but of a man filled with humility and trust, as of a child towards his father, suffering and yet rejoicing.

For a correct judgment of the evil, the restrictions, and the afflictions which come upon the believer within the sphere of the Christian life, Calvin begins with the experience of the fatherly love of God revealed in Christ. This revelation sheds its reconciling and illuminating light upon all circumstances of the Christian life, especially upon the dark and sad. By this the judgment of the Christian in respect to every evil is determined, so that he views afflictions no more as punishments, but as means of educating him and preparing him for eternal life. Accordingly the cross should induce us to practice obedience and patience. The patience of the Christian is not insensibility to suffering, for such a patience would destroy virtue. We cannot destroy natural sensibility to the injurious, and therefore we hold all the more firmly to patience. But affliction patiently borne fills us with joy even in the most bitter sufferings, proves our virtue, teaches us obedience, leads us to make God our refuge, and turns our thoughts from the present to fix them upon the future.

If we look at afflictions from the divine point of view, they become the divine method of conveying blessings to us. While the heathen supposed themselves to be carried on in

the resistless course of fate, the child of God lays all that he is and has in the hand of an almighty, good Father. He is a member of Christ. He must be like Christ. If he is incorporated into the body of Christ, it is by being formed into his image. Is this possible without sharing his sufferings? The cross brings the Christian into communion with the death of Christ, and points to community with him in his glorious resurrection.

What has already been said gives us the means of explaining the temptations and enticements under which the Christian suffers. They are the means of confirming his faith and of advancing his Christian life. The meaning of the Reformer will always remain somewhat obscure upon this subject on account of the ambiguity of the Latin and French languages, which have each only one word (*tentatio*) for expressing both *trial* and *temptation*.¹ The word *temptation*, says Calvin (using *tentatio*), is frequently used of any kind of trial whatever. In this sense God tempts Abraham when he puts his faith to the proof. Such temptations are afforded by the events of every day. These are called by Calvin *tentationes externae*. In opposition to this kind of temptations Calvin employs the phrase *tentationes internae* of all allurements to sin which arise from our fallen nature, and our connection with the wants and desires of the flesh. These temptations come from the Devil, and just as Jesus was not subjected to temptation to test his faith, so he cannot be touched with temptations of this class. A third class, *tentationes spirituales*, embrace especially the temptations which are peculiar to Christians. Among them are numbered temptations to mistrust God's love and goodness, uncertainty as to our salvation, unbelief of God's promises, paroxysms of fear, and even of despair, objection to the lowliness of Christ's appearance, or to the small number of his true followers, a feeling as if deserted by God, the sight of the fortune and prosperity of the irreligious. These attack the most pious, and did not spare the Lord himself.

¹ German, *Versuchung*, *Anfechtung*, and *Prüfung*.

If, now, leaving this *enumeration* of temptations, we ask what is their inner ground and what their psychological priority, the answer of Calvin is, that trial and testing come from God, but temptations come from our evil nature, or from the Devil. Farther than this he does not go. He leaves the analytical discussion of the subject to others.

But how shall the Christian succeed in gaining the victory over temptation? Calvin cannot answer this question with any very great degree of clearness. He has only practical directions to give. He points the Christian to the great Exemplar, Christ, and to the means of grace; he warns him to be watchful; he directs him to apply the promises of God to himself individually; he tells him to clothe himself in the armor of the Christian described by Paul; he presses upon him the duty of prayer. Especially are Christians, when tempted to doubt the love of God, reminded that his promises are unailing, and depend not upon us, but upon his own divine nature.

We are thus brought in contact with Calvin's views in reference to prayer. The prayer of the Christian has its principle in faith. Without firm confidence in the grace of God can we call upon God neither rightly, nor with freedom and joy. This is the difference between Christian and heathen prayer. The heathen have no faith, and so no delight in prayer. Faith is also necessary to prayer for another reason, that only prayer offered in the name of Jesus has the promise of being heard. By this faith in the God of our salvation revealed in Jesus Christ does the Christian become conscious that he can rely only upon the mercy of God for everything, that his own strength or service gives him no claim upon the help of God, but that he must give the honor to God only. So prayer becomes the best school of patience, submission, and obedience. By it we are taught self-denial. Into it must always enter that petition: Thy will be done. Finally, we should note that Calvin makes prayer the unceasing expression and exemplification of the Christian life. All the virtues are summed up and put in practice in Christian

prayer. Prayer flows from faith. Through prayer that self-surrender and self-denial which Calvin presents as the summary of the Christian life are made perfect.

VII. THE EFFECTS OF THE NEW LIFE UPON THE COMMUNITY, OR FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE, STATE AND CHURCH.

1. *The Family and the Household.* The foundation of the family is marriage, which, originally ordained and blessed by God, unites man and woman in one being. Before the fall marriage was a peculiar benefit given to men, that the man might hold the position of head to the woman, and the woman in turn assist the man. The proper use and object of marriage was the propagation of the race. But since the fall marriage has another object. It is given to men for all temptations of the flesh as a remedy against unchastity. It is a divinely permitted and ordained accommodation for the weakness of our sinful nature.

The character and laws of this institution are to be derived from the original institution in Paradise. God did not then have simply Adam in mind, but the whole race of man. Since monogamy was the law of paradise, it is therefore the law of the race. This law is confirmed by the voice of nature, for only in monogamy is real love and harmony possible. True, many of the heroes of the Old Testament were polygamists, but this was often in defiance of God's law, and was severely punished; or sometimes it was from a laudable desire to propagate their family, through which the Messiah was to come. But we are never to imitate the example of the patriarchs when that example conflicts with the express commands of God.

It has not seldom been cast up against the Reformers that their views of marriage fell short of the religious and moral spirit of Christianity. For they recommend marriage as a remedy for unchastity, or hold up the right of marriage as an element of Christian freedom, without reference to its bearings upon the moral advancement of Christendom. But, in truth, Calvin, as well as Luther, will be found to recognize

in marriage a divinely honored and sanctified institution,¹ and many passages might be quoted to prove that he regards it as a blessing to both parties. For example: "Christ confers such honor upon marriage that he makes it the image of his own union with his church. . . . As Christ poured out bowels of affection upon his church, which he had betrothed to himself, so he would have every one affected toward his own wife" (Institutes, iv. 12, 14; 19, 35). One passage serves not only to exhibit the Reformer's views upon the topic before us, but also upon other topics. He says, in substance (Sermon 39 upon Ephesians), the subjection of the wife to her husband rests upon a twofold ground. First, because in the creation man was made the lord and head of the woman, since she was formed from him. Second, it is a punishment for the transgression of Eve. Consequently, disobedience to her husband on the part of a wife is disobedience to God. Yet the rule of the husband should never be contracted, tyrannical, and selfish. Christ has not subjected his bride, the church, to the yoke of a tyrant, but has humbled himself and sacrificed himself for her. Can therefore a husband be severe and heartless towards his wife? Religion should therefore establish and deepen the Christian virtues of mildness, mutual forbearance, and submission, within the circle of family life.

All this shows that the predominance in Calvin's writings of those elements which suggest the objection made to his view of marriage is due not to the defect of that view, but to some other cause. This we shall find to be Calvin's constant polemic reference to Rome on the one hand, and the Libertines on the other.

The unreasonable estimation set upon celibacy burst early into the church like a plague. Supported by the authority of Jerome it came to be considered as a condition of especial sanctity, and so arose this so momentous vow of chastity,

¹ Calvin not only styles adultery a damnable sin, but passes condemnation also upon divorce, which he declares inconsistent with the calling and the character of a Christian.

which Calvin opposes for three reasons. It is rash to assume a vow of which one does not know whether he is able to keep it, since most who take it do not know their strength, and so tempt God. Again, such a vow, in general, can be taken only by neglecting and limiting the commands of God, and so must be an act of disobedience. And, thirdly, this vow is an abridgement of Christian liberty, and a fetter laid, of her own accord, by Rome upon the conscience which Christ has set free at the price of his own blood. Practically, the canonizing of celibacy has opened wide the door for lust.

Calvin contends no less earnestly against the errors of the Libertines, who justified free love and the religion of the flesh under the pretence of Christian freedom. They maintained that marriage solemnized before witnesses was carnal, except as it was also a marriage of the heart, and that no Christian was bound by it. They called that a spiritual marriage when one person was pleased with another. Calvin declares marriage a divine ordinance, and therefore indissoluble. Whoever dishonors it commits an insult against God himself.

When, therefore, we consider the historical position of the Reformers, the objection raised against them above must be essentially modified. Their own example shows that the higher, moral, and religious conception of marriage was in no degree strange to them, though it is not fully expressed in their writings.

The fundamental positions of Calvin upon the relations of parents and children, of masters and servants are developed from the Christian point of view. Calvin advises a strong government in the training of children, but the strength should be tempered with mildness and patience. It is not enough, as the heathen philosophers said, that the family should be the picture of a well-ordered state. A Christian family should be a church in miniature. In the family, as in the church, Christ should rule, and the father of a family should labor first of all that his companions in the household may be companions in the faith. Calvin speaks very frequently

of the religious duties of the head of a house. He should dedicate himself and his whole house to the service of God, should direct his children to obedience to God, should instruct them in the true faith, and should teach them the word of God. The servants, also, should not be excluded from the blessing of the knowledge and the fear of God. The head of the house must direct them and lead them to this, and must not excuse himself from this duty through a perverse, blameworthy pride. To the fulfilment of these duties the parents, and especially the father, should dedicate all their powers. Yet they should remember that without God's blessing all their efforts will be in vain.

As regards the duties of children towards their parents nature directs that they be subject to their parents. But a merely external obedience is not enough. The motive of this obedience should be reverence for parents as representatives of God. God is our Creator and our Father, and we owe all obedience to him. But what is due to him is as really due to his representatives. Here first is the ordinance of nature recognized and honored as a positive divine command, and here lies the chief distinction between Christians and heathen. To the obedience of this command is joined an especial promise, which applied first to Israel and the land of Canaan, but also bears a wider and more universal meaning.

We should remark that Calvin, no less than Luther and the other Reformers, insists upon the instruction of the youth as the unavoidable duty of parents. Ignorance was the great reliance of the Papists, and the school was to serve as the great weapon against the errors and lies of Rome.

2. *Social Life.* — Free social life, and those qualities pertaining to it which exhibit themselves in art and in sportive recreation, are, at least in practise, entirely excluded from Calvin's system. Yet upon this topic there are many things to note which are of interest as contributing to explain Calvin's doctrine of Christian freedom and self-denial.

First, we must notice certain remarks of the Institutes.

The tenth chapter of the second book deals with the use of the present life, and its good things. The fundamental positions here maintained throw a clear light upon Calvin's position towards the world (using that word in its narrow and ascetic sense), and so must be presented at this point. If one would merely live he must use the necessary means of life. But we cannot entirely shun what may contribute more to pleasure than necessity. A good standard of decision as to what it is our duty to refuse is to be found in the consideration that our life here is a pilgrimage toward heaven. We must, however, avoid two errors: (1) refusing the good things of earth except for the satisfaction of our necessary wants, and so laying upon conscience a fetter which the word of God does not prescribe; or (2) permitting every sort of license under the plea of a freedom which leaves everything to the individual conscience. Of course the conscience cannot be bound by special rules, but the Scriptures give certain general rules according to which we must govern ourselves. It should be a fundamental principle to use good things for the purpose for which God has made them. But he has not made them for the supply of our necessities only, but for our gratification also. For this he has made the flowers, and given to the gold and the silver, the ivory and the marble, a beauty and brilliancy which make them more costly and valuable than other stones or metals. Far from us be that inhuman philosophy which not only robs us of the permitted pleasures of the divine beneficence, but cannot once reach its own aim, since it cannot take away from man his sensibility or turn him into a block. To avoid luxury we must (1) thank God for all that he has made; for how can gratitude and intemperance coexist? The best and safest means of preventing luxury is to subject this life to the eternal life. This teaches us how to bear poverty as well as riches, and puts us on our guard against permitting this life to hinder the eternal. (2) take care not to overestimate earthly good. This error exhibits itself as well in flying from poverty as in seeking wealth. (3) be ever mindful of the day of reckoning. (4) remember our calling.

DeWette says that Calvin conceived morals purely upon the negative side of separation from humanity, and not also positively as the transfiguration of humanity. But this judgment must be considerably modified. To be sure, Calvin sets forth the negative side more prominently; but we must not forget that his ethics set before the Christian the task not so much of *escaping* the world, after the ascetic fashion, as of *conquering* the world, after the spirit of the gospel. This is, at least, Calvin's theory (as may be seen by his opposition to the spurious perfection of monasticism), whatever his practice may have been. If he sets this present life in too sharp opposition to the future, he represents the one, again and again, as the positive means and place of preparation for the other, and from this point of view is able to form a correct estimate of our present existence, its gifts and modes of activity, and even of science and art. He does not disparage music and song. He strongly condemns dancing, yet is not without milder expressions.

In fact, however, Calvin's practice was far from mild. His theory took the middle way between stoical contempt and epicurean deification of sensuous enjoyment and of suffering; but in practice he knew nothing of the kind. The strength with which he enforced discipline corresponds perfectly to his own picture, drawn in the Institutes, of an inhuman philosophy. This rigor in practice, which contrasts so sharply with the mildness of his theory, may in some part be explained by the necessary reaction against the immorality of those days, but for the most part by a consideration of Calvin's personal character. As he needed no recreation himself, and as his own life was controlled in all its departments by a conception of duty determined by the decalogue, he denied to others the right of recreation which belongs to a sphere not positively determined by the conception of duty, but rather having its standard and law in the practice of virtue. One can and must have relief from the performance of prescribed duty, but one requires no relief from the practice of agreeable and voluntary virtue, in which, indeed,

resides the continuity of moral character. Thus, should self-control oppose, for example, the really possible temptation arising from games of chance, or the sensuous excitement of the dance; and in the same sense Christian virtue has to set bounds to, as well as positively to rule, the department of recreation.

3. *The Magistracy.* — There are two God-established institutions — the state and the church. The latter exercises its power over the soul, and aims at the eternal life; the former has to do with the external man, and confines itself to the right ordering of life in this world. The secular magistracy is of God's establishment and ordering. This thought should, on the one hand, warn those who exercise public power, since they are God's representatives, to exhibit the likeness of God's righteousness and goodness in their deeds; and, on the other hand, it should remind those who injure or oppose the magistracy that they are committing an insult against God himself.

Calvin, like the other Reformers, remarks that this divine authority of rulers is independent of the consideration how those who at any time bear authority have come into power. Even if they do not do their duty, we must not refuse them our obedience. Even in the man who shows himself entirely unworthy of kingly honor and authority there is, though veiled, the image of God; for the apostle says every magistrate is of God. In the same way, married persons and parents are not freed from their duty by the sins of their companions or children. We are not to resist evil, but to apply for redress to him in whose hand are the hearts of kings and the destiny of the world.

All this is to be limited by the consideration that the secular magistracy have power only in secular matters. If they encroach upon the spiritual realm, then subjects are released from their allegiance, and the universal law comes into force that we are to obey God, rather than man.

We ought also to notice the famous passage in the Institutes (iv. 20, 31) in which Calvin maintains the right of

of resistance on the part of powers constitutionally instituted, and to a fixed limit, to the encroachments of supreme magistrates. "If there are any popular magistrates established to control the cupidity of kings (as, for example, ephors, tribunes of the people, etc.), I do not forbid them acting according to their office."

Calvin employs the divine authority and establishment of the secular magistracy as an argument against the sects, and particularly the Anabaptists and Libertines. These fanatics declared that the kingdom of Christ could not be properly honored if the secular governments continued. But Calvin declared that secular governments were not in conflict with Christ's kingdom, and that a Christian might exercise supreme power without prejudice to his character or his name as a Christian. In the Old Testament there were many judges and kings who held their places under God's direction and by his good pleasure. This office is not superseded by the coming of Christ. Calvin closes his argument upon this subject by declaring that they who maintain such opinions are the enemies of God and man. Of God, because they degrade what he honors; of man, because they would ruin the world by introducing universal anarchy.

But Calvin does not stop with defending the rights of magistrates; he also lays down their duties. Like the old philosophers he represents their duty as being the rewarding of the good and the correcting of the evil. But more frequently he refers their duty to the two tables of the law.

The first table of the decalogue, which has reference to God, binds magistrates to the protection and the promotion of religion; for it is appropriate that the secular magistracy should give honor to that God whose representative it is, and through whose goodness it is in the possession of power. Magistrates ought to make laws with reference to religious things and the service of God. They ought to provide against the desecration of true biblical religion. But they should not stop with this negative service. They have also the right, — yes, the holy duty, — of forcibly promoting the true

religion, the gospel, in an ignorant or a reluctant land ; for not in vain is it said, " Compel them to come in."

In this connection, we should note Calvin's theory of the right to punish heretics. This belongs, of course, to the age, from which comes the fact that Bullinger and Melancthon gave their assent to it. Yet it is true that the authority of the decalogue had more power with the Reformed theologian than with the Lutheran. The Genevan political institutions were so closely united with the Reformation, through the equally strong necessity of reformation in state and church, that many an idea of the old theocracy must have seemed worthy of imitation. The morally reformed state and the faith of the Reformation could only stand or fall with one another. The immoral citizen seemed worthy of church-discipline, and the heretic was punished by the state.

Calvin has but little to say as to the manner in which the magistrate, in obedience to the second table, is to reward the good, protect the innocent, and cherish every necessary and honorable art. From this he is speedily led to speak of the magistrate's right of punishing — the *jus gladii*. Like Luther he distinguishes between personal anger and murder, and official wrath and execution. In this defence of the right of punishing he goes farther than we can follow him ; for he not only excuses, but praises Moses and David for their murderous acts (Ex. ii. 12 ; 1 Kings ii. 5, 6).

The right of punishing leads Calvin to consider the *right of war*. In his view there is such a thing as allowable, righteous war. To suppress insurrection, to set the oppressed free, to defend our country against invasion, it is allowed and commanded to magistrates to draw the sword. There are numerous examples in the Scriptures which show that war is allowable. Besides, John the Baptist did not command the soldiers to throw away their arms, but directed them to be contented with their wages, and do injustice to no one. Of course, every means of an accommodation should be employed before one takes arms, and magistrates must be on their guard against falling into unrighteous war through

wilfulness or passion. War must be a thing of necessity, and not of wantonness. In order effectually to remove the necessity of war, we need not make external, forcible rules of action, but we must eradicate the roots of war and all dissension, namely, sin, from our hearts.

In the same sense and spirit Calvin speaks of *the oath*. An oath is an invocation of God to confirm the truth of our speech. When it is employed in the right sense, it is a kind of service of God. Men ought therefore to swear only by God, not by any creature whatever, — that is a species of idolatry ; for it puts a creature in the place God alone should occupy, and thus detracts from his authority. If God is honored by a righteous oath as a witness and judge of the truth, it is clear that an oath ought not only never to be desecrated in confirming error or a lie, but that it ought not to be misused in unnecessary differences or in careless speech. Only necessity, not sentiment or wantonness, justifies an oath. An oath is necessary when it is possible thereby to promote the honor of God or serve our neighbor, or when in weighty matters of business the truth must be confirmed. To reject every oath, without exception, like the Anabaptists, is not reasonable. Matt. v. 34 does not forbid all oaths ; for it is impossible that Christ should come into conflict with the expressions and examples of the Old Testament. Here the oath is not only not forbidden, but even approved and commanded, — yes, even used by God himself. So that it is plain that the passage in the Sermon on the Mount refers not to the righteous use, but to the frivolous misuse, of the oath. The same is true of James v. 12. The oath is a Christian's right, and often his duty.

4. *The Church*. — The dogmatic, ethical, and judicial movements and characteristics of the church are peculiarly associated and intertwined. To ethics belongs certainly the establishment of the necessity of a strong church discipline.

No community, no state, no house can stand without discipline and order ; how much less the church, whose order ought to be most perfect. As the saving doctrine of Christ

forms the soul of the church, so discipline is appointed, like the nerves of the body, to bind together the different members of the churchly organism, each in its place, and all in one. But the discipline of the church is unlike the civil power, for the weapon of the church is not the sword, but the word of God. None the less must each sustain the other, the state purifying the church from all scandals, and the church lightening the labors of the state by contending against the sins of the heart.

The means of enforcing church discipline are of various kinds: special warning, open excommunication, fasts, prayers, special exercises of faith, humility, and repentance. Private admonition belongs to the calling of the cure of souls and the presbyter. The pastor has not merely to preach in public, but when general advice and address are not sufficient, it belongs to him to visit individuals in their houses and instruct them.

Towards sorer sins a stronger means is to be employed. Resting upon the proceeding of Paul in Corinth, Calvin requires excommunication. This has a threefold aim, (1) to remove unworthy members who disgrace the name which they bear; (2) to prevent the ungodly from corrupting the faithful; (3) to excite the shame of the guilty person by the punishment, and lead him to repentance. The exercise of discipline is not a voluntary matter with the church, and, much more, should be administered to high and low without fear of man, but strength should be tempered with Christian love, that discipline may not be converted into torture.

Besides private warnings and excommunication, the church resorts to other means by which she brings her members to obedience, or confirms them in the same. Fasting, when it is not forced upon believers, or regarded as a means of gaining merit, is not without benefit. It works healthfully and powerfully against the lusts and passions of the flesh. It increases earnestness in prayer, and the spirit of devotion in the heart. It is an effectual token whereby the pious soul expresses and exercises its humility.

What has been now said applies equally to the clergy and laity. But Calvin remarks expressly that, in contrast with the laxity of the clergy then prevailing, the clerical body of the first century proved itself more severe against itself than against the people. Above all does Calvin exclaim, with great energy, against the celibacy enjoined upon the clergy, as a fountain of sin and misery not only for the clerical body, but also for the members of the community.

The duties of the church towards the clergy and the clergy towards the church are determined by the nature of the spiritual office, the necessity of which is founded upon the external order and needs of the religious community. Through them God speaks to his own, and treats with them. We must therefore avoid the twofold error either of entirely destroying the spiritual office or of exalting it so as to infringe upon the honor and the rights of God.

The purpose of God in establishing the churchly office aims, moreover, at awaking and promoting the moral and religious life of the church. Through his servants God demands our obedience, and puts that obedience to the test. He teaches us humility, and directs us, who are weak, and in external relations often base, to instruct, warn, and chastise ourselves. He wishes to awaken us to brotherly love, for by the appointment of pastors, who teach others, a closer bond is formed between the different members of the community, partly among themselves and partly towards their common teacher. The responsibility of those who bear this office is great. They ought to exercise their calling in prayer, in all truth, in care, with zeal, with patience, with prudence, with love. Teachers who perform their duty in this spirit are highly to be prized, as precious jewels, the more precious as they are the more rare.

VIII. THE AIM OF THE NEW LIFE, OR CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

A passage of the *Augustana*, brought to light by Ritschl, sets forth Christian perfection as consisting in faith in the

fatherly providence of God, prayer, humility, and a manner of life in correspondence to our calling. Calvin has a similar passage, making Christian perfection to consist in the fear of God, faith founded in him, ardent prayer, gratitude, and patience. This does not include faithfulness to our calling nominally, but really it was included in Calvin's system, and was an essential element of his conception of perfection.

But we must admit that Calvin does not hold fast to that conception of Christian perfection which is suggested by the Augustana, and appears in the passage referred to. There perfection is viewed in a qualitative sense, as the expression in act of reconciliation with God through Christ; but Calvin treats it almost exclusively as quantitative. But since perfection considered thus must appear incomplete and defective, he cannot gain for this conception a positive meaning or a fixed place in Christian ethics.

The quantitative conception of perfection is plainly a consequence of Calvin's theory of the law as the unchangeable standard of the new life. It must inevitably follow from his confounding of the moral law with the judicial law, and from the elevation of the decalogue to the rank of a standard of Christian morality, that perfection cannot have a qualitative, but only a quantitative meaning. Since it is governed by the statutory law, it can consist only of an aggregate of individual commands. It becomes nothing else than the fulfilling of the ten commandments, that is, it is reduced to a practical nullity.

There is another motive side by side with this which renders the construction of a theory of perfection very difficult, or absolutely impossible, for Calvin. Perfection seems to our reformer entirely irreconcilable with the feeling of quantitative distance between men and God. If one will deal in earnest with the conception of Christian perfection he must confess that our perfection consists in part in the knowledge of our imperfection. If one does not do this, if perfection is defended as something actually attainable for Christians here below, spiritual pride and self-delusion is

produced. But the impossibility of perfection is proved by the quantitative judgment derived from the decalogue.

Calvin's polemics upon this subject are directed against the Libertines and the Catholic church. He makes his strongest attack upon the Libertines. Their perversity consists chiefly in this, that they identify objective perfection with the absence of the complaining voice of conscience. If conscience is enlightened, said they, as the conscience of the Christian is, by the Spirit of God, it must be an infallible standard by which to judge good and evil. If it does not condemn a Christian he must be perfect. Indeed, true spirituality makes itself manifest in this, that the Christian, inspired by the spirit of Christ, and therefore free, is no longer troubled by his conscience. Hence it follows that the Libertines taught that the Christian could, under the leadings of the Holy Spirit, attain actual perfection here below. These views are grounded upon a peculiar pantheistic theory of fatalism, whose reverse side is quietism.

To oppose these views Calvin recurs to the law. Perfection is the fulfilling of the law. A perfect obedience to the law is impossible here below, because regeneration, by which alone is all fulfilling possible, does not come fully to completion during our earthly existence. Of course it is conceivable and possible that God might bestow such gifts of grace upon a man as to render him perfect, but as he has nowhere promised this, so certainly has it never been seen.

Calvin arrives at the same result, also, through the following course of argument, derived from the theology of Augustine. To complete perfection, to perfect fulfilling of the law, perfect love toward God is essential. Here the principle applies according to which "love follows knowledge to such a degree that no one can perfectly love God who has not come to a perfect knowledge of his goodness first." But our love does not fully correspond to the goodness of God, for the full knowledge of that goodness is concealed from us below. Here we see only through a glass darkly, and know only in part.

It is evident, therefore, that Calvin does not deny the abstract possibility of fulfilling the law through a supernatural grace, which could bring regeneration to completion here below, and fundamentally renew our spiritual powers and activities. But actual experience, which, by means of the Scriptures, is made undeniably general, and is applied to the whole past and future race of man, knows in fact no such perfection. The holiest men of the Old and New Testaments, a David and a Paul, declare that they have not "already attained," but are always far distant from the goal. We must well mark, also, that even our conscience is only an imperfect standard by which to judge our performances. Subjective consciousness of perfection is not a proof of the objective reality of the same. God discerns much more acutely than we, and he alone can judge of perfection, since he alone knows himself, in whom resides the only perfection.

Calvin's impelling motive in this contest was undoubtedly a religious one. If we grant that perfection is possible for men here below, he is no more in need of forgiveness. This detracts from the grace of God, and robs God of the honor which belongs to him. Calvin ascribes the visions and hallucinations of the Libertines to their godless pride, and frequently quotes the words of Augustine, that the highest perfection of the Christian consists in knowing and confessing his sins. Pelagius took precisely the opposite ground, and, influenced not by religious but by moral interests, not only did not deny the impossibility of attaining perfection, but expressly remarked: "Whenever I have to speak of forming good habits or of leading a holy life, I am accustomed first to exhibit the power of human nature, and to show what it can effect; for we can never enter the path of virtue except we have hope for a companion."

In his polemics against the Catholic church Calvin has chiefly to do with the ascetic conception of a higher perfection, existing apart from and above the common life. Monasticism puts Christian perfection in obedience to external statutes, in the renunciation of family, private property, and personal freedom, in abstinence and fasting; in short, in

entirely self-chosen practices which should procure especial favor with God. But here the Papists come into direct conflict with the word of God. The favor derived from works is a delusion; monastic vows are an abridgement and an infraction of Christian freedom; and that pretended perfection is to be entirely abandoned, since it is arbitrary and self-originated. It conflicts with the God-ordained form of every moral life, namely, with life in the moral calling. Like the Augsburg Confession, Calvin regards moral conduct in one's civil calling as the distinctive mark of Christian perfection. This remark gives the key to much that Calvin has to say.

God, because he knows the natural unrest and inconstancy of the spirit of man, which lets him wander idly hither and thither, and would equally attempt the most opposite things, has confined this disorderly activity within the wholesome bounds of a fixed calling. Our calling is accordingly the only legitimate way of life, and, as it is imposed by God, cannot be relinquished without guilt. Monasticism, which seeks for perfection elsewhere, and does not found itself upon the word of God, however attractive to men, is therefore condemned by God.

Calvin is brought at this point into conflict again with the Libertines. Certain of this sect had passed an unfavorable judgment upon common life as not harmonizing with the higher calling of the Christian, for he should give himself entirely to spiritual things. But Calvin points them to the positive will of God which marks out the fixed calling as the object and limit of the activity of a Christian, and ordains the earthly life as the means of attaining the heavenly life. On the other hand, the Libertines sometimes sought to justify every mode of life under the pretext of a calling. Calvin points out the antinomian tendency which was revealed in this fact, and which was dominant beneath their whole system. Not every pleasing way of life, says Calvin, deserves the name of a calling. We are to consider to what God calls us, and to hold every occupation which is inconsistent with his word as a temptation from below.

But Calvin's view of a calling is not without positive influence upon his ethical system. A fixed calling is a school of obedience inasmuch as it directs man's activity to a given object, confines it within definite bounds, and thereby exercises a wholesome discipline. The more the worldly calling is brought into harmony with the religious calling in the Christian sense, the more will it appear not a game of chance, nor blind necessity, but a divine decree. In this way may every one be reconciled to his calling, however hard and difficult it may be. His calling will also afford him a convenient standard for measuring his daily duty. And without a calling it is impossible to gain a life which shall be a symmetrical and united whole.

These different modes of expression may be summed up in this: that Christian perfection lies neither above nor below a special Christian calling, but is to be gained, and works itself out, within the same. Our civil calling may be closely connected with our religious calling, and thus the one exalted through the other to the worth and significance of a place in the kingdom of God.

Were we to express a critical judgment upon Calvin's conception of Christian perfection we could not deny that the reformer lets us take many a deep look into the nature of Christian morality. But the correct understanding of Christian perfection is rendered impossible for him by the constantly recurring and exclusive theory that the decalogue is the rule of the new life. So long as perfection is set forth as the fulfilling of the law, so long does it remain a mere aggregate of endless, single acts and good works, and perfection becomes a vain endeavor after sinlessness of conduct. This is the more to be regretted because it is not the necessary consequence of Calvin's system. His view of individual activity securing the gift of perseverance; his doctrine of repentance extending through the whole life, and coming to perfection within the Christian church; his exceedingly rich application of the conception of moral calling, show undoubtedly that Calvin was able and inclined to conceive of moral acts under the quality of a whole in their essential nature.