



the **CALVIN** **orum**

Advent Gospel
In Isaiah

Mary and Mariolatry
The Virgin Mother

Scripture and Theology
Ultimate Norm

Recent Elections
Some Undercurrents

News

Letters

Book Reviews

VOL. XVI, NO. 5

**TWO DOLLARS
A YEAR**

DECEMBER, 1950

THE CALVIN FORUM

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Address all editorial correspondence to Dr. Clarence Bouma, Editor THE CALVIN FORUM, Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan. Address all subscription and circulation correspondence to: THE CALVIN FORUM, Calvin College and Seminary, Grand Rapids 6, Michigan.

THE CALVIN FORUM is published monthly, except from June to September, when it appears bi-monthly. Subscription price: Two Dollars per year.

Entered as second-class matter October 3, 1935, at the Post Office at Grand Rapids, Michigan, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

The CALVIN FORUM

Published by the Calvin Forum Board of Publication

VOLUME XVI, NO. V

DECEMBER, 1950

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Calvinism: Faith, Life, and Worship

William C. Robinson
Columbia Theological Seminary
Decatur, Georgia

JOHN CALVIN defined religion as consisting in faith coupled with a serious fear of God and expressing itself in legitimate worship. Kolfhaus is saying that for Calvin, Christian faith means Christian activity, that the end of Divine election, of exposition and teaching of the Word is pious and holy living.* In his edition of *Instruction in Faith*, Fuhrmann writes: "The unflinching intention of Farel and Calvin, however, was to form again New Testament Christianity in Geneva, to restate it as Faith, to re-create it as Life, and to re-establish it as Church."

This current recognition is not out of line with the great spokesmen of Calvinism. Kuyper attributes to Calvin a world and life view, an ethics and a Church order as well as a doctrine, and Warfield calls Calvin the creator of the evangelical ethic. But perhaps it is as well to remind ourselves of these broader interests when we try to organize Calvinism under an architectonic thought principle or two.

Lecerf gives the subjective principle of the Reformed Dogmatics as faith rather than reason. For him the knowledge of God is the revelation of the infinite, holy and incomprehensible God to finite, sinful creatures. Accordingly, Calvin's system is "a synthesis of antithetical propositions" given in God's Word. It is a synthesis of propositions not comprehensively known, so that our knowledge of God is more of certainty than of comprehension (*Etudes Calvinistes*). In similar fashion, for W. A. Hauch, Calvin is not so much the systematic thinker as he is the Reformer of strong faith, whose faith carries in itself the power to bear even the logical tensions of apparent contradictions without thereby breaking (*Vorsehung und Freiheit nach Calvin*, p. 39). In his

* Kolfhaus, *Vom christlichen Leben nach J. Calvin*, citing Calvin's Commentaries on I Cor. 14:23; II Petr. 1:10; I Thess. 4:2; I Tim. 5:7.

study of *Calvin's Doctrine of Man*, Professor T. F. Torrance of New College likewise finds unresolved tensions.

Without then essaying the difficult task of saying what is the organizing principle of Calvinism may we not go to Calvin and find some of the great emphases which he magnified for faith, for life and for worship? Without endeavoring to be exhaustive or exhausting, the writer would like to suggest a few.

First, the end of faith, life and worship is the glory of God, that is, *solī Deo gloria*.

Secondly, the motive power which incites to this end is the revelation of the goodness and grace of God in Christ Jesus. The mercy of God in Christ is the logic of the true religion, or, *sola gratia*.

Thirdly, the moving strength for faith, for godly living, and for worship is the power of the Holy Spirit. Human activism depends on Divine activism.

Fourthly, the fellowship of faith, life, and worship is the Church, the body of Christ.

Fifthly, the characteristic attitude of this faith, life and worship is self-denial.

Sixthly, the measure thereof is the Word of God, with particular reference to the law of God.

The first two of these will be found signally emphasized by Calvin in the Dedication of the *Institutes*, as the analogy of faith by which all Scripture is to be interpreted. They as well form the first two chapters in the Geneva Catechism. In the twelfth and thirteenth answers in this Catechism, Calvin tells us that everyone of us must be fully assured in his conscience that he is beloved of God, and that He will be both his Father and Saviour. This assurance comes from God's own Word wherein He utters unto us His mercy in Christ and assures us of His love towards us.

