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## THE NINETY-FIVE THESES IN THEIR THEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

"A poor peasant's son, then a diligent student, an humble monk, and, finally, a modest, industrious scholar, Martin Luther had already exceeded the half of the life-time allotted to him, when—certainly with the decision characteristic of him, but with all the reserve imposed by his position in life and the immediate purpose of his action—he determined to subject the religious conceptions which lay at the basis of the indulgence-usages of the time to an examination in academic debate." This singularly comprehensive and equally singularly accurate statement of Paul Kalkoff's is worth quoting because it places us at once at the right point of view for forming an estimate of the Ninety-Five Theses which Luther, in prosecution of the purpose thus intimated, posted on the door of the Castle-Church at Wittenberg on the fateful October 31, 1517. It sets clearly before us the Luther who posted the Theses. It was—as he describes himself, indeed, in their heading—Martin Luther, Master of Arts and of Theology, Ordinary Professor of Theology in the University of Wittenberg. And it indicates to us with equal clearness the nature of the document which he posted. It consists of heads for a discussion designed to elucidate the truth with respect to the subject with which it deals—as again Luther himself tells us in its heading. We have to do here in a word with an academic document, prepared by an academic teacher, primarily for an academic purpose. All that the Theses were to become grows out of this fundamental fact. We have to reckon, of course, with the manner of man this Professor of Theology was; with the conception he held of the

## MARTIN LUTHER AND JOHN CALVIN, CHURCH REFORMERS

So far as I am aware, no one has proposed the honors of canonization for any of the Protestant Reformers. Such honors have been freely assigned to many who lived in ages when correct biography was not in vogue. Even so good a man as Bernard of Clairvaux, to whom we easily accord the name "saint," had his appreciable faults. The age in which Luther and Calvin lived was the age of print and the reporter took down everything men of eminence did or said and the writing of biographies was not confined to admirers as in the Middle Ages. These men had their blemishes,—serious blemishes. They were of like passions with ourselves. We know too much about them, we are quite willing to acknowledge, to invest their foreheads with the aureole.

We pay them honor for their service to religion and society just as in the sphere of discovery, we pay honor to the greater navigators in these Western regions, Columbus and Magellan. Luther and Calvin opened the door to the modern era of history. Not Charles V or Henry VIII, not Erasmus and Reuchlin, not Shakespeare and Bacon but Luther and Calvin enunciated the interpretations along which religious thought and social liberties in Protestant countries have been advancing.

In intellectual gifts and disposition most unlike, they were fully coöperant in the work of the Reformation. It must be recalled, however, that Calvin was only an infant when Luther was a doctor of theology. When the Theses were posted up, Calvin was but eight years old and when the Diet of Worms met he was still a school lad. All the spiritual principles of the Reformation were announced a considerable time before Calvin was through with his university studies.

In the history of the Church since the days of the Apostles I can think of only two figures of marked preeminence,

contemporary the one with the other, with whom the great Reformers of the 16th century may be compared, Francis d'Assisi and Dominic of Guzman. These two remarkable men of the 13th century, the one an Italian, the other a Spaniard, also differed widely in gifts, disposition and training and yet were united in a compelling religious purpose of a reformatory kind and, acting independently the one of the other, started and furthered one of the most notable religious revivals since the days of St. Paul. The methods of the gentle Francis and the proud disciplinarian were as different as their temperaments. Their precepts and example put new life into the missionary and social activities of the Church. A century after their deaths Dante joined them in one of the highest celestial spheres, the one as an Ardor inflaming the world with love, the other as a Splendor filling it with light. Their followers were quickly found in every part of Europe and gained renown on the mission field. They occupied the seats in the universities. Thomas Aquinas and Savonarola were Dominicans: Bonaventura, Duns Scotus and Ockam Franciscans.

Not a hundred years elapsed, however, until the name "friar" was synonymous with laziness, ignorance and superstition so far had the testaments and careers of Francis and Dominic been forgotten. In this we have another parallel between them on the one hand and the two leaders of the Protestant Reformation on the other. The followers of Luther and Calvin in the generations immediately succeeding their deaths carried on one against the other and each party to some extent within its own membership what we are inclined to pronounce fierce and un-Christian polemics and strife.

1. In the circumstances of birth and the preparation for their work Luther and Calvin differed widely. Like the great commoner in our national history, Luther came—to use the common phrase—from the humbler class. Like another in our national history, the father of his country, Calvin came from the educated and polished class. It was

one of Luther's noblest traits that he never sought to hide the lowly environment in which he was born. Eminence did not puff him up. He never affected the company of the mighty or courted the patronage of princes. "I am the son of a peasant," he used to say, "my father and grandfather and all my ancestors were genuine peasants."

John Calvin was born in France under the eaves of the episcopal palace of Noyon. His father was a man of ecclesiastical position. To the son the path to school and university was wide open and his support assured by church patronage bestowed upon him when he was still a child.

Both chose a legal career. According to Melanchthon, Luther's talents were the admiration of his university, Erfurt. Calvin's gifts won tribute from his distinguished professors. Both, as students, had demonstrated that they were endowed with intellectual gifts of a high order.

Luther's studies in the law were suddenly checked by two occurrences which startled his conscience. He bade farewell to the world, its honors and pleasures and, against the will of his father, took the path which for centuries had been praised, as by Anselm and St. Bernard, as the safest way to holiness and heaven. The life in the Augustinian convent was of unspeakable advantage to the future Reformer. He was faithful to its rules and subjected himself to physical mortifications in order to get peace with God as also to a severe study of theology that he might get wisdom. In later years, when he wrote and spoke, he wrote and spoke as one who knew what monkery was. So evident was his conventual devotion that his superiors pointed him out as the model monk and so well esteemed was he for his parts that he was raised to the position of district-vicar of his order and appointed at an early age to a professorship. His visit to Rome in an official capacity was likewise a factor of much importance in his preparation. He saw religion in practice in the capitol of Christendom, he said masses at its altars, he kneeled up the *scala sancta*, at every step saying a prayer that his grandfather might be

released from purgatory. His promise and his worth were recognized by the friendship of John of Staupitz. Before he was thirty, he was invested with the doctorate of divinity, a rank of which he was always proud.

His strenuous application as a student and young professor attested by the voluminous manuscripts from his pen recently discovered, is again and again freely acknowledged by the Roman Catholic scholar Grisar in his recent elaborate and learned biography of the Reformer. In 1521 Cochlaeus, his detractor, saw him at Worms and wrote "Cares and studies have made him so thin, that one may count all the bones in his body." Luther favored the new study of the classics, corresponded with Erasmus and defended Reuchlin but he was never a Humanist in the sense of devoting himself by preference to classical culture. To him theology, was, as he said, "the kernel of the nut, the marrow in the bones, the flour of the wheat" and he was overjoyed when the time came for him to pass from the teaching of philosophy and logic to the presentation of theological themes.

As lecturer of theology in Wittenberg he entered upon a careful study of Augustine, a study neglected even within the Augustinian order. For his religious development, as later for Calvin in the system that theologian presented, this study of the African father was of first import. But more—through Luther the study of Augustine became popular at Wittenberg. Through his influence also a new era in the curriculum of the university seemed about to dawn. This man, wrote Dr. Martin Pollich, rector of the Wittenberg school "will puzzle all our doctors and bring in the new teaching and reform the whole Roman church, for he takes his stand on the writings of the Apostles and Prophets and on the word of Jesus Christ." Along this path of Biblical study, Augustine had been his chief human helper.

In the case of Calvin, the religious element does not distinctly attract during the progress of his university studies. He was a brilliant student of the law and a promising adept



of humanistic culture. His first publication was an edition of one of Seneca's works, in which he mingled quotations from Scripture with quotations taken from classic authors. Before his adoption of the new views he had trained no students in theology: he had prepared no lectures on the biblical books: he had had no monastic experience. On the other hand, his legal training and his humanistic studies had developed in his fine intellect a remarkable precision of thought and furnished him with a Latin style which is pronounced to be of high purity.

In two matters of prime importance for their preparation as religious leaders, Luther and Calvin were agreed. They were up to date men in their studies. They were acquainted with Greek and Hebrew,—studies which were pronounced by a widespread opinion dangerous if not heretical. They might have been called "higher critics" had that expression been in vogue four centuries ago. Luther studied Hebrew and Greek for the very purpose of finding out the meaning of Scripture and Calvin, after "his conversion," took up the study of Hebrew at Basel for the same purpose. For a thousand years no Western churchman had known Greek and Hebrew. Gregory the Great knew no Greek, Anselm knew no Greek, Thomas Aquinas knew no Greek, Wyclif knew no Greek. But Luther did and Calvin did. And, when Eck and Prierias and other controversialists were defending the old system with citations from the canon law and church precedent, Luther was literally filling his pages with quotations from the Scriptures and in cases, references to their original meaning.

The other matter of prime importance in which they were agreed was that both were subjects of a startling and determining religious experience. Their change of views was the result of a severe study of Scripture, at least in Luther's case, and also, as it were, the result of a sudden revelation. The Reformation was an experience in their souls before it became a historic movement. The new era dawned in them before it was proclaimed from pulpit and in

tract. Luther's experience has been compared to the vision seen by St. Paul. No influence from outside started him on his career. No Wyclif or Huss or Marsiglius of Padua stirred his heart. No group of Humanists, no progressive party among the monks aroused him. No conspiracy to overthrow the old and start a new sect impelled him. He was fully a child of the mediaeval church until, in the silence of his cell, poring over the open pages of Scripture as he prepared himself for his lectures, a sudden change broke upon him. When he was made a D.D. in 1512, so he informs us, he did not know what the passage meant "The just shall live by faith" or the meaning of "God's righteousness." But, as the ontological argument suddenly flashed upon the mind of the great Schoolman, Anselm, in the dark hours of the night when he was on his bed, so the meaning of the Pauline words flashed upon Luther suddenly and, again to follow his own words, flung open to him the very gates of paradise. The struggles of months were brought to an end (as also in the case of Anselm his painful meditations in search of a simple proof of the divine existence).

To Luther's own narrative remarkable corroboration has been given in the manuscripts of his lectures on the Psalms and on the Romans, delivered before 1517 and recently discovered. From the lectures on the Romans, which we have in the very manuscript copywritten by his own hand, it appears that he had discarded the philosophy of the "accursed heathen," Aristotle, thus breaking with the consent of the Middle Ages and, setting aside all the Schoolmen as authorities except St. Bernard, he had chosen Augustine as his master guide among theologians and expositors, of Holy Writ. Well before 1517, he was an heretic of heretics in the bud.

John Calvin's religious change was the result of "a sudden conversion" as he called it. By this *subita conversio*, as he says, he was transferred, as it were, from the mire and his feet set on the rock." After trying," he asserts "by all the ways of the Catholic faith to reach peace, I

failed and finally, frightened and with tears I took God's way." All sorts of psychological explainings may be attempted to account for the passage of these Reformers from the old system to the new as has been recently done by the eminent scholars, Denifle and Grisar, but they all break to pieces upon the simple facts that Luther and Calvin came to their views in the careful study of the Scriptures and apart from any collusion to break up the old system.

2. In their careers the two men differed widely. No mortal man of historic note has had so many dramatic scenes in his career as Luther. As Dr. Stalker, in view of these war times, has recently said so ingenuously: "Luther was a child of genius, if there ever was one and he battled his way in the face of incredible obstacles to the highest pinnacle of fame. . . . The great stages of his life were truly dramatic, yet there was mingled with them an element of pathos and homeliness by which they are invested with an atmosphere of romance." The essence of that element of pathos seems to me to have consisted in Luther's apparent utter unconsciousness of the importance of that which he was doing and his lonely and unaided fidelity to what he believed to be the truth of God.

John Calvin, too, had stirring episodes in his career but they have the appearance of being personal occurrences rather than events of world-wide significance. He did not stand alone and combat the sale of indulgences; he did not meet the papal anathema nor defend in high scholastic debate the memory of Huss and repudiate the infallibility of general councils. He did not before the open tribunal of worldly sovereignty assert the compulsive imperative of conscience and Scripture. True to his convictions he also was. He withstood the council and, with Farel, suffered banishment from Geneva. In a grave crisis, when the church's jurisdiction over the Lord's table was threatened by Berthelier and the state, he declared from the pulpit and in the face of a mob that he would rather die than surrender the Church's supreme right to self government.



Against bitter and persistent opposition he sought to make Jehovah lord and king. We will not say that one was more heroic than the other but the events of Luther's life were of the essence of the Reformation as a world movement. They belong as parts of the onward march of history.

3. If we now turn to the religious institutions they opposed and the new tenets they advocated, we find that Luther and Calvin agreed to a remarkable degree. With equal determination they joined in resisting the mediaeval system as it found expression in the papal monarchy, the sacramental system and the sacerdotal theory—the three elements upon which the Schoolmen laid the stress of their theological construction.

They advocated the parity of the ministry and the unsacerdotal character of its performances. The minister's first work and his most important work is to teach, to expound the Scriptures. Luther and Calvin were themselves master preachers. Of Luther Melanchthon said "one is an interpreter, one a logician, another an orator but Luther is all in all." Luther gave a noble suggestion for the pulpit when he said: "Accursed are those preachers who aim at high and hard things."

On the four hundredth anniversary of Calvin's birth, 1909, Doumergue read from Calvin's pulpit in St. Pierre passage after passage which the great Reformer had uttered there and the atmosphere of the venerable edifice seemed heavy with the stillness of a sacred awe and yet vocal with the Higher Presence.

These two Reformers were again agreed in insisting upon the education of the people. Through the Puritans Calvin became the father of the public school system of this country as through Knox of the parish school system of Scotland. In Geneva all children—children of the poor as well as the rich—were to be obliged to go to school. Years before Calvin had put his scheme of popular education into practice, Luther had sent out a special appeal calling upon officials in all German towns to see to it that children, girls

and boys, go to school, primarily that they might be intelligent Christians but also that the home might have well-behaved members and the state well-trained citizens. "Yea," he said, "though there were no soul nor heaven nor hell but only civil government yet would schools be required." He betrayed his own artistic tastes when he prescribed, as a part of the curriculum, music, vocal and instrumental. Knox also prescribed sang schules. Calvin's influence was characteristically shown in the action of the House of Commons when, sending back to the Westminster Assembly a portion of its work for revision, it insisted upon every one's being taught to read that he might read the Scriptures for himself. Luther's influence has born fruit in his own native land which shows by several percent the smallest percentage of illiteracy over all other countries in the world.

In these two ways these two Reformers defined the function of the ministry and the intellectual rights of all of every rank.

In the two leading spiritual principles of the Reformation, the final authority of the Scriptures and justification by faith, they were fully agreed. In the use of Scripture, it must be avowed, they were free where their disciples of after generations were painstaking in constructing theories of verbal and plenary inerrancies. Calvin denied the Petrine authorship of the second epistle which goes by his name and found mistakes in the sacred page as in Stephen's speech, whether Stephen's mistake or the mistake of the sacred reporter. Luther observed that, even if Moses did not write the books ascribed to him, yet were they inspired.

It is true that, in their theory of the Lord's Supper, Luther and Calvin differed as also in the consequent theory of the ubiquity of Christ's body. Luther's conduct in the controversy with Zwingli at Marburg, 1529, and in his tirades later we can only deplore both for their uncharitable obstinacy and their baneful effect in retarding the spread of the Reformation. It is said that Luther, reading one of

Calvin's treatments of the Lord's Supper, declared that, if such exposition had been made years before, there would have been no open controversy. But in the main thing these two Reformers were agreed in that they set aside the dogma of transsubstantiation and all mutation of the elements by the word of the priest, "creating God." The conflicts which were waged between the followers of Luther and Calvin over the theory of the Lord's Supper is one of the pitiful chapters in Church history, one we would fain have blotted out. The observance of our Lord's command is so big a thing that we should refuse to be aliens one from the other over the views we take of the exact method of his presence. It is, to say the least, as much a duty, according to the Scriptures, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace as to insist upon precise rectitude of theological statement.

4. As between Luther and Calvin in the method of apprehending truth and treating it,—Luther found the truth by instinctive perception. His spiritual and intellectual insight was immediate. He had some of the mystical faculty of the Apostle John and John Tauler and the mystical treatise *The German Theology*. He saw the truth and felt it. Calvin reached the truth by the intellectual and reflective faculty, through a process. I do not know that either surpassed the other in the precision of their apprehension of biblical meanings and their perception of the deep things of the Spirit. Luther's commentaries, say on the Romans and Galatians, are full of religious insight and spiritual fervor. The Commentary on the Galatians influenced the author of the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the leader of the Methodist revival. Luther saw deep into the mysteries of saving faith and the merciful provision of God in Christ and he knew, if ever man knew, the mind of St. Paul. Calvin was the pathfinder in critical investigation of the biblical text. His statements are deliberate, weighed in the scales of a well-balanced judicial faculty. I do not recall, however, that any two characters such as Bunyan and John

Wesley were ever savingly influenced by his strong and lucid expositions. Luther translated the Scriptures for his people: Calvin furnished critical expositions, the model for later commentators.

Luther's tracts came from a soul aflame like one of our crucible furnaces. They aroused Europe. Calvin constructed the orderly statement of the new views. His Institutes and his Reply to Sadölet taught the Protestant theologians of Western Europe. Many a divine felt as did our own John Cotton "who was wont to sweeten his mouth with a piece of Calvin before he went to sleep." Melancthon called him "the Theologian" as centuries before Jerome had called Gregory Nazianzen. The one Reformer was moved by the enthusiasm of a great cause, the other by the logic of a great system. The personality of Luther is a cardinal epoch in history. Calvin has his place in a group. He is classed with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. In the discovery and proclamation of religious truth, Calvin was not original. What he advocated and defended Luther had already set forth. The doctrine of predestination Luther and Zwingli had held and propounded with as much confidence as did Calvin. Six years before Calvin was converted Luther discussed that subject at length with Erasmus. When Calvin discussed it in his writings directed against Bolsec and Pighius, he often referred to his great forerunner and adding nothing to the reasonableness of the argument constantly goes back to Augustine to whom both were indebted.

As for exhaustive explanations of deep spiritual themes, Luther's feeling, I suppose, followed the line of his answer to the following question: "As God knew that man would fall, why did God create men?" Some one asked. Luther replied "God knew quite well what He was about. Let us keep clear of such abstract questions and consider the will of God as it has been revealed to us." It is not to disparage Calvin to say that he had some of the Schoolmen's assurance that to all theological questions a satisfactory

answer can be given in terms of reasonable explanation. The Turretins followed this instinct and our own Jonathan Edwards.

As Melancthon said, Luther brought the Apostles out from the prison and darkness in which they had lain for centuries. Calvin did not find any new spiritual light in the Scriptures which Luther had not found. It is for this reason that Roman Catholic controversialists have directed their guns against Luther.

5. The service of Calvin to Protestantism as a spiritual movement was very distinct and very great. He gave to Protestantism permanent standing among the peoples of Western Europe, a thing which Luther was unable to do. The English Reformers were first Lutherans. They turned to Calvin. A few years ago, in a letter to a Hungarian professor, Professor Harnack very cordially recognized the debt of Western Europe to Calvin.

6. And this brings us to the very important element in which Calvin went beyond the German Reformer. He was original in the department of administration. He was the founder of a form of Church government and has become the father of representative institutions in the modern world. Here he had genius where Luther was lacking, was constructive where Luther was a child. Calvin was a legislator and a disciplinarian. His mind ran in the direction of rules. It demanded a system. Luther had no taste for administration. No *civitas dei* lay in his mind as an ideal to be realized in an outward organized institution. He had no concern for regulations. His mind did not run along the line of enactments. His work was done when he had borne witness to leading religious principles,—when he had exalted the Christian man as against the pope and all hierarchies, when he had exalted the rule of conscience in the face of the chief living earthly sovereign; when he had given the Scriptures to his people as the rule of all living; when he had borne testimony to the propinquity of Christ to every penitent believer—then his work was done. He



had no gift for arrangements and was helpless when it came to policies. His visitation of the Saxon churches was an incident in his career.

Little Wittenberg was too remote, it may be said, to start the brain of the administrator. No governmental problems had thrust themselves into its humdrum political life as had been the case in Geneva. The statement accounts for nothing. In a thousand Genevas, Luther would not have been an administrator.

In Geneva, Calvin found the civic problem as pressing as it could have been found in any part of Europe at that time. The city had been a seething pot of political aspirations. The bishop had been obliged to divide his power with the lords of Savoy and both, in 1387, had been forced in a constitution of 79 articles to grant to the Genevan state popular assemblies and representative councils. The cantons of Freiburg and Bern, with their free constitutions, had been looked to for protection by the democratic element and patriots, like Berthelier and Bonivard, by their struggles and violent deaths had furnished a chapter in the history of democratic progress. When Calvin in 1536, following the compulsive urgency of Farel, made Geneva his fixed abode, representative institutions were at work there. Himself, he at first preferred the aristocratic form of government as the least liable to abuse. However, he fell in with the representative method and elaborated it in the ecclesiastical constitution which we call the Presbyterian form but generically the Puritan—whether Congregational or presbyteral—and in large suggestions which, taken up by his immediate disciples, became the norm of representative institutions and democracy in modern states. Calvin would have been a legislator and disciplinarian anywhere, in Wittenberg or San Marino probably as much as in the metropolis on Lake Leman.

7. In the domain of the Church, Calvin's legislation provided that the Christian commonwealth is to be administered by its constituency through elected representatives.

The ideal was the very opposite of the papal monarchy or a hierarchy, self-perpetuating though both claim divine sanction or, on the other hand, of the system of state control and state appointment though this system was retained in ecclesiastical matters in Geneva till the separation of church and state by popular vote in 1909. The system exalted the rights of the laity. The consistory of Geneva—or, as we call it, the presbytery—consisted of ministers and twelve lay elders. The system exalted the freedom and dignity of the pulpit. Calvin and the Reformed symbols laid stress upon a divine call to the ministry, a call discovered to the consistory by a thorough examination into the intellectual furnishing and the moral purpose of the candidate. Not in sacramental performances but in knowledge of the Scriptures and moral aims are we to look for the indispensable qualifications of the clergymen. The Puritan pulpit needs no panegyrist. At times in history, without doubt, it went too far in speaking of matters belonging to the political domain. At times, it has given way morally to the blandishments of episcopacy and the threats of the civil power. But, upon the whole, it has been an iron tonic wherever it has been set up. Somewhat rudely, no doubt, in cases, but fearlessly, it has stood for the things of God as against human devices, for righteousness against the practise of accommodation, and for reality against pretence.

8. Calvin's idea of church government necessarily influenced the theory of civil government,—necessarily because to the men who were Calvinists the Scriptures were compulsive over all modes of enactment. Green remarks that the national synod, which Theodore of Tarsus introduced into England in the seventh century, formed the "mould on which the civil organization of the state quite settled itself," through the unification of the land under one jurisdiction of king and parliament. The representative principle could not be confined to the government of the Church for the freedom of the Christian man can not be confined to the ecclesiastical domain. In his *Institutes* and

here and there in his commentaries on the Prophets Calvin set forth two germinative ideas bearing on the civil realm. Rulers, in accordance with Romans xiii. are to be obeyed in all things and even under much provocation *except* where their acts contravene the dictates of the conscience enlightened by the Word of God. The second idea was that it is meet that the people through representatives, as the ephori in Sparta and the tribunes in Rome, should supervise the administration of civil rulers and, where necessary, rebuke and check them.

Calvin's paragraphs on government in the Institutes, iv: 21, 31 the Puritans of this country were never weary in quoting and they became the powerful incentives in the liberties and self justification of the New England colonies.<sup>1</sup> That strict Calvinist in doctrine, Robert South, knew well the mighty influence of Calvin in modifying the theory of the divine right of kings of which South was an uncompromising advocate. In one of his sermons, that notable preacher spoke of Calvin, the great mufti of Geneva, as advocating anti-monarchical doctrines and haying the face to defend them in his Institutes. Calvin came to this frame of mind on government as the years wore on in Geneva, until he set forth government by common consent as "the best condition by far" and his last edition of the Institutes, by his own hand, 1559 commended government "in the hands of the many."

Calvin's pupils and the school of jurisconsults in Geneva elaborated this conception of civil government with increasing boldness. In 1556, Ponet, afterwards bishop of Winchester, in his *Politike Power*, which John Adams declared to contain "all the essential principles of liberty afterwards dilated up by Sidney and Locke," went far in saying that princes might be deposed by the body of the congregation or commonwealth. Two years later, 1558, three pastors and one elder of the English congregation in Geneva issued

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<sup>1</sup> Hart in *American Hist. as told by Contemporaries*, i; 324-330, gives the passage.

eight political tracts addressed to England and Scotland to show how far superior powers are to be obeyed, a discussion which Calvin pronounced true but "somewhat harsh." The Genevan Bible, of 1557, known as the Puritan Bible, greatly offended James I and the strict advocates of the divine right of kings by its incisive notes on the rights of the congregation and the right of peoples to resist tyrants. Beza, Calvin's successor, and Hotman, also of the university of Geneva, in special treatises went further still in the assertion of the two propositions that rulers are responsible to the Word of God and that a virtual compact exists between rulers and people so that when rulers cease to help the people or defy the Word of God, they may be set aside. Lawyers in Heidelberg took up this advocacy. The Huguenot Mornay, the author of the *Vindiciae contra tyrannos*, 1579, applied the principle when he gave to William the Silent the counsel that, as Philip II had broken his obligations, his royal rule over the Netherlands was no longer binding.

In England, Cartwright set forth the same views of popular sovereignty. John Knox applied them in his attitude to Mary Queen of Scotland. "Think you" said the young sovereign, "that subjects having power may resist their princes by resort to violence?" "If princes exceed their bounds, no doubt they may" was the reply. "I am in the place where I am demanded by my conscience to speak the truth and therefore I speak, impugn it who list" he said again. Pity that in this age the Roman church should beatify Mary while it sees nothing to honor in the man among Scotch men. The principle "that there is between all lords and vassals" a mutual obligation was given expression in Scottish law. The Long Parliament and Cromwell took the same ground and voted the execution of Charles I whose promises were never kept. The principles found codified expression in the Dutch Declaration of Independence, 1581, the Solemn League and Covenant, in the Instrument of Government of 1653 and in the Fundamental

Orders of Connecticut and other New England documents and, we are accustomed to say, in the Mecklenburg Declaration and in the Declaration of Independence.

Calvinism became the expounder and defender of free institutions in France, Holland, England, Scotland and this country. It is also true that Calvinism became intolerant and even tyrannical in Geneva, in England and Scotland and our New England states but within it as of its very essence resided the principles of divine sovereignty and individual dignity and these constrained it in spite of noteworthy exponents to state and finally grant liberty of opinion as in the act of tolerating the Anabaptists in Holland and the declaration of the Westminster Confession that "God alone is lord of the conscience." And we recall that that true spiritual son of Calvin, Roger Williams was the first to incorporate full "soul liberty" into a state constitution.

9. As to the matter of the relation of church and state as it stood in Calvin's mind and the practice of Geneva, it would lead too far to enter into that subject at any length. But a statement of it must be made in order to form a judgment of Calvin's character and of Calvin in comparison with Luther. The subject exercised Calvin's constructive intellect. For Luther apparently it was never a matter of serious reflection. That Reformer took for granted a peaceable and healthy cooperation of the two realms, both submitting to the rule of the Word of God. Calvin was the author of the Ecclesiastical Ordinances of Geneva, the other committeemen appointed by the civil authority to serve with him offering as is probable only moral and confirmatory aid. The code passed by popular vote 1543 and revised 1559, regulated the customs and discipline of the Genevan church. Calvin was likewise active in framing the civil code and, in 1542, the council gave him release from preaching during the week that he might give himself to the work of its preparation. His purpose was to make the two spheres of church and state coordinate and complimentary. He wrote to a friend that it was his pur-



pose to keep them separate: *volui, sicut æquum est, spirit-ualem potestatem a civili judicio distingui*. But, in fact, in Geneva and later in New England they overlapped so that the state exercised functions we now deny to it and the church overstepped its domain in interfering with civil affairs and the appointment of civil officials. Infractions of the first table of the law were punished with the severest physical penalties even unto death as well as infractions of the second table,—atheism, blasphemy, the denial of the trinity, as well as murder. The state appointed lay elders, however acknowledging in 1560 that it had been a pernicious usurpation to appoint them without taking the advice of the clergy.

Servetus was put to death for two crimes, the denial of infant baptism and blasphemy against the Trinity. Bolsec, Pighius and others were banished for denying the decree of predestination. Torture was applied and with Calvin's consent, though he several times complained at the severity of its application. Liberty of printing was suppressed and complaints against civil sentences punished. Parents were forbidden giving certain names to children. The key to every home was at the disposal of the consistory. Roman Catholic writers find in the administration of Genevan affairs the Inquisition without the name. Compulsion took the place of persuasion or at best was added to it. No dissent was tolerated.

The annals, detailing the enforcement of the codes of Geneva, are not pleasant reading. The city had a population of 12000 and in three months, in 1545, thirty-four were executed for witchcraft. From 1542 to 1546 more than eight hundred were seized, fifty-eight put to death and seventy-six exiled. In 1546, so the keepers reported, the prisons were full. The same severity was shown for offenses coming strictly under the supervision of the ecclesiastical authority. From Feb. 1557 to February 1562, 1286 persons were excommunicated from the fellowship of the church.

Vain is the attempt, in my judgment, to excuse Calvin on the ground that he held no official position in the city government. He was consulted on all matters. Lists of offenders were put into his hands for scrutiny and judicial decision. He was prosecutor at the trial of Servetus. After the Spaniard's death Calvin justified his execution in a special pamphlet and he also defended in treatises the banishment of Bolsec and others for doctrinal dissents.

And unsatisfactory is the apology on the ground that many of the best of his contemporaries approved what was going on in Geneva. But all did not. Voices of dissent were found not only in the city but outside the city and Bern was aggrieved. It is an anomaly that Calvin should have joined such profound knowledge of the Scriptures with unyielding severity towards religious dissidents.

The Genevan method has been defended on the ground of the lawlessness which invaded the path of the Protestant movement. Such lawless elements appeared in Germany. It seemed at times as if anarchy might be the fatal stumbling block of Protestantism. The severe regimen of Geneva, it has been argued was necessary to conserve the spiritual principles of the Reformation and perpetuate the movement against this lawlessness from within and the insidious encroachments of Jesuistry from without. The argument has standing ground and the bitter legislation may have been in the positive purpose of Providence.

These things aside, we will remember that Geneva became the bulwark of Protestant liberties, the outpost of liberal education for Western Europe and the model of a well-ordered community. The Huguenots turned their faces and their feet towards Geneva as to a new Jerusalem. John Knox's eulogy, which compared it to the best organized society since the days of the Apostles, is a permanent bit of literature. Geneva became the model state of Europe for moral order.

10. We are now ready to compare Luther and Calvin from the standpoints of personal piety and of humane sym-

pathies. Luther's piety was shown in the beautiful Christian spirit which runs through his tract the *Freedom of the Christian Man*—praised no less by Catholic writers than by Protestant. His hymns on the incarnation are not excelled for childlike simplicity and religious feeling and his great hymn continues to be sung on solemn anniversaries in Protestant lands. His prayers are full of tenderness including one of almost unique simplicity and fervor in his death hour. Calvin's prayers in the Genevan liturgy breathe the full spirit of reverence and tremble with the sense of sin and unworthiness. In his single hymn "I greet thee, who my sure Redeemer art" he too touched the tenderest chord of religious emotion. Nevertheless there seem to be distinguishing qualities in their devotion. Luther's is the childlike trust and confidence; Calvin's an overpowering sense of the immanence of God. To the one God is more the confiding friend, to the other the sovereign and almighty judge; to both equally near. To Luther the deliverance by the atonement seems to have been the governing reality; to Calvin the righteousness which undelay it and which it demands. It was just like Luther to say "Jesus Christ Himself is my immediate bishop, abbot, prior, father, lord and master."<sup>2</sup> Calvin exalted the motive of duty. This sense of duty nerved Knox so that, over his grave, the regent could say: "Here lies he who never feared the face of man." It made the men of the Long Parliament and Cromwell. It expressed itself in the words of Beza: "Sir, it is the lot of the church in whose name I speak, to endure blows not to strike them. But also, may it please you to remember, it is an anvil which has worn out many hammers." It invested Calvin himself with a singular grandeur as a moral personality pursuing an unyielding determination towards the aim of a regenerated commonwealth. There is something very admirable in Luther's letter to John Tetzel offering him comfort when the Catholic party

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<sup>2</sup> Jesus Christus ipse est meus immediatus episcopus, abbas, prior, pater, dominus et magister. On Monastic Vows, Weimar ed., VIII. 376.

was making him the scape-goat for the Wittenberg disturbance. There is something unparalleled in history about the spectacle afforded by the dying Reformer, his frame wasted with studies and physical infirmities, receiving into his chamber the Genevan councils and the ministers of the city and listening to the tribute of their respect and begging their pardon for the exhibitions of temper he had shown. One thing is notable in Puritan history. Puritanism has not been ashamed of apologies when it has felt it has offended against God. A spiritual biography resides in the words which the council recorded of Calvin after his death *un homme de si grande majesté*. Renan pronounced him "the most Christian man of his age."

II. The humanity of Luther has attracted the attention of Carlyle, Froude, Tulloch and other English writers. He was the most human of men. Both Reformers were married but Luther's home stands out in the history of the home circle, with its trust in his wife and his playful affectionateness which fills the letters addressed to her, his interest in his children, translating for them Aesop's fables, singing at the Christmas tree, writing to his little Hans about heaven, weeping as if his great frame would be shattered to pieces at the death-bed of his daughter Lena, taking his boys with him on his last journey to his birthplace, the journey that terminated in his death. He was overflowing in his love for nature, the flowers, the birds, the trees, suggesting the male and female principle as running through all created things. He gathered the hunted hare in his arms on the Wartburg, reminding us of our own commoner president who turned aside on the road to Springfield to restore some little birds which had fallen from their nest. He loved music, declaring it next to the Gospel to be the best medicine of the soul. His humor was overflowing. It does not forsake him even when he speaks of the pope or the devil. His Table Talk abounds in human interests and sage remarks. In the experiences of his last years there is something most human,—disenchantment and weariness at having outlived his time.

Luther lives in the hearts of his people as Knox in the hearts of his people though not in the same measure. Luther's home is the model home. His Christmas songs are sung by every Protestant German household at Christmas time. His independence and his courage are the pattern for his people. Döllinger with master hand remarked that Luther gave to his people what no other man ever gave to a people, its Bible, its catechism and its hymnbook and, after four centuries, they so remain. He is the chief German personality and his soul has entered into the German people.

Of Calvin men think as austere, but unsocial; unsympathetic with the common instincts of mankind though at death master of himself and the situation. He is still an exile. His career and his work remain those of an alien in the land which gave him birth. His own city of Geneva has repudiated his theology at what is regarded as its central thought. This is the pathos of *his* career and it is people who speak another language than the language he spoke who admire him as a commanding moral figure and a benefactor of mankind.

The one, with Melanchthon at his side, sleeps in front of the altar of the church on whose door at midday he struck the article against the sale of indulgences, the first article of the universal Protestant Reformation,—the day which James Anthony Froude has pronounced “the most memorable day in modern history.” But Luther is German after all. Calvin sleeps in a grave which no man can find for by his direction it was unmarked; but his spirit, unnational, holds with a mysterious spell the minds of men in the Protestant world who search for the deep motive of life, life in its reality, and the best form of the social organism. Like the great white birch and pine side by side at my door in the Northern woods, these two men stand abreast in the pathway of what we call modern history,—the one tall and overhanging, with a cluster of branches at the top, the other tall and straight with two or three outstretched branches



and some dead ones still clinging below. Both have withstood the vehemence of the Western storms and both are seen from afar with admiration and gratitude.

Like Francis d'Assisi and Dominic in the 13th centuries the two Protestant Reformers—in whom we hope even Roman Catholics will come to find something to admire—never met. But Calvin often quoted Luther, sent greetings to him as his “much respected father” and referred to him as having been raised up by God in the beginning to go before with the torch for finding the way of salvation.<sup>3</sup> Luther, according to Melanchthon, held his younger co-laborer in “high esteem” and, when he read Calvin's Reply to Sadollet, exclaimed: “this book has hand and foot and I rejoice that God raises up men who will give the last blow to popery and finish the war against anti-Christ which I began.”

Of Luther, Melanchthon, who knew him best in his younger years and his later years, in his heroic strength and his weakness, exclaimed on hearing the news of his death: “The horseman and chariot of Israel is departed who ruled the church in these last evil times” and in his funeral address applied to him the words addressed to Abraham “a prince of God is among us.”

In the last paragraph of his biography of Calvin, Beza who knew Calvin during sixteen years, in the episodes of his stormy career and in his life in the study and knew him best, said: “In him all men may see an example of Christian character, an example which it is as easy to calumniate as it is difficult to imitate.”

To both the Protestant world owes its existence and human society a debt.

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<sup>3</sup> de necessitate reform, eccles., Opp. vi: 459.