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Calvin

ZWINGLI (1484–1531)

IN Zurich the Reformation came in the way normal among the free cities of the Holy Roman Empire. The leading citizens were influenced by the reforming doctrines; they resisted and repudiated the authority of the Bishop of Constance when he tried to interfere; the city council legislated to reform the churches and parishes, with the advice of its chief pastors, to allow clerical marriage, to remove superstitious images and relics, to suppress the monasteries and use their endowments for education, and to order a vernacular and simplified liturgy instead of the mass. The process began in 1522 and was complete by 1525. As in other cities, the council followed with reforming regulations to control public morals.

Zwingli claimed that his reform was independent of Luther's, that he had been teaching reforming doctrines before he had heard of Luther. An examination of the evidence does not wholly support his claim. Zurich received an impetus from the Lutheran revolt like every other free city in the Empire, and at the time Zwingli was eagerly interested in Luther's teaching and Luther's methods. But the same fuel was everywhere present; so was the same appeal from the Church authorities to the Scripture. The Reformation did not all spring from Luther, it sprang from those conditions of the Church and those states of mind which made Luther possible. Zwingli was not deluding himself in claiming that he held reforming ideas before he heard of Luther. But the news from Wittenberg drastically affected events in Zurich.

Like Luther, but more sympathetically than Luther, Zwingli learnt from Erasmus. He sympathized with the quest for reform by cool ridicule. He had more wit, more philosophy, more learning, less profundity, less religious sense than Luther. His desire to reform the Church was a little more like the desire of the humanist who hated inefficiency and obscurantism than like the desire of the ex-friar who had fought through a storm of temptation to defend the souls of his people. He was less pessimistic about human nature, more hopeful about the destiny of good heathen. But he was not only a humanist. As he studied the Greek fathers to whom Erasmus led him, and as he came under the influence of St Augustine, he found the same religious needs and insights that were central in Luther's heart. Neither Zwingli nor Calvin allowed friends, admiring their intellects and following their reasoning like disciples, to see their inwardness; they captured men's allegiance by the cool force of their minds. Luther always remained a man of the heart, he opened his inward thoughts and feelings to the sight and affection, he captured allegiance more by moral stature than by subtlety of mind. The contrast must not be exaggerated. The more we know of the two Swiss reformers, the less possible we find it to treat them merely as intellectuals. But a measure of this strikes everyone who seeks to penetrate the sources to the character and minds of the three men.

Zwingli felt less reverence for the past than Luther, less respect for traditional ways of worship. The churches of Zurich were transformed in appearance. Relics and organs were removed, pictures and images were sold or smashed, surviving altars were stripped bare of ornament, and the new German order for the Lord's Supper (1525) bore small resemblance to the medieval liturgy. After a sermon and prayers, unleavened bread and wine were placed not upon an altar but upon a table in the middle of the nave, surrounded by the congregation. The ministers faced the congregation, wore lay clothes, and carried the bread in

large wooden trenchers round to the silent people sitting in their seats. Zwingli instituted other services almost without liturgical form and composed only of a sermon and prayers.

Luther believed that nothing in the service should be contrary to the Word of God. But as his conservative temperament assumed to be permissible whatever Scripture did not explicitly forbid, he had not sought to abolish the elevation of the Host or the eucharistic vestments. Zwingli, likewise believing that nothing in the service should be contrary to the Word of God, surrounded this belief with a different atmosphere. To his mind the Scripture ought explicitly to sanction what was done in the service; and although he recognized an area of 'things indifferent', such as the wording of the prayers, where the minister or the Church was free to make any edifying rule, he assumed that simplicity ought everywhere to prevail. The change of appearance and worship in the Swiss churches was therefore more revolutionary than in the churches of northern Germany. In some of the Lutheran churches hymnody flowered under Luther's impetus. The Swiss churches thought hymns unscriptural and provided metrical versions of the Psalms. The Lutheran churches continued to use private confession as a sacrament; the Swiss churches did not prohibit private penitence with a pastor but believed the sacrament unwarranted by Scripture, a cause of priestly power, and therefore a corruption.

THE REAL PRESENCE

This difference, as much of attitude as of principle, began to turn upon the doctrine of the eucharist.

It could not be denied that the mass had been the focus of much popular superstition. Zwingli, like Luther, believed that the mass was not a sacrifice, and wished to eliminate the sacrificial language. Unlike Luther, he also believed that the Christian doctrine of the eucharist had been corrupted by the notion that Christ's Body was 'substantially' or 'corporeally' present in or under the elements of

bread and wine. His mind sharply distinguished the material from the spiritual, and shrank from the idea that physical objects might be vehicles of spiritual gifts. He always preferred to treat the sacraments rather as symbols and signs of a covenant between God and man than as means of grace. The Lord's Supper was a memorial of the Lord's death and a thanksgiving for it. In his early years as a Reformer he and his friend Oecolampadius of Basle were so engaged upon saying what the Lord's Supper was not, that they rarely and reluctantly attempted to describe what it was. His reading of the Bible suggested to him that the doctrine of the Real Presence (in those days the word *real* was used to mean *substantial* or *corporeal*) was a misunderstanding. The gift is the spiritual gift of Christ's redemption, and a spiritual gift cannot be received physically but only by faith. And when it was put to him that in the text of the Bible Jesus said 'This is my Body', he and Oecolampadius replied that this was the normal mode of metaphor used by Jesus. He said 'I am the door', 'I am the vine'; but no one insisted that these statements be understood literally. 'This is my Body' must be understood to mean 'this is a sign of my Body'. The bread and wine were not vehicles of a present Christ, but signs of a Christ present by faith.

During the last four years of his life, under pressure from his enemies and perhaps some of his colleagues, he made more positive assertions. These signs, though signs of the absent, are efficacious or grace-bearing signs, they are special modes of the universal presence of the divine Spirit, they focus that gift which we also receive when we pray. He never allowed the traditional doctrine that in the Lord's Supper there is a true communication of the Lord's humanity to the faithful soul.

THE COLLOQUY OF MARBURG, 1529

Luther thought that Zwingli was depriving the faithful Christian of that comfortable assurance promised in the

Gospel, and that he was applying rational argument to a mystery beyond all argument. He could not regard the Swiss as faithful men. The Landgrave Philip of Hesse, painfully aware of a political need for unity among the Protestants, arranged in 1529 a conference at Marburg where, he hoped, peaceable discussion would reunite the two sides. At Marburg he gathered Luther, Zwingli, Melanchthon, Bucer, Oecolampadius, and other leading divines. They agreed upon much, but on the eucharist they failed altogether. Luther began the discussion by writing on the table the words 'This is my Body' and announced that he would never depart from them. 'I am not going to argue whether *Is* can mean *is a sign of*. I am content with what Christ said. . . . The devil cannot get out of that.' Thereafter he would never extend the hand of friendship to the disciples of Zwingli. Melanchthon suffered qualms that the difference was not as simple as either side supposed, and hankered after a reconciliation. Luther moved not a step, and the cleavage among the Protestants grew deeper. And as the divines of some Rhineland cities and the Low Countries followed Zwingli and Oecolampadius rather than Luther, those churches began to look for guidance and leadership rather to Zurich than to Wittenberg.

Sword and battle-axe in hand, Zwingli was killed in 1531 at the fight of Kappel between Zurich and the Catholic cantons. He was succeeded as chief pastor by Henry Bullinger (died 1575), of a wise and moderate temper, who directed a European correspondence as Zurich became a guide and a model for other Protestant cities.

BUCER (1491–1551)

Martin Bucer, the reformer of Strasbourg, devoted a main part of his career to reconciling the Zwinglians with the Lutherans. Like other negotiators he sometimes supposed that finding the right formula was the same as reconciling

the contending parties, and he never suffered from the fault of being too laconic in his explanations. Luther once called him 'that chatterbox'. But Bucer was more than a mere diplomat or negotiator; he was a man of principle and among the most learned and level-headed of the Protestants. After being an adherent of Luther, he had been convinced by Zwingli's argument that a physical reception of a spiritual gift was impossible and that the channel of reception was faith. But he also perceived the force in the Lutheran contention that the Scripture revealed a true communication of the Lord's humanity in the sacrament. He therefore proposed that the true statement of the matter should use the preposition *with*. The divine gift was not given *in* or *under* the forms of bread and wine – thus far Zwingli was right. But it was given in an indissoluble conjunction *with* them – as the bread is given to the body, so the divine gift passes into the faithful soul. This divine gift was the humanity of the Lord, as the Catholic Church believed it to be. Therefore Luther was right in contending that an objective gift was offered to the communicant, and Zwingli was right in contending that the faithless man could receive nothing but bread.

This is in outline the doctrine which came later to be known as 'receptionism', and was destined in time to become the classical doctrine of non-Lutheran Protestantism. One of its forms is the Calvinist doctrine. For Bucer's long sentences were compressed into a clear and coherent explanation, impossible to misunderstand, by one of his lieutenants. From 1538 to 1541 John Calvin, banished from Geneva, was working under Bucer at Strasbourg.

FAREL AT GENEVA

The city of Geneva, like so many other cities of the Empire, had been growing towards independence, though more slowly than Nuremberg or Strasbourg or Zurich. The arms of the city of Berne, since 1528 the most powerful city of

Protestant Switzerland, supported the desire of the Genevans to be independent of their bishop. The Bernese used the Frenchman William Farel to reform the French-speaking areas of Switzerland under their control, and it was a natural extension of Bernese influence when Farel helped the people of Lausanne to drive out their prince-bishop and become a free Protestant city. Farel tried to work in Geneva but was expelled. In 1533 Berne sent him back into Geneva under diplomatic protection. Sermons, disputations, riots, a siege marked the divided state of the citizens. Before the end of 1535 Geneva was Protestant. It was an independent city but its independence was under the protection of Berne.

CALVIN (1509–64)

In the summer of 1536 Calvin passed through Geneva on his way from Paris to Strasbourg, the haven of Protestant refugees fleeing from France. Born at Noyon in 1509, he studied Latin and theology at the University of Paris and law at Orleans. He published in 1532 a reputable edition of Seneca's *De clementia*. Unsafe in Paris, he retreated to Basle, and in 1536 issued a lucid handbook of Protestant theology, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Passing by chance through the city of Geneva, he was persuaded by Farel to stay. The city council offered him employment as a teacher of Scripture.

Farel was no organizer. The Reformation in Geneva consisted of little but broken statues and more sermons. Calvin, who was trained as a lawyer, had been employed at Geneva for some four months when he confronted the city council with a programme of desirable reforms. He had a tidy mind in practical affairs as well as on paper, and one of the consuming passions of his life was a hatred of public mess. He began to seek an organization of the Church and ministry which should ensure decency and order. Like all other Reformers he assumed that this could be achieved by

a systematic reproduction of the practices of the primitive Church as history and the New Testament disclosed them.

His first efforts to organize the Church were stopped by exile, from 1538 to 1541, for Geneva never wished to be organized altogether as Calvin preferred. But the moment he was recalled, triumphantly, he persuaded the city council to establish a series of regulations known as the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. Even when these regulations were revised twenty years later by a Calvin firmly in the saddle, they still failed to represent his precise ideal of an ecclesiastical polity. But from 1541 the outline of his programme was being put into practice.

He was a generation later than Luther. Luther married an ex-nun, Calvin the widow of an Anabaptist; and the difference is symbolic. The problem now was not the overthrow of a papacy, but the construction of new modes of power. Luther rested much upon the doctrine of the priesthood of the laity and derived part of his practical programme from the doctrine. Calvin recognized that the doctrine was in Scripture and emphasized the theoretical consequences. But what was needed was the authority of a rightly called and purified ministry. In breaking down papal authority, the Reformation seemed to have left the authority of the Christian ministry vague and uncertain. Where authority existed among the Protestant Churches, apart from the personal authority of individual men of stature, it rested with the prince or the city magistrate. Calvin believed that in organizing the Church at Geneva he must organize it in imitation of the primitive Church, and thereby reassert the independence of the Church and the divine authority of its ministers.

There was little that was democratic in Calvin's ideal constitution. The pastors chose the pastors, though the city council could reject the choice. They were to meet once a week for the common study of the Scriptures, and this meeting was not voluntary. They chose the teachers, who were responsible for the teaching of Scripture and for education

generally, though again the council insisted that the choice should be ratified by themselves. The elders – the most characteristic of Calvin's institutions – were disciplinary officials. It was their duty to survey the morals of their congregations, to ensure that notorious sinners were not permitted to receive holy communion, and to make reports to the 'Venerable Company' of the pastors. These elders were appointed by the councils of the city government, after consultation with the pastors. Every Thursday they were to meet with the pastors in consistory and consider whether there was any disorder in the church requiring a remedy. They were to summon before themselves heretics, parishioners who failed to attend their churches or who treated the ministers with contempt. They were to admonish; and if the sinner was still impenitent they might excommunicate him and inform the magistrate.

This control over the morals of the population was not new. For centuries bishops' courts and city councils had decreed rules which a later generation would think an intolerable tyranny over the liberty of the citizen. Calvin wanted to give this right and duty to the authorities of the Church, not of the State; and where the Church authorities delivered a sinner to the civil power, the civil power would punish him.

Like the councils of Basle, Berne, Zurich, and other Swiss cities, the council of Geneva had no desire to give the power of excommunication to their clergy. At every turn they sought to add provisos in the Ordinances ensuring that the pastors might act only after reference to the council. They added a note to the final text of the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* which stated: 'These arrangements do not mean that the pastors have any civil jurisdiction, nor that the authority of the consistory interferes in any way with the authority of the magistrates and the civil courts.'

The addition betrayed an uneasiness. In a measure the magistrates had already been forced to allow the right to excommunicate, as a condition of Calvin's return from exile.

They sought to restrict it not only by these ambiguous additions but by insisting that a civil magistrate preside at the consistory, baton in hand, as a sign that he was acting as a civil magistrate and not simply as a lay elder. Calvin at last succeeded in removing the baton in 1561.

The council always retained more control of the elections to the consistory than he wholly approved, and they often interpreted the above clause on jurisdiction in a way which he vehemently disapproved.

The minutes of the consistory after 16 February 1542 are extant. The offences are manifold, and not all are as interesting as the following. A woman knelt upon the grave of her husband and cried *Requiescat in pace*; others saw her and started to copy her. A goldsmith made a chalice. Someone said that the arrival of the French refugees had put up the cost of living. A woman tried to cure her husband by tying round his neck a walnut containing a spider. Another danced. Another possessed a copy of the lives of the saints, the *Golden Legend*. A woman of sixty-two married a man of twenty-five. A barber gave the tonsure to a priest. Another blamed Geneva for executing people for their religious opinions.

Calvin saw danger lurking behind the trivial in moral behaviour. An ordinance of 1547 renewed an older decree of 1535 against the wearing of slashed breeches. But 'we see that, by the loopholes of the breeches, they wish to bring in all manner of disorders'. He was inclined to take a grim view of offences. When several distinguished citizens were imprisoned for holding a dance in a private house, he became (for him) emotional, and declared his intention of uncovering the truth 'even at the cost of my life'.

In 1550 the magistrates authorized the clergy to make an annual visit to the home of each parishioner, with a view to examining whether the household was keeping the rules of the Church.

The Reformation had set out to remedy the corruption, superstition, and immorality of the Church and of society.

The pendulum had swung. The remedy was beginning to work with an effectiveness beyond expectation.

The consistory was indefatigable in its maintenance of the moral order. Its members tried to suppress fortune-telling and sorcery, were pitiless towards merchants who defrauded their clients, denounced short measures, excessive rates of interest, a doctor who exacted high fees, a tailor who overcharged a travelling Englishman. They once compared themselves to dogs which bark when their master is attacked. They thought of themselves as charged with the protection of old people, orphans, widows, children, the sick. They attempted to educate the public conscience and somewhat resembled Hebrew prophets, with their courage, their power, and their unpopularity.

The boundaries between the jurisdiction of Church and State had never been easy to define, and they were not easy to define in Geneva. Calvin, the practised lawyer, drafted a revision of the city code for the council, a plan for a watch, a cleaner mode of dispersing refuse. It was not easy to distinguish whether he was offering these suggestions as an interested layman or as the chief pastor of the city. There is a story that when the first dentist arrived in Geneva, Calvin personally satisfied himself that the man was reputable before he was allowed to practise; and though the story is probably apocryphal, it represents a truth about the entanglement of Church and State. The consistory gave its opinions on the bank rate, on the level of interest for war loan, on exports and imports, on speeding the law courts, on the cost of living and the shortage of candles. On the other hand the council, even during Calvin's last years, may be found supervising the clergy and performing other functions which logic would have allotted to the consistory. The council was not backward in protesting against overlong sermons, or against pastors who neglected to visit the homes of the people; they examined the proclamations by the pastors even if the proclamation called the city to a general fast, sanctioned the dates for days of public penitence, agreed or refused to lend

pastors to other churches, provided for the housing and stipend of the pastors, licensed the printing of theological books.

It is correct to speak neither of magistrates dominated by pastors nor of pastors dominated by magistrates. Some people served on both council and consistory, and were perhaps not always clear in their own minds whether they were acting as Church or as State. A pastor who dominated the consistory could not help being one of the rulers of State as well as of Church. That was one reason why Calvin worked successfully with a constitution which was not quite faithful to his own ideas.

For Calvin was not the absolute ruler of Geneva pictured by legend and his enemies. There were many matters on which he could not achieve all that he wanted. He wanted the pastors to take the first steps in choosing the pastors, and the council insisted on being associated with the work of selection from the beginning. He wanted the pastors to be present when the council elected the elders, and succeeded in achieving this during his last few years, though the old practice was restored eight years after his death. He wanted the punishment of harlots to be severe, and it was never so severe as he thought proper. In October 1558 the council at last decreed that anyone guilty of a second offence should be marched through the city with a cap on her head, heralded by a trumpeter; but even then the council refused to apply the penalty with rigour. In 1546 Calvin persuaded the council to abolish taverns and establish cafés instead. Stringent regulations determined conduct in these cafés, banning indecorous conversation or bawdy songs, decreeing that no meals should be served unless grace were said before and after the meal, and that a French Bible should be available for consultation on the premises. The cafés proved unsuccessful, for the people preferred taverns, and the taverns perforce were reopened. In 1546 there was an act against the use of non-Biblical Christian names, and again the people were too strong. He wanted the pastors to be

ordained with the laying-on of hands, and the council would permit only prayers and a sermon. Nor was he able to persuade the council to return all the ecclesiastical revenues which they had appropriated, like so many cities or princes, at the first rush of reform. This was no matter of principle for him, and he made no strenuous efforts. The question how often the Lord's Supper should be celebrated was nearer to his heart. He believed that frequent, weekly, communion was practised by the primitive Church and ought to be practised by the Church in Geneva. Laymen in the Middle Ages had been accustomed to such infrequent communion that all the Reformers found this change one of the most difficult for the laity to accept. In the Ordinances of 1541 he restrained his request to a monthly communion, and was refused even that. It was to be administered 'for the present' four times in the year.

He was not popular. He was the kind of man who has only disciples or opponents; it was impossible to be neutral about him. He was known and beloved by a few intimates. As a dying man he said of the citizens of Berne: 'They have always feared me more than they loved me.' And the same would be a true verdict upon many of the citizens of Geneva. Some of them are said to have called him Cain, one to have named his dog after him. We hear of rude papers left in the pulpit, of ballads written against him, of men who abused him as a hypocrite and a tyrant, of thirty tennis players suspected of choosing for their game the square outside the church where he was teaching, of a rumour that someone had offered 500 crowns to anyone who would assassinate him. He knew what he wanted and could be ruthless in getting it. Although he could often be gentle, he found it more difficult than most men to be gentle with opponents. Aware that he was faithful to the teaching of the Bible, he identified opposition to himself with contempt for God's Word, and knew that it must be beaten down. He was naturally austere, with no pleasure in food or drink; one almost suspects him of marrying to set an example. He lived

quietly in his house on the Rue des Chanoines, with a modest little stipend and simple household and short hours of sleep; he was always grave, he had none of Luther's exuberance and joy in life. There was no abandon, he held himself upon a rein. When he had decided, he was inflexible. 'If he once gets his knife into you,' said a fellow pastor, 'you do not stand a chance.' A manufacturer of toys and playing cards named Ameaux, whose business was affected by the discipline which prohibited card-playing, said at a dinner party that Calvin was a bad man and a foreigner who taught untrue doctrine. The council decided that he should kneel and apologize to Calvin in their presence. Calvin insisted that such an apology was not public enough, and he would not preach again till proper satisfaction was performed. The council condemned Ameaux to walk through the city in a shirt, carrying a taper and asking God's mercy. If Calvin was restrained where Luther overflowed, if he eschewed the coarsenesses which sometimes defiled Luther's conversation, he lacked Luther's warmth and generosity.

He had little room for expediency, but his mind was neither narrow nor blinkered. Whereas Zwingli could be contemptuous of opponents and Luther could rarely see that they were other than wicked, Calvin could see that they had argument and yet that this argument must be beaten down. The air of inflexibility which he succeeded in imparting to much of his work is primarily the air of a man who is convinced by his own logic and who will follow the reasoning to the utmost consequences, whatsoever they may be and whether they are theoretical or practical. The logic may not always be convincing to the abstract logician. The *Institutes*, even in their final form, had a less inevitable coherence than their popular reputation supposed. The sense of coherence is conveyed to the reader as much by the tidiness of the arrangement and clarity of the style as by any relentless development of the argument from its axioms.

He was a man of the intellect, a man of doctrine. Not even his intimates could penetrate to his soul, as any reader of the

Table Talk can penetrate Luther. There was something aloof, secret, reserved. He was a man of books, texts, authorities; he lacked a feeling for natural beauty. If he had other feelings they were usually concealed. It is a surprise to see his tenderness of spirit when his wife died.

It is at first sight extraordinary that he should have dominated a city of which he was not even a citizen until 1559 and where he made no effort to cultivate popular favour. Until 1555 the opposition within the city was powerful. In 1548 he was summoned before the magistrate to explain an intercepted letter, and was so rebuked for his failure in duty that he believed himself about to go again into exile. His disciples tried to discredit the opposition with the name of *libertines*, but they were libertines only in the unusual sense of holding opinions upon Church and State different from those of Calvin. In 1553 Geneva burnt the Spaniard Servetus for his Trinitarian heresies, and thereby shocked the Protestant radicals. Calvin had wished the death to be more merciful than burning, but he had worked to secure the execution, and some good men believed that the severity should be blamed upon him. In the same year a citizen of the libertine group named Berthelier, who was excommunicate, asked the council and not the consistory, the State authorities and not the Church authorities, for permission to receive the sacrament two days later. The council consented. Under the appendage to the Ordinances, it was probably within its rights. Calvin announced from the pulpit that he would refuse the sacrament to any excommunicate person. He expected to fall and be banished, he even preached a farewell sermon. The council said that he must obey their order, but, discretion being the better part of valour, advised Berthelier not to attend the service. The quarrel dragged on until 1555, when Calvin's interpretation of the Ordinance was accepted and the 'libertine' leaders fled to Berne. Calvin was henceforth secure.

One external circumstance helped him. Geneva was the natural refuge for French Protestants fleeing from persecution. The French Protestants looked to Geneva for leadership; and many refugees who came into Geneva were new supports for Calvin. In 1546 not a single pastor out of thirteen was of Genevan origin. 'Good-bye Geneva,' said one of the men who hated Calvin: 'In the end the King of France will be a citizen here.' The refugees were godly folk who had left their homes for conscience sake; every newcomer from France or Scotland or Italy or the Netherlands or England strengthened Calvin's hand. It was the Scottish refugee John Knox who called Geneva 'the most perfect school of Christ that ever was on earth since the days of the Apostles'.

But it would be wrong to suppose that his authority was based upon external support. Not even all the refugees were content with what they found. Clément Marot, almost a poet laureate in Paris, a gay romantic epigrammatic Frenchman, once imprisoned for eating erroneously in Lent, once compelled to abjure Protestant heresy, published in 1541 metrical translations of thirty psalms. A metrical psalter was the chief vehicle of congregational worship in all the Reformed churches. Marot fled to Geneva, and there translated twenty more psalms, to which Calvin wrote a preface; and soon the congregations were singing them. Marot's poetry perfectly fitted the need of the Reformed. Metrical psalms afforded a new way of heartfelt expression in worship, and were soon beloved. But Marot's lively person was not well suited to Geneva. In December 1543 the consistory accused a man of playing tric-trac with him, and he left the city.

The true source of Calvin's authority was in himself. Uncompromising though he might be, he pursued with a single mind what he believed to be the truth; he extorted that reluctant admiration and discipleship which is given to consistency, to courage, and to decisiveness. He always spoke and wrote with a magisterial force, knew what he wanted and where he was going, was as devoid of pomp or cant as of sentimentality. He impressed Geneva with the stamp of his mind; and therefore the Calvinists, wherever

they went, shared a coherence and clarity of outlook not shared by Lutherans, Anabaptists, or Anglicans.

In 1559 he founded a college for the higher education of Geneva and of western Protestantism. He staffed it with professors resigned from a similar college at Lausanne, who could not get their city council to agree to the right of excommunication, and placed one of them at its head, the scholar Theodore Beza, later his own successor. It rapidly became one of the great schools of Protestant thought, educating many of the Calvinist leaders of the second generation. The rector, professors, and all the teachers were appointed by the consistory, though with the approval of the council. At first all students were made to subscribe a rigid confession of orthodoxy; but this was abolished in 1576, partly because it excluded those who most needed instruction and partly because it seemed to excuse Lutheran colleges when they forced Calvinist students to sign the Confession of Augsburg.

Calvin's wider influence rested upon the clarity of his theological system and of his Biblical exposition. The first edition of the *Institutes*, published in 1536, was a little book distinguished among theological performances mainly by the lucidity of the arrangement and the Latin style. The book grew year by year – he had leisure to extend it in exile at Strasbourg and allowed the first French translation of this longer edition to be published in 1541. The final and further extended edition was published in 1559; Calvin from a bed of sickness dictating the French translation to his secretaries and even then suggesting additions which might be incorporated into the text. He wrote simply and briefly. There are none of the reverberations of Bucer's prose, none of the vehemence of Luther's. Men might not like what Calvin said; they could not misunderstand what he meant. And as the structure was built from edition to edition, it became clear that the handbook, as extended at Strasbourg, already contained the skeleton of the building and that the

additions were illustrating and amplifying and applying to practical circumstances a theology clear to his own mind from the first edition. But in the provision for ministry and organization – the section of the book most momentous in practice – the additions are substantial.

Like all minds of power, he depended upon the influence of others and upon his past experience. The more we know of Bucer, the more evidently derivative are certain characteristic views of Calvin upon theology and church government. But though his stay at Strasbourg under Bucer had been formative, he was no imitator. A man of the Bible and a hard student of the ancient Fathers, he thought and digested and absorbed until the resulting and decisive convictions were his own.

The doctrine of Calvin rested upon a faith in God's special providence guiding the particular events of the world. We are not to think of a general guidance. We are taught by the Bible of his particular guidance in the particular events of individual lives. We read that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the will of the Father. We read that he sent forth a whirlwind in the wilderness, and thus we know that 'no wind ever blows unless he has specially commanded'. We read that he has given babies to some mothers and withheld them from others. This is not fatalism, no mechanical system of a relentless nature, but the personal decrees of an Almighty God. He moves the wills and inclinations of men to walk in the way which he directs. Chance is an appearance to us because his eternal counsel is hidden within his breast.

Luther's ultimate religious act was an utter trust in a redeeming Saviour, his ultimate text 'the just shall live by faith'. Calvin's ultimate religious act was the assent of the will to an everlasting Lord; his ultimate text, 'thy will be done'.

If the circumstances are friendly, the Christian will give all the glory to God and none to himself. If the circumstances are unfriendly and ruin afflicts him, he will recognize

the chastening of God and cry with Job 'The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'. The Biblical texts of resignation and of confidence were frequently upon Calvin's lips; and no one in Christian history has had better right than the Calvinist to use them.

With this religious interest in the providence of God, Calvin surrounded the old doctrine of predestination with a new atmosphere.

The Protestants had been taught by Luther, by St Augustine, and by the Epistle to the Romans that they could not deserve heaven, that the Christian moral life and its consequences hereafter were to be accepted through faith as a gift of God's mercy and love. God chose some and not others – Scripture taught it, and observation confirmed it.

If all is a gift of God, even the faith by which we appropriate the gift, then from all eternity God must have chosen some to life and bestowed mercy upon them, and left others unredeemed from their sins to die an eternal death. Everyone confessed that this was probing the mystery of an eternal Being hidden from human eyes. Everyone agreed that what the congregations needed to hear was not speculation about the mystery of predestination but 'whosoever repents will be saved'. That predestination was a reality was admitted by all the Christian thinkers of the Pauline and Augustinian tradition. The *theoretical* differences between Calvin or Augustine or St Thomas Aquinas or Luther are small.

But Calvin saw it in the context of his faith in providence. Therefore it possessed for him an importance for religious devotion and practice which it had not possessed for Aquinas nor even for Luther. John Eck had written about predestination as an intellectual exercise to train his youthful mind. Calvin abhorred the notion that this was a detached problem for the mind. The Christian's assurance of his election to eternal life was the deepest source of his confidence, his fearlessness, his humility, and his moral power. 'If God be

for us, who shall be against us?' The doctrine, though a mystery, was not a mere mystery for the critics of the lecture room. There were texts about it in the Epistles to the Romans and the Ephesians and elsewhere in the Bible. These texts must have been given that they might convey knowledge, they must be preached from the pulpit and taught to simple people. Every soul should be led in faith to be conscious of his calling, assure himself that God's merciful hand was upon him, until with St Paul he could profess himself persuaded that nothing could separate him from the love of God.

In proclaiming this majestic doctrine Calvin stripped from it the whispering hesitations of his predecessors. He could write nothing obscurely – and therefore he wrote plainly the aweful (*horribile*) consequences: that Christ died on the cross not for all mankind, but only for the elect; that God does not will all men to be saved; that men were created by God whom he decreed from all eternity to be consigned to an eternal destruction. And if anyone cavilled that God was thereby unjust, he replied that *all* men are justly condemned for their sins, and beyond that we cannot see the almighty purpose. We know that God always acts in justice. How that justice works is beyond our sight in this life.

For the next hundred years this was the key question for theologians, for the Catholics almost as much as for the Protestants – the question whether the Augustinian doctrines in this uncompromising expression were the true interpretation of the New Testament. 'I am *not* predestinated,' declared the younger Berthelier violently, 'whatever you and your Calvin say!'

The case of the ex-Carmelite Jerome Bolsec at Geneva is the prototype of a series of controversies which were to disturb Christendom. In October 1551 one of Calvin's colleagues explained the text of John 8.47 upon Calvinist lines. Bolsec, a refugee from France, rose to challenge the contention that Christ died not for all and that faith was a

gift settled from eternity upon the elect; he said that these doctrines turned God into a tyrant. While he was speaking Calvin entered the meeting unseen and listened. When Bolsec ended Calvin rose and spoke for an hour. Bolsec was sent to prison. The city council, puzzled by the argument of both sides, and not readily attracted by Calvin's exposition, appealed to the other churches of Switzerland. Calvin found the answers of the other churches unsatisfactory: Berne replied that the matter was a mystery over which men should not fight; Basle and Zurich gave a general and yet qualified support to Calvin; and Zurich blamed Calvin for his method of dealing with Bolsec. Only Farel's Neuchâtel, unsolicited, sent a letter denouncing Bolsec as an Iscariot. The city council banished Bolsec, more for the sake of peace than for the sake of truth. Bolsec had his revenge by publishing (1577) a life of Calvin which is the source of several scandalous legends.

In the long run this was to be the stumbling-block of Calvinism. At first the organizing power and the doctrine of the Church was the attractive force. Men were not drawn by Calvinist teaching and thereby led to organize themselves as Calvinist churches. They were drawn by the Calvinist discipline and thereby led to Calvinist orthodoxy. But the moral and devotional power in the doctrine of election was mighty. The Calvinists were austere, fearless, hard-working, devout men of the Bible. They knew what they believed, they knew what they must do, and they knew by what authority they must do it. For a hundred years they were the most potent religious force in Protestantism.

4

The Reformation in England to 1559

In Saxony the impetus to the Reformation was first religious and then political. In France and Holland and Scotland the Reformation began as a religious movement which was inevitably caught up into national politics. But this process was not universal. Some reformations began because the nation was developing, and religious change affected the development. In Denmark and in Sweden the Reformation was more a political revolution with religious consequences than a religious revolution with political consequences.

England was unique in its Reformation, unique in the Church established in consequence of the Reformation. The English Reformation was emphatically a political revolution, and its author King Henry VIII resisted, for a time ferociously, many of the religious consequences which accompanied the legal changes everywhere else in Europe.

In England the crown was not by tradition anti-papal. With a fifth to a third of the land in the hands of churchmen, and with the churchmen possessing special and independent rights in justice and in paying taxes, it was not possible for the king to rule effectively unless he used the theoretically supreme power of the Pope as a means of controlling his clergy.

Cardinal Wolsey is an interesting example of this royal power. Henry's chief minister from 1514, cardinal in 1515, and chancellor from 1515 until his fall in 1529, he seemed to wield all authority in the state. But he needed more than royal authority. To rule the state in 1520 he needed papal authority to dominate the bishops and religious orders. He became papal legate with powers which were renewed