Calvin's Theology of Holiness

A study of the close connection between Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics, and its implications for his view of reform in Geneva

A Thesis Presented for the Degree of

Ph.D. in Systematic Theology

at

King's College, University of Aberdeen

by

Kyoung Soo Shin

University of Aberdeen

2002

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I thank God for His guidance, protection, and grace toward me. Without the grace of the triune God, none of this would have been possible. I would also like to express my heartful gratitude to Dr. Ian A. McFarland for his very careful comments and his kind guidance and encouragement, and also to my two examiners, Dr. Susan Hardman Moore and Dr. Nick Thompson for their consistent scrupulousness and faithfulness. This thesis could not have been completed as a present work without their sincere advice and acute comments.

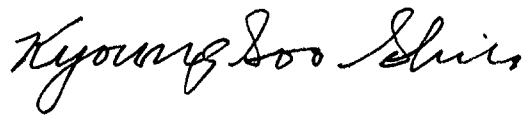
Also, there are many people who helped me through their prayers and financial support. I am truly grateful for my parents' and my parents-in-law's incessant prayers and their financial support. Without their prayer and support I would not have been able to finish this study. Also I have to give much thanks to Mrs. Soon-Ok Kim for her financial support. In addition, I remember those who helped me with their encouragement, concern, and prayers.

Finally, I cannot forget the love, patience, and prayer of my loving wife Rev. Wha-Sun Kim, my two children Ha-Eun and Kwang-Yong, and my brothers and sisters-in-law.

Declaration

I testify that this dissertation:

1. has been composed by me;
2. has neither been accepted in any previous application for a degree, nor consists of work I have done for any previous degree;
3. consists of work researched and written by me;
4. indicates all quotations either by quotation marks, or in the case of longer citations, by indenting and single-spacing the quoted material;
5. acknowledges all references and sources of information in footnotes at the bottom of each page.

Signature 

Summary of the Thesis Study

1. The triune God is the primary and divine cause of sanctification and Christian social ethics. Concretely speaking, God the Father is the final and efficient cause, God the Son is the material cause, and God the Holy Spirit is the instrumental cause for sanctification and Christian social ethics. Humankind is not exempted from its duty and responsibility for, but participates in sanctification and Christian social ethics subordinately. So Calvin called humankind the secondary and subordinate cause of sanctification and Christian social ethics.

2. Sanctification is a long process in which a Christian should steadily grow to conform to the perfect image of Christ through his/her lifetime. It is the basic foundation and main principle for the practice of Christian social ethics. Sanctification is accomplished in a believer's personal and lively relationship with the triune God. Sanctification is aided

by the instruction of the moral law as the divine law. The law is also the foundation stone, norm, and guide for the realization of Christian social ethics. Especially the third use of the law is important to fulfil sanctification and to practice Christian social ethics alongside of the grace of the triune God.

3. Christian social ethics is the concrete and real application of sanctification according to the divine law in the religious, socio-political, and socio-economical dimensions within the world. The ethics of faith connected with religious life is related to the application of sanctification according to the divine will in the religious dimension. The ethics of politics is conjunct with the application of sanctification according to the divine will in the socio-political dimension. Finally, the ethics of economics is connected with the application of sanctification according to the divine will in the socio-economical dimension. In these three different dimension, man as the subordinate, but material agent of Christian ethics is always in the primary-subordinate relationship with the triune God. Thus, Christian social ethics cannot be understood separately from sanctification, but are properly understood through their reciprocally unifying relation. Through the unifying coherence of sanctification and Christian social ethics, Calvin was finally able to succeed in the Genevan Reformation.

A Table of Abbreviations

CO.	*Ioannnis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia.* 59 vols, Brunsvigae: Schwetschke, 1863-1900.
Comm.	*Calvin's Commenaries on the Bible.* 47 vols. Reprint of Edinburgh Edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948-1950.
Inst.	*The Institutes of the Christian Religion(1559).* 2 vols. trans. by F.L. Battles, ed by John T. McNeill, Philadelphia/London: The Westiminster Press, 1960.
OS.	*Ioannis Calvini Opera Selecta.* ed. by Peter Barth and Wilhelm Niesel, 5 vols. Monachii in Aedibus: Chr. f. Kaiser, 1926-1962.
LW.	*Luther's Works.* Ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut Lehmann. 55 vols. St Louis/Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955-75.

Table of Contents

Introduction:

1. Controversial Issues in Calvin's theology: Individualistic theology of sanctification or communal theology for realisation of a just Christian society or country?

Presbyterian churches in Korea, generally speaking, are considered as having two conspicuously different theological trends. Among them, one trend is to have little concern with social responsibilities of Christian churches and social reform by the Word of God, but instead to focus on religious, spiritual redemption of sinful human beings. The other trend is to show more concern with social reform, rather than with the religious piety and sanctification of Christian individuals. Both trends basically derive from Calvin's theology as the foundation of the Reformed Church, whether directly or indirectly, through foreign missionaries from Presbyterian churches in other countries.

In this sense, the purpose of this study was an attempt to understand why such different theological trends came to exist in Korean Presbyterianism. The theological founder of Presbyterian churches in the world is John Calvin, who was the leading Reformer of Geneva. So the writer was curious as to what Calvin's real idea concerning these two different theological trends is, and whether Calvin really emphasised only one trend, neglecting or weakening the other, or not. This is the real motive behind the research for this thesis. Thus, many important writings of John Calvin himself and other suggestive, secondary sources about John Calvin in relation to this issue were read as source material. Through such wide and deep reading of various books of John Calvin, the writer came to detect that there exist two different trends in Calvin's theology, without excluding either of them, but rather correlating both of them very closely around one essential, comprehensive core or theological centre. The writer, furthermore, came to realise that if one neglects either of them when reading Calvin's writings, one seems very liable to distort or misunderstand Calvin's theology. It is because Calvin's theological thoughts were woven very organically and consistently into one theological body, which has an obvious, but comprehensive and tensional core or centre in itself.

Thus, in this thesis, the writer tried to find the one, theological core or centre which penetrates consistently through and combines Calvin's various theological subjects reflected in his *Institutes of Christian Religion*, commentaries, theological treatises, and letters, into one, unifying theological body. The core, or the unifying centre of his theology

which the writer detected from research was *de facto*, divine holiness and together with it, his faithful concern to realise it in the world. In this sense, it may be argued assuredly that 'the divine holiness' or Calvin's active concern with its concrete realisation, in Christian individuals, church, society, and in the world is the main key and theological centre to understanding Calvin's theology most clearly. Thus, in order to ascertain and prove this point, the writer will delve into Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics, (in close relationship to his understanding of God and man as the primary and subordinate cause of sanctification and Christian social ethics.)

Alongside of many efforts to find the core or centre of Calvin's theological thought, many questions also have been posed as to whether Calvin's theology of the 16th century which could transform many other European countries as well as Geneva successfully, is still of theological legitimacy and of applicability for the reformation of our modern society in the 21st century.[1] This curiosity is also related to the material question whether we Christians can live responsible lives in our society or not, and can establish a just, equitable society in the world. So from such questions about and deep concern with Calvin's theological ethics, whether it is still influential and applicable for our modern society or not, we attempted here to research concretely Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics, on the basis of his understanding of holiness as the comprehensive and tensional centre or key to elucidate his theology.

As Troeltsch,[2] Tillich,[3] and Kuyper,[4] and some others respectively argued clearly

---

[1] According to Hans-Helmut Esser, André Biéler and Ludi posed such questions obviously and acknowledged its possibility, namely contemporary relevance of Calvin's theology for modern society. See André Biéler, *Gottes Gebot und der Hunger der Welt-Calvin, Prophet des industriellen Zeitalters. Grundlage und Methode der Sozialethik Calvins* (Zurich: EvZ Verlag, 1966), pp. 5-6; Ludi Schulze, *Calvin and "Social Ethics": His Views on Property, Interest, and Usury* (Pretoria: Kital, 1985), p. 84; Hans-Helmut Esser, "The Contemporary Relevance of Calvin's Social Ethics," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. by David Willis and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 366-367.

[2] Troeltsch summarized Calvinism's much pervasive influence upon the European countries as follows: "The primary reason for this wide-spread extension of Calvinism was the fact that it gained a footing among the Western nations at a time when they were passing through a great process of political development. There is, however, a deeper reason, and one which lies within the essence of Calvinism itself, which explains why it almost or entirely crowded out the rudimentary beginnings of Lutheranism and of the Anabaptist movement, which were also present in those lands. This deeper reason lies in the active character of Calvinism, in its power for forming Churches, in its international contacts, and its conscious impulse towards expansion, and most of all, in its capacity to penetrate the political and economic movements of Western nations with its religious ideal, a capacity which Lutheranism lacked from the very beginning." Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches,* vol.2, trans. by Olive Wyon, 2 Vols. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1931, 1976), pp. 576-577.

[3] Insisting that Calvin's peculiar doctrine of church and state made Calvin's theology so different from Luther's theology and Lutheranism, he argued positively, "Calvinism saved Protestantism from being overwhelmed by the Counter-Reformation. Calvinism became a tremendous international power through the

in their writings, it seems to be true that Calvin's theological thought, undeniably and considerably, has influenced people's religious, cultural, political, economical, and educational life, so far, in the history of human beings. Hans Joachim Kraus[5] and Han Helmut-Esser[6] also respectively represented such curiosities about the relevance of Calvin's theology to modern society and acknowledged its contemporary relevance for our modern world by examining its possibility closely in their articles concerning Calvin's theology. Also, there have been many theologians who tried to analyse the main causes or principal factors of the success of Calvin's reformation and the wide influence of his theology. However, they did not find the ultimate factor of success of Calvin's Genevan Reformation, but seemed, for the writer, to stay in their partial judgment and evaluation of Calvin's theology and his Reformation.

2. The method of development of the thesis

We may classify Calvin scholars' study of Calvin's theology of Christian life or Christian ethics into two different types according to their research methods. The first type specifically attempted to clarify and analyse Calvin's theological thoughts, according to one key principle or theme. The second type seemed to attempt to illumine Calvin's thoughts by combining one main principle with other principle(s).

First of all, according to the first type of study, Dennis E. Tamburello tried to elucidate Calvin's theological thought from the viewpoint of "union with Christ" in his

---

alliances of Protestants on a world wide scale." Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought* (London: SCM Press, 1968), pp. 272-274.

[4] Kuyper argued strongly for Calvinism's wide-spread influence on people's worldview, religion, politics, science, arts, etc., in his lectures on Calvinism delivered at Princeton University. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976).

[5] Kraus argued that the very relevance of theology should be pneumatological relevance and that Calvin's theology could be a good guide to us today "concerning difficult problems with which we are occupied." Hans-Joachim Kraus, "The Contemporary Relevance of Calvin's Theology," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. by David Willis and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 323-324.

[6] Hans-Helmut Esser posed such a question together with André Biéler and Ludi Schulze by quoting from their writings and answered positively to them. After he acknowledged Weber's and Troeltsch's argumentation of Calvin's contribution to the development of capitalism not in the absolute sense, but in the relative sense, he argued, "If the root grounding of Calvinistic, Reformed social ethics in this sense is maintained, then a positive prognosis for its relevance here and now can be asserted with Biéler, Schulze, and others. This would mean a continuing struggle both to free Reformed social ethics from the ongoing temptation of the secularism of limitless self-realization and to lead it back to a rooted, living, secularisation in *unio cum Christo* and thereby led by the Spirit." Hans-Helmut Esser, "The Contemporary Relevance of Calvin's Social Ethics," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. by David Willis and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,

comparative study of John Calvin and the mysticism of St. Bernard.[7] It is very suggestive and fascinating, but he seemed to regard Calvin's theology too statically, as related to religious, spiritual mysticism of "union with Christ," rather than as the theology of active, concrete practice of divine holiness in its essential characteristics.[8] He did not enlarge his concern with Calvin's understanding of union with Christ to Christian social ethics, but just stayed in the limit of ecclesiological, soteriological research of Calvin's theology, so that as a result, his research of Calvin's thought of "union with Christ" just ended in an unfinished or partial study, although it was an undeniably excellent study of Calvin's viewpoint of "union with Christ."

On the other hand, Fred Graham, in his impressive research of the socio-economical aspects of Calvin's theology, called Calvin a constructive revolutionary, in that the revolutionary characteristics of Calvin's messages made his Genevan Reformation so constructive.[9] His is such a valuable research, in that he successfully analysed the socio-political aspects of Calvin's Genevan Reformation, which had been so long neglected and underestimated in the study of Calvin. He, however, did not see the spiritual and religious aspect of the Genevan Reformation, which was Calvin's consistent concern with the realisation of divine holiness as God's enjoinment upon us. Thus, we find that his criticism of Calvin's theology inseparably related to Genevan Reformation did not hit the mark.[10]

In turn, Ronald S. Wallace argued assuredly that the success of Calvin's Reformation and its great influence on Western society was possible because Calvin's theology was "the theology of the Word of God."[11] His book is a very useful research on the whole configuration of the theology of Calvin as a social reformer. But Wallace just ended in his characterisation of the key of Calvin's theology as his emphasis upon God's Word. This is generally true, but not so concrete, because Calvin mostly and essentially saw the Word of God in the dimension of God's promises and enjoinment upon human beings for the realisation of divine holiness in the world, rather than, as just God's general or

---

1999), pp. 384

[7] Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard.* Columbia Series in Reformed Theology, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994).

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 97-101.

[9] W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary John Calvin* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1971).

[10] *Ibid.* See chapter 10.

[11] Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House/ Edinburgh, UK: Scottish

superficial Word.

Besides these scholars, Kampschulte understood Calvin's theology as a system constituted on the basis of his doctrine of predestination.[12] As many Calvin scholars objected, however, the doctrine of predestination is not the most important key to understanding Calvin's theology, although it is a very momentous and vital element in Calvin's theology. So Kampschulte's research also was no less than a partial and one-sided understanding of Calvin's holistic theology. In the meantime, Martin Schulze interpreted Calvin's theology as a whole system conjoined with his eschatology related to the life after death.[13] Eschatological hope played an undeniable role in Calvin's theology. However, Calvin did not just stay in his eschatological hope, but made much of Christian's this-worldly life in order to realise God's holy will. Therefore, his eschatology cannot be the most important aspect of Calvin's theology, although it is a very vital element of his theology. He did not seem to detect clearly the tensional and dialectical relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate[14] in Calvin's theology which emphasised Christian's active and dynamic practice of God's holy will. And then, Carlos Eire defined Calvin's reformative theology as anti-idolatrous theology, in the context of Calvin's war against the idols, which is very persuasive and challenging. He dealt with Calvin's war against the idols in close relation to its political dimensions in chapters 7 and 8 of his book, although he did not deal concretely with the whole configuration of Calvin's Reformation in a close relationship with the realistic political situation of Geneva as a substantial and concrete place for his Reformation.[15]

The second type adopts relational approaches to Calvin study, in order to detect the essential characteristics and features of Calvin's theology. John H. Leith maintained that the core of Calvin's theology should be discovered in the various, personal and existential

---

Academic Press, 1988, 1990), esp. ch.15.

[12] F. W. Kampschulte, *Johann Calvin, Seine Kirche und sein Staat in Genf* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humbolt, 1869), p. 263.

[13] Martin Schulze, *Meditatio futurae vitae: ihr Begriff und ihre beherrschende Stellung im System Calvins* (Leipzig: T. Weicher, 1901).

[14] We may define what the ultimate and penultimate respectively means as follows: The penultimate, first of all, means a practical and concrete, yet sinful reality, in which regenerated Christians live together with unbelievers with their yearning for the eternal, heavenly kingdom, fighting a good fight against all hostile forces, achieving individual and social sanctification or holiness, and practicing Christian ethics concretely according to God's will, in the world. The ultimate then, implies the final, eternal reality which Christians will enjoy, after they have finished their duties and responsibilities as God's people, before God and men, through the course of sanctification in the world.

[15] Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1989).

relationship between God and man in his book *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*.[16] It is surely true that Calvin dealt with his theology in a divine-human relationship, but this cannot regulate correctly and concretely all complicated elements of Calvin's theology including the main core of Calvin's theology. Because this characterisation seems to be too loose and ambiguous, when we pose such questions as what the relationship between God and man means, and when we consider the greatly spreading influence of Calvin's theology upon the development of human society as well as of Christianity, although we may evaluate that it has some important implications. As a matter of fact, Leith denied, in his own introduction of his book, that Calvin's theology has any specific unifying centre in itself, except various divine-human relationships.

Similarly, Philip Walker Butin argued that the most obvious way to understand Calvin's reformative thought is to understand "the divine-human relationship understood according to a pervasively Trinitarian."[17] It is, to a considerable extent, a more persuasive and suggestive study of Calvin's trinitarian theology, than Leith's loose and distracted understanding of the various divine-human relationships. However, Butin either did not see the concrete and constitutive characteristics of Calvin's theology of Christian life which is in close relationship with God's holy enjoinment concerning the divine holiness upon human beings, even though he prominently analysed Calvin's trinitarianism in its relationship to divine-human relationship. To this writer, his concern seems to be basically dogmatic rather than ethical.

William Stevenson explained Calvin's politico-ethical, theological thought in the context of Christian freedom combined with the sovereign grace of God.[18] It may be considered as another surprising enterprise in Calvin study. In reality, Christian freedom and God's sovereign grace are two main, constitutive elements of Calvin's theology of holiness, in association with the divine-human relationship in Calvin's theology. Calvin's theological ethics is, as a matter of fact, composed of the dialectical and tensional relationship between these two elements. In this respect, his observation was very superb in its preciseness and

---

[16] John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989).

[17] Philip Walker Butin, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 3; cf. similarly, Brian Armstrong, "*Duplex cognitio Dei*, Or? The Problem and Relation of Structure, Form, and Purpose in Calvin's Theology," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honour of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, ed. E. A. McKee and B. Armstrong (Louisville: WJK, 1948), p. 142.

[18] William R. Stevenson, Jr. *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

characterisation, but, nevertheless, he did not unify these two separated elements in Calvin's ultimate concern with *divine holiness* as God's enjoinment upon humankind concretely, and in their more close relationship.

In the meantime, Marion W. Conditt, explained the core of Calvin's theological ethics as the obedience in God's election, to God's will, in his doctoral dissertation.[19] It is, likewise, very suggestive in that it correlated Calvin's theological ethics with his doctrine of election, but he did not see the concrete and minute configuration of Calvin's theology of holiness. Calvin's theological ethics is, in reality, very world-affirmative and active, in that he considered Christian life in a tensional and paradoxical relationship between man's vision of ultimate reality and his penultimate life in the world. But, in Conditt's understanding of Calvin's theological ethics, we cannot find such a paradoxical tensional relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate. Therefore, we cannot find Calvin's realistic, yet concretely responsible Christian ethics in his understanding of Calvin's theology. Rather, it seems to me that his study regarded Calvin's theological ethics as a theology of unilateral obedience to God's will.

Although he made much of Christian's obedience, in another sense, it may be argued that Calvin was not so naïve and simple as to argue for a blind obedience to the wicked kings who enforce false religion or idolatry. He did not take a legalistic or casuistic, but a very realistic and moderate attitude toward the observance of the Lord's Day and also making an oath in well-balanced consideration of the whole instructions of both the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, it is also true that Calvin did not demand from people casuistic and legalistic obedience to the law. In this respect, we may argue that his concern with holiness rather than his emphasis upon obedience, which made much of both the holy enjoinment of God and Christian free existence in the penultimate reality, made his theology more positive, realistic, and constructive in his Genevan Reformation and his reformative theology than any other reformer of his time.

Subsequently, A. Mervyn Davies argued that the factor of Calvin's theology to "make Calvinism different from the other reform movements" lies in its "intense activism" and "the orderly, juristical stamp that Calvin placed on the movement and that put an end to

---

[19] Marion W. Conditt, *More Acceptable than Sacrifice: Ethics and Election as Obedience to God's Will in the Theology of Calvin,* Band X der Theologischen Dissertationen, ed., Bo Reicke, (Basel, Friedrich Reinhardt Kommissionsverlag, 1973).

its anarchical tendencies."[20] His comment that Calvin's theology is of intense activism is, in fact, a correct evaluation of Calvin's theology, but he did not explain where and how this activism came out, more persuasively and concretely, because his main concern was upon dealing with Calvinism's contribution to the development of modern democracy in England and America. According to him, Calvinism's contribution was related to Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom. This is a very similar argument to that of William Stevenson. In fact, Calvin dealt with Christian freedom in a different way from Luther, because the former mainly regarded it as the freedom for the realisation of divine holiness as God's ultimate enjoinment upon man, but the latter basically focused himself upon the freedom of justification in faith, although he also argued for freedom to serve neighbours. Therefore, in spite of his less concrete and insufficient treatment of Calvin's activism, Davies' analysis that Calvin's activism came from his positive understanding of Christian freedom is quite useful.

Finally, Guenther Haas stressed that Calvin's theology is Christological and that particularly "union with Christ" is the main idea of Calvin's ethical thought. Alongside of it, he also argued that equity related to the second Table of the Decalogue in Calvin's theology is another important pole that supports Calvin's ethical thought.[21] According to his argument, Calvin's theological thought seems vague and distracted without having any unifying centre in it, because on the one hand, he regarded the central key of Calvin's theological thought as "union with Christ" and, on the other hand, regarded it as "equity" reflected in the second Table of the Decalogue. For the writer, it seems that Calvin did not have any unifying theological key to interpret his whole theological thought systematically with it, according to Haas' argument. However, it is not true because Calvin's theological concern was always, as a whole, focused upon the holiness of Christian individuals, Christian church, Christian society, and further Christian country. Therefore, in any sense, Calvin did not separate the first Table from the second Table in his theology. Hence, although Haas was successful, in some sense, in his treatment of the concept of equity in Calvin's ethics in association with the second Table, he should have dealt with it in its close relationship with the first Table of the Decalogue as the first pivot of Calvin's theological ethics.

---

[20] A. Mervyn Davies, *Foundation of American Freedom* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), pp. 16-17.

[21] Guenther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier

Thus, all the above-mentioned research as we have seen so far, show that there are many different frames and themes to analyse and evaluate Calvin's reformative theology. This proves that, to that extent, it is considerably difficult to identify and clarify the characteristics of Calvin's theology. The above-mentioned scholars certainly grasp some vitally important elements of Calvin's theology in their respective studies. However, for me, it seems also true that they did not grasp the exact core or key-thought of Calvin's theology, particularly in association with Calvin's practical contribution to the success of the Genevan Reformation and the development of modern democracy and of the biblical Christianity.

We will consider both of the two methodologies above-mentioned from a comprehensive viewpoint in this thesis. First of all, we believe that Calvin's theology has a distinct and specific central key to interpret all his theological writings systematically. In this sense, we will adopt the first methodology to stress one central core of Calvin's theology. On the other hand, we believe that Calvin's theology should be considered in various divine-human relationships. So in relation to this issue, we also adopted the second methodology. Therefore we will attempt to identify Calvin's theology concretely by correlating his doctrine of sanctification, his view of the law as a characterisation and norm of Calvin's understanding of holiness, and his socio-political and economic ethics. Thus, finally, we will prove that Calvin's theology was a constructive, reformative theology, which has divine holiness as its comprehensive and tensional centre.

Calvin's theology, which made much of both sanctification and social ethics, could be so influential on account of his integrated understanding of God's sovereign, economic works and Christian freedom, which is essentially related to God's ultimate enjoinment of holiness upon mankind. Through this consideration, we may call Calvin's practical, holistic theology "the theology of holiness." It was because his theology of holiness stressed simultaneously the concrete realisation of socio-political and economical sanctification of the whole society as well as individual, religious sanctification of a Christian through the Christians' perfect obedience to the Word of God. As a matter of fact, we may also argue clearly that Calvin himself dedicated his whole life to the socio-political holiness or sanctification of Geneva, including its citizens' religious, spiritual sanctification. In this sense, we may agree with Auguste Lecerf,[22] Rudolf Otto,[23] and others, who argued that

---

University Press, 1997), pp. 1-2.

[22] Auguste Lecerf, *An Introduction to Reformed Dogmatics*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1949, 1981), pp. 100, 114-117.

Calvin's theology sufficiently showed his concern with the holy related to God's attributes, works, commandments, and Christian life. Similarly, John H. Leith also discovered Calvin's concern with holiness in his research of Calvin's theology of Christian life.[24] But regrettably, he did not develop this theme into a central theme of his research of Calvin's theology of Christian life.

Before we go further to explore Calvin's theology of holiness, it would be useful to define what sanctification means and what Christian social ethics implies for Calvin and also in this dissertation. Sanctification, first of all, could be defined as a whole course in which a regenerated and justified Christian resembles Christ and is transformed into the true image of God, day by day, in order to attain to divine holiness, purity, and perfection, in his whole being. It should especially be remembered that for Calvin, sanctification of a Christian was not separated from the sanctification of church, society, and state, but was understood in the context of an ethical, political, economical transformation of the whole society towards the just and equitable society, according to God's just and righteous will. In this sense, we might argue that Calvin's theology of holiness has both individualistic and social aspects, and both spiritual and physical aspects at the same time. It is because Calvin did not separate one's individual life from his social life, his religious life from his daily social life, and Christian doctrine or instruction from his real social life. In that sense, his *Weltanschauung* was neither dualistic nor dichotomous, but holistic; neither simply material nor idealistic but realistic as it sees things or realities as they are in the tensional relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate.

On the other hand, Christian social ethics means that reformed Christians ought to live obedient lives, according to God's Word as the real norm of their lives, by which they realise God's will for themselves and for their societies, and that further, God's equitable and just reign should be applied to and realised in all spheres of people's life, such as religion, politics, economics, culture, science, and so on, by the Christians' activities of equitable legislation and execution of the law, by renovation of unjust and unfair social and

---

[23] Otto briefly pointed out Calvin's contribution to the development of holiness(*sensus numinis*) in relation to the conception of *sensus divinitatis* in Calvin's theology, in a later edition of *Das Heilige*. See Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige*(München: C. H. Beck, 1963[35]), chapter 2. footnote 2.

[24] He argued, "Calvin's explanation of the personal, existential relationship of God and humankind must also be interpreted in the light of Calvin's intense and vivid awareness of the holy or the presence of the living God. The church is a community of faith which stands in the presence of the Wholly Other, creator of heaven and earth. In the church and in all of its activities there is a sense of the numinous, of the *mysterium tremendum,* at once frightening and fascinating but in whose presence we stand in awe and devotion. The writing and teaching of theology in the church begins with this awareness and with this sensitivity." John H.

political systems according to the law, by concrete practice of love for the poor, the alienated, and the afflicted, and by the realization of God's just and peaceable kingdom in the world, and so on. In this sense, sanctification can in no way be separated from Christian social ethics, but should be considered and applied to people's life integratively as Christian social ethics. Calvin, substantially was not a mere speculative theorist or an idealistic daydreamer, but an ardent, practical reformer of deeds as well as a precise analyser of society, who exerted all his efforts to apply his reformative theology to the concrete reformation of the society in Geneva.

It might be argued that the paradoxical and tensional relationship between the ultimate and penultimate in Calvin's theology, alongside of his concern with holiness, made his social ethics more dynamic and positive. The tension between these two realities exists from beginning to end in Calvin's theology. On account of this tensional relationship, Calvin's theological ethics becomes an ethics of discipleship as well as an ethics of pilgrimage. The reason that his theology was so influential in people's consciousness and their religious lives, and the reformation of society and state, was that it was closely related to his realistic and affirmative understanding of the world based upon the paradoxical, tensional relationship between the ultimate and the penultimate. We can not understand the dynamic characters of Calvin's theological ethics without the correct understanding of such a paradoxical and tensional relationship. Thus, Calvin made his ethics not the perfectionist or separatist ethics,[25] but the realistic and responsible ethics of participation, which made much of God's will for the world where he and his contemporaries lived personally.

Calvin stressed the normative and instructive meaning of the law reinterpreted in the gospel for the establishment of social ethics of responsibility. For Calvin, gospel and law were not different in their contents, but only in their dispensation. So, Calvin's understanding of the law was not as negative as Luther's. In this sense, his ethics was an

---

Leith, *John Calvin's doctrine of the Christian life*(Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), p. 16.

[25] Both were Anabaptists' characteristics, which Calvin attacked strongly in consideration of Christians' and Churches' participant responsibilities for the world according to God's commandments. Calvin's main refutation against the idea of the Anabaptists especially in relation to their perfectionism, separatism, and other theological errors is *Briève instruction pour armer tous bons fidèles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des anabaptistes.*which appeared on June 1, 1544 in Geneva. *CO.* 7. cols. 45-142.; also see W. de Greef, *Johannes Calvijn: Zijn werk en geschriften*, trans. by Lyle D. Bierma, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company/ Leicester, U.K.: Apollos, 1993), pp. 167-169; also see Willem Balke, *Calvin and the Anabaptist Radicals*, trans. by William J. Heynen (Grand Rapids. 1981), pp. 182-195. Calvin's criticism was made on the basis of his reading of confession of the Anabaptists (*Confessio Schlattensis*) which Michael Sattler mainly drafted. Calvin read a French copy of this confession (*Confessio Schlattensis*) translated by a resident of Neuchâtel, which Guillaume Farel had sent him with his letter on February 23, 1544. *CO.* 11. cols. 680-83.

activist and realistic ethics that showed people the right direction of life and proper answers to the difficult questions proposed by society. In addition, Calvin disclosed a considerably realistic and world-affirming theology by shaping a holistic system of ethics, through his combination of the natural law as the foundation of the positive law, and the divine law as the basis of the moral law in the context of the universal, sovereign, and economic governance of God, by abrogating the virtual boundary between them.

Therefore, in Calvin's theology, there is no exclusive worldly reality in which only Christians can exist without non-Christians or vice versa, because they are destined to live with non-believers as a community amidst the world. In this sense, his theology of holiness affirms the world and emphasises Christians' responsibilities to reform that world according to God's Word. Therefore, it does not mean that Christians should assimilate themselves to the world or they must throw away their identities as Christians and submerge themselves in the world, but means that they must understand and accomplish God's holy will for the world and try to expose God's glory and sovereignty to the world through their holy life. In this sense, for Calvin, Christian life was considered as a holy calling and responsibility before God and men, as well as a gratuitous and abundant, divine gift granted to Christians. Thus Calvin correlated the necessity of Christian holy life in the world with their faithful understanding of God's glory and sovereignty. In this sense, we may call his theology in another sense, "a realistic[26] and responsible Christian theology," in that Calvin considered simultaneously a sinful reality of human existence in the world, God's holy commandments, and Christians' responsibility in the world, as they are.

On the basis of this understanding, we will try to grasp Calvin's theology of holiness by dividing our research into four main chapters. However, before we go further to the main body of the thesis, we ought to delineate the importance of Calvin's understanding of the primary, absolute holiness of the triune God as the foundation of, and the subordinate, relative holiness of human beings as the process and goal for sanctification and Christian social ethics, in this Introduction. This will be briefly treated in the next section of this introduction.

Then, in the first chapter, we will delve into the doctrine of sanctification as its

---

[26] In this sense, we may agree with John Leith's definition of Calvin's theology as theological realism and of Calvin as a theological realist. He classified realistic traits of Calvin's theology into nine articles, which are a very reasonable and proper analysis of Calvin's realistic theology. From his "Calvin's Theological Realism and the Lasting Influence of His Theology," in *Toward the Future of Reformed Theology: Tasks, Topics, Traditions*, ed. by David Willis and Michael Welker, (Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U.K.:

inseparable, essential starting-point for the practice of Christian social ethics on the basis of his trinitarianism and theological anthropology. The main task of this chapter is to analyse and evaluate the characters and contents of "holiness of Christian life", namely the doctrine of sanctification. Calvin's doctrine of sanctification will be dealt with in close conjunction with the triune God's economical works in the world and also with the Christian's subordinate, holy life.

Subsequently, in the second chapter, we will examine Calvin's understanding of the law as "the norm of holiness": namely, for both sanctification and Christian social ethics. Here, in the first section, we will tackle Calvin's view of Christian freedom in order to grasp how Christian freedom may be related to the demand of the law and furthermore to the realisation of sanctification and Christian social ethics. Then, in the ensuing sections, we will research Calvin's viewpoint of the moral law, the divine law, the natural law, the positive law, and further his active participation in the legislation of the law in Geneva[27] in association with his bibliocracy.[28] Of course, Calvin's emphasis upon the third use of the law will be minutely examined in close connection with his doctrine of sanctification in the first chapter and his social ethics in the third and fourth chapters. Also, in the second chapter, Luther's understanding of the law and Christian freedom shall be juxtaposed, in order to bring out Calvin's understanding of the law related to the doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics, as well as Christian freedom in full relief.

In the third and fourth chapters, Calvin's social ethics will be explored materially and substantially in relation to his concern with the socio-political and economic sphere,

---

William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), pp. 339-345.

[27] Calvin made clear that the church, as well as all, government and administration should be conformed to God's Word. "Articles concerning the Organization of the Church and of Worship at Geneva proposed by the Ministers at the Council (1537)," in *Calvin: Theological Treatises,* ed. and trans. by J.K.S. Reid, (London: SCM Press Ltd), p. 49.

[28] We might suppose that Calvin's politics in Geneva was close to bibliocracy, which means to govern according to the instruction of the Bible, although it was executed and administered responsibly by the cooperation of 'the Consistory consisting of ministers and elders' and 'the Councils in Geneva consisting of laymen.' Therefore, it was not clerocracy or hierocracy which means the politics by clergymen or pastors. We would like to call it theocracy only in that meaning abovementioned, namely in the sense that it was a responsible politics by the combination and cooperation of ministers and laymen elected by some sort of different elections and recommendation according to the spirit of the Bible. McNeill also called it theology in the sense that we mentioned above. John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 184-185.; Paul Tillich also agreed that although he generally called it theocracy, nevertheless it was not hierocracy, but a politics by laymen. Paul Tillich, *op. cit.*, p. 273; Georgia Harkness also called it bibliocracy in his book about Calvin's ethics. In the sense that in Calvin's political theory, the authority of the Bible replaces the power of the papacy, he said that the Genevan theocracy might be called more properly 'a bibliocracy.' Georgia Harkness, *John Calvin: The Man and His Ethics* (New York/Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958), pp. 21-22, 223. Also see for the same opinion, J. W. Allen, *Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (New York, 1928), p. 61f.

through the consideration of the intimate correlation with the first two chapters. In fact, these two last chapters will treat the issue of the concrete application of divine holiness, on the one hand, in the socio-political sphere, on the other hand, in the economic sphere. The third chapter will be the discussion about Calvin's socio-political understanding of the state, which is intimately related to his constructive understanding of Christian freedom and the law as described in the second chapter. Finally, in the fourth chapter, Calvin's moderate, realistic understanding of economic issues related to Genevan economic life, and the instructions of the Bible about economic ethics will be examined in the context of social reformation and in realistic consideration of both modern capitalism and Christian socialism. We will expose here how Calvin, with equilibrium, dealt with Christian freedom as God's gift, and the issue of social justice and equity related to his concern for the poor and the socially weak. Also, the office of deacon in Geneva who was mostly responsible for the care of the poor and religious refugees will be dealt with minutely in association with the practice of God's love and God's justice for the poor.

And finally, in the Conclusion, we will evaluate briefly several basic traits of Calvin's social ethics, which are in no way separable from his doctrine of sanctification, in the context of the Genevan Reformation.

3. The primary, absolute holiness of the triune God as the foundation of, and the subordinate, relative holiness of man as the process and goal for sanctification and Christian social ethics

In order to comprehend the whole aspect of Calvin's theology of holiness, we, above all, have to look into Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity and ethical anthropology. In relation to his trinitarianism,[29] we have to remember that for Calvin God the Father was understood as the efficient and final cause of sanctification and Christian ethics, God the

[29] It is now an established fact that Calvin's theology is trinitarian theology which is closely related to his concern with holiness of Christian individuals and Christian society. Especially it should be remembered that his trinitarianism is a kind of economic, perichoretic, and relational trinitarianism closely related to his theology of holiness. Philip Walker Butin well exposed Calvin's trinitarian theology in relation to Calvin's understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship in his book, *Revelation, Redemption, and Response: Calvin's Trinitarian Understanding of the Divine-Human Relationship* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), esp. pp. 26-54; J.B. Torrance also exposed Calvin's trinitarian diagram in God's grace for our salvation. J.B. Torrance, "The Concept of Federal Theology," in *Calvinus Sacrae Scripturae Professor: Calvin as Confessor of Holy Scripture*, ed. by Wilhelm H. Neuser,(Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), p. 17; Gunton insisted that vis-à-vis a relational view of Calvin's understanding of God the Trinity, Calvin was closer to Tertullian and Hilary of Poitiers than to Jerome and indirectly Augustine.

Son as the material cause of sanctification and Christian ethics, and God the Spirit as the instrumental cause of them.[30] Especially, Calvin's theology of holiness should be considered in close relation to Calvin's understanding of the holy and loving perfections, justifying and sanctifying works, and just and equitable commandments of the triune God.[31] In this respect, for Calvin, God was the holy God, whose works and commandments are directly related to the realisation of His holy will in the world by His people.

The doctrine of election and providence is particularly essential to understanding Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics because God's election is ultimately to make His people to be a holy community. Secondly, Christ's crucifixion and resurrection is inevitably related to the Christian's mortification and vivification in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In addition, Christ became the model for Christians by his thorough and complete obedience to God the Father. All these facts are important issues which should be considered in Calvin's theology of holiness. Also, we are able to remember the vital importance of the believer's union with Christ in Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian ethics. The union with Christ which is possible in the illumining and guiding works of the Holy Spirit begins with God's effective calling, justification by faith, and regeneration, and continues to the last stage of redemption and also eternally in the elect. Thus, we touched briefly on Calvin's trinitarianism as the starting-point for our continuous research of Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics.

Subsequently, we also have to consider the implications of Calvin's ethical anthropology for his theology of holiness. This is because Calvin considered man as the subordinate cause of sanctification and Christian social ethics.[32] Calvin's concern with man as the subordinate cause of Christian life is well revealed in that he saw man as the responsible agent of Christian social ethics according to God's commandments. So his ethical anthropology should be dealt with in detail in close relationship with his theology of holiness, because for Calvin, the ultimate end which man ought to pursue through his lifetime according to the commandments of God was also the realisation of ultimate holiness of himself and the realisation of the holy society according to God's commandments. In that sense, we find that for Calvin, the holiness was at the same time

---

Colin E. Gunton, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

[30] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion(1559)*, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, III.xiv.21. Afterwards it will be abbreviated to *Inst.*

[31] In relation to Calvin's primary emphasis upon *sensus divinitatis* and *pietas*. *Inst.*, I.i.2-3, ii.1-2, iii.1,3, iv.1-4.

considered as the declaration of God upon the elect, the whole course of Christian life, and the ultimate end of Christian life. Thus it was regarded as *Aufgabe* as well as *Gabe.*

Calvin especially understood man in the three different phases according to Augustine's classification: first, *posse non peccare*, second, *non posse non peccare*, and finally *non posse peccare*:[33] in other words, the original man created in the image of God,[34] the depraved, sinful man on account of disobedience and the Fall, and finally Christians regenerated by the election of God, Christ's atonement, and the regeneration of the Spirit. He considered this three-stage anthropology in relation to God's twofold grace, namely general grace for all people (including Christians) and special grace for the elect. In addition it should also be emphasised that Calvin understood man's threefold (i.e. kingly, priestly, and prophetic) office in relation to his three-stage anthropology. According to Calvin, man was originally created in the image of God to implement his threefold office according to God's holy will as we can see in his commentaries.[35] He was created to perform God's mandate concerning creation or the transformation of culture and society according to God's will. In regards to this, Calvin understood that man was created as a social animal(existence).

> "There should be human beings on the earth who might cultivate mutual society between themselves. ... I, however, take the meaning to be this, that God begins, indeed, at the first step of human society, yet designs to include others, each in its proper place. The commencement, therefore, involves a general principle, that man was formed to be a social animal(*Principium ergo generale est, conditum esse hominem ut sit sociale animal*).[36]

---

[32] *Inst.*, III.xiv.21.

[33] Aurelius Augustine, *Treatise on Rebuke and Grace* (A.D. 426 or 427) in The Nicene and Post-Nice Fathers Series I, Vol. 5, *Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, ed. by Philip Schaffer, *De correptione et gratia*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983). ch. 33.

[34] Calvin objected to people's narrowing of the concept of God's image in man based on his ontological understanding of the image of God in man. In spite of his ontological understanding of the image of God, Calvin did not deny entirely that in some portion, there is some relationship between God's image in man and his dominion. He argued that "Here [God] commemorates that part of dignity with which he decreed to honour man, namely, that he should have authority over all living creatures. He appointed man, it is true, lord of the world; but he expressly subjects the animals to him, because they having an inclination or instinct of their own, seem to be less under authority from without. The use of the plural number intimates that this authority was not given to Adam only, but to all his posterity as well as to him." *Comm. on* Gen. 1:26; also see *Comm. on* Gen. 1:28 and *Inst.*, I.xv.3-4.

[35] Although Calvin did not use explicit terminologies denoting man's threefold office, we may find that his idea of man's threefold office can be discovered in his commentaries such as the commentaries on Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:19-20, on Joel 2:28-29, on Acts 2:17-18, on 1 Pet. 2: 9, and so on.

[36] *Comm. on* Gen. 2:18; He also clearly argued, "Since man is by nature a social animal, he tends through natural instinct to foster and preserve society. Consequently, we observe that there exist in all men's minds universal impressions of a certain civic fair dealing and order. Hence no man is to be found who does not understand that every sort of human organization must be regulated by laws, and who does not comprehend the principles of those laws. Hence arises that unvarying consent of all nations and of individual mortals with

This is a very important allusion by which Calvin could deal with Christian social ethics more positively and concretely. This threefold office of man as a social existence, which had almost been lost because of their disobedience and depravity, was regained in Jesus Christ through the election and calling of the Father and the works of the Holy Spirit. So, this divine mandate becomes self-evident in Christians as the threefold office bearers, who are called, justified, and sanctified in the works of the Holy Spirit according to the election of the Father. Thus, for Calvin, Christian life is essentially conjunct with the concrete realisation of God's holy will in their individual life (sanctification) and in their church, society, and state(Christian social ethics) according to God's holy commandments entrusted to them.

4. The characterisation, limit, and sources of the thesis

This thesis has its limit in its characterisation and contents and its own use of specific sources in relation to the topic of the thesis. So here we will define its limit and sources concretely. First of all, the thesis is not the thesis of historical theology although it deals with, to some extent, historical events in association with Calvin's life and his Genevan Reformation in the 16th century, but in its basic character, a thesis of systematic theology, which substantially focuses itself upon and analyses theological meaning and characters which Calvin's theological thought and his Genevan Reformation reveal to us. Therefore, although we will deal with the realities of historical event and its course, where it is needed or demanded, this will be used only as a theological means to identify concrete and substantial meaning and characters of Calvin's reformative theology and his Genevan Reformation. In this sense, in the thesis, we attempt simply to make clear that Calvin's theology of sanctification and Christian ethics is, in the basic sense of the word, a theology of holiness as the ultimate end of our Christian life as well as God's nature and His enjoinment upon us.

Secondly, we try to elucidate Calvin's theology of holiness, on the basis of our study of the primary sources written by Calvin, and of the secondary sources written about Calvin's theology, and finally of historical situations of the Genevan Reformation. We, however, realise our limitations in our study of his theology, on account of our temporal and spatial distance from Calvin. Therefore, it is inevitably true that there could be, to a

---

regard to laws. For their seeds have, without teacher or lawgiver, been implanted in all men." in *Inst.*, II.ii.13.

considerable extent, difference of meanings or nuances between the real situations of Calvin's Geneva and our interpretation of them. Hence, we cannot help acknowledging our temporal, spatial, and also the cultural limitation and difference in our study of the theology of Calvin who lived in Geneva, in the 16th century. In addition, we also have to express that the thesis is, not a practical theology, although we may show the concrete applicability and practical contributory elements of Calvin's theology of holiness for modern Christian ethics.

Thirdly, Calvin's original writings were written mostly in Latin or French used in the 16th century. In this thesis, the writer is entirely responsible for his direct or indirect quotations from Calvin's original Latin and French texts and his other quotations from and references to the secondary, French and German texts. The author used necessarily quotation marks, whenever and wherever he quoted directly some words, verses, and phrases from primary and secondary texts.

Chapter I. The Spiritual and Religious Nature of Holiness: Sanctification as the principle and foundation for Christian social ethics

In the present chapter, we will inquire into the spiritual and religious nature of holiness, namely Calvin's doctrine of sanctification as the principle and foundation for Christian social ethics.

Sanctification implies the process of Christian life itself, and is a gift as well as an assignment given by God. It is not only indicative but also imperative in Calvin's theology. Calvin dealt with this doctrine in Book III of the 1559 *Institutes*, which discusses Christian life in the total structure. He did not, in fact, treat Christian life as an independent subject until the second edition(1539) of the *Institutes.* It was because the first edition of the *Institutes* was originally intended as a form of a catechism, although finally its character was changed to defend Reformed faith against Francis I, who severely persecuted the French reformed Christians in his time. Then, the doctrine of Christian life appeared at the end of the next two intermediate editions (respectively, 1539, and 1543-1550-the third edition experienced continual alterations throughout this period) of the *Institutes*, right after he dealt with the doctrine of church and state, contrary to the order of the last edition. And then, in his last edition(1559) of the *Institutes,* it came to Book III(1559), before he treats the doctrine of the church and the state, as the application of the doctrine of sanctification.

Sanctification means Christian life lived according to "the internal law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"(Rom. 8:2), and according to the external divine law. According to Calvin's practical syllogism,[1] a true Christian elected and called by God necessarily does good works as the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we may find a personal, religious change in a regenerated Christian like the change of *Weltanschaaung,* of the attitudes of life according to the instruction of the gospel. Thus, we find sanctification is essentially the

[1] We can see it in his *Institutes* III.iv.16-21. He argued that "We now see that the saints have not a confidence in works that either attributes anything to their merit, since they regard them solely as gifts of God from which they may recognize his goodness and as signs of the calling by which they realize their election..." in *Institutes* III.iv.20. This is a kind of deductive reasoning. Calvin tried to define who could be considered the elect by using this reasoning. There are two similar premises: the first premise is that God chose his people. The second is that the elect do good. From these two premises, therefore, the following conclusion could be derived that Christians who do good might be considered to be the elect.

issue of man's holiness before God and in the world. Therefore it does not separate itself from the realisation of Christian social ethics and the earthly kingdom of God, namely a just and equitable Christian society.

Calvin's doctrine of sanctification was mainly dealt with in the whole of Book III of the *Institutes*.[2] In addition, we also may find his doctrine of sanctification in his commentaries, treatises, letters, and catechisms. There have been many secondary articles and writings about Calvin's doctrine of sanctification or Christian life.[3] It proves the active and positive concern of Calvin about sanctification and Christian life itself. On the basis of these sources, we now will materially engage in the study of Calvin's understanding of sanctification by considering both its twofold (divine and human) cause. We will then treat Christian social ethics in the third and fourth chapters.

For Calvin, regeneration, repentance, and sanctification are almost of the same meaning: all three signify the Christian's lifetime course of change, according to the Word of God, in the grace of the triune God's grace. This change contains man's self-denial, bearing of the cross, contempt of the world, and longing for the eternal life, as its constructive elements. In the same meaning, it can be also explained as the mortification of the flesh and vivification by the Holy Spirit in Christian life. Speaking pneumatologically, it is, in fact, completely the work of the Spirit's work. But sanctification also demands man's

---

[2] If there is no special indication, the *Institutes* denotes the final edition of the *Institutes*.

[3] Concerning Calvin's doctrine of sanctification and Christian Life, we can find several good guides: Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of His Religious Thought*, trans. Philip Mairet (New York: Harper & Row, London and Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1963); John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Louisville, Ky.: Westerminster/John Knox Press, 1989); Jonathan H. Rainbow, "Double Grace: John Calvin's View of the Relationship of Justification and Sanctification," *Ex Auditu: An International Journal of Theological Interpretation of Scripture 5* (1989); Lucien Joseph Richard, *The Spirituality of John Calvin*(Atlanta, Ga.: John Knox Press, 1974); Paul Helm, *Calvin and the Calvinists*(Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982); Randall C. Gleason, *John Calvin and John Owen on Mortification: A Comparative Study in Reformed Spirituality*(New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1995); R.T. Kendall, *Calvinism and English Calvinism to 1649*(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); R.W.A. Letham, "Saving Faith and Assurance in Reformed Theology: Zwingli to the Synod of Dort" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1979); Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*(Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1959); T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought*(London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995); William Cunningham, *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*(1862; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1967); William J. Bouwsma, "The Spirituality of John Calvin," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation,* ed. Jill Raitt(New York: Crossroad, 1987); William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait*(New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Jonathan Jong-Chun Won, *Communion with Christ: An Exposition and Comparison of the Doctrine of Union and Communion with Christ in Calvin and the English Puritans*, Ph.D dissertation, (Westminster Theological Seminary, 1989).

participation and material responsibility. Here we find the existence of a paradoxical and comprehensive relation between God's primary works and man's subordinate participation. Therefore, Calvin considered conclusively that sanctification is possible by a twofold cause, namely on the one hand, by the primary, divine cause, and on the other hand, by the secondary, human cause. Thus, on the one hand, we find the triune God's activity in man's sanctification, and on the other hand, also man's responsible activity and participation in it.

In the first section, we will delve into sanctification as repentance (consisting of mortification and vivification). Then we will study regeneration as the beginning of, and as the continuous process of a good fight for faith and sanctification. In the third and fourth sections we will look at sanctification as the gradual growth of justification. Subsequently in the fifth and sixth sections, respectively, we will study the Christian's self-denial and bearing of the cross. Then in turn, we will examine sanctification in close relationship with Calvin's doctrine of prayer. Finally, in the eighth section, we will examine a twofold attitude related to his eschatology, namely contempt of the world and yearning for the eternal, heavenly life.

1. Sanctification as repentance: mortification and vivification

For Calvin, redemption, faith, as well as sanctification are first of all spiritual events, but they are also practical, social events, in that they all take place in people's practical life within church, society, and state. Therefore, they cannot be a solely private, religious event, but are always inseparably connected with the communal life. So whenever we see his allusion to sanctification or holiness, we must always consider its social and communal dimension in its basic characters.

Nonetheless, when Calvin tackled soteriology in his *Institutes* Book III, we detect it has also very spiritual characters. In this sense, if we get the full view of Calvin's doctrine of sanctification, we ought to correlate very closely the *Institutes* Book III, which deals with Christian life in relation to soteriology with the *Institutes* Book IV, which deals with Christian life in relation to ecclesiology and the doctrine of state.

After having dealt with what Christian faith is, in Book III of the *Institutes*, Calvin went on to tackle what repentance and forgiveness of sin in Christian life are. For him,

repentance and forgiveness of sin are not an appendix to Christian faith, but its starting point and continuous process as an essential part of faith. Therefore, he emphatically argued that "the sum of the gospel is held to consist in repentance and forgiveness of sins."[4] He stressed that these two elements cannot be achieved by Christians themselves, but are given by God, as he argued 'repentance is a singular gift of God.'[5] We can gain them only by faith, not by our own works and efforts. True repentance is so closely connected with faith that 'it cannot be separated from faith,'[6] according to him. However, he insisted that repentance and faith should be differentiated clearly and not be confused.

Calvin was a practical theologian who made much of the concrete practice of God's commandments in Christian life, so in this sense, he did not separate sanctification(i.e. holy life) from forensic justification. As he argued, so "actual holiness of life" is "not separated from free imputation of righteousness."[7] He kept the logical order of events in his soteriology, so he put justification by faith ahead of repentance, contrary to the order that he actually discusses them in the *Institutes*. Besides, the holiness of life is legitimately possible only when it is considered pneumatologically and Christologically, as he insisted that "I say only that no uprightness can be found except that where Spirit reigns that Christ received to communicate to his members. ... No one will ever reverence God but him who trusts that God is propitious to him."[8]

According to Calvin, the logical order of soteriology goes as follows. First of all, God's grace comes upon a human being in God's eternal election and practical calling; then that person can come to believe in God, in His grace, and can live a holy life in the imitation of Christ in the works of the Holy Spirit according to God's commandments. Calvin did not argue for instantaneous or temporary repentance as a true, efficacious repentance. Because he thought that repentance should be continued through the whole course of Christian life.[9]

---

[4] *Inst.*, III.iii.1.
[5] *Inst.*, III.iii.21.
[6] *Inst.*, III.iii.5.
[7] *Inst.*, III.iii.1
[8] *Inst.*, III.iii.2.
[9] But we find something different when we see Calvin's own confession about his experience of conversion. He depicted his conversion as 'a sudden conversion' in the preface of his commentary on the Psalms. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms,* Vol.1 (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh Printing Company), xl-xli. However it can be suggested that his 'sudden' or 'unexpected' conversion should be considered not as a completed, finished conversion, but as a beginning of his lifetime's conversion, according to his usage of terminology. Cf. Parker also pointed this out in his biography of John Calvin. "He is far from

In this sense, we found for Calvin, Christian life is not only a new beginning, but also a continuous course, and also an ultimate and final goal. He remarked, "now the hatred of sin, which is the beginning of repentance, first gives us access to the knowledge of Christ, ... Accordingly, we must strive toward repentance itself, devote ourselves to it throughout life, and pursue it to the very end if we would abide in Christ."[10]

The definition of repentance is fully given as follows:

> The Hebrew word for 'repentance' is derived from conversion or return; the Greek word, from change of mind or of intention. ... The meaning is that, departing from ourselves, we turn to God, and having taken off our former mind, we put on a new. ... it is the true turning of our life to God, a turning that arises from a pure and earnest fear of him; and it consists in the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit.[11]

In this definition, we find it already connotes in itself the concept of sanctification. Calvin laid stress on man's turning in repentance from "a sinful life to a pure and earnest fear of God" by "taking off the former mind to put on a new." He, furthermore, expressed this turning as "the mortification of our flesh and of the old man, and in the vivification of the Spirit."[12]

Thus, according to him, it is clear that repentance is "consisting of two parts: mortification and vivification."[13] These two elements are the key expressions that represent most clearly the concrete characteristics of Christian life related to the pursuit of holiness. Among them, mortification was, first of all, defined as "the first part of repentance" and "contrition," and then vivification was identified as "the consolation that arises out of faith"

---

describing it in superlatives. The unexpected conversion is only a beginning, 'a mere taste of true godliness'. He did not immediately arrive at the complete theology later expressed in the *Institutes*; he did not immediately understand the whole ecclesiastical implication of his new faith; he did not forthwith cut himself off from all associations with the church of his youth. All that happened was that his mind, wilful in its submission to other authorities, accepted now the sole authority of God. The wild ox tamed now knew his master; the sheep recovered heard his voice. Calvin was made teachable". T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin* (London: Lion Publishing, 1977), pp. 26-27; Bouwsma also expressed a similar feeling as Parker. "Calvin always emphasized the gradualness rather than the suddenness of conversion and the difficulty of making progress in the Christian life. 'We are converted,' he said, 'little by little to God, and by stages'. In any case the new direction taken by Calvin after his flight from Paris in 1535 should not be exaggerated. The experiences of childhood and youth were significant for Calvin's entire life, as they are for most human beings. " William J. Bouwsma, *John Calvin: A Sixteenth-Century Portrait* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 11.

[10] *Inst.*, III.iii.20.

[11] *Inst.*, III.iii.5.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Inst.*, III. iii.3.

and "the desire to live in a holy and devoted manner, a desire arising from rebirth."[14] According to him, therefore, repentance meant to die to oneself, namely to mortify his sinful desires in his life and live a holy and responsible life for and towards God. To such an extent it meant mortification and vivification. In this respect, repentance was essentially identical with sanctification as a long-lasting course of Christian life in which the Christian is to achieve his ultimate holiness before God. Calvin confirms this clearly: "Accordingly, so long as we dwell in the prison house of our body we must continually contend with the defects of our corrupt nature, indeed with our own natural soul. ... but we may more truly say that the life of a Christian man is a continual effort and exercise in the mortification of the flesh."[15] Thus, Calvin did not exclude man's concrete and material efforts and activities in sanctification and Christian life in any way. Therefore, sanctification was not a static status but contained in itself a positive and dynamic activism. Thus, in his doctrine of sanctification Calvin made clear that his theology is basically an active and practical theology of holiness.

According to Calvin, mortification and vivification are the central characteristics of all Christians as well as the principles of their life, irrespective of their social positions and duties, whether political leaders, clergymen, or lay people. In this sense, Calvin's Geneva was the real stage where people must accomplish their sanctification and holy Christian life and also could observe the realisation of both virtues, and the concrete application of Christian ethics. Public officers' ethics or rulers' ethics as well as citizens' ethics should be considered in close relationship with these two elements as shown well in *Institutes* III.xix and IV.xx. Calvin's *Institutes* Book III.i-xxv was, as a matter of fact, the basic principle for Christian life to apply these two elements concretely to both church community(IV. I-xix.) and state(IV.xx.), as well as to Christian individuals.

According to Calvin, in repentance, man meets God as both Judge and *Agape* at the same time. However, to speak more concretely and precisely, man, in repentance, meets God as Judge in his mortification and as Agape in his vivification. In Calvin, these two

---

[14] *Ibid*; According to Calvin, baptism also should be remembered continuously as a token of mortification and renewal in Christ and vivification of the Spirit whenever they repent through Christians' lifetime as a course of sanctification. Therefore, he applied these two contrastive conceptions of mortification and vivification to baptism. *Inst.*, IV.xv.5.

[15] *Inst.*, III.iii.20.

parts are logically correlated with each other in repentance, namely in Christian life. It means that true repentance does not and must not exclude either of them, because God is the Judge as well as the Agape in His holy perfections. In this sense, also, neither of them between mortification and vivification can be excluded in repentance. This equilibrium between God as the Judge and God as the Agape in Calvin's thought, then, excludes all kinds of so-called Marcionic, theological trends in our contemporary theologies, which mostly neglect or enfeeble God of the Old Testament as an inferior god, or which regard God solely as an immanent God of love, rather than the biblical God of justice and love, who also stays in His absolute, transcendent freedom. According to Calvin, the concept of a love-monistic God is unbiblical or unevangelical, no less the concept of a judge-monistic God. The loving God is the same Judging God, but, we may maintain there exists a certain dialectical tension between God's attributes of love and of justice in Calvin's theology.

Calvin, subsequently, considered repentance under three different rubrics: as "turning of life to God,"[16] as "proceeding from an earnest fear of God,"[17] and as "consisting of mortification of the flesh and vivification of the spirit."[18] As regards this classification, first of all, he stressed that as Christians we need a transformation in the soul itself as well as in outward works.[19] He argued that we should be totally changed in our Christian life internally and externally. Because we have lived for the sake of ourselves according to our sinful desires before our repentance. But now through repentance, we can live for the glory of God, in the grace of God and the works of the Holy Spirit, according to God's commandments.

Secondly, Calvin argued that true and real repentance should come from the fear of God and God's just and righteous judgment. He did not represent God just as the One who, of His own accord, loves his people. Instead, he argued that we should receive God as a fearful God when we have sins and do not repent of them. In this sense, he argued that true repentance comes from the fear of God.

Thirdly, he insisted that we should destroy our whole desires of the flesh and mortify our own sinful nature caused by our disobedience and disbelief in order to obey

---

[16] *Inst.*, III.iii.6.
[17] *Inst.*, III.iii.7.
[18] *Inst.*, III.iii.8.
[19] *Inst.*, III.iii.6.

God's law completely.[20] This is the real meaning of "mortification of the flesh." On this point, Calvin argued that, before we come to vivification of the Holy Spirit, self-denial is a prerequisite for and necessary to our repentance. Here, self-denial means the same thing as mortification of the flesh.

He also explained the two natures of repentance as the relationship between the death of the old man and the beginning of the new man in his commentaries.[21] However, mortification is not so easy for sinners. Because they do not possess the power needed for it in themselves, it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to slay their old sinful natures.[22] Thus, he first emphasized the guiding works of the Spirit as the divine cause, and then our own efforts as the subordinate cause in our repentance. It means true piety can begin with true fear of God and faith, as well as belief in both God's mercy and the works of the Spirit. However it is also true that man should do his best in his repentance, although of course it is possible only through in the prevenient grace of the Spirit. Thus, he made much of the primary, divine cause and the subordinate, human cause at the same time in regeneration or repentance.

> Yet the efficacy of this depends upon the Spirit of regeneration. ... Whomsoever God wills to snatch from death, he quickens by the Spirit of regeneration. Not that repentance, properly speaking, is the cause of salvation, but because it is already seen to be inseparable from faith and from God's mercy. ... This fact indeed stands firm: wherever the fear of God flourishes, the Spirit works toward the salvation of man.[23]

On the basis of this fact, Calvin consecutively thought of mortification of the flesh as participation in Christ's death,[24] and vivification in the Holy Spirit as participation in Christ's resurrection.[25] Thus, he dealt with repentance as "mortification of the flesh" and "vivification of the Spirit," in inseparable relation to participating in Christ's life and death. Here we find Calvin's doctrine of sanctification as being closely related to his Christology.

2. Regeneration as the beginning of, and as the continuous process of a good fight for faith and sanctification

---

[20] *Inst.*, III.iii.8.
[21] *Comm. on* Eph. 4:22-23.
[22] *Inst.*, III.iii.8.
[23] *Inst.*, III.iii.21.
[24] *Inst.*, II.xvi.7.

Regeneration is, in a general sense, to be renewed or to be changed from the old into the new. This might be suggestively thought to be an instantaneous, sudden change of being, but Calvin, in a different way, regarded "repentance" as "regeneration."[26] According to him, therefore, it is not an instantaneous or a once-for-all event, but a long process in which man conforms himself to the image of God in Jesus Christ throughout his lifetime. The purpose of repentance was considered "to restore in us the image of God that had been disfigured and all but obliterated through Adam's transgression."[27] Thus, it essentially signified, for Calvin, the restoration of "the righteousness of God"[28] in man.

It is natural to say that, herewith, regeneration is the whole course of sanctification itself as well as the starting-point of sanctification. John H. Leith indicated that, "the words Calvin used to describe the Christian life point back to some previous state."[29] According to Leith, Calvin's terminologies like "*reparatio, regeneratio, instauratio, reformatio, renovatio,* and *restitutio* all indicate that the Christian life is a redoing of something that has been done."[30] Leith discovered another important, but outwardly contradicting word, "creation" that Calvin used to designate restoration in regeneration. There seems no direct relationship between these two kinds of terminologies. Denying the discontinuity between these two different kinds of terminologies, Leith argued that there is a continuity of the old person and the new person in regeneration. His argument is contrary to the argument of R. T. Kendall who, denying the continuity between the old nature and the new nature of man, regarded regeneration as a new, supernatural creation of human will and/or nature.[31] This writer agrees with John H. Leith rather than Kendall, so the former's following argument is proper in our understanding of regeneration:

> On occasions, this work of repairing, renewal, and restoration is spoken of as creation. At first sight this is something of a contradiction, but on closer examination the word

---

[25] *Inst.*, II.xvi.13; also *Comm.* on Rom. 6:4.
[26] *Inst.*, III.iii.9.
[27] *Ibid*; also see *Inst.*, I.xv.4; *Comm. on* Col. *3:10;* Eph. *4:23.*
[28] *Ibid*; also see *Inst.*, III.xvii.5; *Inst.*, I.xv.4.
[29] John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian* Life (Westminster/ John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1989), p. 71.
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] R.T. Kendall, *Calvin and English Calvinism to 1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 21.

> "creation" does not indicate a complete break in the continuity of the old person and the new person. Redemption is renewal, not the substitution of one person for another. The word "creation" underscores the fact that this work is of God and not of humans. Because repentance is a kind of second creation, it follows that it is not in human power. The point is that the grace of repentance does not create a new person but renews a person who has been broken by sin.[32]

This restoration in regeneration, for Calvin, does not mean the perfection or completion of the righteousness of God or the image of God in us. Therefore, regeneration is not an instantaneous event of perfection, but just a beginning and a continuous course of sanctification in Christian life. In this sense, as regards regeneration, he argued for the possibility and the necessity of the growth of the image of God or the likeness of God in us.[33]

Regeneration or repentance is more closely related to sanctification rather than to justification. Calvin acknowledged the necessity of Christians' continuous struggles to attain to the perfect sanctification (or holiness). These struggles also are accompanied by Christians' social duty and vocation. So Calvin's theology reflects active and responsible Christian social ethics rather than ascetic and individualistic ethics. In relation to these characteristics, we find that certain eschatological and social themes (in relation to the earthly realization of God's will) certainly played an important role in his doctrine of sanctification.

According to Calvin, Christians who are regenerated in the power of the Holy Spirit have a duty to confess their faith in society, according to God's will. In other words, they must think, act, and confess their faith according to their regenerated conscience in the works of the Holy Spirit. Although they experience God's presence and the coming of the Kingdom of God in advance in their religious life, the realities where they live are still not the peaceable and just kingdom of God. It was the real situation of French Calvinists, as well as of Calvin himself, who were under the severe persecutions of King François I. Geneva was also not a peaceable kingdom of God, but an intemperate and normless city which had no specific Christian law after the decline of Catholicism when Calvin had to reform that city according to God's Word. Calvin was well aware that this worldly life could not be the ultimate reality of God. He regarded his life in the world as the life of

---

[32] John H. Leith, *loc. cit.*
[33] *Inst.*, III.iii.9.

penultimate reality.

However, Calvin did not fall in such negativism about people's worldly life, but rather actively participated in social reformation in order to fulfil God's holy will to realise the holy society reformed according to God's holy commandments in Geneva. Such self-consciousness made him contribute greatly to the reformation of Geneva and other European countries. Because he had, in his mind, a clear vision of perfect and ultimate kingdom of God, he wanted to change absurd and intemperate realities into a holy world (although penultimately), where God's will could be accomplished ultimately. In this dimension, Calvin's theology and his life could not but be eschatologically focused in its social and historical dimensions. Calvin's sermons, treatises, letters, and the *Institutes* testify to this sufficiently.

According to Calvin, however, Christian life as a continuous process of sanctification begins from listening and obedience to the instruction of the Word of God. In this sense, the Bible was the most essential and important guide for Christian life. He argued, "The law of God contains in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us. But because our slowness needs many goads and helps, it will be profitable to assemble from various passages of Scripture a pattern for the conduct of life in order that those who heartily repent may not err in their zeal."[34] Alongside of the biblical instructions, Christian life is possible on account of the power of the Holy Spirit, but also demands from Christians their responsible participation, and their complete obedience to God. According to Calvin, the Bible is useful in that it gives the Christian twofold knowledge: "the first is that the love of righteousness, to which we are otherwise not at all inclined by nature, may be instilled and established in our hearts; the second, that a rule be set forth for us that does not let us wander about in our zeal for righteousness."[35]

With this help of the Bible, the sincere faith in and union with the triune God makes Christian life practicable. *First of all*, according to Calvin, our union with God the Father in faith makes God's holiness infused into us and makes it possible for us to follow and to glorify Him. The purpose of the Christian life is the ultimate holiness and the glory of God. Calvin made much of our responsible answer to God's calling for this purpose.

---

[34] *Inst.*, III.vi.1.
[35] *Inst.*, III.vi.2.

Secondly, as regards Christ who reconciled us with God, as he is an example that God has set before us, we ought to follow his pattern in order to achieve our redemption and to fulfil the Father's will entirely in the world. Therefore, our life should "express Christ, the bond of our adoption." It is, in other words, to "give and devote ourselves to righteousness."[36] Calvin's key theme here is that we should prove ourselves to be God's children through our responsible, holy life. *Thirdly*, in relation to the Holy Spirit, we come to know that we are dedicated as temples to God. In that sense, Christian life should be a continuous and strenuous fight against all kinds of unrighteousness and the filthiness of sin, because "both our souls and bodies were destined for heavenly incorruption and an unfading crown." Thus our pure and holy life in relation to the triune God was considered to be "the most auspicious foundations"[37] of sanctification.

Thus, Calvin argued that faith renewed through "the word of the gospel" is an integral and pure faith in the triune God. According to him, the gospel "is a doctrine not of the tongue but of life."[38] He stressed that our faith demanded by the gospel is not a partial faith of the soul, but the holistic faith of the whole being. Thus, the gospel was understood as a total system of Christian life, in that "its efficacy ought to penetrate the inmost affections of the heart, take its seat in the soul, and affect the whole man."[39] Calvin stressed the necessity of a pure and right doctrine, which contains the gospel, because the doctrine was the principle of Christian life, which could actually affect people's religious and social life in the world. Particularly, here it should be stressed that Calvin did not separate religious doctrine from a real, Christian life, and did not neglect either of them, but correlated the former with the latter in his doctrine of sanctification.

In this sense, for Calvin, Christians could be identified as concrete confessors of Christian faith through their everyday, concrete life. In association with the confessing life of Christian individuals, Calvin made much of their "integrity" and entire "dedication to God for the cultivation of holiness and righteousness." He thought that Christian life is a life of service of both God and neighbour. So, he did not separate Christians' religious holiness or sanctification from their prophetic, priestly, and kingly responsibility for society.

---

[36] *Inst.*, III.vi.3.
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Inst.*, III.vi.4.
[39] *Ibid.*

Thus, according to Calvin, Christians are responsible beings who have to live a responsive and participant life in their society before God for the perfect realisation of God's holy commandments. He asserted,

> Therefore, let us not cease so to act that we may make some unceasing progress in the way of the Lord. And let us not despair at the slightness of our success; for even though attainment may not correspond to desire, when today outstrips yesterday the effort is not lost. Only let us look toward our mark with sincere simplicity and aspire to our goal; not fondly flattering ourselves, nor excusing our own evil deeds, but with continuous effort striving toward this end. ... It is this, indeed, which through the whole course of life we seek and follow.[40]

Thus, Calvin did not in any way exclude Christians' responsible life before God, although he made much of God's sovereign grace of election, calling, and regeneration in Christian life. In fact, he successfully combined God's sovereign grace with the Christian's responsible holy life in his doctrine of sanctification.

Calvin's main motive in writing the *Institutes* also should be considered sincerely in the context of his emphasis upon Christian life related to the realisation of divine holiness. He wrote the *Institutes* partly in order to defend and confess his reformed faith unhesitatingly before King François I, as he expressed in the *Prefatory Address to King François I of France*,[41] although he originally intended to write it to help people to read the Bible easily and systematically. He argued,

> Consequently, it seemed to me that I should be doing something worthwhile if I both gave instruction to them and made confession before you with the same work. From this you may learn the nature of the doctrine against which those madmen burn with rage who today disturb your realm with fire and sword. And indeed I shall not fear to confess that here is contained almost the sum of that very doctrine which they shout must be punished by prison, exile, proscription, and fire, and be exterminated on land and sea.[42]

It should be remembered that severe and cruel persecutions and afflictions had been inflicted upon French reformed Christians, substantially at first, after a tumult caused by Cop's inaugural oration as the rector in the University of Paris in 1533 (which was

---

[40] *Inst.*, III.vi.5.

[41] Here he tried to show that the reformed faith is totally different from the radical Anabaptists whom were regarded at that time as fanatical heretics and rebels.

[42] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Ford Lewis Battles, "Prefatory Address to King Francis I of France," pp. 9-10.

rumoured as having been written by Calvin himself) and then, on a full scale after the posting of placards by reformed radicals in the 18th of October 1534 in Paris. This latter outbreak resulted in the weakening of the hopeful prospects of the Reformation in Paris. Cop's oration was *de facto* the display of the main principles of the Reformed Gospel before the Sorbonne. It was received as a kind of aggressive and dangerous challenge to Catholicism. Therefore, directly after this oration, they began persecutions upon those who had a reformed faith. Calvin, Cop, and other reformers could not help fleeing from Paris. Thus Calvin fled from France in 1533, almost permanently, in order to evade persecutions.

Then, before Calvin for the first time entered Geneva in 1536, as a reformer of that city, he wrote the first edition of the *Institutes.* He published it in 1536 in order to defend the legitimacy of a reformed Christian faith against unreasonable persecutions and distorted criticisms by King François I and the Catholic authorities. Confession of faith was, for Calvin, one of the most important issues related to sanctification and Christian ethics. He did not break in any way the strong bond and unity between Christian faith and Christian life. In that sense, sanctification was considered not to deny or abandon his faith in order to evade persecutions, afflictions, or martyrdom. So in the same context, in relation to his doctrine of sanctification, we also have to bring into relief Calvin's emphasis upon Christian's duty of public or private confession which Calvin also showed clearly through his anti-Nicodemistic writings like *Petit traicté*(1543), *Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodémites*(1544), and *Quatre sermons...avec briefve exposition du Pseaume LXXXVII*(Geneva, 1552).[43]

For Calvin, sanctification or holiness implied a strong adherence to and confession of the reformed faith at the risk of life amongst dangers of persecutions or martyrdom. In this sense, Calvin's fight can be considered internally a species of spiritual warfare, as Charles A.M. Hall argued in his dissertation.[44] It was also externally a continuous warfare against idols and idolatry enforced by Catholicism, as Carlos M.N. Eire evidenced in his

---

[43] W. de Greef, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House/Leicester, UK: Apollos, 1993), pp. 136-141.

[44] Charles A.M. Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin,* Ph.D. Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Basel, (Zürich: Evz-Verlag /Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), esp. pp. 117-211.

book.[45] However, as a whole, it was essentially a fight to achieve an integral and holistic holiness in society as well as in the Christian's private life.

Here we may consider Calvin's doctrine of sanctification as closely related to Luther's *simul iustus et peccator.* Although Luther emphasized the spiritual, dialectical tension within Christian existence between the justified person and the sinner, however, Calvin more clearly disclosed the tension between the 'already' of Christian life, which began from his justification by faith, and the 'not yet' of his heavenly redemption, which would result from final sanctification and ultimate glorification. Acknowledging that the guilt of a believer is removed when he is regenerated by the Holy Spirit, Calvin made clear that the Christian cannot escape completely from the law of sin, until the end of his life. Thus, the progressive character of Christian life as a long course was much more emphasised by Calvin rather than by Luther. The regenerate should continue to stay in Christ's righteousness through his unceasing and lifelong good fight of faith. Thus, Calvin characterised the existence of the Christian who is still in the penultimate situation, as the existence of a pardoned sinner who has to fight continuously amongst the world, in order to attain to final redemption and glorification, and to fulfil God's will concretely in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit.[46]

In this respect, Calvin was in opposition to the separatist attitudes of certain Anabaptists that were shaped by their perfectionism or excessive spiritualism[47] because they could not materially devote themselves to the reformation of the whole society by their separatism. He did not believe that a perfect sanctification was achieved once-for-all in the world by the regenerating works of the Holy Spirit, but objected to the establishment of a secluded community that cannot give any impact or influence upon the whole society. Calvin was a moderate and realistic reformer who was aware of sinful realities of the world, and also who recognised the necessity of reformation of the whole society, so he denied their perfectionism and religious separatism. For him, the Anabaptists' theology seemed to further Christians' irresponsibility before God and before their neighbours by their

---

[45] Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 1989), esp. pp. 195-275.

[46] *Inst.*, III.xvii.5.

[47] *Brièvе instruction pour armer tous bons fidèles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des anabaptistes, CO.* 7. cols. 55-63.

separatism into a secluded community. To separate was to neglect or forget one's vocation to be light and salt in the world. In addition, they dismissed the spiritual tension between worldly life, and heavenly life from their doctrine and their life, so it lost the transformational power through which a reform of society according to God's holy will could be accomplished.

On the contrary, Calvin understood regeneration or sanctification as a continuous course of spiritual and social struggle against disbelief and social evils in the world, for Christians to achieve their final redemption and to fulfil God's just and equitable will in the world. In this sense, his theology always should be duly understood as a realistic and concretely historical theology. His Christianity was in fact, a participant, responsible Christianity. Calvin differentiated the ultimate from the penultimate, and heavenly redemption from a realistic Christian life. We find here Calvin's operating with a distinct dichotomy between the ultimate and the penultimate. It is certainly true that there is an insoluble, absolute distance between these two realities. Therefore, they should not be confused. Calvin's understanding of reality was distinctly acute and clear, and made him possible to solve the difficulties which he faced during his reformation in Geneva.

According to Calvin, the fruits of repentance in the course of sanctification were as follows: "the duties of piety toward God, of charity toward men, and in the whole of life, holiness and purity."[48] In this list, we find that for Calvin, holiness and purity were considered as ultimate fruits of regeneration in Christian life. These were, as a matter of fact, the ultimate goal of religious and social reformation. The method of bearing the fruits of regeneration was twofold: one was through all the precepts of the law by the internal illumination of the Spirit and the other was by the internal warning and admonition of the Spirit to our impurities. Thus Calvin emphasised the close relationship of the law and the works of the Spirit in the Christian life of sanctification.

Such regeneration then, according to Calvin, begins with the external profession of sin as well as a turning to God.[49] In this sense, on the one hand, Calvin made much of our continuous repentance of sin in Christian life, as Luther also did. Of course, it should be remembered that Calvin did not discriminate social sin and private sin, because all sin is

---

[48] *Inst.*, III.iii.16.
[49] *Inst.*, III.iii.18.

interconnected. In this context, we can understand his continuous criticism of the so-called Libertines, especially as regards their intemperate and licentious activities which became the direct or indirect cause of social disorder and unlawfulness in Geneva. Considering our too egoistic and intemperate societies, we may suppose that Calvin's emphasis upon God's law and the holiness or sanctification of society, should be especially stressed in order to establish and sustain a well-ordered and lawful society according to the spirit of the Bible.

Thus, Calvin's conception of regeneration was holistic, and so could not help implying the holistic cure or reformation of society including individual people's lives. Thus, the Genevan Reformation was carried forth to accomplish holiness and purity in the wide community as well as in the individual Christian's moral and religious life. This is because holiness or perfection was God's absolute commandment for his people(Lev. 11:44,45).[50]

3. Justification as the starting-point of Christian life, and sanctification as its gradual growth

For Calvin, the doctrine of sanctification has the doctrine of justification by faith as its firm foundation as well as its starting point, so he did not in any way depart from that foundation when he treated the theme of sanctification. In relation to our justification, therefore we have to look upon God's mercy and Christ's perfection, but not upon our own works.[51] Justification is possible only when we receive the divine righteousness in the gospel with faith. According to Calvin, the justified guided by the Spirit can fulfil even "the capstone of the law," which is "love," because the Spirit of God is the very cause of righteousness in them.

Calvin argued that when we consider our righteousness, we have to "lift up our minds to God's judgment seat." Here God's judgment is compared to our sinful self-righteousness. Therefore, man's haughtiness and man's own consciousness of his own merits cannot stand in any way before God's righteousness. Thus, for Calvin, "Any

---

[50] *Comm. on Harmony of the Law.* Vol. 2, Lev. 11:1-46, esp. 11:43; *Comm. on Harmony of the Gospels.* Vol. 1, Matt. 5:48. ; *Comm. on* 1 Pet. 1:15,16. But here Calvin interpreted perfection or holiness ordered us by God not as equal perfection or holiness, but as related to resemblance of God's holiness (or perfection) or our daily striving to advance in that direction.

confidence in the righteousness of the works just could be regarded only as spiritual diseases."[52] So in relation to this issue, Calvin stressed that God's highness is contrary to our lowness, what Kierkegaard later called the infinite qualitative distance between God and human beings.[53] Thus, Calvin stressed God's absolute transcendence over sinful human beings in relation to His holy nature and holy works. So it was clear, for Calvin, that our righteousness is nothing and of no use before divine righteousness.

According to Calvin, human beings can experience four different stages of justification through the whole course of their lives,

> For men are either (1) endowed with no knowledge of God and immersed in idolatry, or (2) initiated into the sacraments, yet by impurity of life denying God in their actions while they confess him with their lips, they belong to Christ only in name; or (3) they are hypocrites who conceal with empty pretences their wickedness of heart, or (4) regenerated by God's Spirit, they make true holiness their concern.[54]

For Calvin, among them, the fourth kind is most proper and legitimate: to grow in conformity to the image of Christ. Justification by faith was considered to begin with God's initiative coming to us,[55] because we, as dead men, cannot do anything good to obtain redemption.[56] So it was clear, for him, that the capacity for well-doing flows only from regeneration.[57]

Only the Spirit can make it possible for us to be engrafted into fellowship with Christ. Thus Calvin here associated justification by faith with pneumatology as well as Christology. He argued, "however we may have been redeemed by Christ, until we are engrafted into his fellowship by the calling of the Father, we are both the heirs of darkness and death and the enemies of God. For Paul teaches that we are not cleansed and washed of our uncleanness by Christ's blood except when the Spirit works that cleansing in us."[58] Thus, here Calvin made much of God's calling, Christ's atonement, the illumination and washing of the Spirit, and believer's union with Christ, in man's justification.

---

[51] *Inst.*, III.xi.16.
[52] *Inst.*, III.xii.1.
[53] For Calvin, God is qualitatively and infinitely different from a human being. *Comm. on* John 4:24.
[54] *Inst.*, III.xiv.1.
[55] *Comm. on* Isa. 59:16.
[56] *Inst.*, III.xiv.5.
[57] *Comm. on* Eph. 2:10.
[58] *Inst., III.xiv.6*; *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 6:11.

If that is so, what is the righteousness of the fourth kind of justification mentioned above? For Calvin, the end, as well, as the beginning of it was considered as the triune God's prevenient grace:

> We confess that while through the intercession of Christ's righteousness God reconciles us to himself, and by free remission of sins accounts us righteous, his beneficence is at the same time joined with such a mercy that through his Holy Spirit he dwells in us and by his power the lusts of our flesh are each day more and more mortified; we are indeed sanctified, that is consecrated to the Lord in true purity of life, with our hearts formed to obedience to the law. The end is that our especial will may be to serve his will and by every means to advance his glory alone.[59]

Its final end was, on the one hand, the accomplishment of our complete obedience to God's will and therefore the realisation of our holiness. On the other hand, it was the ultimate glorification of God Himself.

Calvin, however, also acknowledged clearly that we still remain pardoned sinners in the world, although we become justified by the redemptive works of Jesus Christ and by the washing works of the Holy Spirit, according to God's calling. Thus, in fact, in Christian life there arises a tension between the perfect and the imperfect, namely between ultimate redemption and penultimate Christian reality. So Calvin argued, "since this mortal life is never pure or devoid of sin, whatever righteousness we might attain, when it is corrupted, oppressed, and destroyed, by the sins that repeatedly follow, could not come into God's sight or be reckoned to us as righteousness."[60] His pessimistic tenor did not stop here, because "no perfection can come to us so long as we are clothed in this flesh, and the law moreover announces death and judgment to all who do not maintain perfect righteousness in works."[61] Nevertheless, Calvin did not argue for our passive and negative waiting for the ultimate, but urged us to actively respond to God's calling of us for reformation of the world, namely for the fulfilment of the holiness of the world as well as their own sanctification in the works of the Spirit.

In this sense, for Calvin, the good works of Christians were also their duty as God's children as well as God's enjoinment upon them. These were not the necessary condition of redemption, but the expressions of thanksgiving for God's gratuitous grace of

---

[59] *Inst.*, III.xiv.9.
[60] *Inst.*, III.xiv.10.

redemption. Therefore, although Calvin exhorted believer's good works positively and affirmatively in the course of sanctification, he objected strongly to any attempt to make those works a kind of merit before God. He made clear that our works could not be the cause of our salvation. Good works without Christ's grace and forgiveness of sins can only be abomination to God.[62] Thus, Calvin thoroughly criticized the works-righteousness.

His argument, however, did not stay in this negative criticism. On the contrary, he associated faith or justification with sanctification or good works of the believers. Thus, again the duty of the good works of Christians was emphasised, when he argued, "For we dream neither of a faith devoid of good works nor of a justification that stands without them."[63] Thus justification always goes together with sanctification in his theology. However, for Calvin, the foundation of this combination is Jesus Christ as an example set for our sanctification by God, because Jesus is the ground of "wisdom," "justification," "sanctification," and "redemption" for us in the world.[64] Thus embracing of Christ in faith could be identified with participation in his holiness. It means that we are to resemble, live with, and dwell in Jesus through our whole life.[65] Thus Calvin ensured that Christ's righteousness is essentially the only foundation of our justification. Upon that justification, we can grow continuously through our sanctification, when we follow the pattern of Jesus, who completely obeyed the will of the Father in the works of the Spirit.

4. Sanctification and justification as grace upon grace

Even though justification by faith was the divine starting point of Christian life for Calvin, sanctification was paramount to all other doctrines of Christian life. Vis-à-vis this subject, one of the most important features of Calvin's soteriology is that he put sanctification ahead of justification in his discussion. It was because he thought that sanctification is in its nature more essential and substantial to denote what Christian life is.[66] Here we find that there is a great deal of difference between the theology of Calvin, who

---

[61] *Ibid.*
[62] *Inst.*, III.xiv.16.
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Comm. on* Cor. 1:30.
[65] *Inst.*, III.xvi.1.
[66] *Inst.*, III.xi.1.

made much of Christians' good works, and the theology of Luther, who put the point to justification by faith rather than to sanctification. We know very well that the latter tried to focus upon justification by faith exclusively in order to refute the works-righteousness or the works-merits of Catholicism. Here we find these two Reformers' concern were essentially different from each other. While Luther saw the abuse of wrong faith prettied up by works-righteousness or works-merits in Catholicism, Calvin, on the contrary, observed the wrong, false, hypocritical works rather than good works enjoined by the Bible, alongside of their wrong doctrine of faith in Catholicism. Thus, while Luther focused himself upon the faith and divine justification, Calvin made much of the good works of Christians based upon the divine and pure faith.

Calvin was far more affirmative and positive than Luther in his emphasis upon Christians' good works. Furthermore, for Calvin, Christians were, in fact, ontologically the persons who ought to do good works, and Christian faith was understood to essentially contain in itself Christian's holy life to bear fruits of good works. Such emphasis upon the good works of believers was also intimately related to his strong desire to build a holy Christian society amongst the world by reforming it according to the Word of God thoroughly. In this sense, his Reformation was of such potential power as to reform Geneva successfully by his double emphasis upon the Christian individuals' holy life and the holistic reformation of the whole society. Thus, Calvin made much of all Christian citizens' holy and responsible life before God in their society, regardless of people's social ranks or positions.

To that extent, Calvin was not essentially an ontological hierarchist, but a realistic democrat who argued for all people's equality before God's holy law. In this sense, he preferred democracy or the composite system of democracy and aristocracy to other political systems. Although he was not a democrat in today's sense, he believed that the sovereignty to constitute and establish the government was given people by God. In this sense, he supported positively the election system to constitute the lawful government,[67] compared to other political systems.

Thus, he gave much point to all individual Christians' responsibilities as citizens

before God and in the society, according to God's commandments based upon the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. This was also the main reason that in Geneva all people's pious and pure life was so emphatically stressed and disciplines were so strictly enforced by the Consistory. Therewith, Calvin demanded from people their responsible life before God, from magistrates their responsible administration, from ministers their responsible discharge of their duties before God and other people. It was also the real reason that he himself was so imbued with a great responsibility for the reformation of Genevan society. Of course, the success of the Genevan Reformation also could be thought of as the product of his ardent desire to keep a reformed faith secure and pure according to the gospel in Geneva, against Catholic's idolatrous doctrines, worship, and life. Thus Calvin made continuous efforts to reflect and apply his theology of holiness positively to the Genevan Reformation.

According to Calvin, while sanctification was a long process of Christian life toward heavenly glory, justification represented the change of the status and belonging of Christians, and just a beginning of Christian life. He acknowledged both of them as the grace given to the saints by the Holy Spirit. So in logical sequence, sanctification and justification were considered as *grace upon grace*. In this respect, he called both of them a "double grace," as he argued, "by partaking of [Jesus], we principally receive a double grace: namely, that being reconciled to God through Christ's blamelessness, we may have in heaven instead of a Judge a gracious Father; and secondly, that sanctified by Christ's spirit we may cultivate blamelessness and purity of life."[68]

Notwithstanding, Calvin obviously distinguished justification from sanctification, even while admitting a close relationship between them. Justification by faith is only the foundation or the starting point compared to sanctification, so they should be essentially distinguished. On this basis, Calvin criticised Osiander for mixing justification with sanctification in his dogma of "essential righteousness." According to Calvin, it was a dangerous dogma that actually jeopardized justification by faith as well as sanctification. Osiander really "expressed himself as not content with that righteousness which has been

---

[67] *Comm. on* Micah. 5:5; Concerning Calvin's preference for democracy or the composite of democracy and aristocracy in relation to his support of election-system will be concretely treated in the third chapter.

[68] *Inst.*, III.xi.3; Cf. *Inst.*, III.xvi.1.

acquired for us by Christ's obedience and sacrificial death, but pretends that we are substantially righteous in God by the infusion both of his essence and of his quality."[69]

The core of Calvin's criticism was that Osiander mixed divine righteousness, and man's sinful righteousness on the way of sanctification[70] and thus, he severely weakened the necessity of Christian holy, pious life before God as well as the atonement of Jesus Christ and God's sovereign declaration of justification. So Calvin drew a line between his idea and Osiander's idea. According to Calvin, Osiander's "essential righteousness" virtually abolished or enfeebled the importance of sanctification and Christian real life in the world. In addition, he weakened the role of the Holy Spirit who makes possible Christians' imitation of the pattern of Jesus and their complete obedience to God's will, by mixing justification and sanctification to such degree that he completely enfeebled sanctification.

For Calvin, the truth of justification by faith is firm, so it is true that it cannot in any way be weakened. Justification by faith was understood in a legal, forensic viewpoint. God called us justified only by the works of Jesus Christ and by the sovereign mercy of God without considering our good or bad works.[71] In this respect, justification by faith is pure grace, because we have no merit or works through which we can be called righteous. On the other hand, Calvin thought of sanctification as the Christian's good works issuing from the grace of God in the process of redemption. However, it is sure that he did not insist on our perfect justification and sanctification in earth, admitting the continuous vestiges of sins in Christians.

Nevertheless, the holy life was God's commandment, for Calvin. In this context, we may find a kind of practical syllogism in Calvin's theology, especially in Book III of the *Institutes*(1559).[72] According to Calvin, "a conscience so founded, erected, and established is established also in the consideration of works, so far, that is, as these are testimonies of God dwelling and ruling in us."[73] The good works could strengthen more firmly Christians' faith in God's presence with them. They could give them a clear assurance of their election.

---

[69] *Inst.*, III.xi.5.
[70] *Inst.*, III.xi.6.
[71] *Inst.*, III.xvi.3.
[72] *Inst.*, III.xiv.18-20.
[73] *Inst.*, III.xiv.18.

"When, therefore, the saints by innocence of conscience strengthen their faith and take from it occasion to exult, from the fruits of their calling they merely regard themselves as having been chosen as sons by the Lord."[74] "The fruits of regeneration" were also considered as the "proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, from which "they are greatly strengthened to wait for God's help in all their necessities" and also were regarded to "proclaim God's benefits as not to turn away from God's freely given favour."[75] Thus, although he did not consider them as their merit for redemption, Calvin stressed that they could be regarded "as gifts of God from which they may recognize his goodness and as signs of the calling by which they realize their election."[76]

Of course, among others, Calvin stressed that Christians have to look at God's mercy and Jesus Christ who is the mirror of election, rather than our own good works, in order to get "assurance of our redemption" and "assurance of our election." Notwithstanding, he did not weaken the importance of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, namely the good works of the saints, which are borne in our life as the token of God's election. In this sense, the good works of Christians were very important and necessary for establishing a good Christian society as well as for acquiring the assurance of redemption. Thus, as McGrath argues, the practical syllogism brought "a significant psychological pressure to demonstrate one's election to oneself and the world in general by exhibiting its signs—among which was the whole-hearted commitment to serve and glorify God by labouring in his world."[77] McGrath's comments show that Calvin's practical syllogism has in a certain sense a close relationship with Calvin's practical theology. "This concept, laden with considerable political import, placed Calvinist spirituality and pastoral theology upon a more secure theoretical foundation."[78] Therefore, it should be borne in mind that Calvin's Christianity was consistently a realistic, practical and social Christianity in relation to his practical syllogism.

Then, subsequently, Calvin correlated the fruits of Christians' calling with their election by the Lord. God's calling reveals His free grace of redemption upon Christians. It

---

[74] *Inst.*, III.xiv.19.
[75] *Ibid.*
[76] *Inst.*, III.xiv.20.
[77] Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*(Oxford & Cambridge, Massachusetts: Black Publishers, 1996), p. 241.
[78] *Ibid.*

means, "there is no doubt that whatever is praiseworthy in works is God's grace; there is not a drop that we ought by rights to ascribe to ourselves."[79] Thus, Calvin also associated Christians' holy life bearing good works with God's election. Hence, faithful believers cannot in any way separate themselves from the love of God at any time, because all good things in Christian life are possible only by God's preceding, free grace upon us.[80]

So, we may define justification (election, calling) as the prior grace (the first grace) and sanctification (good works of the saints, regeneration) as the following (or second) grace, in Calvin's soteriology. In this same stream, McGrath, too, argued that Calvin resolved the conjunction between justification and sanctification in two ways; one is through "his conception of the "insertion of the believer in Christ"(*insitio in Christum*), and another through his conception of "acceptance in the sight of God"(justification) and "regeneration or moral improvement"(sanctification)."[81] This means, on the one hand, in Calvin's theology, believers' union with Christ should be always considered together with his soteriology, and on the other hand, Christian sanctification can never be separated from justification, namely divine acceptance of sinners in His law-court, as the relation of grace upon grace.

Likewise, if we consider justification as divine indicative, we can also consider sanctification as divine imperative accompanied by divine indicative. Calvin accentuated God's grace as the first cause, and good works of the saints caused by the gift of the Holy Spirit as the second cause. In addition, he also finally explained the glory of God as the final cause of our salvation. So, according to him, Christians do good works for the glory of God as well as for others' benefits, but not for themselves. Thus Christian life is the life of devotion and service. It is clear in Calvin's theology that one of the final purposes of Christian life is the glory of God. He expressed this fact clearly in many places of his theological writings like his reply to Cardinal Sadolet,[82] the *Institutes*, and the opening articles of the Genevan Catechism.[83] John H. Leith also well showed in his book that Calvin's main concern was deeply associated with the glorification of God through all

---

[79] *Inst.*, III.xv.3.
[80] *Inst.*, III.xiv.19.
[81] Alister E. McGrath, *op. cit.*, p. 166.
[82] *CO.* 5. col. 391; *OS.* 1. 463-464.
[83] *CO.* 6. 9-10; also see English translation in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, trans. & ed. by J.K.S. Reid(London: SCM Press Ltd, MCMLIV), pp. 91-92.

aspects of Christian life.[84] Calvin explained the right way of glorifying God as follows through the dialogue between Minister and Child, in the Genevan Catechism:

> Minister: What is the right way of honouring him?
> Child: To put all our trust in him; to study to serve him all our life, by obeying his will; to call upon him, whenever any need impels us, seeking in him salvation and whatever good things can be desired; and lastly, to acknowledge him with both heart and mouth to be the only author of all good things.[85]

Thus, Calvin showed that the Christian life of sanctification cannot be separated from their meditation upon God's grace and God's glory and also that our life should be one of thanksgiving for God's gratuitous grace. Here we may find a momentous feature of Calvin's theology which correlates closely God's sovereign grace and ultimate glory with human being's responsive, obedient, and responsible life before God. This motif is closely conjoined with Christian social ethics, which greatly influenced the success of Genevan Reformation.

5. Sanctification and self-denial

Self-denial is also an important pivot of Calvin's doctrine of sanctification. Self-denial does not mean to deny a human right or human dignity, but for Calvin, makes human beings truly human in God. It is interesting that Calvin did not attribute this power to human self-esteem, but to human self-denial. According to Calvin, although the human being, as the image of God, was made high and noble, he became a sinner on account of his disobedience and disbelief. Further, even though redeemed by the triune God's grace, a Christian still lives in the sinful world as a pardoned sinner, in such a sinful world, he is still exposed to all kinds of temptations and evils under the power of sins according to the desires of the flesh, although he is entirely guided by the power of the Holy Spirit.[86] In addition, even though he has become God's child and an heir of the heavenly Kingdom, his redemption is not complete while he stays in the world. Besides, his redemption cannot

---

[84] John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*(Westminster/John Knox Press & Louisville, Kentucky, 1989), pp. 37-45. Esp. section "The Glory of God" in the first chapter "The Christian Life."

[85] *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, pp. 91-92.

[86] *Comm. on* Rom. 7:21-25.

come from his works, but only from God's free grace. So in this sense man is asked to be humble before God and other human beings.[87] In this sense, according to Calvin, self-denial implies to deny man's haughtiness and all perverted forms of self-love. Calvin defined self-denial and its necessity as follows:

> This *self-denial* is very extensive, and implies that we ought to give up our natural inclinations, and part with all the affections of the flesh, and thus give our consent to be reduced to nothing, provided that God lives and reigns in us. We know with what blind love men naturally regard themselves, how much they are devoted to themselves, how highly they estimate themselves. But if we desire to enter into the school of Christ, we must begin with that folly to which Paul (1 Cor. 3:18) exhorts us, *becoming fools, that we may be wise;* and next we must control and subdue all our affections.[88]

Self-denial was, for Calvin, in fact, the very method to beginning Christian life with Christ. He believed this to be the real beginning of our sanctification in the world. This is the opposite to secular and mundane methods of life.

Thus, Calvin interlinked self-denial, positively, with the imitation of Jesus Christ, by which Christians are trained as the disciples of Jesus Christ and a member of the people of God. According to him, in self-denial, man looks up to Jesus instead of himself, and follows only Jesus, denying himself and making himself low. Here we find God's paradoxical working in us, in that "he resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (Jam. 4:6)."[89] In this respect, for Calvin, self-denial has also a deep and essential relevance to humility.[90] Calvin defined humble men as "those *humble,* who being emptied of every confidence in their own power, wisdom, and righteousness, seek every good from God alone."[91] Therefore it, in essence, implied thorough and complete reliance upon God as well as self-emptiness.

Furthermore, for Calvin, self-denial signified that Christ lives in Christians, and that they are not their own, but his. So it also implied that they have to live and grow in Jesus Christ not by their own power, but by his secret power. Thus Calvin explicated the two modes of Christ's living in Christians as follows: "The one life consists in governing us by his Spirit, and directing all our actions; the other, in making us partakers of his

---

[87] *Comm. on* Phil. 2:3.
[88] *Comm. on* the Harmony of the Gospels, Vol.2, Matt. 16:24.
[89] *Comm. on* Jam. 4:10.
[90] *Comm. on* 1 Pet. 5:5.
[91] *Ibid.*

righteousness; so that, while we can do nothing of ourselves, we are accepted in the sight of God. The first relates to regeneration, the second to justification by free grace."[92] Therefore, self-denial can be said to contain Christians' giving up of futile desire, avarice, selfish ambition,[93] and earthly, sensual, devilish wisdom,[94] and willing to live in the guide of the Holy Spirit in relation to their Christian life in the world.

On the other hand, for Calvin, Christian's self-denial is relevant to the formation of a sound and moral Christian society. Wherever people deny themselves sincerely, there cannot be extravagance, licentiousness, intemperance, discrimination, injustice, fraud, burglary, murder, and sexual immorality, etc. In this sense, for Calvin, self-denial was virtually related to both sanctification of the believers and to the making of the holy Christian community in the world. Thus, we may evaluate affirmatively activities of the Genevan Consistory in Calvin's Geneva in consideration of his emphasis upon Christian's self-denial. The theme of self-denial was also, in the same context, correlated with church discipline in order to protect "the church's purity and as a means of inducing repentance." McNeill so defined "corrections" according to Calvin's definition, as "medicine to restore sinners to the Saviour."[95]

In Geneva, strict discipline was enforced through the Ten Commandments as divine law and the positive law based upon this divine law. Such discipline enforced by the use of the law and exercised by the Consistory had coercive power over Genevan citizens. Calvin, however, properly stressed that the severity of legal discipline should be tempered with clemency. Therefore the severity and harshness of the discipline in Geneva actually did not correspond to Calvin's original understanding of discipline. In addition, the actual power to judge and punish sinners was not in the hands of Calvin or of other pastors of Geneva, but as a matter of fact, in the magistrates of the Little Council of Geneva. On account of this problem, Calvin, in reality, was always in a tensional relation to Genevan civil government. He reclaimed the church's actual exercise of church discipline to protect the purity and holiness of Christian church, and finally could regain it only in 1555, when

---

[92] *Comm. on* Gal. 2:20.
[93] *Comm. on* James 3 :15-16.
[94] *Comm. on* 1John 2:15-17.
[95] John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 164.

his supporters won in the Council elections. McNeill describes the exact situation of Geneva in the mid-16th century in relation to this issue.

> In the confusions of the years 1538-41, with Calvin absent, the authorities had adopted a severe course. They had forced compliance with the new beliefs and practices on pain of exile and had visited the homes in order to destroy images. The councils were inclined to be oppressive through anxiety. The severity of the regime after 1541 is also much more connected with the councils than with the Consistory. The Ordinances required the latter to turn over to the magistrates for punishment stubborn and criminal offenders. The cases that were finally judged in the Consistory were minor, and most of them trivial. The position of the Consistory was long ambiguous, since it had no power of corporeal punishment and claimed none, and for many years was unable to act independently in excommunication.[96]

The authorities of Geneva dealt strictly and rigorously with unlawful sexuality, adulteries, carousings, intemperance, blasphemy, and negligence of worship.[97] Calvin also did not like these kinds of impieties and impurities, but notwithstanding, Calvin laid stress that the discipline should be executed with equity and clemency in order not to be unduly severe. He described what proper discipline should be as follows:

> There is need of strictness, in order that the wicked may not be rendered more daring by impunity, which is justly pronounced an allurement to vice. But on the other hand, as there is a danger of the person, who is chastised, becoming dispirited, moderation must be used as to this — so that the Church shall be prepared to extend forgiveness, so soon as she is fully satisfied as to his penitence.[98]

Thus, Calvin tried to balance strictness and moderation in discipline, on the one hand in order to restrain social and individual evils, and on the other hand to erect a sound Christian community based upon forgiveness.

Further, Calvin explained the doctrine of self-renunciation of Christian life, both in its relationship to God and in conjunction with his fellow men. This structure is almost similar to the structure of a twofold love which Jesus taught in the Gospels,[99] as Calvin briefly argued, "we perceive that denial of self has regard partly to men, partly, and chiefly, to God."[100]

---

[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Ibid.* p. 165.
[98] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 2:6
[99] *Comm. on* the Harmony of the Gospels, Vol. 3, Matt. 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27.
[100] *Inst.*, III.vii.4.

The focal point is also the believers' holiness before God and men. Calvin stressed the Christian's spiritual and bodily purity and holiness before God.[101] He argued that God's sovereignty should be respected before man's rights in order to fulfil a true holiness in the world. Nevertheless, Calvin did not in any way neglect man's right responsibility in sanctification. In this sense, Christians, following God's holy will, not only ought to renounce themselves, but also to live and work for the glory of God. Self-denial before God was also considered as a great prerequisite for self-denial before our neighbours. Though self-denial before God was more important for Calvin than that before neighbours, but they should be considered together in their close relationship. In the Genevan Reformation, Calvin certainly made much of God's glory, lordship, and commandments rather than human freedom of thought or activity.[102]

Alongside of this preference, he secondly made much of the Christian's humble self-denial before his neighbours in his theology and in his Reformation. Calvin and his fellow pastors sacrificed their lives to establish a true, complete reformation of Geneva. It was a religious, moral, economic, and socio-political reformation, based upon the principle of equity harmonised with Christian freedom, and upon the principle of holiness according to the holy Word of God. Especially, in his sermons on Deuteronomy, Calvin gave a point to the Christian's concern for the poor.[103] His concern for the poor was in conjunction with the preservation of the principle of God's justice and equity in society, so that he criticised the exploitation of the poor labourers by the rich, and usury, monopoly and oligopoly, and false balance, slavery related to poverty, etc.[104] Thus, his concern for the socially weak was connected with his ethical concern for a holy and equitable society according to the Word of God. In this way, Calvin tried to concretely apply the instruction of the Bible to the reality of society, namely to Geneva, in order to reform it according to God's will.

In the Genevan Reformation, as a matter of fact, Calvin was like a prophet, in the sense of the Old Testament, in relation to his efforts to correct and reform spiritual

---

[101] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 6:20; Also see *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 7:23.

[102] *Comm. on* Gal. 1:10

[103] *CO. 27.* Cols 337-357. *Sermon XCV* on Deut. 15:11-15 and *Sermon XCVI* on Deut. 15:16-23; *CO.* 28. Col. 181. *Sermon CXXXIX* on Deut. 24 :10-13.

[104] *Comm. on Minor Prophets. Vol.1, Lecture Sixty-sixth. Amos* 8:6; *CO.* 27. Col. 567. *Sermon CXIV* on Deut. 19:14-15; *CO.* XXVIII. Col. 11. *Sermon CXXV* on Deut. 22 :1-4 ; *CO.* 28. Col. 161f. *Sermon*

confusion and disorder in people's life of Geneva, as some Calvin's successors like Theodore Beza[105] and Nicolas Colladon, and some French Catholic scholars like Louis Bouyer,[106] Yves M.-J. Congar,[107] and Alexandre Ganoczy[108] so argued. Max Engammare also, regarding Calvin as "a prophet without a prophecy," explained "the senses in which he was a prophet" "according to three axes: as commentator of Scripture; as advisor or guide of the political powers; and as a man convinced that he had received from God a special vocation."[109] Similarly, Calvin with his prophetic voice urged people to show pious and moderate attitude to their lives as Christians: "to begin with, then, in seeking either the convenience or the tranquillity of the present life, Scripture calls us to resign ourselves and all our possessions to the Lord's will, and to yield to him the desires of our hearts to be tamed and subjugated."[110] Thus, for the establishment of a holy, pious society Calvin resolutely demanded a temperate and self-sacrificing life from people, especially from Genevan citizens.

Then, Calvin argued in turn, that, alongside of their self-denial, Christians should entrust themselves entirely to God's blessing. Calvin's social, this-worldly asceticism is well revealed here. He argued, "For as that blessing follows only him who thinks purely and acts rightly, thus it calls back from crooked thoughts and wicked actions all those who seek

---

CXXXVII on Deut. 24:1-6, Col. 188. *Sermon CXL* on Deut. 24 :14-18 ; *Comm. on Harmony of the Law, Vol. 3. Deut.* 26:6,10-13,14-15,17-18.

[105] In his brief biography of John Calvin, which was composed as a preface for the posthumous French edition of Calvin's commentary on the book of Joshua, Beza depicted Calvin as "the prophet of the Lord." Theodore Beza, "Leçons," in *Correspondance de Bèze,* 6:20; quoted in Max Engammare, "Calvin: A Prophet without a Prophecy," *Church History: Studies in Christianity & Culture,* Vol. 67, No. 4, (December, 1998). p. 643.

[106] "What we have been able to say of Calvin and his various disciples does not seem to us to be understood seriously unless we recognize an echo not only of Mosaic revelation and the great Hebrew prophetic tradition but also (and not least of all) of evangelical preaching." Louis Bouyer, *Du protestantisme à l'église*, pp. 90 and 96; quoted in Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin*, trans. by David Foxgrover and Wade Provo, *Le jeune Calvin: Genèse et evolution de sa vocation réformatrice,* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1987), p. 307.

[107] "The reformers, inasmuch as they are truly of God, are in their own way men of the Spirit, whose function is similar to that of the prophets." Congar, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'église*, p. 218; quoted in Alexandre Ganoczy, *loc. cit.*

[108] Ganoczy evaluated affirmatively that Calvin's prophetic call was positive and constructive in relation to edifying Christian community. "Calvin's task was to reestablish this faith by 'returning to the sources.' Calvin's grand attempt to integrate his 'prophetic call' into ordinary pastoral work and to construct an ecclesiology that takes into account the royal priesthood of believers testifies to this basically positive intention." Alexandre Ganoczy, *op. cit.*, p. 308.

[109] Max Engammare, *op. cit.*, p. 645.

[110] *Inst.*, III.vii.8.

it."[111] Thus, Calvin asked people to pursue perfect holiness in the face of all kinds of wickedness, because he thought that it is a true piety before God and also a vital foundation for social sanctification, as he argued,

> And for godly minds the peace and forbearance we have spoken of ought not to rest solely in this point; but it must also be extended to every occurrence to which the present life is subject. Therefore, he alone has duly denied himself who has so totally resigned himself to the Lord that he permits every part of his life to be governed by God's will.[112]

We also may find Calvin's view of Christian life in his *Commentary on Romans* 12:1, which goes as follows: "Ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."(KJV). Particularly, he explained 'acceptable' here as follows: "our life is framed aright, when this sacrifice is so made as to be pleasing to God: he brings to us at the same time no common consolation; for he teaches us, that our work is pleasing and acceptable to God when we devote ourselves to purity and holiness."[113] Holiness was understood in close relationship with the believers' good works. Calvin, in turn, demanded the believer's whole cleanness as a whole being before God when he argued, "by *bodies* [Paul] means not only our bones and skin, but the whole mass of which we are composed; and he adopted this word, that he might more fully designate all that we are: for the members of the body are the instruments by which we execute our purposes. He indeed requires from us holiness, not only as to the body, but also as to the soul and spirit."[114] Thus, the holiness for which Calvin argued was a holistic and integral holiness of the whole being. In addition, it was a demand for a complete holiness of the whole city of Geneva. He wanted to present Geneva and all Christians in it as a holy and acceptable sacrifice to God. In order to fulfil this aim he used church discipline as a means together with other biblical methods like education, worship, words and Sacraments, and so on.

Secondly, Calvin dealt with Christians' self-denial before their neighbours. He stressed that Christians should throw away selfishness and arrogance, in order to be the really faithful people of God and to establish a sound Christian society. For Calvin, it was thought to be, on the one hand, possible by a true love for neighbours, and on the other hand,

---

[111] *Inst.*, III.vii.9.
[112] *Inst.*, III.vii.10.
[113] *Comm. on* Rom. 12:1.

by the concrete application of God's righteous will in society. Therefore, Calvin argued that 'to seek to benefit one's neighbour', Christians should "give up all thought of" selves, namely "get out of" themselves.[115] Thus, he gave a point to "the only right stewardship of Christians tested by the rule of love."[116] According to him, in this sense, they often should exhort each other in order for them not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness,[117] but to carry each other's burdens.[118] This is actually almost similar to Luther's argument for the priesthood of all believers.[119]

In the meantime, Calvin differentiated the Christian's love for neighbours from the secular concept of love, by adding that our love for neighbours depends upon our love for God.[120] For the love of neighbours, he advised them to look upon the image of God in every individual man, because all men were created in the image of God, whether they be Christians or not. Thus, he defined "neighbours" as follows:

> The word, neighbour, includes all men living; for we are linked together by a common nature, as Isaiah reminds us, "that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh"(Is. 58:7). The image of God ought to be particularly regarded as a sacred bond of union; but, for that very reason, no distinction is here made between friend and foe, nor can the wickedness of men set aside the right of nature.[121]

In this definition we detect Calvin's philanthropic viewpoint of human beings. Thus, to that extent, Calvin made clear that the image of God implies a social image of God, which is related to "a sacred bond of union." As such, his understanding of "neighbour" is very social, humanitarian, and communal.

However, it is also true that he made more of the importance of Christian community in essence, compared to general community, when he argued, "it is among members of the household of faith that this same image is more carefully to be noted, in so far as it has been renewed and restored through the Spirit of Christ."[122] Calvin, nevertheless,

---

[114] *Ibid.*
[115] *Inst.*, III.vii.5.
[116] *Ibid.*
[117] *Comm. on* Heb. 3:13
[118] *Comm. on* Gal. 6:2.
[119] See Martin Luther, "Concerning the Reform of the Christian Estate(1520)," in *LW.* Vol. 44. pp. 115-219.
[120] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, Vol. 3., Matt. 22:39.
[121] *Comm. on* Gal. 5:14.
[122] *Inst.*, III.vii.6.

did not limit the scope of the love of the neighbour. Thus, when we meet all men who need help, regardless of their being Christians or not, we can help and support them with pleasure although Calvin's emphasis was more upon love for believers rather than ordinary people, in that "[believers] belong to the same family with ourselves."[123] He remarked, "there are duties which we owe to all men arising out of a common nature; but the tie of a more sacred relationship, established by God himself, binds us to believers."[124] Thus, the only condition of love for neighbours, irrespective of their Christian faith, was considered to be a common nature as the image of God that we may find in all people. Therewith, Calvin could prepare a general and universal ground, which is a common nature of all people, on which people can love each other and on which he could develop the holistic Christian social ethics.

Here we may find Calvin's specific argument of human dignity based upon God's creation and of human being's responsibility for society. According to Calvin, the dignity of man should be considered and respected by the Christians' altruistic love for neighbour, not by their egoistic, self-centred love for themselves, because for him self-denial meant to renounce oneself before both God and neighbour in order to bring a holy, loving Christian community to fruition in this world, according to God's will. Such a community would have a penultimate, approximate status because it could not be the ultimate kingdom of God where the elect would be blessed by a complete union with Christ. Therefore, it may be obviously argued that in Calvin's theology, there is combination of a *teleological motif* related to the establishment of the holy, loving Christian community where God's will would be completely applied, and a *deontological motif*, which requires of Christians their humble, responsible answer to God's Word to achieve God's will.

Finally, Calvin, representing self-denial of Christians as mortification, again focused himself upon "the duties of love" performed "from a sincere feeling of love"[125] and a humble mind. Actually, we know, according to Calvin, that the final goal of our self-denial is a complete union with Christ and an ultimate union with God in heaven, and a perfect restoration of God's image in us by the renewing of the Holy Spirit and by our resemblance to the image of Christ. Nevertheless, we must not forget that for Calvin, the concrete establishment of a holy, divine, and enlarged Christian community was no less

---

[123] *Comm. on* Gal. 6:10.
[124] *Ibid.*

important in his theology and in his Reformation, especially in Geneva. In this sense, we find that self-denial was a momentous means of pursuing the Christian and humanitarian enterprise. Thus, now in that context, we may conclude that for Calvin, love was a kind of duty or debt to God, neighbours and society, which should be implemented and paid in the world by all Christians through their self-denial.

6. Sanctification and bearing of the cross

To take up the cross is never an easy thing, even for God the Son. However, for Calvin, the other important element of sanctification was obviously to bear the cross. In this sense, Calvin argued that we should bear our own cross, just as Jesus bore his. To carry the cross was also an actual matter of life and death, in Calvin's own life, not only as a reformer of Geneva, but also as a religious refugee, since his departure from France in 1553. Thus, he knew vividly what it meant to bear the cross according to the instruction of the Bible. According to Calvin, to bear the cross meant to become "the companions of Jesus Christ," namely "to follow their Master," at the risk of their life; that is, both "to conform to his example" and "to abide by his footsteps like faithful companions."[126]

To resemble Jesus Christ, essentially, demands two necessary attitudes for Calvin: "self-denial and a voluntary bearing of the cross."[127] Such an idea in Calvin's theology is very similar to that of Thomas à Kempis, although Calvin's thought was a more in-worldly and realistic asceticism, compared to the latter's more ascetic and monasterial piety. Thomas à Kempis(1380-1471), who followed the *Devotio Moderna* which Gerhard Groote(1340-1384) began in 1379, argued with a resolute voice,

> O Lord Jesus, as You have spoken and promised, so let it come to pass; and grant that it may be my lot to merit it. I have received the Cross from Your hand; I will bear it, and will bear it even to death, as You have laid it on me. Truly the life of a good Monastic is a Cross, but it leads him to paradise. We have begun. We may not go back; neither should we abandon it.[128]

---

[125] *Inst.*, III.iii.7.
[126] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, Vol.1. Matt. 10:38.
[127] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Vol.2. Matt. 16:24.

Having already dealt with self-denial, here our main concern will be upon Calvin's understanding of "bearing of the cross." Bearing of the cross was one of the methods of God's training of His children for their sanctification and for the realisation of God's holy will in the world. In this sense, Calvin argued, "though there are common miseries to which the life of men is indiscriminately subjected, yet as God trains his people in a peculiar manner in order that they may be conformed to the image of his Son, we need not wonder that this rule is strictly addressed to them."[129]

In addition, Calvin gave a point to the expression "daily" in relation to bearing the cross. With this word he made clear that we are in a penultimate situation and so have to fight a good fight continuously until we finally will enter the heavenly glory, and in that context he also argued, "daily--which is very emphatic; for Christ's meaning is, that there will be no end to our warfare till we leave the world. Let it be the uninterrupted exercise of the godly, that when many afflictions have run their course, they may be prepared to endure fresh afflictions."[130] So in this sense, to bear the cross was considered to be inevitably accompanied by afflictions or persecutions which Christians had to endure through their earthly life.

In that context, Calvin argued that if the godly mind bears the cross, he is to climb higher in Christian life. So he affirmatively and optimistically viewed the suffering in Christians' lives as God's training and discipline, in order to lead them to an ultimate, heavenly glory. Therefore, it was not considered as a painful and miserable suffering. Nor should it be considered as the believer's merit of redemption and heavenly glory. For to resemble Jesus Christ is only possible in the course of sanctification exclusively by the work of the Holy Spirit according to God's will. The Holy Spirit makes people obey the Word of God and bear the cross in their wandering lives. It is a great consolation that Jesus also mediates in people's life from heaven as mediator and example when we bear the cross. To post-modern Christians, Calvin's argument about "bearing the cross" probably seems difficult to understand, but nevertheless, this is truly the focal point of Calvin's Christianity. Because for him, the *raison d'etre* of a Christian is found in bearing the cross according to

---

[128] Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, ed. by Hal M. Helms,(Paraclete Press, 1982), pp. 221-222, esp. from "On Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life."

[129] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*. Vol.2. Matt. 16:24.

[130] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*. Vol.2. Luke 9:23.

the pattern of Jesus Christ for the completion of sanctification, both in relation to being blessed finally with God's eternal blessings and in relation to ultimate fulfilment of God's holy will in the world.

That is why he first of all wrote, "it is the Heavenly Father's will thus to exercise them so as to put his own children to a definite test."[131] Actually the Father's will is absolute and sovereign in His own provision, but it is also a loving will for His people in the world. Therefore, for Calvin, God was not rigid and merciless, but a loving and thoughtful divine Educator who fosters His children through sufferings and trials. According to him, the world was obviously the school of God where God trains His people according to His secret decree. In this sense, Calvin explained the reason that we should bear the cross as follows: First, it is because God wants to control our arrogance and haughtiness, and at the same time, to prove to us our incapability and weakness. For Calvin, another of the virtues of a Christian was complete humility from the beginning to the end. Thus, through God's training by hardships, diseases, and afflictions, one comes to search for God's grace with a humble mind before God.[132]

Thus, Calvin introduced the idea of endurance brought by God, emphasizing that by experiencing the cross, believers "patiently endure—an endurance quite unattainable by their own effort."[133] Therefore the cross is ultimately beneficial and useful to us because it makes possible our sanctification and our holy life in the world. The purpose according to which God trains us by making us persevere in hardships is to make us see and depend upon only God Himself by unmasking our hypocrisy and striking at our perilous confidence in the flesh.[134] Therefore, Calvin urged that we should throw away blind self-love and egotism, love dearly to receive the grace of God, and firmly believe the faithfulness of the promise of God.

The second reason, for Calvin, that God gives his people trials and ordeals was "to test their patience and to instruct them to obedience."[135] He argued that, as Abraham and Peter completely obeyed God's will when God trained them in His own way through trials

---

[131] *Inst.*, III.viii.1.
[132] *Inst.*, III.viii.2.
[133] *Inst.*, III.viii.3.
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] *Inst.*, III.viii.4.

and afflictions in order to bless them, so Christians also have to endure all kinds of trials and obey God's will sincerely in order to receive the gracious blessings from God.[136] Here we find that God is a sovereign and almighty God who demands complete obedience from us. Calvin implied that a perfect man of God is a man obedient to God. In relation to this argument, we must understand that Calvin's idea came from his thought of covenant between God and His people, dedicated to the final glory in God.[137]

In that sense, we are reminded that Calvin often compared the world, the church, or the Bible to God's school, Christ's school, or the Holy Spirit's school[138] in which God trains His people. We may find here that Calvin was in some extent influenced by scholasticism in relation to his terminology of "school," when we consider that scholastic theology in the Middle Ages denoted theology appropriate to a particular kind of "school," as David C. Steinmetz argued in his articles.[139]

In any case, Calvin maintained that we also should cast away "the wanton impulse of our flesh to shake off God's yoke."[140] This wanton impulse was considered as an illness, which only can be cured by the cross. So for Calvin, to endure affliction and repent truly was the essential means for Christians to overcome sins and the wanton desires of the flesh. Calvin furthermore, did not neglect the value of Christians' sufferings for the righteousness of God in their life.[141] In that sense, for him, "we cannot be Christ's soldiers on any other condition, than to have the greater part of the world rising in hostility against us, and pursuing us even to death."[142] So it was natural for Calvin that Christians were still under persecution. (Consider the Huguenots who were under severe persecution during Calvin's time!). The world was regarded as a battlefield between God and believers, and Satan and

---

[136] *Ibid.*

[137] *Inst.*, III.ix.4-6.

[138] In many instances God's school was considered as the Bible as in *Inst.*, I.vi.4; *Inst.*, I.xvii.2. But Calvin also did not neglect God's school which was shown in the natural order as in *Inst.*, II.vi.1, "The natural order was that the frame of the universe should be the school in which we were to learn piety, and from it pass over to eternal life and perfect felicity"; Jesus Christ, for Calvin, was considered as inner Schoolmaster, *Inst.*, III.i.4. Actually he alone is the schoolmaster in the church. *Inst.*, IV.viii.1,9, IV.xiv.9; He also spoke about the school of Christ. *Inst.*, III.ix.5, III.x.5; We Christians are schoolboys in God's school. *Inst.*, III.xi.9, IV.viii.14; Further, scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit. *Inst.*, III.xxi.3, IV.xvii.36; the visible church as the mother of the believers also was the school of God for God to train his children. *Inst.*, IV.i.4, IV.viii.13.

[139] David C. Steinmetz, "The Scholastic Calvin," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. by Carl R. Trueman & R.S. Clark, (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 1999), pp. 27-30.

[140] *Inst.*, III.viii.5.

[141] *Comm. on* 1 Pet. 3:14; *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 3:12.

[142] *Comm. on* the Harmony of the Gospels, Vol. 1, Matt. 5:10.

his followers.[143] So believers should equip themselves with the sword of the Word in order to fight victoriously against all evil powers. In that sense, it was a spiritual warfare which should be fought until the achievement of the final victory. It was also true of Calvin's life as a reformer because he was also "a warrior of God, a good soldier of Jesus Christ"[144] who fought in a spiritual warfare to fulfil the Genevan Reformation throughout his life.

In the meantime, then, alongside of his Genevan Reformation, Calvin was also always mindful of his co-religionists in France, who were under severe persecution, as well as those persecuted in other European countries on account of reformed Christian faith. In this sense, Calvin's theology also might be called "a theology of pastoral care and encouragement" for afflicted religious refugees. To recommend reformed Christianity and encourage reformed Christians, Calvin wrote and sent many letters to the political leaders of other countries: for instance, to King Edward VI (three letters)[145] and Queen Elizabeth I of England,[146] to King Sigismund August of Poland,[147] to the King of Navarre,[148] to the Queen of Navarre,[149] and also other religious, political leaders like archbishop Thomas Cranmer, the Duke of Somerset, and others in England and the Duchess of Ferrara in Italy, etc. Especially, Calvin's deep concern and ardour upon "the revival and reestablishment of biblical and evangelical Christianity in England" is well represented in these letters that Calvin sent to English kings and religious leaders, as Philip E. Hughes demonstrated it in his article, "Calvin and the Church of England."[150] Among them, we may pick one letter

---

[143] *Com. on 2 Tim.* 3:17.

[144] Charles A.M. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

[145] Calvin sent three epistles to the young Protestant King of England respectively on January 1551, on 4th July 1552, and on 12th March 1553. Calvin dedicated him two of his commentaries, *Isaiah,* and *The Canonical Epistles,* and Four Sermons of Master John Calvin, with a Brief Exposition of Psalm lxxxvii. *Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Bonnet Edition* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), respectively pp. 119-123, 138-139, 145-146.

[146] In his letter on January 15, 1559 (*CO.* 17. Col. 413-15), Calvin dedicated the new edition of his *Commentary on Isaiah* to Queen Elizabeth I, although he retained the dedication to Edward VI who died young as well. The queen, however, refused the dedication (*CO.* 17. Col. 566). The reason was that during his stay in Geneva, John Knox had written a caustic treatise, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment and Empire of Women,* in which he had rejected female rulership. W. de Greef, *Johannes Calvijn : Zijn werk en geschriften,* trans. By Lyle D. Bierma, *The Writings of John Calvin: An Introductory Guide*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1993), p. 103.

[147] *Op. cit.*, pp. 189-193; In order to appeal for promotion of the Reformation in Poland, Calvin dedicated the *Commentary on Hebrews* to the King of Poland (*CO.* 13. Cols. 281-86). *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[148] *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

[149] *Ibid.*, pp. 231-233.

[150] Philip E. Hughes, "Calvin and the Church of England," *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World,* ed. by W. Stanford Reid, (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), pp. 173-196.

sent to King Edward VI, which encouraged him to continue his efforts to re-establish pious and holy Christianity in England, so as to show Calvin's far-reaching vision of the restoration of pure, biblical Christianity in England as follows:

> Not to mention others, it may justly be regarded as no ordinary consolation amidst the present distresses of the Church, that GOD has raised you up and endowed you with such excellent abilities and dispositions for defending the cause of godliness, and that you so diligently render that obedience to GOD in this matter which you know that he accepts and approves. For although the affairs of the kingdom are hitherto conducted by your counsellors, and although your Majesty's most illustrious uncle, the Duke of Somerset, and many others, have religion so much at heart, that they labour diligently, as they ought to do, in establishing it; yet in your own exceptions you go so far beyond them all as to make it very manifest that they receive no small excitement from the zeal which they observe in you. Not only are you celebrated for possessing a noble disposition, and some seeds of virtues, (which at so early an age is usually thought to be remarkable,) but for a maturity of those virtues far beyond your years, which would be singularly admired, as well as praised, at a very advanced age. Your piety especially is so highly applauded, that the Prophet Isaiah, I am fully convinced, will have one that will regard him with as much reverence, now that he is dead, as Hezekiah did when he was alive.[151]

On the other hand, Calvin was vigorous in his reaction to heretics, as we can see in the case of Servetus who had been burnt at the stake in Geneva on account of his heretic doctrine of the Trinity.[152] Calvin was infinitely sympathetic to faithful Christians suffering on account of unjust persecutions because of their reformed Christian faith, as we also may see in the case of five young French students who had been burnt to death on May 16, 1553 in Lyons for their confession of faith. Calvin considered their death as a glorious martyrdom According to Stickelberger, they wanted to preach the gospel as Calvin had taught them, but they were burnt to death because of their faith, before they could preach their evangelical faith to people.[153] Calvin was virtually the only man who tried to change Servetus' sentence of death by fire, to a seemingly less cruel, yet other kind of execution, but it was in vain,

---

[151] John Calvin, "To His Serene Highness Edward Sixth, King of England, & c.: A Truly Christian Prince," in *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah,* Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. xx.

[152] Almost all the cities in Switzerland: Zurich, Bern, Basel, and Schaffhausen, and Christian leaders like Bullinger, Farel, Melanchthon, Calvin, the Bernese agreed that Servetus should be put to death by fire. McNeill explained the detailed situation of Servetus' death. "All expressed horror at the heresies revealed, and advocated punishment. The Council was now decided, and Perrin's plea for acquittal or delay was brushed aside. In the end the verdict was unanimous. Servetus was found guilty of spreading heresy and was sentenced to death by burning." John T. McNeill, *op. cit.*, pp. 175-176.

[153] Emanuel Stickelberger, *Calvin: A* Life, trans. By David Georg Gelzer, (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1954), pp. 115-118.; *See* Jules Bonnet, *Lettres de Jean Calvin*, Vol. 1. 2 Vols., (Park, 1854), pp. 384-386.

because the majority of the people in Geneva objected to Calvin's argument.[154]

It is true that it became substantially a great flaw in Calvin's Genevan Reformation. However, considering that Servetus' treacherous plot to overthrow Calvin's Reformation through his league with the so-called political Libertines of Geneva was severe and dangerous, we may argue that Calvin could not but be rigorous to Servetus in order to keep his Genevan Reformation intact, in such a disordered situation as that of Geneva in 1553.

Thus, like the case of the five young French martyrs, for Calvin, bearing the cross was counted as a greatly valuable thing to the Christian life. It was a material conclusion of Calvin derived from his consideration of Christians' penultimate situation in the world. As he argued, "let us be ashamed to esteem less than the shadowy and fleeting allurements of the present life, those things on which the Lord has set so great a value."[155] In that sense, the cross was regarded as bringing Christians two benefits: "a fellowship with Christ," and "a blessed participation of heavenly glory" by trying our faith through persecution.[156] So Christians' schooling in God's school of suffering was essential and necessary to the preparation for the ultimate glory in heaven. So the motif of discipleship and suffering goes together with the motif of pilgrim and earthly sojourner yearning heavenly glory. Here we find a strong motif of hope in Calvin's theology to the extent that it reveals itself as a theology of strong hope for the future.

Therefore, in Calvin's theology, persecution in Christian life was none other than a kind of touchstone through which our faith can be inspected. In such sense,[157] he said, "we cannot be Christ's soldiers on any other condition, than to have the greater part of the world rising in hostility against us, and pursuing us even to death."[158] God's chastisements make us more docile and more obedient to God's Word.[159] However, our persecution does not make us participate in heavenly glory automatically, nor can it be our merit for redemption. According to Calvin, God trains us by persecution, afflictions, and molestations in order to make us a perfect people of God, and also in order that "all the sorrows we endure" might

---

[154] John T. McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 176.
[155] *Inst.*, III.viii.7.
[156] *Comm. on* 1 Pet. 4:12-13; also see *Comm. on* Rom. 8:18.
[157] *Comm. on* Rom. 5:3-5.
[158] *Comm. on the harmony of the Gospels*, Vol.1, Matt. 5:10; also, Refer to *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 3:12.
[159] *Comm. on* Ps. 119:71.

"contribute to our salvation and final good"[160] by making us cleave to Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, the cross is not itself a suffering, but a blessing combined with an affirmative hope for the glorious future. In addition, Calvin here made sure that God's "whole consolation of the godly" was promised to faithful Christians who bore the cross.[161] Therefore, unless they also have this kind of hope for the future, such afflictions and persecutions cannot give any benefits for God's children.[162] In this sense, we may certainly agree with Thomas F. Torrance when he called Calvin's eschatology, "the eschatology of hope."[163]

In this context, Calvin rejected the Stoic attitudes concerning sufferings and afflictions harassing our Christian life. Appealing to St. Paul, he explained the difference between Christians and the Stoic (2 Cor. 4:8-9) as follows: "patiently to bear the cross is not to be utterly stupefied and to be deprived of all feeling of pain."[164] Thus, he refused the Stoic apathetic and speculative attitude toward sufferings. Contrary to Stoicism, Calvin interlinked Christians' suffering with bearing of the cross from the perspective of the divine will.[165]

7. Sanctification and prayer

In this section, we come to examine the meaning and gravity of prayer in Christian life, i.e., sanctification. In relation to sanctification and the establishment of a just, equitable society Calvin did not weaken the usefulness and value of prayer. In this respect, the Heidelberg Catechism follows Calvin's thought most faithfully in affirming that our prayer means to participate in Christ's priesthood[166] and our life is a token of our thanksgiving to

---

[160] *Comm. on* Rom. 5:3.

[161] *Ibid.*

[162] *Comm. on* 2 Cor. 4:17.

[163] T.F. Torrance, *Kingdom and Church: A Study in the Theology of the Reformation* (Edinburgh & London: Oliver and Boyd, 1956).

[164] *Inst.*, III.viii.9.

[165] *Inst.*, III.viii.11.

[166] At Answer 116, it depicts our prayer as "the chief part of the thankfulness which God requires of us." Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom: With a History and Critical Notes,* Vol. III. The Evangelical Protestant Creeds With Translations, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), p. 350; Also see Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions: Theology from Zurich to Barmen,* trans. by John Hoffmeyer, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), p. 101; also At the Q. & A. 32 of the Confession it, the answer deals with Christians' priestly, prophetic, and kingly office as follows: "... in order that I also may confess his

God for His redemption of us.[167]

Prayer was, for Calvin, a vital element in the establishment of the kingdom of God So he argued that "the supply of the Spirit is the efficient cause, while prayer is a subordinate help"[168] of our salvation. But it does not mean that he considered prayer to be meritorious, because true prayer of the believers is possible only in the works of the Holy Spirit and by the intermediation of the Word of God. For Calvin, prayer was, in fact, an important method by which God works in and through people and he argued that prayer was "the chief exercise of faith," "by which we daily receive God's benefits."[169] Thus, it is also a necessary tool by which we can ask God's help and find His secret will for us.[170] According to Calvin, God hearkens to us "inasmuch as our prayers depend upon no merit of ours, but their whole worth and hope of fulfilment are grounded in God's promises, and depend upon them, so that they need no other support."[171] So, in prayer, we absolutely confide in God in relation to his promises. We know that the condition of God's listening to our prayers is God's faithful promises which he contracted with His people. That is actually the very condition on which we can pray to God boldly for His grace and help.

Subsequently believers' repentance and pious life were, also, considered in relation to prayer, not because it becomes our merit before God, but because it is pleasing to God.[172] Contrary to this general rule of believer's prayer, however, Calvin argued that God is righteous and fair in His listening to the prayers of the poor and/or the persecuted, whether they have saving faith in God or not. It was, as a matter of fact, the subject of general grace as well as the subject of social justice. It is, then, vitally important, because Calvin argued that in a broad sense of God's providential ruling, social ethics is intimately related to people's prayers as well as God's general grace ruling the world according to His sovereign providence. Thus, for Calvin, prayer exposed itself as the subordinate means that

---

name, may present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him, and may with free conscience fight against sin and the devil in this life, and hereafter, in eternity, reign with him over all creatures." Philip Schaff, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 318.

[167] The structure of *the Heidelberg Catechism*(1563) very interestingly reflects Calvin's structure of theology, so it consists of three different structures: respectively, the knowledge of our misery, the knowledge of Christ's atonement and redemption of us, and then finally Christian life as our thanksgiving to God.

[168] *Comm. on* Phil. 1:19.

[169] *Inst.*, III.xx.1-52.

[170] *Inst.*, III.xx.2.

[171] *Inst.*, III.xx.14.

[172] *Inst.*, III.xx. 6-10.

God contains in His sovereign and providential governing of the world. Of course, this kind of prayer is also only possible owing to the general works of the Holy Spirit. In this respect, Calvin comprehended the whole world within and under God's general government. It means, in other words, for Calvin, that God was the God of the whole world. Calvin made clear that

> [God] helps the miserable and hearkens to the groans of those who, unjustly afflicted, implore his aid; therefore, that he executes his judgments while complaints of the poor rise up to him, although they are unworthy to receive even a trifle. For how often did he, punishing the cruelty, robberies, violence, lust, and other crimes of the ungodly, silencing their boldness and rage, also overturning their tyrannical power, attest that hee helps those wrongly oppressed, who yet beat the air with praying to an unknown god? And one psalm clearly teaches that prayers which do not reach heaven by faith still are not without effect. The psalm lumps together those prayers which, out of natural feeling, necessity wrings from unbelievers just as much as from believers, yet from the outcome it proves that God is gracious toward them [Ps. 107:6,13,19]. Is it because he with such gentleness attests the prayers to be acceptable to him? Nay, it is by this circumstance to emphasize or illumine his mercy whenever the prayers of unbelievers are not denied to them; and again to incite his true worshipers to pray the more, when they see that even ungodly wailings sometimes do some good.[173]

Thus, according to Calvin, God directly rules the world according to His just and equitable will, by which He listens to and responds to the cries of the afflicted sincerely. In this sense, for Calvin, God was necessarily a just God who supports and protects people's fundamental human rights and hearkens to the groans of the unduly afflicted. We, in that sense, cannot deny Calvin's direct or indirect influences upon and contribution to the development of modern democracy in association with his concerns upon the rights of human being as the image of God.

On the other hand, the Genevan Consistory in Calvin's times was criticized bitterly on account of its excessive intervention in citizens' private lives, especially in the so-called Libertines' intemperate life. Nevertheless, Calvin's contribution to the defence of human rights should not be underestimated, particularly in relation to his pastoral and philanthropic concern for religious refugees and sufferers from neighbouring countries, as well as for the poor in Geneva. He also supported the right of private ownership and the duty of civil authority to protect people's lives and the rights of liberty, including lawful resistance by "the magistrates of the people" against oppressive and idolatrous civil

---

[173] *Inst.*, III.xx.15.

authorities which coerce people believe false religion and obey evil rulers, etc. In this regard, we have many supporters like Ronald S. Wallace,[174] W. Fred Graham,[175] Jeannine E. Olson,[176] J. M. Vorster,[177] and so on. Of course, when we consider many complex elements in Geneva including Servetus' death, we may not call him the father of human rights, as Ritschl[178] and Vorster[179] did. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Calvin's humanitarian thought came from his understanding of the natural law as well as his biblical understanding of God's general grace, according to which God protects the poor and the afflicted justly and equitably. We shall deal with this subject more deeply in chapters three and four.

Also in relation to prayer, it is important to bear in mind that in Calvin's theology the sole mediator is Jesus Christ. In that sense, truly, our prayer should be done by his name and through his mediation.[180] In this respect, Calvin utterly opposed prayers of intercession to canonized saints, as was the practice in Catholicism,[181] because it destroyed the true doctrine of prayer and furthers false veneration of the saints.[182] Therefore, we find that the true doctrine of prayer is inseparably related to the establishment of true religion and holy society in Calvin.

---

[174] Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Reformer, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House/ Edinburgh, UK: Scottish Academic Press), 1988, 1990.

[175] W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary John Calvin* (Atlanta, Georgia: John Knox Press, 1971).

[176] Jeannine E. Olson, *Calvin and Social Welfare* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press/ London and Toronto: Associated University Press, 1989). Jeannine especially well evidenced Calvin's deep devotion to social welfare in Geneva by her meticulous and precise study of the numerous account books of the deacons of the *Bourse française* in the Archives of the State of Geneva.

[177] J. M. Vorster, "Calvin and Human Rights," *The Ecumenical Review,* (Geneva: April 1999); Vol. 51, Iss. 2. pp. 209-220.

[178] D. Ritschl, "Der Beitrag des Calvinismus für die Entwicklung des Menschenrechtgedankens in Europa und Nord-Amerika," *Evangelische Theologie*, vol. 40. 1980, p. 333.

[179] J. M. Vorster, *op. cit.*, p. 218; He listed many important principles regarding human rights as Calvin defines them: the sovereignty of God, the creation of the human being in the image of God, the natural law, the inextricable relation between people's responsibilities and rights, etc.

[180] *Inst.*, III.xx.17-20.

[181] *Inst.*, III.xx.21-27.

[182] For Calvin's lifelong war against the idols and idolatries, refer to Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Carlos M.N. Eire, "True Piety Begets True Confession: Calvin's Attack on Idolatry," in *John Calvin and the Church*, ed. By Timothy George (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 247-276; John H. Leith, "John Calvin's Polemic against Idolatry," *Soli Deo Gloria: New Testament Studies in Honour of William Childs Robinson*, ed. By J. McDowell Richards (Richmonds, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1968), pp. 111-124.

Finally, Calvin argued that the Lord's Prayer is the most important prayer in the world in relation to realization of our sanctification and Christian ethics. He dealt with the Lord's Prayer in association with Christian life, namely doctrine of sanctification, in his first (1537) and second (1541) editions of *Instruction et Confession de foy*, and in consecutive, different editions of the *Institutes*. He especially expounded this prayer in Book III. xx, which is a considerably long section of the last edition of the *Institutes*. The effects of this prayer, as a matter of fact, can be broadly applied to the worldly situation, especially in association with the first three petitions among the whole six petitions. The final goal of this prayer was, substantially, God's glory. The glory of God is mostly interlinked with the first three petitions, while the latter three petitions are mainly (but not absolutely) related to Christian daily life.[183] However, it is true, too, that the goal of the second part of the prayer is also closely conjunct with the realization of God's will.

From the title of "our Father" who receives our prayer in this prayer, Calvin found a kind of brotherly solidarity between Christians, so he argued that "by the same right of mercy and free liberality we are equally children of such a father."[184] This is strongly interconnected with Calvin's sincere concern for the preservation of Christian community, as we could see in his Genevan Reformation. So he argued that "just as one who truly and deeply loves any father of a family at the same time embraces his whole household with love and good will, so it becomes us, in like measure, to show to his people, to his family, and lastly, to his inheritance, the same zeal and affection that we have toward this Heavenly Father."[185] Here we find Calvin's desire for establishment of a holy community which is organised by a brotherly love as the children of a father. He continues, "let the Christian man, then, conform his prayers to this rule in order that they may be in common and embrace all who are his brothers in Christ, not only those whom he at present sees and recognizes as such but all men who dwell on earth."[186] This vision was, in fact, the vision of a global and eschatological community of love, which would ultimately be accomplished in Christ through our strong union with him.

First of all, vis-à-vis the first petition, among others, Calvin emphasised that all

---

[183] *Inst.*, III.xx.35.
[184] *Ibid.*
[185] *Ibid.*
[186] *Inst.*, III.xx.38.

impiety, all detractions and mockeries, and all sacrileges should be banished in order to 'hallow God's name' in its perfect holiness. In Calvin's Geneva, the Consistory really performed its role to get rid of such blasphemies, according to the *Ecclesiastical ordinances*(1541) whose composition Calvin was mainly responsible for. The ultimate vision and goal of this petition was to make the whole race of mankind revere God wholeheartedly. So he stressed that true piety and reverence of God should be spread out in the whole world, as the first petition proposes it.[187]

Continuously, the second petition, "your kingdom come" is the prayerful claim for the coming of the Kingdom of God in the world. In this petition, Calvin defined *what the Kingdom of God is* as follows:

> God reigns where men, both by denial of themselves and by contempt of the world and of earthly life, pledge themselves to his righteousness in order to aspire to a heavenly life. Thus there are two parts to this Kingdom: first, that God by the power of his Spirit correct all the desires of the flesh which by squadrons war against him; second, that he shape all our thoughts in obedience to his rule.[188]

In this definition, we find that the Kingdom is first of all spiritual and secondly, is related to the complete obedience to God's rule in the world. So this definition is substantially not so different from his definition of sanctification, which basically consists of mortification and vivification. Here, however, he made more of the Christian's complete submission to the will of God. The kingdom of God was, thus, for Calvin, social as well as religious in its character, because it was an ideal goal of Christian life which will be ultimately accomplished in heaven, as well as God's enjoinment which Christians should fulfil in the world as the shape of a holy and pure Christian community.

In the concrete practice of the Kingdom, there are three steps that Calvin proposed. The first step was to cleanse the petitioner himself of "all corruptions that disturb the peaceful state of God's Kingdom and sully its purity." This happens basically through "the working of God's Word" and "the secret inspiration of the Holy Spirit." Thus, the Kingdom is, first of all, spiritual and religious, but it was also considered to be moral and political in association with the realisation of a complete peace from all corruptions.

The second step was to "descend to the impious, who stubbornly and with

---

[187] *Inst.*, III.xx.41.

desperate madness resist God's authority and to pray for them to repent their impieties and succumb to God." This is the stage according to which Christians materially act to fulfil a true holiness in their society. Therefore, it demands from Christian a continuous, spiritual fight against all impieties and blasphemies. But it does not exclude moral and social efforts to sanctify society itself. In connection with this, humility is demanded from Christians for God to set up His Kingdom through their Christian life. However, it is also true that there cannot be any ultimate Kingdom of God in the world, as he asserted that "zeal for daily progress is not enjoined upon us in vain, for it never goes so well with human affairs that the filthiness of vices is shaken and washed away, and full integrity flowers and grows. But its fullness is delayed to the final coming of Christ when, as Paul teaches, 'God will be all in all.'" In this regard, Calvin was not a utopian perfectionist, but a realistic reformer, who still yearns for ultimate completion in the heaven. We find here that in Calvin's thought, there exists a specific, tensional structure between penultimate reality which should be reformed, and ultimate holiness in heaven, namely between temporal, imperfect thing which should be sanctified and purified, and perfect, eternal thing which Christians finally will gain. Here we find that Calvin considered Geneva as the place which should be reformed according to God's holy will, in this tensional structure, because it is not the ultimate, but the penultimate which lies still sinful and temporal in the course of sanctification and reformation.

Finally, the third step is to learn to bear the cross, because ultimately, "God wills to spread his Kingdom"[189] by the believers' self-sacrificial devotion. This is the step of physical and positive practice of God's holy commandments through Christians' sacrificial participation in the reformation. Thus, Calvin listed concretely the material blueprint to fulfil a divine, just society in the world. It is sure that Calvin attempted the Genevan Reformation according to this theological blueprint. Surely, in this sense, he greatly stressed the value of prayer and its effective use in Christian social reformation as well as in Christian holy life.

In the third petition, "that God's will may be done on earth as in heaven," Calvin requested a complete obedience to God's will. This petition directly corresponds to Calvin's

---

[188] *Inst.*, III.xx.42.
[189] *Ibid.*

characteristic theological concern, which makes much of God's absolute sovereignty. Alongside of this, Christians' self-denial was strongly requested. Calvin simply asserted, "Whoever does not resign and submit his feelings to God opposes, as much as he can, God's will."[190] Geneva before Calvin's thorough Reformation was actually a considerably secularised, intemperate, and irreligious society on account of an almost complete banishment of Catholicism, just before Calvin came into it. Geneva was in a spiritual and social crisis. Those realities were especially specific in Geneva, compared to other areas in Switzerland in those days. In this sense, we might conjecture that the Genevan Consistory in Calvin's age could feel a stronger need for strict discipline in Geneva, in order to restore moral and spiritual order of the city, in consideration of the moral situations of other German-speaking areas of the Swiss Confederation. Thomas M. Lindsay evidenced it sufficiently in his book about the Reformation.[191] In this respect, Zwingli and Bullinger were different from Calvin in that they did not admit the right of excommunication in the church. Lindsay argued that Calvin's such rigour was partly due to his faithful ardour to restore and to preserve in Geneva the example of the Church of the first three centuries in Geneva, which tried to keep its spiritual and religious purity and holiness from external persecutions and temptations.[192]

Thus in the beginning of the 16th century, Geneva was desperately in need of a true reformer and a true Christianity in order to change its gloomy spiritual state and its dissipated and relaxed social atmosphere. It was this very reason that Farel called for Calvin's active participation in the Genevan Reformation. Calvin was still a little-known young scholar, although he had already published the first edition(1536) of the *Institutes* when he was invited to participate in and lead the Genevan Reformation. Thus, Calvin tried to reform Geneva thoroughly according to the Word of God. In that sense, he asked citizens for their strict and firm self-denial and true piety, which could be actually comparable to the religious attitude of the church and its Christians of the first three centuries. So somewhat strict, in-worldly asceticism was religiously and socially applied to social reformation as well as individual Christian ethics in Geneva by Calvin's leadership.

---

[190] *Inst.*, III.xx.43.

[191] Thomas M. Lindsay, *A History of the Reformation*, vol. 2, in 3 vols, (Edinburgh: T&T. Clark/ New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907, 1951), pp. 109-113.

[192] *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

On the other hand, for Calvin, the second part of this prayer, namely the latter three petitions were mainly interlinked with man's daily affairs, although indirectly and resultantly related to social and communal issues. Above all, the fourth petition was concerning the issue of "people's daily bread." In connection with this petition, Calvin asked Christians for their self-restraint, unselfish and disinterested attitudes, and moreover glorification of God in their everyday life. Daily bread implied here the most fundamental desire which people have to be fed daily, and together with it, finally, social stability and peace, whether spiritual or material, which the former could bring to society. In this respect, according to Calvin, everyman should stay in the proper limitation of the use of his freedom vis-à-vis this issue, and further would have to entrust their bodies and their life, as regards this desire, entirely to "[God's] safekeeping and guardianship."[193] In this sense, we might positively argue that poorhouses, free hospitals, and shelters for the religious refugees in Geneva, which were mostly implemented by the diaconate, and also which were instituted and reinforced according to the *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*(1541), contributed materially and substantially to the establishment of a peaceful and equitable Christian society in Geneva.

In turn, the fifth and sixth petitions were understood in association with "all that makes for the heavenly life." According to Calvin, "the spiritual covenant that God has made for the salvation of his church also rests on" these two petitions. The fifth was about forgiveness of sins or regeneration, and then the sixth relates itself to sanctification and perseverance of the saints in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the fifth petition of "forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," Calvin mostly criticized religious perfectionists, namely "those who imagine such perfection for themselves as would make it unnecessary to seek pardon." It was, for him, because they did not consider their penultimate situation in the world, but enfeebled biblical emphasis upon forgiveness of sins and continuous repentance in the course of sanctification. Thus, the result of such perfectionism was self-evident for Calvin: namely haughtiness, deceit, and laziness. According to him, it just cannot but bring out antinomianism or a separated sectarianism, which cannot make any material influence upon a general society. Virtually, for Calvin, those who insisted upon such perfectionism were the Spirituals, against whom he himself argued resolutely for a long time, because he was well aware of their influence upon the

[193] *Inst.*, III.xx.44.

church and wider society.[194] They were also called the Libertines by Calvin, which are different in their characters from the political Libertines in Geneva. These Spirituals were the followers of Quintin Thieffry and Antoine Pocque who believed in "a pantheistic spiritualism or mysticism" and interpreted the Bible allegorically according to their "pantheistic determinism."[195] Thus, they misused the Bible and fell into a false perfectionism and unbiblical antinomianism. In this sense, they were compared by Calvin to such heretics of the early church as Cerdo, Marcion, and Valentinus.

In the final petition of "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one," Calvin suggests that Christian life is a kind of spiritual warfare against all sinful powers.[196] In relation to this motif, we find that Charles A.M. Hall's thesis about Calvin's theology is very suggestive, because he saw it entirely from the viewpoint of spiritual warfare performed by Christians with the Spirit's sword.[197] Our malign enemy assaults us sometimes with temptations, and with trials and hardships at other times. So against the devil's guile, first of all, we have to fight in order to overcome all his evil contrivances. This was Calvin's picture of Christian life in the world. Here Calvin ensured that the secret of victory in our warfare is the works and grace of the Holy Spirit. It means that the power of the Spirit is materially the efficient and positive aid to our spiritual warfare in the world.

In any case, however, for Calvin, all these hardships, trials, tribulations, or severe poverty or illness may be the tools or means of God in order to train His people. Through these hardships, they can overcome their desires of the flesh and sluggishness. This motif is deeply related to Calvin's thought that the world is the school of God and is governed by God's providence. The ultimate goal of such hardships was, as a matter of fact, to make His people holy and pure in their faith. God purifies the elect by using these hardships and makes them grow in their faith. Here Calvin differentiated God's trial from Satan's trial. The former was, in its basic character, useful and beneficial for God's children because it makes God's people ultimately holy, while the latter "may destroy, condemn, confound,

---

[194] About Calvin's criticism against them, see *"Contre la secte phantastique et furieuse des libertins qui se nomment spirituels," CO.* 7. cols. 145-252 ; *"Epistre contre un certain Cordelier, suppost de la secte des Libertins, lequel est prisonnier à Roan," CO.* 7. cols. 341-364.

[195] W. de Greef, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

[196] *Inst.*, III.xx.45.

and cast down."[198] So in relation to the latter, Christians necessarily have to fight a good spiritual warfare. To that extent, Christian life was not such an easy thing, but in fact, a hard and suffering course of sanctification.

In this sense, as regards this warfare, Calvin finally argued that Christians should pray for final, ultimate victory in the power of the Holy Spirit, because "if the Lord did not snatch us from the midst of death, we could not help being immediately torn to pieces by his fangs and claws, and swallowed down his throat."[199] Thus the Lord's Prayer has, for Calvin, a substantial relationship with God's holy will to fulfil the Kingdom of God in the world, in other words, to realise a just, peaceful, and holy society composed of regenerated, holy Christians, ruled according to God's will. In this sense, the Lord's Prayer, for Calvin, was a public prayer for the realisation of God's will in the world. Therefore, Calvin's insistence of the following is very suggestive for Christian social ethics in that "the prayers of Christians ought to be public, and to look to the public edification of the church and the advancement of the believers' fellowship"[200] Thus, the final end of Christians' prayer was to realise God's Kingdom, power, and glory in the world.

8. Contempt of the world and longing for heaven

Christian life in the course of sanctification is the life disdaining the world and at the same time longing for eternal life. Calvin called upon us to hope for eternal life, as illustrated in *Institutes* III.ix-x. According to him, we should not look at the vain and futile things of the world if we long for and want to possess the blessings of eternal glorious life. In this sense, he urged us to go forward with "the discipline of the cross."[201] It means Christian life in the world is a kind of drill by God to make Christians the holy people of God. Through this "discipline of the cross," we are able to see God's reward in heaven reserved for the people who learn to follow Jesus and to hope for God's blest eternity. In this world we cannot find true rest and peace, but only despair. He trains us throughout our

---

[197] Charles A.M. Hall, *With the Spirit's Sword: The Drama of Spiritual Warfare in the Theology of John Calvin*, Ph.D. Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of Basel,(Zürich: Evz-Verlag, 1968).

[198] *Inst.*, III.xx.46.

[199] *Ibid.*

[200] *Inst.*, II.xx.47.

[201] *Inst.*, III.ix.1.

life amidst great tribulations and hardships; in order for us not to indulge in the present benefits or fall into worldly allurements and temptations. Therefore, to make his followers strong and perfect in faith, Jesus always asks us to hold our heads higher and to see in him the eternal heavenly bliss, even while we are still under sufferings and afflictions in this world.[202] Therefore, according to Calvin, we Christians should always "fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2) in order to know the real meaning and ultimate end of our sufferings in this world.[203] Thus Christians find the real sense of Christian life through their hope for the heavenly bliss, even amongst sufferings.

Calvin here apparently taught a dualism between the contemptible present life and the glorious life to come. This dualism can also be considered as the continuously struggling life on the way versus the life which has gained the final victory. Calvin argued, "we conclude that in this life we are to seek and hope for nothing but struggle; when we think of our crown, we are to raise our eyes to heaven. For this we must believe: that the mind is never seriously aroused to desire and ponder the life to come unless it be previously imbued with contempt for the present life."[204] Calvin's warning against indulgence in the worldly pleasures of life continues to show itself here, because that kind of worldly pleasure takes our love for the ultimate in heaven away from us.[205]

Calvin's thought appears quite pessimistic in regards to his view of this world. It is also certainly eschatological considering his yearning for eternal life. This kind of dualistic, pessimistic, and also eschatological thought cannot be easily found in our modern secular society. But it is neither a sort of apocalyptic understanding of the world nor an understanding of the impending judgement of God. It reflects a careful delineation of the pilgrim's progress on earth.

Calvin argued that there is no neutral zone between the concern for eternal life and love for the world, suggesting that we should reject the worldly pleasures for the better one. He remarked, "indeed, there is no middle ground between these two: either the world must become worthless to us or hold us bound by intemperate love of it. Accordingly, if we have

---

[202] *Inst.*, III.xviii.4.
[203] *Comm. on* Heb. 12:2.
[204] *Inst.*, III.xviii.4.
[205] *Comm. on* 1 John. 2:15-17.

any concern for eternity, we must strive diligently to strike off these evil fetters."[206] So for the ultimate concern about eternal life, according to him, we must listen carefully to the Word of God calling us and "with all our heart to meditate upon the life to come"[207] and try hard to get to our goal of sanctification and glorification.

Calvin's pessimistic remarks on our present life in the world, however, should be understood together with other passages where he also made much of our worldly life. The present life was also no less important and valuable for Calvin for several reasons. According to him, first of all, we should think of this present life as one of the blessings which God gave us, and so should acknowledge and thank Him for His grace. Secondly, it is important because the present worldly life is set for the preparation of the glory to come. This shows Christian life in the explicit structure of penultimate things before ultimate things. And thirdly, it is because we begin to taste the mercy and benevolence of God by the various kinds of benefits from God in this life in anticipation. It means we experience the present earthly blessings as the prolepsis of God's eternal blessings, just as the people of the Old Testament expected eternal blessings through their earthly happiness and blessings, which God gave them.[208]

For this reason, even though we can enjoy our present earthly blessings, for Calvin we should not stick to these blessings, but rather to God's heavenly eternal glory and reward. However, we should remember that Calvin never neglected these present worldly blessings, because they are also God's blessings in this world. In this sense, this worldly life is no less meaningful and valuable. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that for Calvin, in many cases, the earthly blessings alluded to in the Bible were considered as the form of anticipation of the latter as related to heavenly and spiritual happiness.[209]

However, in consideration of the three reasons mentioned above, Calvin maintained that we have to thank God for this present life.[210] Calvin's attitude here might be considered in association with his viewpoint of the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He viewed the relation between the Testaments as one

---

[206] *Inst.*, III.ix.2.
[207] *Ibid.*
[208] *Inst.*, II.xi.2.
[209] *Ibid.*
[210] *Inst.*, III.ix.3.

of promise and fulfilment, or as the mirror of the future and the reality of the future. So he argued, "we contend ... that, in the earthly possession [the Israelites] enjoyed, they looked, as in a mirror, upon the future inheritance they believed to have been prepared for them in heaven."[211]

Subsequently, based upon this understanding of our penultimate life in the world, Calvin suggested some principles according to which we can live in this world, which evidence the essential importance of penultimate life. Firstly, he argued that we should realize the purpose of various gifts, which God created and gave us. It means that we are endowed with various gifts and so have a high commission before God. Therefore, our earthly life is of value that can in no way be disregarded. Secondly, he stressed that we ought to disdain the present life and meditate upon heavenly immortality.[212] This is in fact concerning our mortification of the desire of the flesh in the world. Therefore, it does not mean that we should deny our worldly life entirely. Thirdly, he suggested that we should know and live according to our own calling. It means that we are created the lord of all creation who must accomplish God-committed mission. Thus, it is clear that this worldly life has a kind of relative value, compared to the heavenly life, for Christians. So Calvin here shows the structure between penultimate and ultimate. Compared to the ultimate, this world has a relative value, for Calvin, but this relative value of the penultimate was crucial to Calvin's work in Geneva. In this context, McGrath's calling Calvin a very world-affirming theologian[213] is fully justified.

Notwithstanding, in other vein, it is true that this present life was thought of as a passing phenomenon and a transient life for Calvin while the ultimate was considered as heavenly bliss. He put it in this way: "by his Word the Lord lays down this measure when he teaches that the present life is for his people as a pilgrimage on which they are hastening toward the Heavenly Kingdom [Lev. 25:23; I Chron. 29:15; Ps. 39:13; 119:19; Heb. 11:8-10,13-16; 13:14; I Peter 2:11]."[214] Thus, he made clear that his theology is in a certain sense the theology of a pilgrim. So he depicted this world as an alien land and heaven as

---

[211] *Inst.*, II.xi.1.

[212] *Inst.*, III.x.4.

[213] Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), pp. 219-222, 250.

[214] *Inst.*, III.x.1; also refer to *Inst.*, III.vii.3.

homeland, and argued that we should meditate upon future life:

> Let the aim of believers in judging mortal life, then, be that while they understand it to be of itself nothing but misery, they may with greater eagerness and dispatch betake themselves wholly to meditate upon that eternal life to come. When it comes to a comparison with the life to come, the present life can not only be safely neglected but, compared to the former, must be utterly despised and loathed.[215]

We can detect in his statements that he really longed for a future eternal life in heaven. There appears a plain tension between the ultimate and the penultimate. His pessimism about this worldly life continues. It could be probably suggested that this gloomy idea of the present life is deeply related to his wandering life as a refugee from France to Geneva and the actual difficulties of the Genevan Reformation. He compared this present life figuratively to "a sentry post at which the Lord has posted us, which we must hold until he recalls us."[216] In addition, he encouraged us not to fear death so much, because we can be blessed with the heavenly glory. This encouragement can be considered in relation to his firm confidence in the reformed faith. It also should be remembered that he already saw and heard of many martyrs in France and in other countries because of their reformed Christian faith during the reigns of French kings François I and Henri II. Especially, the situation of the Huguenots was so serious in France under the reign of King François I and other successive kings, especially after the posting of the placards in the 18th of October, 1534 in Paris and in other towns, which publicly criticised Catholic Mass as idolatry. The author of the placard, known as a certain Antoine Marcourt fled to Neuchâtel right after this happening took place. Lindsay well shows the situation of persecutions in France.

> The *Parlement* and the University demanded loudly that extreme measures should be taken to crush the heretics; and everywhere expiatory processions were formed to protest against the sacrilege. The King himself and the great nobles of the Court took part in one in January, and during that month more than thirty-five Lutherans were arrested, tried, and burnt. Several well-known Frenchmen (seventy-three at least), among them Clement Marot and Mathurin Cordier, fled the country, and their possessions were confiscated.[217]

It is probably true that such information and experience of persecutions

---

[215] *Inst.*, III.ix.4.
[216] *Ibid.*
[217] Thomas M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

strengthened his mind. Thus, to that extent that the earthly life was significant, the desire of the heavenly life also probably grew increasingly in his mind and heart. In that sense, future life also should be prepared for all the time. Thus Calvin essentially had at the same time a twofold attitude of life, which is both pessimistic and positive.

Therefore, for an appropriate evaluation of Calvin's reforming theology, his pessimistic attitude should always be paralleled with his faithful and ardent intervention in the Genevan Reformation as a God's minister. Calvin's life in Geneva reminds us of his active and positive participation in its reformation. While, as pilgrims, waiting for our heavenly glorious life, we also have to participate in social reforms actively and fight a good fight until we get the final victory over all kinds of evil and sin. Calvin's Reformation carried out and realized itself in such context of fighting a good fight in this world through all his lifetime, from his conversion until the end of his life. For Calvin, to confess Christian faith meant to live entirely according to his faith in God and to fight a good fight like a soldier faithful to his commander.[218]

At any rate, compared to his ardent desire of the future heavenly life, his neglect of the present life was very remarkable and conspicuous, even when we consider the fact that he was active in his reformation of the reality. Moreover, it is also true that we can find a basic negative and pessimistic idea about the human body comparatively contrasted to the heavenly glory. But, it should be regarded as his acute warning against human absolutisation of and immersion into bodily life itself in the world without thinking of its creaturely limitedness and its ultimate unity with God through final, eschatological redemption in Christ. In this sense, his position was different from Plato's philosophical, meditative dualism between the real and the ideal, between the decaying, mortal, and inessential body and the eternal, immortal, essential soul or spirit which Plato showed in his *Phaedo*.[219] It means that for Calvin, life was keener and more serious than Plato's philosophical understanding of life.

Thus, Calvin's eschatological hope for the kingdom of God in heaven became his

---

[218] Calvin also fought a good fight as a good soldier of Jesus Christ in Geneva like Paul in Asia Minor. *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 4:7; also Refer to *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 2:3,4.

[219] Plato, *Phaedo* 61d, 64, 68, 80 in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato including the letters,* ed. by Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, Bollington Series LXXI, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961).

theological motif and lever, by which he powerfully and consistently reformed the Genevan society. For as regards God's justice and commandments, he could never be satisfied with his contemporary situation. It is presumably true that in his mind he always dreamed of a holy, pure, and godly Geneva and tried to accomplish such a wonderful dream concretely. Nevertheless he did not forget the relational structure between the penultimate and the ultimate. It is why, in another dimension, he so ardently yearned for the glorious future life in God, which will come down from the heaven, as well as took part in the Genevan Reformation so deeply. In this sense, he urged Christians to hope for and wait for the coming of the Lord.

This hope for the coming of Christ, too, was closely conjoined with hope for the believers' eschatological resurrection. Hence, as pilgrims on the way to heaven, Christians must hold on to this eschatological hope firmly, because our eschatological resurrection in Jesus Christ will be the ultimate, glorious triumph to corroborate the previous victory already gained in Jesus over all evils. As Calvin put it, "yet lest we be still grievously exercised under hard military service, as though we obtained no benefit from the victory won by Christ, we must cling to what is elsewhere taught concerning the nature of hope."[220] In this sense, our life of hope necessarily demands us to "live sober, righteous, and godly lives in this age," because "our blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of our great God, and of our Saviour[221] Jesus Christ" are waiting for us.

According to Calvin, to become a real Christian or to have a firm Christian faith along the course of sanctification is in no way easy, on account of many hindrances and obstacles on the way to our heavenly home. Therefore, Christian life of sanctification is necessarily accompanied by spiritual warfare as he maintained that

> Hence arises the fact that faith is so rare in this world: nothing is harder for our slowness than to climb over innumerable obstacles in "pressing on toward the goal of the upward call" [Phil. 3:14]. To the huge mass of miseries that almost overwhelms us are added the jests of profane men, which assail our innocence when we, willingly renouncing the allurements of present benefits, seem to strive after a blessedness hidden from us as if it were a fleeting shadow. Finally, above and below us, before us and behind, violent temptations besiege us, which our minds would be quite unable to sustain, were they not freed of earthly things and bound to the heavenly life, which appears to be far away.[222]

---

[220] *Inst.*, III.xxv.1.
[221] *Ibid.*
[222] *Ibid.*

He demanded a sincere, hard-working, and strong Christianity in order to obtain all the benefits from the gospel. But it also should be remembered that this cannot be accomplished by our own knowledge, will, and efforts, but only by the triune God's working in us.

On the other hand, our hope for the eschatological resurrection is essentially oriented for union with God as human being's highest good. While Calvin emphasised continual union with Christ[223] along the way of our sanctification, he also made much of our final union with God in heaven. As pilgrims who foretaste heavenly joyfulness in Christ along the way of sanctification, we have to rely upon the working of the Holy Spirit for the ultimate pleasure, that is union with God in heaven. So he urges us saying, "it is that Paul holds out to believers this goal [Phil. 3:8], to which he says he strives, forgetting all things [Phil. 3:13] until he attains it. We also ought to strive toward it the more eagerly, lest, if the world lay hold on us, we be grievously punished for our sloth."[224]

Concerning the eschatological prospect of our life, he admitted the dichotomy between the soul and the body in human beings and believed in the resurrection of the body as well as in the immortality of the soul. So he regarded death as the separation of the soul from the dead body (II Pet. 1:14; II Cor. 5:1). Nevertheless, refuting strongly Manichean dualism, according to which the flesh was considered as worthless compared to the spirit, he gave a point to the holiness and purity of our whole existence as body and soul."[225]

Though our sanctification should be perfected by God, it cannot be accomplished completely in this world. In this sense, he was in opposition to our perfect sanctification in this life. This is exactly what the relationship between the penultimate and the ultimate shows itself in Calvin's theology. Likewise, our sanctification can thoroughly be completed not by our initiative, but exclusively by divine initiative. In this respect, he also denied synergism.[226]

---

[223] According to Calvin, we receive all the benefits of our union with Christ from our baptism in our faith in Jesus Christ. In the union with Christ, we can continuously grow toward the entire union with God in the heaven. Therefore, Calvin made much of our baptism as a token of our union with Christ. *Inst.*, IV.xv.6.

[224] *Inst.*, III.xxv.2.

[225] *Comm. on 2* Cor. 7:1.

[226] Synergism is a kind of doctrine that in justification or in redemption God works together with man. It denies God's sovereign and irresistible grace in justification or redemption of a human being. Pelagius,

> We know, however, that under the term *sanctification* is included the entire renovation of the man. The Thessalonians, it is true, had been in part renewed, but Paul desires that God would perfect what is remaining. From this we infer, that we must, during our whole life, make progress in the pursuit of holiness. But if it is the part of God to renew the whole man, there is nothing left for free will. ... when he says, *sanctify you wholly*, he makes him the sole Author of the entire work. ... As, however, so complete an entireness is never to be met with in this life, it is befitting that some progress be daily made in purity, and something be cleansed away from our pollutions, so long as we live in the world.[227]

Thus, Christian life was considered as a continuous process of drill and education of Christians to be a completely holy people of God. It was a kind of touchstone to test Christians as God's real people for Calvin. Therefore, it was indispensable to Christians.

Calvin often said that we are not ours, but God's, and also that we are God's temple, in which the Holy Spirit dwells."[228] Here he demanded that we, as the whole man having soul and body together, should live a holy life by obeying God. This also may be counted as the motif of union with God. Our sanctification, then, is inseparably conjunct with our confession of faith as a whole. Accordingly, the fear of God deeply corresponds to the confession of faith. In that sense, "the fear of God is dead in those men who, through dread of tyrants, fall from a confession of their faith, and that a brutish stupidity reigns in the hearts of those who, through dread of death, do not hesitate to abandon that confession."[229] The confession of faith is to express their faith clearly before God and other human beings, even though they are in severe persecutions or danger of death, so in this sense he criticized so-called Nicodemites, who disguised their faith with Catholicism through dread of death.[230] Calvin made clear that holiness should also be a concrete, external expression as well as an internal, spiritual formation. Here, the eschatological resurrection necessarily functions as a goal, which quickens our sanctified life, namely our holy life before God. Calvin explicated the phrase, "those who have done good will rise to

---

Socinus, Arminius, and the Remonstrants in Dort synod of the Netherlands argued for this doctrine by denying God's absolute grace.

[227] *Comm. on* 1 Thess. 5:23.

[228] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 6:19.

[229] *Comm. on Harmony of the Gos*pels, Vol.1, Matt. 10:28.

[230] About this, see Calvin's refutation of the Nicodemites, first of all, *Petit Traicté monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidèle congnoissant la verité de l'évangile, quand il est entre les papistes(1543), CO,* 6, cols. 537-578, and secondly, *Excuse de J. Calvin à Messieurs des Nicodémites, sur la complaincte qu'ilz font de sa trop grand' rigueur(1544), CO,* 6, cols. 589-614.

live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned"(John 5:29), in relation to believer's life doing good works, as follows: "He points out believers by good works, as he elsewhere teaches that *a tree is known by its fruit*, (Matt. 7:16; Lk. 6:44.). He praises their *good* works, to which they have begun to devote themselves since they were called."[231] He denied that this verse supports the thought of the merits of works, because, according to him here "Christ does not now treat of the cause of salvation, but merely distinguishes the elect from the reprobate by their own mark; and he does so in order to invite and exhort his own people to a holy and blameless life."[232]

Therefore, those who are affected by God in the course of sanctification should not fear to be disdained or mocked by *so-called* false believers. Calvin explained the exact meaning of *the mortification of Jesus Christ*, in its intimate relationship with our Christian life, through which we wait for the glorious resurrection in our daily afflictions and holy Christian life. It meant to suffer all afflictions with Jesus Christ, who died for us on the cross.

> For he employs the expression — *the mortification of Jesus Christ* — to denote everything that rendered him contemptible in the eyes of the world, with the view of preparing him for participating in a blessed resurrection. In the first place, the sufferings of Christ, however ignominious they may be in the eyes of men, have, nevertheless, more of honour in the sight of God, than all the triumphs of emperors, and all the pomp of kings. The end, however, must also be kept in view, that we *suffer with him,* that we may be *glorified together with him.* (Rom. 8:17).[233]

Here, too, we find the theme of the Christian's union with Christ in suffering. Calvin interpreted our afflictions and persecutions as outer sanctification, while our self-denial or renouncing the lusts of the flesh were interpreted as inner sanctification.[234] Outer sanctification was considered as important as inward sanctification in Christian life, because it is closely correlated with the outer confession of faith as faithful Christians. In that sense, as well as essentially, he made much of our open and plain confession of faith before God and human beings. He explained this twofold sanctification: the one is related to

---

[231] *Comm. on* John 5:29.
[232] *Ibid.*
[233] *Comm. on* 2 Cor. 4:10-11; *Comm. on* Rom. 8:17-18.
[234] *Comm. on* 2 Cor. 4:10-11.

the death of our old man and our walking in newness of life,[235] the other is "a mortification of Christ" to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.[236]

This twofold sanctification has an intimate relevance to social dimensions of Christian life, as well as to its spiritual dimensions. Outer sanctification is related to confessing Christian faith practically and concretely. In Calvin's day, to confess reformed faith under Catholic persecutors, especially in France, was regarded as a political as well as a religious gesture. It also, for Calvin, was an ethical gesture, insofar as it led to attack on false idolatries, false religion, and tyrannical magistrates or government. Persecution and martyrdom exposed the Catholic oppressors' injustice plainly, as the number of martyrs came to grow. In this situation, Calvin confessed his own evangelical Christian faith boldly through the different editions of the *Institutes* and his other writings. Inner sanctification was, too, important in association with erecting sound and holy Christian community, because it cannot be a good community without expelling all kinds of false desires related to social position, perverted sexual desires, haughtiness, and intemperance, and so on, from people's mind and heart. Thus, Calvin truly tried to consider sanctification in a whole category, which includes both religious dimension and socio-political aspect.

According to Calvin, our sanctification, i.e. our holy life as a whole existence testifies to our fellowship and membership with Christ. We may detect in Calvin's theology that the concrete life of a Christian is an important standard to ascertain his identity as a real Christian or not, although one's status would only be made clear ultimately before God in the end.[237] Anyway, he did not separate faith from concrete life. That is the reason why he emphasized the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life as being important, alongside of his emphasis upon Christ as the mirror of election and God's mercy.

Nevertheless, he did not deny that Christian life is a life in process. So continuous renewal or growth of life in Christ was acknowledged. He argued, "[to make progress] is the only way of persevering, to make continual advances, and not to stand still in the middle of our journey; as though he had said, that they only would be safe who laboured to make

---

[235] *Comm. on* Rom. 6:6; also *Comm. on* Col. 3:5

[236] Calvin suggested that our sufferings as Christians are intimately interlinked with our election. *Comm.* on Rom. 8:29.

[237] *Comm. on* Rom. 6 :12.

progress daily."[238] Thus, he made clear that Christian life is a kind of nurturing process or educating process through sanctification. In that sense, we may argue that his anthropology is not only an essentialist anthropology related to God's original creation of human being, but also a teleological anthropology related to the ultimate goal which man ought to pursue through his lifetime, an anthropology as a process through which to attain to the final perfection.

Calvin maintained that, as God liberated us from all kinds of deadly sins, so now we have to live according to God's sovereign will.[239] Hence, we ought to dedicate our whole existence as a living sacrifice to God.[240] In this respect, the afflictions are a touchstone by which our faith can be tested. Afflictions make us clean before God, strengthening and sanctifying us instrumentally as Christ's strong soldiers. He adjudged that the molestations afflicted to us, in fact, make us grow fully to the image of Christ and our eternal redemption. God trains us with afflictions, through which we are disciplined as the companions of Christ as well as the people of God.[241]

So Calvin maintained that we ought to meditate upon God himself, in this suffering, penultimate world, in order to get "the highest good and all the elements of happiness."[242] These meditations are good stimuli for the development of Christian spirituality and Christian holy life, because the ultimate goal of our life is to be united with God in Jesus Christ through the works of the Holy Spirit.[243] Therefore, Christian life is certainly a continuous drill to "participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires"(2 Pet. 1:4). Through this drill in the course of sanctification, we learn to mortify our desires of the flesh and to participate in the divine nature. In this place, we find there exists a deep relationship between *contemptio mundi* and *meditatio coelestia vitae* in Calvin's theology. Union with God was also estimated highly. God's promise for the perfection of our sanctification was eternal heavenly blessings as well as union with God.[244] Likewise, God's reward like "the crown of righteousness" is

---

[238] *Comm. on* 2 Pet. 3 :18.
[239] *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 2:3-4.
[240] *Comm. on* Rom. 6:13 ; *Comm. on* Rom. 12:1.
[241] *Inst.*, III.xxv.8.
[242] *Inst.*, III.xxv.10.
[243] *Comm. on* 2 Pet. 1:4.
[244] *Inst.*, III.xxv.10.

promised and waits for them who finished their course of sanctification in the world, although it cannot be considered in terms of the merits of works, because it is only possible on account of God's free grace conferred upon them.

Calvin, thus, had a clear vision of the ultimate reality,[245] so that he believed that we would be rewarded not because of our works,[246] but because of God's working in us, based upon God's faithful promises[247] when we would have finished our race in the course of our sanctification. This is, in fact, what Calvin wanted to say about our life of hope for the glorious future as well as for the heavenly blessed life.

In that sense, the promise of future blessing should be shared together with other people through our good works and mission. Calvin connected Daniel's prophecy concerning our hope for both resurrection and heavenly glory with our Christian duty to deliver the gospel to our neighbours.

> No one of God's children ought to confine their attention privately to themselves, but as far as possible, every one ought to interest himself in the welfare of his brethren. God has deposited the teaching of his salvation with us, not for the purpose of our privately keeping it to ourselves, but of our pointing out the way of salvation to all mankind. *This, therefore, is the common duty of the children of God,* — to promote the salvation of their brethren.[248]

Here we see Calvin's sincere ardour for mission or spreading of reformed Christian faith.[249] Although Calvin was mainly known as a reformer of Geneva, he was also deeply related to the French reformed Christians, (the Huguenots). Pierre Courthial described Calvin's deep concern upon the suffering Christians in France.

> Up to 1555, the time that Reformed churches were "established," Calvin, who was in Geneva, did not cease praying for his country and his compatriots that they might yield themselves to the Lord and His Word, that true churches might be established in France, and that the believers in France might be strengthened to stand firm and, if necessary, become martyrs. As early as 1535, as the *Epistle to King Francis I* (destined to be inserted in the preface to the *Institutes*) testifies, the Reformer sought to help and comfort

---

[245] *Inst.*, III.xxv.11.

[246] *Comm. on* 2 Tim. 4:8.

[247] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, Vol. 1, Matt. 10:40-41; *Comm. on* Col. 3:22-24.

[248] Calvin treasured this evangelism very much, connecting it with the Word of God's promise of reward for us. *Comm. on* Dan. 12:3.

[249] *Comm. on* Jam. 5:19-20.

la pauvrette Eglise ("the poor little church") of France.[250]

Robert M. Kingdon confirmed that from 1555 to 1562 Calvin sent 88 preachers to France, who played an important role in establishing reformed churches there.[251] In addition, Calvin's letters were good encouragements to the French reformed Christians, who were laid under severe persecutions by François I and Henri II.[252]

Finally, in the meantime, Calvin tried to see Christian life from the viewpoint of God's final judgment for sinners. In fact, it can be an important warning against our laziness and unbelief before God. God's judgement played a threefold role in Calvin's theology. Firstly, it seemed to be a breakwater to protect us from sinning before God. Secondly, it is a real guide leading us to the right way of God. Thirdly, it is really related to God's just judgement upon the sinners. According to Calvin, then, all these three facts devote themselves to advancing our sanctification in this life.[253] In spite of Calvin's allusion to God's judgment, it should be remembered that God's mercy for the people is endless, as we have seen it so far in his soteriology. Calvin's doctrine of sanctification, in the end, tells about God's infinite love in Jesus Christ.

Thus, as we have observed so far, it is clear that the motif of eschatological hope played a very important role in Calvin's theology, in relation to his doctrine of sanctification and Christian ethics. Though his ideas about the present world were pessimistic, they did not hinder him from reforming his society. On the whole, his pessimism contributed to his Reformation in a positive way rather than in a negative way. It

---

[250] Pierre Courthial, "The Golden Age of Calvinism in France: 1533-1633," in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, edited by W. Stanford Reid, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982), p. 77.

[251] Robert M. Kingdon, *Geneva and the coming of* the *Wars of Religion in France*(Geneva: Droz, 1956), pp. 140-141; The first missionary who was sent from Geneva to a church in Poitiers, France was Jacques L'Anglois. See Philip E. Hughes, *The Register of the Company of Pastors of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966), pp. 25-28; also see Richard Stauffer, *La Réforme(1517-1564),* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), pp. 97-98.

[252] There were many pieces of letters that Calvin wrote to Christians who suffered because of persecutions in France. He wrote a letter without date (approx. September 1545) to Monsieur de Falais in order to exhort to glorify God amid poverty and persecutions; Calvin wrote several pieces of letters to the five young prisoners of Lyons—Martial Alba, Peter Escrivain, Charles Favre, Peter Navihères, Bernard Seguin-- who were facing death of martyrdom on the 10th of June, 1552, on the 7th of March, 1553, on the 15th of May, 1553; Another letter was sent to the other prisoners of Lyons on the 7th of July, 1553; Letter to encourage the brethren of France who were under redoubled persecutions on November, 1559. in *Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Bonnet Edition*(Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), pp. 76-78, 134-137, 143-145, 148-155, 218-225.

did not abolish or weaken his ardour for reformation, but rather strengthened it more emphatically, because he always expected his final victory which would be given by God. Thus, for Calvin, hope always went together with patience amongst sufferings in his Christian life.[254]

Summary

One of the most outstanding features in Calvin's theology and Calvinism compared to Lutheranism is its emphasis upon sanctification in the Christian life and concrete Christian social ethics. Even if Luther also emphasized Christian's love for others flowing from the love of God, his main point of view remained justification by faith, and so the doctrine of sanctification was weak. As a result of this, Lutheran social ethics have been relatively underdeveloped. Many have seen in this the reason why German Lutheranism became the theological and political ground for Hitler's appearance.

In this chapter, we have clarified the definition, purpose, and principles of sanctification as a continuous Christian life. Basically Calvin's treatment of sanctification was made possible in the framework of his soteriology. We are saved from our sin through God's redemption of us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, according to God's election and calling. But we still live in the penultimate sinful world. Therefore, there is still tension between our final redemption and our present redemption. In this sense, Calvin made much of *simul iustus et peccator,*[255] as Luther did. But for him it does not stay a mere dialectical relationship, but developed into a discussion of a gradual and lifelong sanctification.[256] In this sense, he refuted the perfectionism of the Anabaptists and the Spirituals, because he thought that it promoted haughtiness, self-conceit, and separatism from the world.[257]

For Calvin, regeneration, repentance, and a gradual growth of justification all belong to one category called sanctification. In relation to his doctrine of sanctification, Calvin did not want to erect an abstract and speculative structure of redemption. Therefore,

---

[253] *Inst.*, III.xxv.12.
[254] *Comm. on* Rom. 8:25.
[255] André Biéler, *L'humanisme social de Calvin*, trans. by Paul T. Fuhrmann, *The Social Humanism of Calvin* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), p. 16.
[256] *Inst.*, III.iii.16-20.
[257] *CO.* 7. Col. 77.

there is no such strict *ordo salutis*, compared to the later reformed scholasticism. Interestingly, Calvin put the doctrine of sanctification ahead of the doctrine of justification by faith. He used several different expressions to describe sanctification, such as repentance regeneration, sanctification, and Christian life.[258] Leith explains Calvin's difference from later Reformed theology as regards understanding of sanctification. "Repentance is a far more inclusive term for Calvin than for later Reformed theology. The Westminster Assembly, for example, sharply distinguished repentance and sanctification. Calvin included under repentance the whole process by which a sinner turns to God and progresses in holiness."[259]

When Calvin dealt with his doctrine of sanctification and soteriology, he valued believers' union with Christ very highly in all the courses of redemption and sanctification. Union with Christ in Calvin's theology is related to all the elements of his Christian ethics containing the relationship between church and state, and to the doctrine of sacraments as well as to the doctrine of sanctification in his soteriology.

He thought of repentance, regeneration, and sanctification as lifelong, not a temporary or instantaneous event.[260] According to him, regeneration as sanctification consists of mortification and vivification. Mortification meant to put away the desires of the flesh, obeying God's commandments in the power of the Holy Spirit, but vivification meant to live as a new creature in the power of the Holy Spirit. Likewise, repentance or regeneration was also a sanctifying process in one's lifetime.

Calvin understood the relationship between sanctification and justification as grace upon grace. Sanctification is the gradual, spiritual growth of justification to conform to Jesus as the perfect image of God. Therefore justification and sanctification becomes the twofold grace, namely grace upon grace. Besides, we found that for Calvin, sanctification meant our self-denial before God and man, and also meant our bearing of the cross. According to him, for Christians, to bear the cross meant to become "the companions of Jesus Christ," namely "to follow their Master"; that is, both "to conform to his example"

---

[258] Niesel also pointed out this aspect of Calvin's theology like this, "Calvin calls it rebirth or penitence or else renewal, sanctification, conversion." Wilhelm Niesel, *Die Theologie Calvins,* trans. By Harold Knight, *The Theology of Calvin* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), p.127.

[259] John H. Leith, *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989), p. 66.

[260] *Comm. on* John 17:17.

and "to abide by his footsteps like faithful companions,"[261] in spite of all kinds of afflictions, persecutions, and hardships, and further, all kinds of temptations.

Calvin's main concern of Christian life was related to the glory of God and the glorious life of heaven. Considering his negative view of our bodies and his hopeful expectation of the heavenly glory, we could detect that there are two contrastive aspects - as the ultimate and the penultimate - in Calvin's thought. The ultimate means the heavenly glory we Christians some day will arrive at when we finish our race on earth, while the penultimate is the reality in which we Christians lead our daily lives. Therefore, for Calvin, Christian life was regarded as a pilgrimage to the glory of heaven. In comparison with the coming glorious life in heaven, he thought of this present life as transient and fleeting.

Nevertheless, he did not deny affirmative values of the present life as the gift of God, as the period of the preparation of the future eternal glory, as the foretaste of God's mercy and love entirely, and as the school of God, in which God trains his people according to His Word. Moreover, he thought of the world as the stage where God's sovereignty shows and His glory shines among all the creation. So his thought did not stay at just a negative position, but could positively disclose and reflect God's glory and sovereignty to the whole world.

So, now finally, we could define the final goal and purpose of sanctification in Calvin's theology as follows: the glory of God as the purpose and norm; conforming to the image of God in Christ; the heavenly blessedness; total and entire redemption from sin, suffering, and death; the glorification of our soul and body; finally, the end of pilgrimage in the world. In addition, we also can find a secondary, but vitally important definition of sanctification related to Christian social ethics as follows: the realization of a holy, equitable, and just Christian society in the world, according to God's will, which will be dealt with more in detail in chapters three and four.

---

[261] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, Vol.1. Matt. 10:38.

Chapter II. The Norm of Holiness: The Law as the guide and norm for sanctification and Christian social ethics

In the previous chapter we researched the character, goal, and traits of sanctification in consideration of Christian social ethics. It was in fact the inquiry of the character of holiness related to Christian life. This is the place in which we examine the function and use of the law as the norm for sanctification and Christian social ethics in Calvin.[1] Here we will find the law as the norm of holiness for Christian individuals, Christian communities, the Christian commonwealth, and the whole world.

Calvin dealt with his understanding of the law including his exposition of the Decalogue, from the first edition of the *Institutes* to the last. In the first(1536), second(1539), and third(1543) editions he showed that the law is a vital reference-point for our faith, by treating it right after he dealt with a twofold knowledge of God and man, but before he deals with Christian faith (including his exposition of the Lord's Prayer). In the fourth edition(1559), in chapters 11-12 of Book 1, he stipulated the character of true worship in close relationship with his understanding of the first and second commandments of the Decalogue, which prohibit idolatry and false worship. In Book 2, he examined the doctrine of the Bible in chapters 7-11, right after he delved into anthropology in connection with man's depravity in chapters 1-5, and need of redemption in chapter 6, but before he treats Christology in chapter 12. Thus, through Calvin's organic structure and disposition of every subject in the final edition of the *Institutes*, we come to understand his positive viewpoint of the use of the law which mediates between sinful man, depraved on account of his disobedience and fall, and Christ as the only source of redemption. This same structure also reveals itself in Calvin's *Instruction in Faith*(1537), which was the first Genevan Catechism. In this Catechism, Calvin dealt with the law in articles 8-11, after he treated man's depravity and the necessity of redemption in articles 4-7, but just before he discusses Christology and soteriology in article 12 and onward.

---

[1] Concerning Calvin's viewpoint of the law, there are some excellent guides: David L. Puckett, *John Calvin's Exegesis of the Old Testament.* Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995) ; Guenther H. Haas, *The Concept of Equity in Calvin's Ethics* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997); I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law* (Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1992); Josef Bohatec, *Calvin und das Recht*(Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachf. Ges. M.b. H.Graz, 1934); T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986).

This chapter will consist of seven short sections. The first section will be assigned to the comparative study of Luther's and Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom in relation to the law. Here the correlation between law and Christian freedom will be scrutinised concretely, in consideration of its implications for Christian life and social ethics. Then, in the second section, the close relationship between law and gospel as a twofold Word of God represented in Calvin's theology will be examined in detail. According to Calvin, there is no essential difference between law and gospel except the mode of dispensation. So the law is no less useful and important for Christian life than the gospel in Calvin's theology. Here we will find the theological difference between Calvin and Luther in relation to their basic understanding of the law.

Then, in the third section, we will explore the threefold use of the law in Calvin's and Luther's theologies. According to Calvin, the threefold use of the law is as follows: its spiritual or pedagogical use, its political or civil use, and its principal or proper use for Christian life respectively. Special attention will be given to the third use of the law in connection with the doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics in Calvin's theology. Contrary to Calvin, emphasis upon the third use of the law is absent in Luther's theology, although the later Lutheran *Formula of Concord* concedes its usefulness and value for Christians.

In the fourth section, we also will show that in Calvin's theology, God's commandments were given as gift for His people's sanctification and the realisation of holiness in their society and country. Subsequently, in the fifth section, we will investigate the Decalogue as the kernel of the law. Here we will deal with the background and purport of the Decalogue, the preface and structure of it, the first Table related to the worship of God, and the second Table to the love of neighbour, and finally the relationship between the divine law and Christian social ethics (including sanctification). In the sixth section, we will explore the connection between God's will, natural law (including conscience), the moral law as the written and divine law, and the positive law, and explain their respective characteristics and their implications for Christian social ethics. Then, Calvin's active activity of legislation of the civil law and the church ordinances in Geneva will be concretely dealt with in consideration of his Genevan Reformation. Here we will find him as a faithful constitutionalist. And finally, in the seventh section, Calvin's understanding of lawsuits will be surveyed. Thus, we will ultimately find that for Calvin, the law was the realistic norm for the realisation of holiness of Christians both individually and socially.

1. Law and Christian freedom

Both of the great Reformers, Luther as well as Calvin, had a deep concern for Christian freedom. However, it is true that there are some specific differences between them Basically, Christian freedom is a good starting-point to understand and discuss their Christian ethics as well as their doctrines of sanctification. Here our main concern is to deal with Calvin's conception of Christian freedom in comparison with Luther's, especially in order to show Calvin's thinking more clearly and saliently in relation to his understanding of Christian life. Calvin dealt with this theme in all the editions of the *Institutes.* In the first edition, he dealt with it in chapter 6 of that one-volume book, before he deals with the power of the church and civil government. Christian freedom thus functions as the foundation and starting-point of his socio-political ethics. In the second edition, it was dealt with in chapter 13, similar to the structure of the previous edition. But in the third and fourth editions, its position was changed. In the third edition, Calvin put it in chapter 12, before he dealt with human tradition and the doctrine of predestination and providence. Of course, it was the opening chapter to deal with Christian life, although it was separated from chapter 20 dealing with the subject of civil government. In the final edition, enlarged into four books, Calvin moved the chapters concerning the doctrine of predestination and providence to the first Book where he deals with the knowledge of God the Creator. Calvin also put the chapter about Christian freedom before the chapter that deals with prayer. And the chapter concerning civil government came to chapter 20, at the end of the fourth Book. However, in this edition also his view of Christian freedom was almost unchanged as other previous editions. In that sense, also in this final edition it should be dealt with in close relationship with the chapters on the power of the church and civil government, as was in the first edition.

Luther dealt with Christian freedom in his essay, *The Freedom of a Christian*, one of his three important essays published in 1520, and a crucial text for understanding Luther's views on Christian ethics. While Calvin handled Christian freedom as a basic foundation to deal with the questions of justification, God's law, and Christian social ethics, Luther mainly dealt with it as the substance of Christian life itself. So they are, in basic characteristics, very different, although Calvin was much influenced by Luther in his understanding of Christian freedom.

Both emphasized that Christian faith is a prerequisite to Christian freedom.

However, Luther's lively spontaneous understanding of Christian freedom seems lacking in Calvin's theology. Their approaches are also very different. Calvin, while considering Christian freedom, emphasized the use of the law as norm for Christians more positively than Luther did. Besides, Calvin also understood Christian freedom thoroughly under the broad category of God's absolute sovereignty: God's sovereign will covers, sheathes, and binds all parts of Calvin's theology, including Christian freedom. So for Calvin, Christian freedom should be understood in the broader context of God's providential rule over all humankind. William R. Stevenson, Jr. also showed that we have to understand Calvin's view of Christian freedom within a broader context of the doctrine of God's sovereign grace characterizing Christian freedom as a woven cord, sheathed in sovereign grace. So he argued,

> In a very real sense then, the ends of providence and the ends of freedom are the same. On the one hand, in presenting believers with newfound security in God's salvation choices, Christian freedom unleashes a new gratitude and a new excitement about the possibilities of Christian service. Yet on the other hand, in presenting believers with their complete emptiness in the face of Christ's redemptive work, Christian freedom lashes them ever more tightly to his loving and often mysterious guidance.[2]

In this sense, Calvin's discussion of Christian freedom is very systematic and is considered in the whole perspective of Christian theology. Contrary to it, Luther's discussion of Christian freedom is considerably independent, although considered very much in close relation to Christian faith. For Luther, really the starting point of Christian freedom is Christian faith as "living spring of water welling up to eternal life."[3] He explained Christian freedom in terms of two short propositions: "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."[4] But his main emphasis is more on the first proposition than the second one, when we consider the whole content of the treatise. Owing to his caution about works-righteousness, Luther scarcely used the law as a norm for Christians. Instead, he made much of faith working through love. So Luther, all the time, interpreted Christian freedom in terms of the twofold interaction of faith and love.

In associating Christian freedom with justification by faith in God, Calvin did not

---

[2] William R. Stevenson, Jr., *Sovereign Grace: The Place and Significance of Christian Freedom in John Calvin's Political Thought* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.149.

[3] Martin Luther, "The Freedom of a Christian," in *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. by Timothy F. Lull, (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989), p. 595.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 596.

differ much from Luther. Calvin did not neglect the importance and priority of faith, either. While Luther's accentuation is more on freedom from sin and death, however, Calvin's is more on freedom to serve and love neighbours. This difference comes from their basically different theological and historical backgrounds. The pressing question and main concern for Luther was how to set up faith free from interference of works-righteousness. In other words, the central problem for him was that of true Christian faith itself. But for Calvin, the vitally important question was how we can lead holy and faithful lives as Christians in a sinful world in order to glorify the triune God. In other words, it was the problem of Christian life (or Christian ethics) related to the realization of holiness. On account of these different backgrounds Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom, in a real sense of the word, became more constructive and productive of active Christian social ethics than Luther's.

According to Calvin, a Christian obtains his spiritual and religious freedom from justification by faith, as was the case in Luther.[5] Calvin thus called Christian freedom "an appendage of justification and is of no little avail in understanding its power."[6] So, according to him, when man becomes a Christian, he is essentially placed under God's law in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So here in Calvin's theology, we find that there is still another important aspect of Christian life, which is the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, according to Calvin, Christians exist between justification by faith and God's law, alongside of the works of the Holy Spirit.[7] Therefore, understanding the contents and characters of Christian freedom is vitally important. Calvin remarked, "but, as we have said, unless this freedom be comprehended, neither Christ nor gospel truth, nor inner peace of soul, can be rightly known."[8]

There are not a few difficulties in defining what Calvin's view of Christian freedom actually is. Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom has some specific traits. Calvin worried about spiritual disorder and religious heresies, as well as self-indulgence and licentiousness in relation to the establishment of a wholesome Christian society and the realization of holy Christian life in Geneva. In this sense, it was clear for him that Christian freedom is neither dissoluteness nor self-indulgence. It has a clear order, spiritual norm, and

---

[5] Luther thought of Christian freedom as the freedom of the inner man. *Ibid.*, p. 599.

[6] *Inst.*, III.xix.1.

[7] For more detailed understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in Christian life, it would be helpful to see section 3 of the first chapter in this thesis.

[8] *Inst.*, III.xix.1.

proper limitation, according to which we can lead our lives by the help of the Holy Spirit. But this order and norm does not operate by external compulsion of the law, but by free, voluntary obedience to the law of God, through the internal illumination of the Spirit. Calvin's idea is more systematically organized than Luther's, and so it is better able to comprehend all the elements of Christian faith. In that sense, while Luther tried to keep Christian freedom from being weakened by legalism or replaced by works-righteousness, Calvin was mostly worried about how we, as Christians, can lead holy lives, how we can glorify the triune God, and how we can establish a holy Christian society, through the use of Christian freedom. Accordingly, Calvin's discussion of Christian freedom looks a bit sterner in a way that it seems to connote self-moderation, but nevertheless a more positive, active, and politico-ethical, as compared with Luther's.

Calvin argued that Christian freedom consists of three parts. The first is that "the consciences of believers, in seeking assurance of their justification before God, should rise above and advance beyond the law, forgetting all law righteousness."[9] Calvin denied work-righteousness or law righteousness fundamentally, so in this regard the first part means that *believers' consciences* should advance beyond the law. The object of Christians' concern for their freedom should not be on themselves, but on God's mercy and Christ our Lord. This freedom is God's present for us, which "was procured for us by Christ on the cross: the fruit and possession of it are bestowed upon us through the Gospel."[10] Calvin also in that sense, called Jesus "the Author of our freedom."[11] He did not depart from the plain fact that only Jesus Christ should be our righteousness, because when we look into ourselves, there is nothing good in us. Thus, he thoroughly denied Christian's work-righteousness.

With respect to this first part of Christian freedom, Luther, too, had a similar view. Luther explained it as the freedom from the law. According to him, "the entire Scripture of God is divided into two parts: commandments and promises."[12] The commandments are related to men's helplessness,[13] but the promises are given men in order to redeem them through their faith in Christ and God's grace.[14] For Luther, the law was mainly understood

---

[9] *Inst.*, III.xix.2. *CO.* 2. cols. 613-614.
[10] *Comm. on* Gal. 5:1.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Martin Luther, *op. cit.*, p. 600.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Faith in Christ brings every good thing for Christians, which are promised by God. In this sense, faith in God's promises far exceeds the obedience to the law or good works. *Ibid.*, p. 601.

in relation to its spiritual function to make a sinner realize his sinfulness and to lead him to Jesus. In this sense, unlike Calvin, Luther did not argue for the normative and positive use of the law for Christian life. For him, everything a Christian needs is contained in the faith in God's promises, which operates through love. So Luther emphasized that the law was unnecessary for our doing good works and our redemption. Therefore, for Luther, faith could be considered as containing almost everything in Christian freedom. Accordingly, his doctrine of Christian freedom becomes practically indistinguishable from his doctrine of faith. The very highest worship of God and perfect obedience to God are possible by Christian faith, not by works.[15]

Though Calvin also denied works-righteousness, he never belittled the usefulness and validity of the law for believers because the law urges Christians to do good things through the works of the Spirit.[16] Calvin maintained that we are called to live a holy life before God, insisting, "The whole life of Christians ought to be a sort of practice of godliness, for we have been called to sanctification [1 Thess. 4:7; cf. Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 4:3]." Thus the function of the law for Christians becomes clear as he argued that, "here it is the function of the law, by warning men of their duty, to arouse them to a zeal for holiness and innocence."[17] Therefore, in this sense he differentiated the pedagogical, spiritual role of the law in preparing us for the gospel from its normative, practical role for Christian's holy life before God.

This practical and positive characteristic of the law is, in fact, lacking in Luther's understanding of Christian freedom. Instead of saying the positive role of the law, Luther argued that Christians become kings and priests through their redemptive faith in Jesus' kingship and priesthood. Christ received these two prerogatives by his birthright, but Christians obtain them through faith in Christ. According to Luther, faith "unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united with her bridegroom."[18] In this marriage, union with Christ takes place in the soul, and with it comes a special exchange between Christ and the soul: thus they hold everything in common, so that "the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as

---

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 602.

[16] *Inst.*, III.xix.2.

[17] Calvin's emphasis upon the third use of the law always should be regarded as the most important part of his social Christian ethics. *Ibid.*

[18] Martin Luther, *op. cit.*, p. 603.

his own."[19] In this context, Luther concentrated on faith in relation to Christian freedom as he asserted, "therefore faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian and the fulfilling of all the commandments."[20]

Thus, justified Christians live their lives as kings and priests by their faith in Christ As kings, all Christians "are by faith so exalted above all things that, by virtue of a spiritual power, he is lord of all things without exception, so that nothing can do him any harm."[21] Nevertheless, their kingship is different from earthly kingship, in that they "are subjected to all, suffer many things, and even die."[22] Their kingship belongs to a spiritual dominion, and in this respect they are spiritually kings over all things. Likewise, for Luther, their priesthood also comes from the Christian's emancipating faith. Priesthood is far better and more excellent than kingship. As priests, Christians can pray for their neighbours and teach one another God's Word. Thus, Luther insisted on the priesthood of all believers in the context of his doctrine of Christian freedom. Christians' duties as priests are, above all, to preach Christ aright. In this way, Luther clung exclusively to justification by faith and Christology in his discussion of Christian freedom. By contrast, Calvin separated the doctrine of faith from his teaching on Christian freedom, dealing with the latter in relation to Christian ethics as well as sanctification. In that sense, Calvin's allusion to Christian freedom is more concrete and practical than Luther's, because the latter's insistence on Christian freedom is so closely related to faith, that it cannot well deal with Christian freedom in close relation to Christian ethics and sanctification.

According to Calvin, "the second part" of Christian freedom, which is "dependent upon the first, is that conscience observes the law, not as if constrained by the necessity of the law, but that freed from the law's yoke they willingly obey God's will."[23] God the Father is the God of mercy and love who asks us to do good things. Calvin stressed that a justified Christian will willingly be obedient to God's law, not because it compels us, but because he loves God so much. Thus, a Christian's good works are not the condition of redemption, but practice of thanksgiving, as we can see in the structure of *the Heidelberg Catechism*(1563) which reflects Calvin's theological influence. As love or true piety is demanded of us as justified and regenerated Christians, Calvin argued that, "our soul must

---

[19] *Ibid.*
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 605.
[21] *Ibid.*, p. 606.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Inst.*, III.xix.4. *CO.* 2. col. 615.

first be emptied of all other feeling and thought, our heart cleansed of all desires, and our powers gathered and concentrated upon this one point."[24] This means that we are no longer the servants of the law or of sin, but are adopted as God's children, so that a new relationship between God and us comes about. So, as children, we freely and with pleasure follow God's commandments in the power of the Holy Spirit. For this reason, believers shall "exercise themselves in constant meditation upon the favours which God confers,"[25] because it encourages and gives them hope for God's grace and heavenly kingdom.

However, Calvin all the time realized that we have some limitation in this world because our freedom must be lived out in a sinful world. Nevertheless, this fact should not discourage us, because we are freed by God's grace and love from the bondage and curse of the law. Therefore, when we remember that God is good and merciful, we can obey His requests with pleasure in the Holy Spirit's guidance, even in this sinful world. In this way, God's love and not the law regulates us. In Calvin the regulating power of God's love was the normative use of the law as well as the power of the Holy Spirit, but in Luther, it was just the works of the Holy Spirit who renews Christians' faith, because he neglected the third, normative use of the law. According to Calvin, Christians can realise more clearly the contents of God's love through the instruction of the law in the illumination of the Holy spirit, by which they actively obey God's commandments in order to serve their neighbours and to accomplish God's will in the world. Thus for Calvin, through God's love that regulates our life, we are willingly able to follow God's law as freedmen, without being coerced by it. In this respect, Calvin was active and positive in his understanding of God's law as the norm for Christian's holy life, in close conjunction with Christian freedom.

On the other hand, Luther handled the second part of Christian freedom in relation to the outer man (namely, a perfectly dutiful servant of all, who spontaneously observes the law without coercion), as he did the first part in relation to the inner man (namely, a perfectly free lord of the spirit, who is freed from the law). For Luther, the reason that we have to pursue good works is that we live in this sinful world as the outer man. As regards the outer man, he described Christians as servants of all. In relation to this fact, he began to talk about sanctification a bit. That "in this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labours, and other reasonable

---

[24] *Inst.*, III.xix.4.
[25] *Comm. on* Phil. 1:6.

discipline and to subject it to the Spirit."[26] Luther's references to sanctification tend to be individualistic and also somewhat ascetic, as shown in this sentence. He stressed believers' good works in relation to their self-denial of the desires of the flesh and to their faith in God.[27]

Calvin, however, did not use Luther's dualism between the inner man and the outer man. In contrast, he considered a human being as a whole being who has both soul and body at the same time. He thought that the soul is better and more valuable than body, but he did not deny that man is a holistic being. Thus he really made his theological anthropology more constructive and more holistic ethical anthropology than Luther's. This difference in fact, had considerable influence upon his social ethics.

For Luther, Christians do good works "out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God,"[28] as freed men, not by compulsion, and also in order to please God. Good works are thoroughly the works of faith. Thus, "the Christian who is consecrated by his faith does good works, but the works do not make him holier or more Christian, for that is the work of faith alone."[29] But, Luther's ideas here seemed to open the doors to a faith-monism by not considering the actively normative use of the law for Christians, and by not distinguishing faith from love, but unifying them together out of fear of works-righteousness. Also it might be argued that in some sense, this faith-monism of Luther's cleared the way for Lutheran political quietism. As one of Calvin's successors in the 20th century, Barth, in this sense, argued that Luther's theology virtually made the road to German Christians' blind obedience to Hitler of the third Reich.[30]

For Luther, the basic motivation for social ethics comes from the fact that "a man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself."[31] In this sense, he called it a true Christian life when faith is truly active through love. For Luther, faith is an all-inclusive concept for Christian life, because Christian ethics, sanctification, love for

---

[26] Martin Luther, *op. cit.*, p. 610.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 611.
[28] *Ibid.*
[29] *Ibid.*, pp. 612-613.
[30] Karl Barth, *Eine Schweizer Stimme,* 1945; quoted in Horst G. Pöhlmann, *Abriss der Dogmatik,* (Korean translation), (Seoul: Korea Theological Study Institute, 1989), p. 402 ; In that sense, we also might agree with McGrath's following argument, on the whole, although not entirely, that "the failure of the German church to oppose Hitler in the 1930s is widely seen as reflecting the inadequacies of Luther's political thought." Alister E. McGrath, *Reformation Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK/Malden, Massachusetts, USA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, second edition), p. 210.
[31] Martin Luther, *op. cit.*, p. 616.

neighbours, and other divine things are included in his concept of faith. But such understanding is very ambiguous and vague when we consider God's concrete, plentiful, and detailed commandments in both the Old and New Testaments in relation to Christian life. In my opinion, God's commandments should not only be considered as the law that proves man's incapacity, but also as the law that regulates Christian life actively and practically. Therefore, true understanding of the law should not remove any one element from these two elements, but Luther made the understanding of the law imperfect by enfeebling the latter element and so made Christian social and political ethics very weak.

Luther introduced some relational analogy between Christ and Christians, and in turn applied it to a new relationship between Christians and other people. That "hence, as our heavenly Father has in Christ freely come to our aid, we also ought freely to help our neighbour through our body and its works, and each one should become as it were a Christ to the other that we may be Christs to one another and Christ may be the same in all, that is, that we may be truly Christians."[32] Here we grasp some idea of *imitatio Christi*, as a Christological ethical motif, and existential regulation of a being as a Christian in terms of relational analogy in Luther's theology. Luther here showed us his stress upon Christians' positive love for neighbours in the context of the priesthood of all believers. But this does not extend itself to a more active and concrete doctrine of sanctification or a more active political and social ethics, but remains a pietistic and individual regulation of existence as a Christian rather than communal or social ethics.

In that sense, Luther's view differs from Calvin's more positive emphasis upon the Christian's realisation of sanctification and concrete and responsible practice of Christian social ethics based upon his trinitarian understanding of sanctification and Christian social ethics. Calvin had a more concrete and positive idea of *imitatio Christi* in terms of his doctrine of sanctification than Luther did. Owing to the lack of more positive doctrine of sanctification and Christian ethics, Luther and his heirs seem not to have had a more active Christian social ethics. Besides, on the pretext of keeping justification by faith (as well as the ubiquity theory of the sacraments), the Lutherans frequently objected to ecumenical movement to unite all Protestant churches in many ways.[33] In this sense, it was in fact true

---

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 619-620.

[33] John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 196-200. Here see Calvin's active ecumenical attitudes compared to Lutherans' unfriendly attitudes as regards international or interdenominational ecumenical conference or council where many conversations for unity were exchanged. Calvin and Luther did not criticise each other's theologies, but had very affirmative

that Calvin's efforts to unite Protestant churches in one fold was relatively successful only in Reformed circles apart from Lutheran circles.

Luther's Reformation was also considerably different from Calvin's in that Calvin always tried to achieve Church's spiritual and real independence from the control of the state in relation to the complete and thorough embodiment of God's will and commandments, and to fulfil his vision of a holistic holiness, in a realistic society, although penultimately.[34] Therefore Kuyper's following comments are rational and well-grounded.

> In Roman Catholic countries, the identification of the invisible and the visible Church, under Papal unity, is still maintained. In Lutheran countries, with the aid of "cuius regio eius religio," the Court-confession has been monstrously imposed on the people as the land-confession; there the Reformed were treated harshly, they were exiled and outraged, as enemies of Christ.[35]

Thus Luther's Christian ethics remained fideistic and pro-national, so that Luther's Christianity was just satisfied with its becoming State Church without transforming thoroughly the whole society, according to God's sovereign will revealed in the Old and New Testaments. In this sense, substantially his Reformation was ethnically and mostly German, rather than international.

In the meantime, according to Calvin, "the third part of Christian freedom lies in this: regarding outward things that are of themselves "indifferent," we are not bound before God by any religious obligation preventing us from sometimes using them and other times not using them, indifferently."[36] This part of freedom, to some extent, asks us to take responsibility for our deeds. A Christian is a free man who is emancipated from all kinds of outer things, except love for God and for his neighbours. Therefore, as regards outer things, Calvin emphasized that our conscience is free from all kinds of inessential things in Christian faith but the duty of love for God and our neighbours. Those who can enjoy this part of freedom are free from all kinds of superstitions like horoscopy or worship of the relics, taboos, or external ceremonies and rites, but always will pursue actively and purely God's will revealed in the Bible. God's sovereign will, all divine things related to God's

---

attitudes towards each other's theologies. However, in the orthodox Lutheranism after Luther's death, the Lutherans continued to attack Calvin's theology and Melanchthon's theology, especially in relation to their doctrines of the Sacraments, of predestination, Christology, etc.

[34] Calvinists (including Calvin)' struggle for the liberty and for the sovereignty of the church was totally different from other churches. Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976[9]), pp. 105-106.

[35] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

perfect glory, and all the godly things conjoined to the pursuit of his neighbours' benefits will decide his thinking and behaviour. Above all, Calvin made more of God's commandments and Christians' complete obedience to them than Luther did, especially in relation to freedom of Christians' conscience (although penultimately and approximately) for the realisation of holy Christian community. To that extent, his ethics became more a practical, responsible Christian ethics than those of any other reformers in his time. Because for him Christian confession of faith always was inseparably related to Christian practical life at the risk of the danger of martyrdom. This is the reason that we can find so many Christian confessions in reformed circles and the reason that Calvin so strongly reproached the so-called Nicodemites for disguising their reformed faith with external Catholic faith in order to evade persecution or martyrdom.

Christian life is a kind of race, which we have to run through our lifetime. In this race, nothing should be a burden or impediment to our spiritual progress. In that sense, for Calvin, a true Christian should be free from all kinds of burdens and sins in order to have and enjoy a real Christian freedom. Calvin argued,

> Now there are various burdens which delay and impede our spiritual course, such as the love of this present life, the pleasures of the world, the lusts of the flesh, worldly cares, riches also and honours, and other things of this kind. Whosoever, then, would run in the course prescribed by Christ, must first disentangle himself from all these impediments, for we are already of ourselves more tardy than we ought to be, so no other causes of delay should be added.[37]

A Christian is a person for whom the end and purpose of life is clear. The goal of his life is to glorify God, to attain the ultimate redemption which God promised him, and furthermore, to bring the kingdom of God onto the earth (although penultimately and approximately). For Calvin, to construct God's kingdom in the world is only possible by God's own power and will, not by humanity's power. However, Calvin did not exclude man's participation in its construction on the earth. So, as Calvin showed it in his exposition of the Lord's Prayer, we Christians have to pray according to the Lord's Prayer and to actively participate in constructing God's kingdom in the world as a positive, yet responsible agent. A Christian is blessed because he receives everything good from God, but he does not use it just for himself without considering his neighbours' benefits and without thinking of God's commandments of the Bible. Because God's commandments of

---

[36] *Inst.*, III.xix.7. *CO.* 2. col. 616.
[37] *Comm. on* Heb. 12:1.

the second Table are closely related to seeking the neighbour's benefits. Thus, as regards the third part of Christian freedom, Calvin put much importance on two things: the first, to thank God for what He gives us; and then the second, to edify the church community. Christians can do anything they want to do, but their freedom also should be contributed to the edification of their neighbours and further of Christian community. In that sense, Christian freedom is confined in its purpose and responsibility and is not an infinite freedom without any restraints.

In this sense, moderation itself is not godliness; and neither is godliness moderation. Nevertheless, according to Calvin, godliness accompanies moderation. Calvin insisted, "Away, then, with uncontrolled desire, away with immoderate prodigality, away with vanity and arrogance— in order that men may with a clean conscience cleanly use God's gifts."[38] To such extent, Christian freedom means for Calvin the freedom of moderation and of responsibility, and furthermore means to keep one's composure in everything and to be thankful in whatsoever situations one may find oneself.[39] We suppose here also that social ethics should be closely related to individual ethics and sanctification of self-denial and self-mortification in the Holy Spirit. It means that social holiness and cleanness cannot be separated from, but should be pursued together with individual holiness and cleanness. In that sense, we might argue, by following Calvin, that social ethics starts from and goes together with Christians' spiritual, religious ethics of holiness and purity. This was exactly what Calvin considered as the law of Christian freedom.[40]

Christian freedom, in this regard, is the freedom through which Christians can edify and benefit their neighbours, namely the freedom for their neighbours. So according to Calvin, for example, as regards food, clothes, and drinking, etc., Christian always "ought so to bear with it that" they "do not heedlessly allow what would do" their brothers "the slightest harm."[41] In this sense, this freedom, to some extent, can be identified with the freedom to love neighbours.

Next, Calvin dealt with two different, yet realistic offences related to Christian freedom: one is "the offence of the weak," and the other is "that of the Pharisees." In the offence of the weak, the "of" is the objective. Therefore, it means the offence by which someone else afflicts the weak. In the offence of the Pharisees, the "of" is subjective.

---

[38] *Inst.*, III.xix.9.
[39] *Comm. on* Phil. 4:11,12.
[40] *Ibid.*

Therefore, it means the offence to others or themselves being inflicted by Pharisees. In regard to the former Calvin stressed that the sincere use of Christian freedom should not allow the weak to stumble on account of their weakness or simplicity. It implies that Christian freedom should be used cautiously, in thoughtful consideration of the weak, lest they enter into temptation. On the other hand, Calvin wanted to neglect or disregard the Pharisees' offence, because "they fall down on account of their own wickedness or hypocrisy rather than others."[42] In relation to the former, we can consider St. Paul's advice for Christians, in connection with their 'temperance in eating and drinking' in order not to stagger or enfeeble the faith of the weak, or to make them sin against man and God, as in Romans 14:15-21 and 1 Corinthians 8:8-13. However, as regards the latter, we can consider Jesus' saying about the Pharisees' false instruction(Matt. 16:6, 11, 12; Mk. 8:5), hypocrisy and ostentious displays(Matt. 23: 13, 15, 23, 25-27, 29; Lk. 12:1) as their offence.[43]

According to Calvin, liberty and the use of it are different. The difference between them is as follows: "Liberty lies in the conscience, and looks to God; the use of it lies in outward matters, and deals not with God only, but with men."[44] Therefore, it has the relationship between essence and practice, or similarly religion and religious practice, i.e. ethics. Hence, if liberty should be a real Christian liberty, it should be regulated by a twofold love for God and for neighbours. Calvin was well aware of this principle to use liberty as God wills.[45] Thus, we know that Christian freedom has to be filtered through and be perfected by love, because "our freedom is not given against our feeble neighbours, for love makes us their servants in all things; rather it is given that, having peace with God in our hearts, we may also live at peace with men."[46] Man is not an isolated existence, but lives in a tightly netted society. The more a society increases in size, the more human relations and social life will be complicated, and therefore the more earnestly human beings will need a standard or norm in their lives. In a growing society, Christians also lead their lives as social existence and so have to live a responsible life.

So, it is expected of us that we accommodate ourselves to our neighbours as Jesus Christ did. Love for neighbours ought to be our principle of life, which also can be a good

---

[41] *Inst.*, III.xix.10.

[42] Here Calvin considered sincerely how Christian love should be. *Comm. on* Rom. 15:1.

[43] *Inst.*, III.xix.10

[44] *Comm. on* Gal. 5:13.

[45] According to Calvin, Christian freedom should be used to edify his neighbours for the glory of God and for the salvation of our neighbours. *Ibid.*

[46] *Inst.*, III.xix.11.

exercise and drill in order to conform to Jesus on the way to sanctification and to the establishment of a holy and pure society. In that sense, our liberty will be valuable when we give up ourselves and sacrifice ourselves for our neighbours' sake. To that extent, Calvin maintained that "nothing is plainer than this rule: that we should use our freedom if it results in the edification of our neighbour, but if it does not help our neighbour, then we should forgo it."[47] Here Calvin argued that our freedom could be of no use if it is not used for the edification of our neighbour. Thus, he gave a point to the effective use and application of Christian freedom, namely the concrete praxis of it in the context of Christian social ethics. It, therefore, could be supposed that an empty and disordered society is generated by empty, speculative words without concrete, responsible deeds in which to consider one's neighbour's benefits and God's glory. As we cannot conceive of a God who has no love, so we cannot live as Christians without love for our neighbours.[48] It seems that Calvin tried to fill up the gap between Christian knowledge and Christian deeds by emphasizing the good works of Christians through obedience to God's commandments.

However, this is not everything that we can say about Calvin's understanding of Christian freedom, because when we speak of freedom or love for our neighbours, it is premised that our love or freedom would be led by our faith in God. In other words, love or freedom for neighbours can never be a pretext to evade the worship of and obedience to God. In that sense, not Christian freedom itself, but faith in God combined with it is the first principle of Christian life, then love for neighbours, which is closely related to Christian freedom, comes. In order to say Christian freedom aright, spiritual order, due restraint, and faith should be considered and taken into account together. For God's sovereignty and glory must not be impaired at all by man's freedom. In other words, we would say that our freedom of love and service for our neighbours cannot and must not obstruct our faith in and obedience to God. The best way to harmonize properly our faith in and love for God with our freedom of help and service for our neighbours is to follow the two great Commandments of Jesus. Here we have to consider positively Calvin's understanding of relationship between God's election and the good works of the believers. If a Christian belongs really to the elect, his life necessarily would produce the good works, namely the

---

[47] *Inst.*, III.xix.12.

[48] "Faith is dead, being by itself, that is, when destitute of good works. We hence conclude that it is indeed no faith, for when dead, it does not properly retain the name." *Comm. on* Jam. 2:17; Although Luther called *the Epistle of James* "an Epistle of straw" and neglected its ethical implication for Christian social ethics,

fruits of the Spirit, in the Holy Spirit (*practicus syllogismus*). In this sense, we know that, in connection with a true Christian's life, nothing can exempt him from God's commands which enjoin him to do good works.

> ... with whatever obstacles Satan and the world strive to turn us away from God's commands or delay us from following what he appoints, we must nonetheless vigorously go forward. Then, whatever dangers threaten, we are not free to turn aside even a fingernail's breadth from this same God's authority, and it is not lawful under any pretext for us to attempt anything but what he allows.[49]

And yet, according to Calvin, Christians are the people who are free from all worldly, outer compulsion and coercion like laws and constitutions, except God's Word as gospel and law that directs our mind and conscience. The first purpose of Christian freedom is to live according to God's commandments. Therefore, no laws, institutions, or statutes except our love for God and God's love for us, can ensnare and enslave our conscience, which was freed from the curse of sin, death, and law. Our conscience in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is quiet and peaceful even among all kinds of afflictions and persecutions. Accordingly, our conscience under any circumstances is always free with respect to outer laws and coercion. But this emancipated conscience does good works by following the exhortation of the Holy Spirit faithfully and through pure and truthful obedience to the Word of God.

Calvin was well aware that there could be a dilemma between obedience to God's law inscribed in our mind (or in the Bible) and civil law, as well as between benefiting neighbours and obeying (or loving) God. But, actually he recognized that true confession of faith should have priority over everything whatsoever, because he thought that Christian faith should not be compromised in any sense. This was an important motive and driving force with which Calvinism could spread throughout Europe without being enfeebled, in spite of changeable and varied political situations. With this kind of uncompromising Christian freedom of faith and conscience, Calvin finally succeeded in a multidimensional reformation that included both spiritual and religious reformation, socio-political reformation, and furthermore, institutional and constitutional reformation by official institutions like the Consistory, Geneva Academy, the four Councils of Geneva,[50] and so on.

Calvin clearly pronounced that James' teaching does not at all contradict justification by faith, which Luther so strongly hold fast to. *Comm. on* Jam. 2:20; *Inst.*, III. xvii.11-13.

[49] *Inst.*, III.xix.13.

[50] There had been already four different Councils in Geneva, which substantially ruled over the city, before Calvin came to Geneva. They were respectively, the Little Council (25 members), Council of Sixty (60

So from next section on, we will engage in Calvin's understanding of the law concretely, by considering his understanding of Christian freedom with specific reference to the law.

2. The twofold Word of God as the norm of Christian life: the law and the gospel

According to Calvin, God's Word as law and gospel reflects God's will for humankind and thus is the only standard and basis of both sanctification and social ethics. Law was understood as encompassing two different aspects: "not only the Ten Commandments, which set forth a godly and righteous rule of living, but the form of religion handed down by God through Moses."[51] According to the former definition, law can be identified with the moral law in the narrow sense, but the latter is more comprehensive and broader in its meaning, according to which law can be regarded as the whole way of life witnessed in the Old Testament. Calvin used these two definitions together, but he was particularly concerned with the first.

Calvin also defined "gospel" in two ways. In a broad sense, it was regarded as including "those testimonies of his mercy and fatherly favour which God gave to the patriarchs of old." But, in a higher and narrower sense, it refers to "the proclamation of the grace manifested in Christ."[52] Calvin's theological thought can be thought of as Christological in a narrow sense, but in a broader sense, as trinitarian, so that he all the time correlated Christ's redemptive works with God's fatherly mercy and favour for his people in the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when we consider the concept of gospel in Calvin's theology, we have to bear in mind synthetically Christ's self-giving love, in God's fatherly love through the works of the Holy Spirit.

However, according to Calvin, there is no difference in substance between law and gospel, but only in the mode of dispensation. He argued, "The covenant made with all the patriarchs is so much like ours in substance and reality that the two are actually one and the same. Yet they differ in the mode of dispensation."[53] Calvin's insistence shows us his substantial difference from the Lutheran circles, in understanding the relationship between

---

members), Council of Two Hundred (200 members), and The General Council or Commune. However, practically, the Little Council held responsibility in routine matters. John T. McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

[51] *Inst.*, II.vii.1.

[52] *Inst.*, II.ix.2.

[53] *Ibid.*

law and gospel, because Lutherans basically tend to set law and gospel in contrast.

For Calvin, law and gospel together serve God's ministry to bring people to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Through divine law, human beings realize that they are sinful, and then only, can they be guided to God the Father through Jesus Christ. In this sense, the foremost and most foundational value of the law is interconnected to Christ's self-sacrificing love. According to Calvin, law "was intended, not to lead God's people away from Christ, the foundation of the Covenant, to some new way of salvation, but on the contrary to keep them looking for his coming, to kindle their desire for him, to encourage them when the time seemed long until he should come."[54] However, for Calvin the law also retains a function in the life of Christians as pilgrims on the way to heaven, as the means, standard, and norm of sanctification and social ethics, namely as the norm to realise the ultimate holiness in Christian life.

Therefore, first of all, it should be noticed that in Calvin's theology the law plays a noteworthy and determinative role in conjunction with his emphasis upon Christian life. The law, in fact, helps Christians to live as God's sincere, holy children. It is arguable that Calvin knew the value of the law through his study of law in Orléans(from 1528 for one and a half years), in Bourges(1529), and again in Orléans (in 1531, where he graduated as *licencié ès lois*; in 1532, completed his legal studies) as well as that he regarded the law in the Bible as divine law decreed to all human beings.

Before he converted to true reformed Christianity sometime between the 1st of November, 1533(the date of Cop's inaugural address as rector of St. Barbe college in University of Paris) and 1535(his settlement in Basel), Calvin was a humanist who studied civil (namely, Roman) law, according to the scholastic tradition through the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, under the guide of Pierre de L'Estoile, who was a respected law teacher in the University of Orléans. During those days, of course, Calvin was influenced by "a new humanist approach to the study of Roman law," which focused upon "the original sources," namely upon a direct study of "the best texts of Roman law." He studied their grammatical and historical contexts rather than an indirect study of texts, through the glosses by the guide of Andreas Alciati, the Milanese humanist, who taught law at Bourges and also through his reading of the works of Guillaume Budé, who was a leading legal humanist in France.[55] Also in relation to his humanism, we cannot deny his having been influenced, in

---

[54] T.H.L. Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 45.
[55] Guenther H. Haas, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

some sense, by Jacques Lefevre d'Étaples, who was one of the humanistic leaders in the Meaux circle, which was the main power of French Reformation before Calvin's Reformation in Geneva.

Thus, Calvin became a good scholar of civil law in terms of his humanistic knowledge of the Roman law. There is not much evidence that he deserted all his knowledge of civil law and its methodology after his conversion. Rather, we may argue that he used this knowledge in order to understand and explain the divine law in the Bible most properly. In fact, he read the Bible in 'a humanistic way that he learnt from Universities,' which made much of a direct study of 'the text of the Bible' and 'its grammatical and historical context,' although, together with it, he also made much of the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit and the interpretation of the Bible by the Bible itself on the basis of his trinitarianism. I argue that this was well reflected in Calvin's thought of the natural law and the positive law. In that sense, it is understandable that he put much importance on divine law, natural law, and conscience together in his theology.

In any case, Calvin insisted that the law of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments as moral law, is still useful and efficacious in the New Testament, and also in the Christian church.[56] Calvin expounded the Ten Commandments in *Institutes* II.viii, after he had made clear the three uses and functions of God's moral law in both Old and New Testaments in *Institutes* II.vii. His exposition of the Ten Commandments shall be examined in section four in order to clarify Calvin's thought on sanctification and social ethics. We will engage in Calvin's understanding of the three uses of the law here in section two and then in section three. He bore in mind that the law exists within the wider and broader context of God's universal reign over all humankind. In this sense, both Testaments should be dealt with meaningfully, without any one part of them being neglected. As Niesel acknowledged, for Calvin, the law always was thought of in the category of a triune God's faithful covenant. God's truthfulness and faithfulness in His covenant with His people was always considered as the most important element in Calvin's understanding of the law. God is the gracious God who grants Himself to us and then asks us to obey His commandments.[57] Karl Barth also followed Calvin when he understood God's law, namely the Ten Commandments as "the ordinances of the *covenant of grace.*"

---

[56] *Inst.*, II. viii. 5.

[57] Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. by Harold Knight, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1956), pp. 92-94.

To him, Jesus Christ was considered as "the substance of the covenant of grace."[58]

Besides which, the whole Scriptures containing law and gospel were considered by Calvin to be a clear mirror that reflects God.[59] As a mirror, the Bible teaches us the clear and plain will of God, which is our spiritual holiness, the holiness of society, and further the right way of life and our obligation as human beings according to it. Needless to say, it also gives the right knowledge of God as the basis of our piety, and exposes our sinfulness and the nothingness of life without God. Furthermore, God's Word functions to make faith contemplate God, as Calvin maintained, "the Word itself, however it be imparted to us, is like a mirror in which faith may contemplate God. Whether, therefore, God makes use of man's help in this or works by his own power alone, he always represents himself through his Word to those whom he wills to draw to himself."[60]

On the other hand, comparing the Bible to the spectacles of people with weak-sighted eyes, Calvin suggested that "Scripture, gathering up the otherwise confused knowledge of God in our minds, having dispersed our dullness, clearly shows us the true God."[61] The Word of God is "the very school of God's children"[62] and so we should "prick up our ears to the Word, the better to profit"[63] and also "be a pupil of Scripture, in order that true religion may shine upon us"[64] Thus, the Word of God as law and gospel becomes the best guide for our piety and obedience to God. Through it they clearly realize God's love and will for them and for their societies in the inner illumination of the Holy Spirit.

In the process of sanctification, Calvin asked Christians to design their own lives according to God's law. It is because "the law of God contains in itself that newness by which his image can be restored in us."[65] The law is understood to have power or competence to recover God's image in the people who faithfully follow it, not automatically, but by the works of the Spirit. Thus, we can see the normative use of the law was positively encouraged in Calvin's understanding. He suggested two biblical instructions for the pertinent principle of the Christian life: respectively, "the love of righteousness" and "a rule

---

[58] Karl Barth, *The Heidelberg Catechism for Today,* trans. by Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr.,(London: The Epworth Press, 1964), p. 39.

[59] *Inst.*, I.xiv.1.

[60] *Inst.*, III.ii.7.

[61] *Inst.*, I.vi.1.

[62] *Inst.*, I.vi.4.

[63] *Inst.*, I.vi.2.

[64] *Ibid.*

[65] *Inst.*, III.vi.1; also see *Inst.*, III.vii.1.

which keeps our zeal for righteousness."[66] He argued that righteousness or holiness is our goal of being called by God. According to him, Christians should not only go forward to get their goal, but also live in order to make a pattern of Jesus Christ. We should show God's glory to the world, as God's children, with our good works. Accordingly, the good works of believers are encouraged and demanded of us by God, through which He might be glorified.[67]

What Calvin wanted in his Reformation was not only the change of consciousness or just individual regeneration, but also holistic and thorough Reformation of all things including society, according to God's will. According to Calvin, all humankind came from one ancestor in order to make them pursue mutual concord and love each other more positively. Here we find out Calvin's thought about humankind's communal destiny under one ancestor. He argued, "God could himself indeed have covered the earth with a multitude of men; but it was his will that we should proceed from one fountain, in order that our desire of mutual concord might be the greater, and that each might the more freely embrace the other as his own flesh."[68] Then Calvin, stressing that the whole world should be the proper place for human beings' abode, argued that social equality should be the basis for a just and right society according to God's original will of the creation. "Besides, as men were created to occupy the earth, so we ought certainly to conclude that God has mapped, as with a boundary, that space of earth which would suffice for the reception of men, and would prove a suitable abode for them. Any inequality which is contrary to this arrangement is nothing else than a corruption of nature which proceeds from sin."[69]

Calvin commentated that all human beings are in fact one community, and also that God's grace for all human beings made it possible for them to live flourishingly everywhere in the world. "In the meantime, however, the benediction of God so prevails that the earth everywhere lies open that it may have its inhabitants, and that an immense multitude of men may find, in some part of the globe, their home."[70] He also brought the meaning of the stewardship of humankind to light, arguing that "[Moses] confirms what he had before said respecting dominion. Man had already been created with this condition, that

---

[66] *Inst.*, III.vi.2.
[67] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*. Matt. 5:16.
[68] *Comm. on* Gen. 1:28.
[69] *Ibid.*
[70] *Ibid.*

he should subject the earth to himself."[71] Here we also can find out Calvin's stress upon man's social vocation to rule the world according to God's will. Therefore, even when Calvin seemed to engage himself in dealing with soteriology, we also have to consider his soteriology as inseparably related to his socio-ethical concern.

Although Calvin acknowledged that ceremonial laws concerning the observance of days, ancient rituals, and other complex ceremonies had already been abolished in Christ,[72] he did not forsake the essential contents of the law, but rather rediscovered the affirmative value of the law which Jesus fulfilled for the Christian life. Thus, without falling into the wrong dichotomy between law and gospel, he made much of both things as God's whole Word for Christians. The curse of the law, according to him, was already removed by Jesus' redemptive works, especially to the believers. However, the other parts of the law are still efficacious and functional for Christians, as an essential norm to accomplish their holy lives in the world. John Hesselink examined these characters of Calvin's understanding of the law very closely, when he argued:

> This law, which is the antithesis of the gospel, is not the whole law, the *tota lex*, but the bare law, the *nuda lex*. It is the law abstracted from its real setting which is the covenant. Such a law is a bare letter without the vivifying Spirit of Christ. It has nothing but rigorous demands which place all human beings under a curse and the wrath of God. The law, thus understood, can only be described as the antithesis of the gospel, for it implies a type of righteousness which is diametrically opposed to the righteousness of faith.[73]

Thus, Calvin differentiated the normative law which Christians should be encouraged to use from the dead law which had already abrogated to them.

The law, according to Calvin, is contained in both Testaments, as is the gospel, and the centre of both Testaments is Jesus Christ. In this sense, it is true for Calvin, as Parker notes, "the redemption of Christ, then, was not first revealed in the incarnate Christ and therefore in the New Testament, but had already been made known to the saints of the Old Covenant."[74] According to Calvin, therefore, the Old Testament should be read in the light of God's redemption in Christ through the works of the Spirit. To that extent both Testaments should also be applied concretely for the realisation of sanctification and Christian social ethics. Thus Calvin thoroughly put stress upon the continuity between and

---

[71] *Ibid.*
[72] *Inst.*, II.vii.14.
[73] I. John Hesselink, *op. cit.*, p. 158.
[74] T.H.L. Parker, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

material efficacy of both Testaments as the same Word of God for Christian life.

3. Calvin's emphasis upon the threefold use of the law for constructive Christian social ethics

Here we will delve into Calvin's understanding of the threefold use of the law more concretely in relation to his social ethics. Hesselink greatly contributed to our understanding of Calvin's concept of the law in his book, *Calvin's Concept of the Law.*[75] He succeeded in bringing into relief that Calvin was a theologian of "the law." Actually most criticism with respect to Calvin's understanding of the law came from "Catholics, Jews, and liberals[76] and from orthodox Lutherans," rather than Reformed theologians. Thus, they defined Calvin as a strict legalist or a religious dictator of Geneva. Hesselink argued that their criticism of Calvin's understanding of the law was based upon their wrong or insufficient knowledge of Calvin's theology of sanctification (or holiness).

Here we suppose that we do not need to bring Calvin's full understanding of the law again into light, as Hesselink did in his above-mentioned book. We just want to find what implications Calvin's understanding of the law has for sanctification and Christian social ethics. In this section, particularly, our main concern is on clarifying Calvin's understanding of the three uses of the law in Christian life. It is noteworthy that Calvin developed meaningfully a clear doctrine of the threefold use of the law in his theology, compared to other Reformers in his day. It, in fact, makes Christian ethics of Calvinistic circles strikingly different from that of Lutherans, especially in relation to the third use of the law. This distinction between Calvinists and Lutherans can be traced to the difference between Calvin and Luther themselves. One of the biggest differences between them was Luther's general negligence of the third use of the law, compared to his emphasis upon the first and second uses of the law.

Contrary to Luther's indifference to the normative use of the law, Calvin did not throw away its validity for Christian life and Christian social ethics. It is clear in the title of his *Institutes* II.vii: "The Law Was Given, Not to Restrain the Folk of the Old Covenant

---

[75] In the introduction of his book, Hesselink introduced a long list of researches which had been done so far in relation to Calvin's understanding of the law. *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-5.

[76] Hesselink commented that "the older portrayals of Calvin and his work by the Catholics, F.W. Kampschulte and Imbart de la Tour, and the Jew, Stephan Zweig, are no longer taken seriously by responsible historians" because most of their criticism came from their falsehood, misunderstanding, and distorted prejudice. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Under Itself, but to Foster Hope of Salvation in Christ Until His Coming."[77] Thus, Calvin understood the law very positively. Furthermore, he set much value on the usefulness of the law, even after Christ's first coming and his final exaltation. While Luther associated the law primarily with sin and thus understood it solely in relation to its theological and civil uses, Calvin considered the law in connection with the grace of God for his people and further accentuated its normative, positive function for Christian life.

Calvin's understanding of the three uses of the law is as follows: First of all, the law reveals God's righteousness, making God's people sure of his righteousness, and condemning and cursing them as sinners on account of it.[78] This is the first and spiritual, theological function of the law. Secondly, he spoke of the political function of the law: "at least by fear of punishment to restrain certain men who are untouched by any care for what is just and right unless compelled by hearing the dire threats in the law."[79] Calvin thought that the second use of the law "is necessary for the public community of men, for whose tranquillity the Lord herein provided when he took care that everything be not permitted to all men."[80] So, this is mainly related to the sustenance of an orderly and peaceable public society so that it represents a political and ethical function.

Calvin's main concern was the third function of the law,[81] which was not prominent in Luther's theology. He called this function its "principal" use, "the proper purpose of the law, which finds its place among believers, in whose hearts the Spirit of God already lives and reigns."[82] So, this is the most important function, because it is directly associated with the Spirit of God working in believers' minds and ruling over them. Thus, through the Spirit, they can have God's law inscribed on their minds. At the same time, they have the written law, through it, perceiving the will of God clearly, and being instructed by it to become profitable and to control themselves in order not to be led astray.

In understanding the third use of the law, we find a considerable similarity between Calvin and Melanchthon. Melanchthon was the person who used the concept of the

---

[77] *Inst.*, III.vii.1.
[78] *Inst.*, II.vii.6-9.
[79] *Inst.*, III.vii.10.
[80] *Inst.*, III.vii.10.
[81] See *Inst.*, II.vii.12-13.
[82] *Inst.*, III.vii.12.

third use of the law in his *Loci Communes*(1521).[83] Here Melanchthon argued that the Holy Spirit makes it possible for believers to keep the law. However, Melanchthon's first obvious allusion to the threefold use of the law was in the 1535 edition of his *Loci communes*.[84] Calvin used the conception of the threefold use of the law from the first edition(1536) of his *Institutes*[85] to the last edition(1559) of it[86] almost without any change in its essence, but only in its quantity. Its placement also was not so changed from the first edition to the third edition. All three editions deal with it in the third chapter, right after the discussion of the twofold knowledge of God and man. So it functions basically as an introduction to Christian faith. But in the last edition, the threefold use of the law was dealt with in Book II, vii-viii, which mainly deals with the knowledge of God the redeemer in Christ, in a soteriological context, right after the discussion of the necessity of Christ's redemption of sinful men, but before the allusion of the necessity of gospel. Thus we may find some gap and difference between the first three editions of the *Institutes* and the last edition of it on this topic; nevertheless, there is not much change in Calvin's understanding of the use of the law.

However, in comparison with the later Melanchthon's synergistic idea of divine-human relation in redemption, as we can see in his last edition of the *Loci communes*(1555),[87] Calvin more clearly brought the Spirit's role into relief in his understanding of the law. Calvin thought the law could be compared to a constant sting to stimulate a person to live according to the will of God or a whip to urge the idle and stubborn ass. "The law is to the flesh like a whip to an idle and balky ass, to arouse it to work. Even for a spiritual man not yet free of the weight of the flesh the law remains a constant sting that will not let him stand still."[88] Thus, finally, all three uses of the law can be summarized briefly as follows: first of all, its theological use, secondly its political use,

---

[83] Philip Melanchthon emphasized the importance of the law, especially of the Decalogue particularly for Christians in his *Loci communes(*1521 edition*), Melanchton and Bucer* (LCC 19), pp. 126-127.

[84] *Corpus Reformatorum* XXI. cols. 405ff. Bucer also used the threefold use of the law in his *Commentaries* of 1530. Bucer, *Enarrationes perpetuae in sacra quatuor Evangelia, 2nd* edition, (Marburg, 1530^2). pp. 123-127. François Wendel, *Calvin: The Origins and Development of his Religious Thought* (New York: Harper, 1963), pp. 198; also see I. John Hesselink, *Calvin's Concept of the Law*(Allison Park, Pennsylvania: Pickwick Publications, 1992), pp. 38-39.

[85] He treated it in the last part of chapter I concerning the Ten Commandments, before he examines justification finally. "Ex his colligi potest, quale officium et quis sit usus legis. Tribus autem partibus continetur." *OS.* I. 61.

[86] In *Inst.*, II.vii-viii.1-13.

[87] Melanchthon seemed to argue that the Word of God and the Holy Spirit works together with man's will in regeneration. Actually this point of view was severely criticised by the orthodox Lutherans, especially by antagonists of the Leipzig Interim. C.L. Manschhreck, ed., *Melanchthon on Christian Doctrine: Loci communes(1555),* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 60.

[88] *Inst.*, III.vii.12.

and thirdly its normative or didactic use. Among these three uses of the law, the second and third uses are correlated with the positive or civil law of the state, the details of which we will explore further on.[89]

While Luther considered the theological use as the most important function of the law, but for Calvin the third use of the law was the most important and essential one. According to Calvin, the law has an eternal, permanent efficacy for God's people, as he argued, "There are not many rules, but one everlasting and unchangeable rule to live by. For this reason we are not to refer solely to one age. David's statement that the life of a righteousness man is a continual meditation upon the law [Ps. 1:2], for it is just as applicable to every age, even to the end of the world."[90] However, if the law can be used as a norm for Christians, the condemnation and curse of the law must be removed, and we must get spiritual freedom from the curse of the law, so Calvin remarked, "the fact, then, remains that through the law the whole human race is proved subject to God's curse and wrath, and in order to be freed from these, it is necessary to depart from the power of the law and, as it were, to be released from its bondage into freedom."[91] According to him, "when through faith we lay hold on the mercy of God in Christ, we can attain this liberation and, so to speak, manumission from subjection to the law."[92] Therefore, unlike Luther, for Calvin, Jesus came not as the end, but the fulfiller of the law who got rid of the curse and condemnation of the law[93] and so made the law and its efficacy perfect and eternal, in the world.[94] Calvin, further, taught how the law can be good for the Christian by God's help through the gospel.

> In this way, the promises also that are offered us in the law would all be ineffectual and void, had God's goodness not helped us through the gospel. For this condition, that we should carry out the law—upon which the promises depend and by which alone they are to be performed—will never be fulfilled. Thus the Lord helps us, not by leaving us a part of righteousness in our works, and by supplying part out of his loving-kindness, but by appointing Christ alone as the fulfilment of righteousness.[95]

Calvin called this righteousness of Jesus Christ obtained by faith "another

---

[89] *Inst.*, IV.xx.15-21.
[90] *Inst.*, III.vii.13.
[91] *Inst.*, III.xvii.1; Calvin, also like Luther, admitted the cursing function of the law, " ...the law having pricked and stung our conscience to the awareness of them." *Ibid.*
[92] *Ibid.*
[93] *Inst.*, III.vii.15.
[94] *Inst.*, II.vii.14.
[95] *Inst.*, III.xvii.2.

righteousness,"[96] because it was imputed to us externally by God. Jesus Christ got rid of 'the condemnation of the law' (*maledictio legis*) by his complete obedience to the law and will of God. Thus, he acknowledged the necessity of the law as the objective commandment of God for believers. However, according to Calvin, "the promises (of the law) have no beneficent effect upon us so long as they have reference to the merits of works, and consequently, if considered in themselves, they are in a sense abolished." [97] Notwithstanding, through gospel, "the promises of the law" can be accomplished in us. Thus we find that the third use of the law becomes perfect in the use of gospel in Christian life. Calvin maintained, "when the promises of the gospel are substituted, which proclaim the free forgiveness of sins, these not only make us acceptable to God but also render our works pleasing to him. And not only does the Lord adjudge them pleasing; he also extends to them the blessings which under the covenant were owed to the observance of his law."[98]

Calvin argued that God's grace and faithfulness are behind the law, by the merits which Christ obtained through his thorough obedience to Father's will.[99] He differentiated "promises of the law"[100] from evangelical promises as follows: "I call "promises of the law" not those sprinkled everywhere in the books of Moses, since in them many evangelical promises also occur." According to Calvin, "the promises of the law" means "those properly pertaining to the ministry of the law. Promises of this sort ... declare that there is recompense ready for you if you do what they enjoin."[101] Here Calvin stressed that the observance of the law could not condition our reception of God's benefits, but is simply our perpetual duty and the expression of our thanksgiving as God's children. In that sense, the promises of the law are rather to show God's goodness and mercy for His people. Hence, they ask us to revere and honour "the Author of these benefits."[102]

However, according to him, even though we keep "covenant of mercy," namely "whatever promises of mercy," or in other expression "promises of the law" as the people of God, it cannot be our merit, but just our perpetual duty, according to which we ought to live. So for Calvin, the law was given as a norm for the holiness of Christian life. The final purpose of the law is to glorify God the Father. On the one hand, the ultimate goal of

---

[96] *Ibid.*
[97] *Inst.*, III.xvii.3.
[98] *Ibid.*
[99] *Inst.*, III.xvi.3.
[100] *Inst.*, III.xvii.6.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.*

Christian life in this penultimate world is to glorify God through our holy lives, and on the other hand, in relation to the ultimate, it is the perfection of our salvation and the accomplishment of our holiness in heaven.

Thus, the law is useful in Christian life, because "the law contains perfect righteousness," in contrast to "the weakness of our flesh."[103] In that sense, according to Calvin, the good works of believers are pleasing to God and are considered as good by God, although they are not in themselves counted as merits. Actually, they are the fruits of the Holy Spirit produced as the results of obedience to the Word of God. The process in which justified Christians' good works are received by God as righteous is as follows: First, forgiveness of sins comes, and then good works of believers are counted as righteous, and pleasing to God[Rom. 4:22].[104]

4. God's Commandments as the duty of love balanced by justice for the fulfilment of Christian life

Calvin considered the law and Christ's instruction in close connexion, acknowledging that the law is still valid even after Christ came. According to him, the purpose of the whole law can be summarized as "the fulfilment of righteousness to form human life to the archetype of divine purity."[105] Divine purity qualifies our Christian life according to the law. In order for us to attain purity and holiness perfectly, Christ asked of us the twofold love (Matt. 22:37,39): love for God (Deut. 6:5) and love for neighbours (Lev. 19:18). Of course, the first is the foundation of the second. In this sense, we find that the purpose of the law is related to fulfilling this twofold love. Hence, worshipping life(piety) should present itself as love(serving life), and vice versa, love should come out from piety.

For Calvin, the law was not a tasteless and dry law, but the living law working through love. In that sense, he was neither a love-monist,[106] an antinomian,[107] nor a

---

[103] *Inst.*, III.xvii.7.
[104] *Inst.*, III.xvii.8.
[105] *Inst.*, II.viii.51.
[106] Joseph Fletcher replaced in his *Situation Ethics* law with love(agape). In his ethics, all rules, principles, or laws are accidental or secondary compared to the importance of love. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), pp. 31, 69-70, especially in broader context of pp. 57-145. Thus James T. Laney criticized his ethics as 'love-utilitarianism,' in "Norm & Context in Ethics: A Reconsideration," *Soundings*, vol. 52, No.3 (Fall, 1969), p. 319. James Gustafson also criticized it as 'love-monism,' in his article, "Love-Monism," *Storm over Ethics* (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1967), pp. 26-37.

merciless jurist.[108] Calvin defined the love commanded by God as an infinite love, so that he could say, "we ought to embrace the whole human race without exception in a single feeling of love; here there is no distinction between barbarian and Greek, worthy and unworthy, friend and enemy, since all should be contemplated in God, not in themselves."[109] However, his understanding of love was not intemperate, licentious love, but a moderate love symmetrized by justice and equity. In this sense, in the definition of his love, we find that there was a somewhat puritanical element. So, he clearly differentiated religious clemency toward true Christian believers from his strictness toward heretics and antinomians whom he saw destroying a sound Christian community, spiritually and socially.

Calvin knew that love for neighbours is not just a matter of evangelical counsel, but God's commandment and our duty as God's people. In this regard, Calvin held fast to his belief that "faith without deeds is dead" through all his lifetime. In that sense, it was not altogether strange when he argued that, "to be Christians under the law of grace does not mean to wander unbridled outside the law, but to be engrafted in Christ, by whose grace we are free of the curse of the law, and by whose Spirit we have the law engraved upon our hearts [Jer. 31:33]."[110] Being engrafted in Christ does not take us out of the world, but binds us to it in action. Christians loved by God in Christ should go down to the world with the same love that God showed us in Christ. Christian life is not life out of the world, but life in it. In this sense, we Christians sincerely should learn to love our neighbours who are in afflictions, in need, and are persecuted on account of their true Christian faith, as Jesus forsook his life for sinners.[111] Therefore, love should be proved by our concrete deeds, and he argued that, "let us not profess by the tongue that we love, but prove it by the deed; for this is the only true way of showing love."[112]

Thus, the law in the Decalogue is not ceremonial or ritual law abrogated by Jesus' coming, but a living principle for Christian life, through which Christians can lead their holy life in the Holy Spirit, as followers of Christ who fulfilled the law through his life and

---

[107] In Geneva, the Libertines like Jacques Gruet, Ami Perrin, and so on were the antinomians who denied the necessity of the law for Christians and also Christian societies. In this respect, they strongly were against Calvin's bibliocracy.

[108] Harro Höpfl, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

[109] *Inst.*, II.viii.55.

[110] *Inst.*, II.viii.57.

[111] Calvin recommended us to follow Jesus and to imitate his pattern. He argued, "our feelings should be so formed and regulated, that we may desire to devote our life and also our death, first to God, and then to our neighbors." *Comm. on* 1 John 3:16.

death. Deepening this idea, thus, Calvin identified love for God with our wholehearted obedience to God's Commandments. He annotated John 14:21 as follows: "the undoubted proof of our love to him lies in our *keeping his commandments*; and the reason why he so frequently reminds the disciples of this is, that they may not turn aside from this object; for there is nothing to which we are more prone than to slide into a carnal affection, so as to love something else than Christ under the name of Christ."[113] Thus, Calvin related "love" with Christian's self-sacrificing, self-ascetic devotion to God and his neighbours.

In this sense, for Calvin, a Christian is light, which sheds its light by sacrificing itself, and salt, which melts itself away within his society, without departing from his society.[114] Thus, Calvin, affirming the life in the world, emphasised Christian's social responsibility and duty as light and salt. So Christian life was regarded as not a negative acquittance of evil things, but as an active and positive practice of good works by heartful obedience to God's commandments. Thus, according to Calvin, we may argue that the ultimate end as well as the starting point of Christian life is the *coram Deo.* It is closely related to complete admittance of God's sovereignty in all spheres of our life as some Dutch Calvinists like Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd argued.[115] In Calvin's theology, God is the God of history, history is the history of God, and world is the world of God.[116]

In addition, God is fair and impartial, as is His Word.[117] Calvin made much of God's fairness and justice in relation to his social ethics (Job 31:6; Prov. 24:12). Therefore, God's viewpoint, namely His highest will was the foremost thing in Calvin's understanding of Christian life and social ethics. Thus, contrary to the traditional division of sin, Calvin did not divide sin into mortal sins and venial sins, because all sin is committed against God, which is "a violation of the law," and provokes God's wrath and upon which God's

---

[112] *Comm. on* 1 John 3:18.

[113] *Comm. on* John 14:21.

[114] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, vol.1, Matt. 5:13-15.

[115] Abraham Kuyper and Herman Dooyeweerd developed Calvin's thought of God's sovereignty toward all spheres of life very distinguishedly. See Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*(Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), and Herman Dooyeweerd, *Roots of Western Culture: Pagan, Secular, and Christian Options*(Toronto: Wedge Publishing Foundation, 1960), esp. ch. 2 and his magnum opus, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought,* 4 vols, (Amsterdam & Philadelphia, 1958).

[116] Kuyper explained Calvin's theology of God's sovereignty in comparison with Luther's soteriological theology. "Luther as well as Calvin contended for a direct fellowship with God, but Luther took it up from its subjective, anthropological side, and not from its objective, cosmological side as Calvin did. Luther's starting-point was the special-soteriological principle of a justifying faith; while Calvin's extending far wider, lay in the general cosmological principle of the sovereignty of God." Abraham Kuyper, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

[117] *Inst.*, II.viii.58.

judgment is declared.[118] But for Calvin, this does not mean that all sin is same, but it is by nature the violation of the law before God. Thus, Calvin regarded all sin, regardless of individual sin or social sin, as harmful to human society as well as abominable to God. Besides, according to the Bible, all man who committed sin ultimately should die because all sin is mortal. To such extent, sin is by itself harmful and also contrary to the establishment of God's holy society.

This was the very reason that Calvin made much of "brotherly corrections," namely discipline according to the biblical instructions, and stressed Christian's holy life before God and men and also the holiness of church and society so much in Geneva. For this, he emphasised our thorough obedience to the Word of God.[119] In this sense, we might argue that Marion W. Conditt's thesis is very suggestive in this direction. Conditt understood Christian freedom as the freedom for obedience to God's will and found the implications of Christian obedience in Christian ethics from Christ's perfect obedience to God's will. Thus, he developed his thesis of Calvin's theology thoroughly in terms of the motif of obedience.[120]

In that sense, for Calvin, the law should be observed not as an enforced duty, but as the expression of thanksgiving of Christians regenerated by God's grace. Calvin understood the law as God's gift for Christians, in order to make them live according to His gracious will. According to him, the law of the Old Testament is not different from Christ's law of the New Testament, in its essence and contents. Therefore, the law cannot and must not be separated from the gospel in Calvin's theology.

5. The Ten Commandments as the kernel of the moral law

1. The background and purport of the Ten Commandments

Most of the Reformers were fascinated by the Ten Commandments. Especially, Luther, Melanchthon,[121] as well as Calvin paid attention to this kernel of the moral law of

---

[118] *Ibid.*

[119] *Comm. on* Rom. 12:1.

[120] Marion W. Conditt, *More Acceptable than Sacrifice: Ethics and Election as Obedience to God's Will in the Theology of Calvin,* Ph.D. Dissertation. (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kommissionsverlag, 1973), esp. ch.4. pp. 72-85.

[121] Melanchthon dealt with the law including the Decalogue in all editions of his *Loci communes* from the first edition(1521) to the last edition(1555). In the first edition, it was treated in chapter 3(*De lege*)

God. Melanchthon's understanding of the law, especially of the third use of the law is very similar to Calvin's, as we already have seen in the previous section. So here it is not necessary to deal with Melanchthon's viewpoint of the law again.

For Calvin, the Ten Commandments were the foremost kernels of God's law through which we can find out God's revealed will. He dealt with the Ten Commandments especially ahead of his exposition of the Apostle's Creed[122] in *the first Genevan Catechism*(1537), and also from Q131 to Q232 between the Apostle's Creed and the Lord's Prayer in the second Genevan Catechism(1542).[123] The first Catechism shows Luther's influence in its structure, but the second Catechism displays Martin Bucer's theological influence in its contents and dealing order.[124] In the former, Calvin, following Luther's Small Catechism's structure, arranged its main contents in this order: the law, the Apostle's Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Sacraments. But in the latter, he reversed the order of the Apostle's Creed and the law. Thus, he changed Luther's structure of law and gospel, into the order of gospel and law. From the second Catechism, Calvin's mature theology, in fact, increasingly began to show itself. And Calvin dealt with the Decalogue in the continuous editions of the *Institutes* from the first(1536) to the last(1559), and also in the *Commentary on the Harmony of the Law*(1564).[125]

According to Calvin's Preface of the *Commentary on the Harmony of the Law*, the centre of the four books of the Pentateuch except Genesis is the law, especially the Ten Commandments,[126] which is directly related to the ultimate fulfilment of holiness of

---

between sin(ch.2. *De peccato)* and gospel(ch.4. *De evangelio*), and in the last edition, in chapter 7 between the doctrine of sin and the doctrine of gospel as was in the first edition, but more extendedly and minutely.

[122] The title of the French edition in 1537 was *Instruction et confession de foy dont on use en l'église de Genève. CO.* 22. cols. 25-74; *OS.* 1. 378-417. Its Latin edition came out in 1538 under the title *Catechismus, sive christianae religionis institutio, communibus renatae nuper in evangelio Genevensis ecclesiae suffragiis recepta, et vulgari quidem prius idiomate, nunc vero Latine etiam, quo de fidei illius sinceritate passim aliis etiam ecclesiis constet, in lucem edita, Ioanne Calvino autore. CO* 5. cols. 313-362; *OS.* 1. 426-432.

[123] The French edition of this catechism was published early in 1542 under the title *Le Catéchisme de l'église de Genève, c'est a dire le Formulaire d'instruire les enfants en la chrestienté. CO.* 6. cols. 1-134.

[124] Bucer had already composed and published two different catechisms before Calvin came to Strasbourg in 1538. The first Catechism was published in 1534 under the title *Kurtze schrifftliche erklärung für die kinder und angohnden, der gemeinen artickeln unsers christlichen glaubens, der zehen gebott, des Vatter unsers...* And the second, more minutely enlarged Catechism was published in 1537 with the title *Der kürtzer Catechismus und erklärung der XII stücken Christlichs glaubens. Des Vatter unsers und der Zehen gepotten...* W. De Greef, *op. cit.*, p.132.

[125] Originally it was published as Calvin's commentaries on the five books of Moses. The first part was his commentary on the Genesis and the second part was the harmony of the law which rearranged other four books centring on the law. The original title of the commentary was *De M. Iean Caluin, Sur Les Cinq Liures De Moyse.*(Geneve, 1564).

[126] Calvin argued that "I admit, indeed, that whatever refers to the regulation of the conduct is comprehended in THE TEN COMMANDMENTS." John Calvin, "the preface" in *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospel. Vol.1.* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. xv.

Christian life. Calvin rearranged the four books of the Pentateuch centred on the law, according to his intention, into four parts.[127] The four parts are as follows: the first, the *Preface*; the second, the Ten Commandments; the third, supplements; and the last, the end and use of the law, and finally the sanctions of promises and threats in the law.[128] These four books showing God's holy will for His people consists of two major, principal parts, as Calvin argued,

> These FOUR BOOKS are made up of two principal parts, viz., the HISTORICAL NARRATIVE and THE DOCTRINE, by which the Church is instructed in *true piety*, (including faith and prayer,) as well as in *the fear and worship of God*; and thus the rule of a just and holy life is laid down, and individuals are exhorted to the performance of their several duties.[129]

According to Calvin, these two principal parts are related to God's enjoinment to the church as well as to the Israelites. Especially in relation to the use and application of the narrative in the four books, Calvin made much of divine twofold works: namely, God's inestimable, bountiful mercy on the sinful Israelites, and his terrible punishments on the obstinate wicked at the same time.[130] Thus, for Calvin, the Ten Commandments were really the sum of "the rule of a just and holy life"[131] to the church as well as to the Israelites in the sinful and idolatrous world. He presented the Decalogue to Christians as an important guide and norm for Christian holy life in the world.

Luther, above all, dealt with the Decalogue in his Small and Larger Catechisms(1529). It is very astonishing that Luther attached much weight to the value and meaning of the Ten Commandments in relation to Christian life, when we consider that he was so opposed to the use of the law which he identified with work-righteousness. Here it seems that Luther's understanding of the law, to some extent, reflects his first disputation against Johann Agricola's antinomianism. Agricola was, in a certain sense, the originator of

---

[127] T.H.L. Parker well pointed out Calvin's intention of rearrangement of the four books as follows: "[Calvin] saw a unity in them, centred on the Law, and the Law itself centred on the Decalogue. The Decalogue itself comprehends all the parts and every aspect of man's behaviour towards God and his own fellows (cf. *Inst.* II.viii.11); there is therefore no precept, whether theological, moral, or ceremonial, which does not come under one of the Ten Commandments." *Op. cit.*, p. 122.

[128] John Calvin, *op. cit.*, pp. xvi-xviii.

[129] *Ibid.*

[130] Here we have to remember that Calvin considered the narrative of the Bible, namely the Decalogue, in a broad context of Christian life amidst the world in relation to God's holy will, rather than in an exclusively Christological and ecclesiatical context, as we can see in Stanley Hauerwas' more or less fideistic ethics of character. See Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceble Kingdom*(Notre Dame, Indiana : University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 16, 25, 28-29.

[131] John Calvin, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

Lutheran antinomianism, which was developed by Nicholas von Amsdorf(1483-1565) and Andrew Poach(1516-1585).[132] These antinomian Lutheran scholars argued that the law is unnecessary in justified Christians, only acknowledging the first and the second uses of the law, which also Luther strongly argued for in his earlier times. Especially, through disputation against Agricola, Luther gradually moved toward intensifying the usefulness and value of the law for Christians. Thus, it seems that Luther gradually emphasised the affirmative use of the law in his later age than in his earlier times. We can find Luther's affirmative understanding of the law for Christians and his active emphasis of Christians' good works in his later writings, as we see in his sermons on the gospel of John.

> But now I discover that the Law is precious and good, that it was given to me for my life; and now it is pleasing to me. Formerly it told me what to do; now I am beginning to conform to its requests, so that now I praise, laud, and serve God. This I do through Christ, because I believe in Him. The Holy Spirit comes into my heart and engenders a spirit in me that delights in His words and works even when he chastises me and subjects me to cross and temptation.[133]

Luther in his *Small Catechism* dealt with the Ten Commandments in its first part. When we consider its position in the *Catechism*, it is clear that it was treated as the preparation for the inception of faith rather than as a norm for Christian life. Nevertheless, considering his exposition of the Ten Commandments, we find that Luther also considered it to be of substantial efficacy and value for Christians. He argued that "God threatens to punish all who transgress these Commandments: we should, therefore, fear his anger, and do nothing against such Commandments. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep them: we should, therefore, love and trust in him, and gladly obey his Commandments."[134] This is also true in his Large Catechism.[135] The Large Catechism is more complicated and more minute in its exposition of the Ten Commandments than the Small Catechism, but the same with the latter in the essential contents. So, although Luther did not anywhere deal with the third use of the law explicitly, nevertheless, he had to some extent an affirmative understanding of the Decalogue's practical usefulness for Christian

---

[132] Justo L. González, *A History of Christian Thought:From the Prostestant Reformation to the Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3,(Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1975, 1984), pp. 100-102.

[133] Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of John,* in *LW*, Vol. 22, p. 144.

[134] *Luther's Small Catechism,* in Philip Schaff, *op. cit.*, p.77; Hesselink also paid more attention to this fact. About this, just refer to His two books: first, *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, pp. 77-78, secondly, *Calvin's Concept of the Law,* pp. 102-103.

[135] Hesselink well evidenced Luther's familiarity with the Decalogue by his quotation from the Large Catechism. *Calvin's First Catechism: A Commentary*, p. 78; Theodore G. Tappert, trans. & ed., *op. cit.*, p. 407.

life. Thus through several disputations against antinomianism, the Lutherans also finally adopted the third use of the law in the *Formula of Concord*(1577) which reflects Melanchthon's positive understanding of the law, especially of the third use of the law, as well as Luther's more or less reserved understanding of the law.[136]

Calvin basically acknowledged that there is an inward law written upon the hearts of all, according to God's creation of man in His image. This means that by nature all human beings know what is right and what is wrong, and, further, how they have to serve and worship God and to serve and love their neighbours. However, owing to sin, human beings became blind spiritually, so that they are in darkness about spiritual things and unclear about love of God and neighbour. For this reason, God showed his grace to sinful human beings by giving them the Ten Commandments as a written law. The Ten Commandments are the core of the moral law that God gave his people to guide them in God's love and God's Word.

It should be remembered, then, that for Calvin, the law containing the Decalogue is the law of covenant. In this context, "Calvin's concept of the law cannot be rightly understood and appreciated unless it is recognized that the law is essentially the law of the covenant."[137] For Calvin, actually, God was always considered to be a personal God in a dialogical relationship with man. Therefore, according to him, even though He is a sovereign and omnipotent God, He always wants to be in a faithful relationship with man. In this sense, the law is the symbol of God's will for partnership with man. So through the law, God exposes His will clearly to man. Thus the law gains a new meaning in Calvin's theology.

According to Calvin, The Ten Commandments can be summarized into two elements: *piety* (love for God) and *righteousness* (love for others). Calvin believed that the law teaches us how to honour and worship God in a right way and how to live righteously with other people in the world according to God's will. Here we find an inseparable correlation between the ultimate concern for God and the penultimate concern for neighbours in Calvin's understanding of the Decalogue in association with his theology of holiness. He did not separate these two elements, but connected them comprehensively. In this sense, he affirmed, "the only lawful worship of [God] is the observance of

---

[136] Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 479-481.
[137] I. John Hesselink, *op. cit.*, p.87.

righteousness, holiness, and purity."[138] Therefore, he materially made much of the content and validity of the two Tables for Christians. Above all, man realizes that he is sinful and wretched before God when he meets the precepts of the law. The law functions as *a mirror* in which we can look at ourselves, and which discloses our sinfulness and unrighteousness nakedly before God who is most holy and righteous.[139] Thus, through reflecting himself in the law, man cannot help becoming humble and modest, and seeking God's mercy and forgiveness.

Calvin did not overlook that there are two opposing elements in God's law: these are first of all God's promises of reward for those who obey God's law, and then threats of judgment against those who disobey God and commit injustice. He made clear that God has a clear standard of judgment, which is related to God's highest perfection and purity. The law is the manifestation of God's will. Therefore, God of the law reveals himself as God of holiness. This God demands perfect obedience from his people. Obedience to God's law is the most important word in relation to due and right worship of God, because the law contains God's perfect righteousness. Thus, the law becomes the practical norm of the holiness of Christian life.

According to Calvin, the law is not simply related to man's outward behaviour. To obey the law means to follow and pursue God's will thoroughly both inwardly and outwardly. In this sense, Calvin asked of Christians their holistic and perfect purity. Sanctification and Christian ethics are not just outward problems, but also should grow from our heart. Calvin believed that Christ came to recover the right use and meaning of the law. Jesus came to this world not to abolish the law, but to restore the true meaning of the law and disclose its perfect essence, and to make us lead pious and holy lives according to God's standard. Thus leading holy lives, Christians can be good witnesses to God before men, glorify God, and further make the world more worthy to live. Therefore, the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, and the Sermon on the Mount and the New Commandments of Jesus Christ cannot be separated, but should be connected directly. Calvin interpreted the Ten Commandments in the light of the Sermon on the Mount and the New Commandments, and furthermore, applied the former essentially to the latter.[140] Thus,

---

[138] *Inst.*, II.viii.2.

[139] *Inst.*, II.vii.6-7: also see Philip Melanchthon's stress upon the efficacy of the Decalogue for Christians in his *Loci communes(*1521 edition*), Melanchton and Bucer* (LCC 19), pp. 126-127.

[140] Hesselink also took notice of the deep correlation between the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount. I. John Hesselink, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

in contrast to Luther, Calvin did not stay at the negative and passive understanding of the law, but tried to apply it in a far more concrete and practical way to sanctification and Christian social ethics.

2. The structure and preface of the Ten Commandments

Calvin divided God's law as a holy norm of Christian life, into two parts: "the first part (was) to those duties of religion which particularly concern the worship of his majesty; the second, to the duties of love that have to do with men."[141] However, between these two parts, the first part is more spiritual and religious than the second, and a foundation stone for the second part. The second part is more social and ethical. In that sense, he asserted, "it is vain to cry up righteousness without religion."[142] Here we find the existence of the correlation between the ultimate(the first part) and the penultimate(the second part) in his understanding of the two parts of the Decalogue. Thus "the worship of God," namely the fear of God was considered as "the beginning and foundation of righteousness."

The first part, then, consists of four Commandments and the second part six Commandments. Calvin followed the traditional way of dividing the Ten Commandments, which Jewish and most Protestant reformers followed, contrary to the Lutherans' and the Catholics' way of division.[143] Further, Calvin saw continuity between the Old Testament and Jesus, in that Jesus summarized these two Tables into a twofold love(Matt. 22:37,39; Lk. 10:27). In that sense, spiritual, religious sanctification related to the existence of faith should not be divided from social ethics, because piety cannot be separated from the righteousness of Christian life.

The God of the Ten Commandments is the God who emancipated and redeemed His people from the sufferings of bondage in Egypt which was "like a house of bondage,"[144] as the preface of the Ten Commandments shows.[145] For Calvin, the preface of the Decalogue is the most important and major premise, through which we have to interpret

---

[141] *Inst.*, II.viii.11.

[142] *Ibid.*

[143] *Inst.*, II.vii.11.: cf. The Lutheran theologians and Catholic theologians traditionally divided the first three Commandments in the first Table, and the rest in the second Table. They normally did so by combining the first Commandment and the second Commandment. Refer to foodnote 4 in Hesselink, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

[144] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Law*, Vol.1. Exod. 20:1,2.

[145] "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2).

what follows. Astonishingly enough, in both Luther's Catechisms God's declaration of Himself was omitted. Instead, Luther emphasized the first Commandment. However, Calvin made much of the preface before he deals with each Commandment one by one. According to him, God was the God who asked his people to obey and serve Him with their sincere and whole hearts. Through the emancipation of his own people, God showed Himself as a Father who considered the Israelites as His children. Calvin showed a certain spiritual meaning of the liberation event related to Christians, as he added, "in order that it may not seem that this has nothing to do with us, we must regard the Egyptian bondage of Israel as a type of the spiritual captivity in which all of us are held bound, until our heavenly Vindicator, having freed us by the power of his arm, leads us into the Kingdom of freedom."[146] Here the emancipation was considered by Calvin as the emancipation from satanic powers, from spiritual bondage, from idolatry, and a God who emancipated the Israelites was regarded as the Lawgiver as well as the Emancipator and Redeemer. In the same context, freedom which the Israelites got was considered to be the freedom to serve, obey, and devote themselves to God the Redeemer with all their heart, mind, and life. But it is difficult for us to find a socio-political framework related to social and political problems at the core of the Commandment, because here Calvin considered the preface of the Decalogue thoroughly as related to the issue of true piety or worship, especially related to the first Table of the Decalogue, although it becomes the basis for the second Table of the Decalogue.

Of course, we should not stay at this stage. Because for Calvin, the Decalogue was not just for spiritual meaning, but also has a concrete applicability to our individual and social lives. The Ten Commandments were not just given to an individual Christian, but rather were given to the whole Christian community as well as the national Israelites. Therefore, we can think that as the Ten Commandments were given to physical Israelites, so they were given to spiritual Israelites, because in the New Testament church was considered by Calvin to be spiritual Israelites. In this sense, the Ten Commandments have complete relevance to Christians as well as to the Israelites. As the Israelites were redeemed from the Egyptian bondage, which symbolises the bondage of sin and secularity, so church which consists of the followers of Jesus Christ also was emancipated from the bondage of sin by faith in Jesus Christ who died on the cross, for remission of our sins. Hence, there is

---

[146] *Inst.*, II.viii.15.

enough reason that we have to follow the Commandments in order to regulate our Christian life according to God's Will.

3. The first Table

The first Table of the Ten Commandments consists of four Commandments, which primarily deal with the worship and honour of God. Jesus identified the first table as the Commandments about the love of God, as He said, "hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (Mk. 12:29b-30, NIV)." The first Table is, in its essence, the foundation by which the second Table can be confirmed. The fear and true worship of God never should be compromised, distorted, thwarted by anything for Calvin. Especially the first Table should be read in consideration of Calvin's Genevan Reformation. Here Calvin showed his strong anti-idolatrous Christian faith, namely his deep concern on religious, spiritual holiness.

1) The first commandment (Exod. 20:3)

According to Calvin, the first commandment demands from us true piety by interdicting us from a false religion or superstition. True piety or true worship of God consists of four elements: "(1) adoration (to which is added as an appendix, spiritual obedience of the conscience), (2) trust, (3) invocation, (4) thanksgiving."[147] Calvin made much of the importance of "true religion," which is deeply involved in true knowledge of God and strong aspiration "to contemplate, fear, and worship, his majesty; to participate in his blessings; to seek his help at all times; to recognize, and by praises to celebrate, the greatness of his works — as the only goal of all the activities of this life."[148] Together with this, superstition ought to be rejected in Christian life. Because false religion or false confession was supposed by Calvin to hinder or distort a Christian's holy life through wrong and false instructions and doctrines. That's why in Geneva all kinds of idolatries and false ceremonies were strictly excluded. Especially here we can remember Calvin's treatises against worship of relics and astrology,[149] his refutation of the Catholic Mass,[150] and further

---

[147] *Inst.*, II.viii.16.

[148] *Ibid.*

[149] His refutation of the veneration of relics was published in 1543 under the title *Advertissement très utile du grand profit qui reviendroit à la chrestienté, s'il se faisoit inventoire de tous les corps sainctz, et*

his critical writings against the *so-called* Nicodemites.[151] He argued that God is the living and holy God who asks us to have true religion and holy life. Thus the first commandment truly regulated the religious duty of God's people.

2) The second commandment (Exod. 20:4-5)

The second commandment is concerning God's demand for lawful worship, namely spiritual worship of him which was established by God himself.[152] Calvin's whole life was a continuous fight against idolatry. All things that he did through his lifetime were entirely related to his ardent desire to establish a realistic and responsible Christianity, against false worship, false doctrine, and wicked idolatries. The relationship between God and his people is often compared to the relationship between husband and wife in the Bible. Calvin adopted this metaphor to show Christian's duty and obligation to God. As fidelity and faithfulness are demanded of husband and wife, so God asks true piety and loyalty of us in our lives.[153] Therefore, true religion necessarily should be connected to true Christian life. True religion is to focus on the living God with our entire hearts, but not on indulgence in lust or the desires of the flesh. In that sense, holy worship can neither be separated from sanctification, as no true Christian faith is either separated from true Christian social ethics. Thus, Calvin correlated Christians' confession closely with their pious and right life. It is not arbitrary, but gracious and purposive, in that God's commandment is to establish a right and holy society of His people. Accordingly, to worship images whether visible or not, or to subject God to our sensory perceptions cannot be possibly permitted, because God is Spirit, far exceeding our mind and heart, and because idolatry furthers a false religion and a false

---

reliques, qui sont tant en Italie, qu'en France, Allemaigne, Hespaigne, et autres yoraumes et pays. CO. 6. cols. 4-5-52. Also see John Calvin, *Three French Treatises*, ed. Francis M. Higman(London, 1970); Against astrology, in 1549, he published *the Advertissement contre l'astrologie qu'on appelle iudiciaire, et autres curiositéz qui regnent aujourd'huy au monde(Geneve). CO.* 7. cols. 509-542.

[150] Calvin strongly argued in his all editions of the *Institutes* that the Catholic Mass is the idolatrous ritual that destroys Christ's perfect, once-for-fall atonement and so desecrates the Lord's Supper. It was always dealt with in close relationship with his doctrines of civil government and Christian life from the first to the last edition. It means that Calvin always considered that idolatrous worship like the Catholic Mass could give a direct, bad influence upon Christian religious, socio-political life.

[151] Calvin wrote three kinds of refutations against *the Nicodemites* who disguised their reformed faith externally by attending to the Catholic Mass. The first articles(1543) was *Petit traicté, monstrant que c'est que doit faire un homme fidèle congnoissant la vérité de l'évangile quand il est entre les papistes. Avec une épistre du mesme argument. CO.* 6. cols. 537-588 ; And the second articule was published in 1544 under the title *Excuse de Iehan Calvin, à Messieurs les Nicodémites, sur la complaincte qu'ilz font de sa trop grand'rigueur. CO.* 6. cols. 589-614. Also see *Three French Treatises,* edited by Higman, pp. 131-153; Finally, he wrote to criticise them in 1552 through his *Quatre sermons...avec briefve exposition du Pseaume LXXXVII.* Also see W. de Greef, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-141.

[152] *Inst.*, II.viii.17-21.

morality, which destroy a sound (Christian) society, together with all the people in it.

3) The third commandment (Exod. 20:7)

The third commandment orders us to hallow God's name. It can be condensed into three major points: First, to glorify and magnify the greatness of his name with our tongues and hearts; secondly, not to abuse wrongly or wickedly God's Holy Word and his worshipful mysteries; finally, to refute distorted and wicked profanity or irreverence inflicted upon His name and to defend God's works in this world with our entire hearts. These points have much suggestive meaning for Christian life, because we Christians always bear the name of God in our life.

In relation to this commandment, Calvin treated the problem of oaths together.[154] He defined an oath as "calling God as witness to confirm the truth of our word."[155] If we think of oath in this direction, it is firmly implicated to telling the truth and to confessing our faith in God in the presence of other persons. Therefore, it becomes the issue of social ethics as well as of individual ethics, because the truth is actually the basic principle of social contract for the establishment of a just Christian society. So Calvin professed, "We are justly said to witness to our religion in invoking the name of the Lord as our witness. For thus we confess him to be eternal and immutable truth; and we call upon him not only the fit witness of truth above all others, but also the only affirmer of it, who is able to bring hidden things to light; then as the knower of hearts."[156] Telling the truth, therefore, among all falsehood and untruth could be regarded as the issue of our sanctification and Christian ethics. In that sense, this commandment has a clear link with the ninth commandment in relation to keeping society sound and truthful.[157] Here we find that there exists an inseparable correlation between the ultimate(love for God) and the penultimate(love for neighbours) in Calvin's theology.

Thus Christians should do their duty faithfully to tell the truth, because general

---

[153] *Inst.*, II.viii.18.

[154] Concerning making oaths, Calvin minutely dealt with his theological position in his refutation of the Ananptists(June 1, 1544), *Brièvе instruction pour armer tous bons fidèles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des anbaptistes. CO.* 7. cols. Especially see his attack against the *Confessio Schlattensis*(Schleitheim Confession), articles 7. Here Calvin shows his realistic, comprehensive interpretation of the Bible, concerning making oaths. It means that he did not refuse to make oaths, but made much of the right use of the oaths, in the absolute sense of the word. In this sense, he attacked the Anabaptists's naïve use of Jesus' teaching of oaths in the books of Gospel.

[155] *Inst.*, II.viii.23.

[156] *Ibid.*

[157] For further reasoning, refer to the section of the ninth commandment in this chapter.

inclination of sinners is to deceive, even though they are educated by ordinary morals of life as the Bible shows well in Romans 3:9-18.[158] Therefore, we can say that sanctification and the practice of Christian ethics are closely related to holding fast to the truth and to telling the truth under whatever conditions we may find ourselves. In that aspect, it can be connected with the realization of justice, because in many cases telling the truth means the exposure of people's immorality or social injustice. In this sense, we find the intimate relationship between hallowing of God's name or swearing in God's name and a just Christian life to tell the truth.

And yet, for Calvin, to swear falsely by God's name was also regarded as desecrating God. Likewise, perjury also dishonours God. So it should be prohibited to swear empty oaths by God's name, because it hurts God's holy name. When taking into consideration Calvin's treatises, the oaths that Calvin abhorred were closely related to profanity and desecration of God's holy name.[159] Thus Calvin stressed that oaths should be prudently and sincerely done. However, unlike the Anabaptists, he opposed the opinion that all oaths without exception should be prohibited and stopped. Rather, according to Calvin, a lawful oath could be called a sort of honour offered to God.[160] An oath has a proper twofold use: firstly, to confirm and prove the things already accomplished, and secondly, to carry out successfully our duty which we will perform in the future in relation to people's lawful request.[161] He interpreted Jesus' prohibition of oath (Matt. 5:34-37) in broad harmony with all other instructions of the Bible, especially with the Old Testament.[162] In this sense, Calvin criticized the Anabaptists' argument that any oath should not be done at all, because they did neither consider Jesus' prohibition of the oath in the context of the whole Bible,[163] nor in a concrete and real social situations in which Jesus said his prohibition of the oaths, but inclined toward extremely separatist, ideal conception of the oaths parting away from a material, social context or background.

According to Calvin, Jesus is the same and one God identical with the Father and therefore they cannot be different from each other concerning the oath, as he argued; "Now the eternal God not only permits oaths as a legitimate thing under the law (which should be

---

[158] *Comm. on* Rom. 3:9-18.

[159] *Briève instruction pour armer tous bons fidèles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des* anabaptistes, CO. 7.94.

[160] *Ibid. CO.* 7.93.

[161] *Ibid. CO.* 7.94.

[162] *Ibid. CO.* 7.95-98.

[163] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Vol.1. Matt. 5 :33-37.

sufficient), but commands their use in case of necessity [Ex. 22:10-11]. But Christ declares that he is one with the Father [John 10:30]; that he brings nothing but what the Father has commanded [John 10:18]; that his teaching is not from himself [John 7:16], etc."[164] Here we find that Calvin is a considerably realistic, synthetic expositor of both Testaments. He considered the Old Testament in the context of the New Testament and vice versa at the same time. Thus he could evade the risk of being fragmentary or one-sided in the interpretation of the Bible, and at the same time could show his balanced and comprehensive understanding of the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments.[165]

In this sense, Calvin could permit the use of lawful oaths affirmatively in five cases as follows: firstly, in relation to a testimony to the truth; secondly, when an oath is related to glorification of God and love for neighbour; thirdly, when an oath is necessary in order to confirm something important; fourthly, when the purpose and intention of a vower is right and proper; finally, when an oath about the truth furthers to glorify God's name.[166] All these arguments are intimately conjunct with concrete, social circumstances. Here we find Calvin's realistic, concrete understanding toward oath-taking in the social context, which is in many ways contrary to the Anabaptists. Then, he enumerated the right cases of lawful oaths which people of the Bible made. According to Calvin, patriarchs, prophets, and holy kings of the Old Testament, and ancient church fathers made oaths following God's example. Besides, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah also made oaths[167]

Calvin argued that an oath is an order approved by God, which puts an end to all controversies (*le serment est pour mettre fin à toutes controversies*).[168] He considered lawful oath which was made by God's name, as what God ordered and willed.[169] Thus, for Calvin, an oath is to confirm the promise that was made lawfully.[170] Calvin, then, took some examples of oaths, which were used in order to confirm people's loyalty and true faith to God, from the Bible(2 Chron. 15:14 - King Asa; 2 Chron. 34:32 - King Josiah; Nehem. 10:30 - Esra et Nehemiah).[171] In this sense, we come to know that believers can and have to

---

[164] *Inst.*, II.viii.26.
[165] *Inst.*, II.x.1-23.
[166] *Briève instruction pour armer tous bons fidèles contre les erreurs de la secte commune des* anabaptistes, *CO.* 7.99.
[167] *Ibid. CO.* 7.100.
[168] *Ibid.*
[169] *Ibid. CO.* 7.99.
[170] *Ibid. CO.* 7.101-102.
[171] *Ibid. CO.* 7.102.

make an oath on the basis of God's faithful grace of promise.[172] Thus we realize that true and lawful oaths, in other words, telling the truth becomes a vital foundation to keep society sound from all kinds of falsehood and hypocrisy. Because we know that one man's untruth, namely the falsehood of Achan in chapter 7 of the Book of Joshua[173] was not just considered to be his own sin, but rather to be the sin of the whole of Israel. Even though one family committed theft and perjury, God's judgment was passed upon the whole Israelites.

A lawful oath was also a very important element in reforming Geneva according to God's Word, because developments like Servetus' false testimony, the Libertines' intemperate antinomianism, or Cardinal Satoleto's distorted criticism against reformed faith during Calvin's absence in Geneva, etc.,[174] could spoil the Genevan Reformation in a moment. Besides, there were many opponents who offended Calvin's Reformation by their false instructions, namely religiously distorted doctrines or instructions under the pretext of God's name.[175]

Thus, for Calvin, all the words in the Bible were compactly connected to each other as a network, without excluding any part from it. Jesus, according to him, came to complete the law injured by false leaders, and therefore to revive the real meaning of it according to its original intention. In this regard, for him, a just oath should serve to glorify God's name and to edify his neighbours including Christian brothers, in consideration of the biblical instructions. Therefore, it is not just related to the word itself which should be spoken, but to the life itself which should be lived holily. Calvin, in this respect, argued that our life definitely must be joined with obedience to the authority of Christ and to glorification of Christ, which is really the instruction of the Bible. So he argued, "life must be regulated in such a manner, that whatever we say or do may be wholly governed by the authority of Christ, and may have an eye to his glory as the mark."[176] Thus, to glorify Lord's name and to edify brothers were, in fact, two main principles of Calvin's theology[177]

---

[172] *Ibid.*

[173] *Comm. on.* Josh. 7:1-26.

[174] Catholic Bishop, Sadoleto's letter to the Council and the population of Geneva is dated March 18, 1539. In it he regrets that the inhabitants of Geneva have broken away from "our mother, the church." According to him, a Christian ought to be guided by the Roman Catholic Church, which establishes the norms for a Christian life. He attacks the ministers of Geneva, especially Farel, portraying them as deceivers and innovaters. W. de Greef, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-153.

[175] See Richard C. Gamble, ed., *Calvin's Opponents,* Articles on Calvin and Calvinism: A Fourteen-Volume Anthology of Scholarly Articles, vol.5, (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992).

[176] *Comm. on* Col. 3:17.

[177] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 10:31.

related to the establishment of a biblical, just society, based upon a firmly lawful foundation.

4) The fourth commandment (Exod. 20:8-10)

The fourth commandment is concerned with keeping the Sabbath Day holy. Basically the seventh day, namely the Sabbath was a blessed day to celebrate what God did in his creation.[178] On that day, God rested from his work (Exod. 20:11; 31:17; Deut. 5:14). But it should not be thought literally, because "inasmuch as God sustains the world by his power, governs it by his providence, cherishes and even propagates all creatures, he is constantly at work" and if He "withdraw his hand a little, all things would immediately perish and dissolve into nothing." Therefore, for Calvin, it should be interpreted as that "God ceased from all his work, when he desisted from the creation of new kinds of things."[179] Thus Calvin denied a deistic understanding of God, but stressed God's continuous, economic works in the world.

Actually, the first human pair could enjoy eternal rest with God. After Adam's Fall, however, they lost the eternal rest and the meaning of the Sabbath day was also changed to a foreshadowing or symbol of eternal rest in heaven, which the elect finally would enjoy. Thus then, the Sabbath day became "a promise" about the perfect thing that was still not fulfilled, as well as God's enjoinment to be strictly obeyed in the Old Testament (Num. 15:32-36; cf. Ex. 31:13ff; 35:2).[180] Thus, here we find the peculiar character of this day related to both ultimate future and penultimate reality. This tensional relationship was neither abrogated in the New Testament nor in subsequent Church history. Here we find the tension between the "already" and the "not-yet." Therefore, it is necessary to introduce the sanctification as a motif into the discussion of the Sabbath.[181]

Calvin explained the meaning of keeping this day holy in three main points: first, to take a spiritual rest in God, secondly, to have a drill of piety meditation upon God's Word and works in a stated day and place, and thirdly, to give a day of rest to servants and labourers.[182] If the first two points are related to piety, the third point is related to socio-political issues. In relation to the third point, Calvin argued, the Sabbath should be

---

[178] *Comm. on* Gen. 2:3.
[179] *Comm. on* Gen. 2:2.
[180] *Inst.*, II.viii.29.
[181] *Inst.*, II.viii.30.
[182] *Inst.*, II.viii.28.

kept "to give surcease from labour to servants and workmen(Deut. 5:14-5; Exod. 20:10; 23:12)."[183] Then, he also strongly argued, "We should not inhumanly oppress those subject to us."[184] Thus, Calvin strongly gave a point to the motif of justice and human rights, which is inseparably related to the establishment of an equitable and just society.

However, in relation to the first two points, too, the Commandment has an important function connected with sanctification and regeneration. It is a matter of people's "*separation*" "from the profane nations to be God's peculiar inheritance," as the Sabbath's separation from the other six days reveals itself. Calvin commented about it as follows, "the Prophet means that something else was intended by the Sabbath, that the Israelites might acknowledge themselves separated by God, so as to experience him for their Father in all things."[185] In addition, Calvin correlated the Sabbath with "*sanctification*" as its object.[186] He argued, "The Sabbath was the sign of mortification. God, therefore, sanctifies us; because when we remain in our natural state we are there mixed with others, and have nothing different from unbelievers: hence, therefore, it is necessary to begin by dying to ourselves and the world, and by exercising self-denial; and this depends on the grace of God."[187] We find here all elements related to Calvin's doctrine of sanctification: mortification, self-denial, and God's grace.[188] Calvin also explained it in conjunction with *regeneration by the Spirit* or *vivification in the Spirit.* So he argued, "God's Church was separated from the profane nations that he might regenerate it by his Spirit."

Calvin, in turn, discovered two momentous themes of mortification and vivification in this Commandment. "They should each rest from their works, and so conform themselves to God's example. For we are said to rest from our works when we are dead to ourselves; and allow ourselves to be governed by God's Spirit, when we live in him, and he lives in us."[189] This argument shows that man should be freed from the slavery of work, by the rest in the Spirit of God, namely by vivification of the Spirit, especially on the Sabbath.

Thus, we come to honour this day, also in relation to our sanctification. The fact

---

[183] *Inst.*, II.viii.34; Luther also emphasized that workmen whether men or women, should take a rest in order to restore vitality of the body on the Sabbath in his *Larger Cathecism*(1529), especially in the article 83 of the first part which deals with the Decalogue. See Theodore G. Tappert, trans. & ed. *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), pp. 357-462.

[184] Inst., II.viii.34: *Comm. on the Harmony of the Laws*, vol.2, Exod. 20:10; Deut. 5:14,15.

[185] *Comm, on* Eze. 20:12.

[186] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Laws*, vol. 2, Exod. 31:12-17.

[187] *Comm, on* Eze. 20:12.

[188] *Comm. on* Heb. 4:10; *Inst.*, II.viii.29.

that we should keep a special day for God in this world means that we are still in a penultimate world, where there is still not a complete and eternal repose, and that we have to pursue our holiness continuously. Therefore, it reveals us as pilgrims in the world. This penultimate world is the place in which we just foretaste the heavenly repose, and prepare for the ultimate, heavenly life.[190]

Furthermore, for Calvin, the Sabbath Day was considered as a foreshadowing of Jesus' coming, as he argued, "with whose presence all figures vanish; he is the body, at whose appearance the shadows are left behind. He is, I say, the true fulfilment of the Sabbath."[191] The rest, which we enjoy in Jesus in the world, is only the foretaste of the heavenly eternal rest. So according to Calvin, compared to the Jews, Christians have a very different understanding as regards the Sabbath Day, because for the former it was just a foreshadowing and a symbol of, but for the latter it becomes a foretaste and a part of the real and eternal repose which we will enjoy fully in heaven. In this sense, the observance of the Lord's Day demands from us our continuous, pious life. This is connected with the works of the Spirit, meditation on God's Word, participation in the worship of the church, and the practice of love for neighbours.

However, this commandment does not have any relation to our legalistic, superstitious, or external observance of the day. Its legal and literal observance was annulled by Jesus' coming,[192] as was the case in the superstitious keeping of other days. So now it can be observed only in relation to its spiritual purpose rather than its lawful and superstitious observance.[193] Rather, the Sabbath should be kept in relation to glorifying God in a stated day.[194] In this sense, Calvin was not a strict legalist in keeping the Sabbath Day. Nevertheless, he emphasized the importance of keeping holy a stated day as a Lord's Day in order to keep a proper order of God and because of our weakness as the flesh in the world.[195] Here Calvin made much of realistic reasons in relation to our realistic, spiritual necessity. But, for Calvin, the issue at stake here was the spirit and attitude of keeping the Sabbath Day. Thus, Calvin made much of our obedience to God's commandment, our drill of piety to try to keep the Lord's Day, and also the principle of justice and equity in relation

---

[189] *Comm, on* Eze. 20:12.
[190] *Comm. on* Heb. 13:14.
[191] *Inst.*, II.viii.31.
[192] *Inst.*, II.viii.31.
[193] *Comm. on* Heb., 4:10
[194] *Inst.*, II.viii.32.
[195] *Inst.*, II.viii.33.

to the protection of the human rights of the socially weak, according to which Christians should lead their lives.

It was also an "external symbol or sign" "that God had set [His people] apart as a holy and peculiar people to himself."[196] It means that as a symbol or sign, the Sabbath marks itself as God's perpetual promise of eternal repose in the heaven. He defined the nature of our eternal rest, as related to the ultimate union with God in heaven: "the true rest of the faithful which lasts to all eternity is to conform to that of God. As it is the highest human blessedness to be united with God, so that ought also to be man's ultimate purpose, to which all his plans and actions should be directed."[197]

In that sense, "[the Sabbath day] contained a spiritual mystery, was a sacrament, since it was a visible figure of an invisible grace."[198] So Calvin stressed its character as a mutual agreement between God and man, as was the case in the Sacraments, arguing that "there is a mutual agreement in the sacraments, by which God binds us to himself, and we mutually pledge our faith."[199] Thus the Sabbath day ultimately symbolises the heavenly, eternal repose. But the yearning for eternal rest should not make our lives in the world pessimistic or passive, but rather make us practice positively Christian life in the worship of God and the love of others.

Thus, so far, we examined the first Table of the Ten Commandments in detail. The first Table is directly related to the proper worship of God. Nonetheless, it has an abundant and suggestive implication for Christian social ethics. Here we find that in relation to Christian social ethics and sanctification, it should not be separated from the second Table of the Ten Commandments. It means that our worshipping life should be inseparably joined with serving our neighbours and our societies. In other words, we can say that worship should be closely connected with pursuing justice and love in the world.

4. The second Table

The second Table basically aims at accomplishing true and pure relationships between human beings, and therefore it ultimately intends to establish a sound Christian community, namely a holy community, organised according to God's Word. Therefore, the

---

[196] *Comm, on* Eze. 20:12.
[197] *Comm. on* Heb., 4:3,10.
[198] *Ibid.*
[199] *Comm, on* Eze. 20:12.

second Table is a cornerstone for the formation of a sound, Christian social ethics. Here the problems of justice, equity, and holiness will be dealt with briefly.

5) The fifth commandment (Exod. 20:12)

Calvin interpreted the fifth commandment as that which enjoins us to obey and respect "those whom God has placed over us."[200] Here he enlarged family ethics into social ethics. Calvin seems quite conservative on this issue. All authority given fathers as well as rulers has been granted by God, so "whether they are worthy or unworthy of this honour," they should be honoured and obeyed according to this commandment. In this sense, Calvin looked like a conservative institutionalist. He argued that, "those who abusively or stubbornly violate parental authority are monsters, not men! Hence the Lord commands that all those disobedient to their parents be put to death. For since they do not recognize those whose efforts brought them into the light of day, they are not worthy of its benefits."[201] Thus, Calvin made much of the basic order to constitute and preserve society. Therefore, to show honour to parents or rulers means to treat them with due courtesies like "reverence, obedience, and gratefulness."[202] Accordingly, in a broad sense, filial duty is basically not so different from loyalty to rulers. Rather, filial duty or loyalty should be regarded as a good expedient to serve God with glory and honour due to Him.

However, Calvin also left us some room to disobey parents or rulers in relation to worshipping and obeying God. In this sense, he shows that he is not an absolutist about his institutionalism, especially in conjunction with worship of God. Worship and obedience to God are the most important principles to consider, when we honour those who are placed over us by God. Calvin stressed the principle, "in the Lord."[203] On that account, although they are our parents, our kings or rulers, if they make us violate God's law or disobey God, their instructions or orders definitely should be rejected or disobeyed, because God's commandment is the foremost priority in our life. In this sense, Calvin's apology for reformed Christianity against king François I was legitimate and reasonable. In the same context, his successors also could develop people's rights of resistance against tyrannical dictators who oppressed people cruelly and coerced people to follow Catholicism against their will.

---

[200] *Inst.*, II.viii.35.
[201] *Inst.*, II.viii.36.
[202] *Ibid.*

6) The sixth commandment (Exod. 20:13)

Calvin explained this commandment, "You shall not murder," in connection with all aspects of safeguarding people's lives.[204] As with the proclamation of Jesus, Calvin also thought murder begins in the heart. He identified anger or hatred born in the heart with homicide begun in the heart. Therefore, to prevent murder can be interpreted actively to recover love for neighbours. Thus this commandment comes to have a twofold biblical basis: "man is both the image of God, and our flesh."[205] The former fact signifies man's dignity and his divine origin, but the latter symbolises man's feebleness or creatureliness, which definitely needs others' help and protection. Thus, in this commandment, man's dignity and creatureliness complement each other. Therefore we know that this commandment, on the one hand, asks of us to respect man as God's image, and on the other hand, to love man as our fellowman. Thus Calvin found human dignity from the fact that man was created in the image of God.

So, this commandment is directly related to Christ's instruction in Matthew 5:21-22. According to Calvin, "the doctrine of law," which enables the beginning and the completion of "a holy life" requires "a perfect love of God and of our neighbour"(Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18.).[206] Thus Calvin counted love as the highest perfection, in order to establish a holy society full of a true love for neighbours. Love is the most precious virtue in Christian life.

In this context, we know that Calvin's Geneva as well as Bucer's Strasbourg were the cities of religious toleration. Especially, in Calvin's Geneva, we can find there had been a large influx of religious refugees from France and other adjacent countries, since from 1542 on. This was also the case in Strasbourg during Calvin's stay there. Calvin himself stayed there for three years between 1538-1541, and enjoyed religious freedom and toleration fully. In some sense, Strasbourg during Calvin's three-year sojourn became the very model for his later development of religious toleration in Geneva. Although there was the unhappy event of Servetus' death in 1553, nevertheless Calvin's Geneva was an exemplary city. Many reformers and reformed Christians at that time aspired to go there someday in their lifetime. The door of the city was almost always open to accept religious

---

[203] *Inst.*, II.viii.38.
[204] *Inst.*, II.viii.39.
[205] *Inst.*, II.viii.40.

refugees from other neighbouring countries, except some exceptional cases for public security and other complicated reasons.

The majority of refugees in Geneva were French reformed Christians who fled from France in order to evade religious persecutions or burning at the stake. They were in many cases aided by the *Bourse Française*[207] to settle down safely in Geneva. Although there were many poor refugees who caused native Genevans anxieties about their safety and the maintenance of social peace, it was also true that many were French bourgeois who belonged to the middle or upper classes and who engaged themselves in commerce and industry. In this sense, it was true that hospitality and xenophobia coexisted in Calvin's Geneva. French bourgeois refugees aided the development of Genevan city-economy and so became an aid to Calvin's stable and successful Reformation against his opponents' criticism. As a matter of fact, in Calvin's later time, there were more French refugees in number than the native population of Geneva. Really the former were main supporters of Calvin's Reformation, whose support was the substantial element of Calvin's victory in his Reformation since 1555 onward, over against the bellicose Libertines. William G. Naphy argued that the support of the French bourgeois refugees was definitely an important element of the consolidation of Calvin's Genevan Reformation.[208] Thus, we now find that Calvin's tolerance and acceptance of religious refugees from other countries in Geneva, from the viewpoint of the sixth commandment, contributed very much to the success of his Genevan Reformation.

7) The seventh commandment (Exod. 20:14)

This commandment, 'You shall not commit adultery' is related to keeping people from all sexual uncleanness.[209] Dealing with the seventh commandment, Calvin contrasts lawful marriage with lustful intemperance of the flesh. In his exposition of the Hebrews 13:4, therefore, he considered that marriage was set in opposition to fornication by the Apostle as a remedy for that evil.[210] In relation to sex, modesty and purity are biblical virtues, which God asks of us. Although he made much of temperance and purity

---

[206] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels*, Matt. 5:21.

[207] About this, we will examine minutely in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

[208] William G. Naphy, *Calvin and the Consolidation of the Genevan Reformation*(Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 139. For the more detailed explanation of the numbers of refugees in Calvin's Geneva, see pp. 121-139.

[209] *Inst.*, II.viii.41.

[210] *Comm. on* Heb. 13:4.

concerning sexual desires, Calvin did not deal with the importance of marriage more comprehensively and concretely, when we consider that it is a far more important institution than only legitimately admitted conjugal, sexual relations. He abhorred all extramarital lust of the flesh which runs counter to the pious Christian life. In this sense, Calvin's concern was mainly on the holiness and purity of Christians before God. He pinpointed a twofold reason that man should marry: namely, "through the condition of our nature, and by the lust aroused after the Fall."[211] The former is explained by God's saying that "it is not good for the man to be alone and therefore God will make a helper suitable for him(Gen. 2:18, NIV)." It means that celibacy is by nature, neither good nor biblical in its basic sense. The latter means man's fallen and sinful situation after his Fall.

For me, however, these two reasons are not enough to explain the essential meaning of marriage which God instituted, because God tied man and woman as husband and wife through his officiating at the first wedding in Eden(Gen. 2:18-25). Is a marriage just a kind of shelter for those who cannot endure sexual lust or intemperance? Here, we have to consider the answer of this question, together with Calvin's expositions on Genesis 1:26-28 which set forth materially the vocation of human beings as "birth, breeding, and flourishing of the offsprings," and deputyship of human beings as the initiator of culture.[212] According to his allusions to man's deputyship, Calvin's view of marriage seems too narrow or insufficient to identify the full, essential meaning of marriage instituted by God. In this respect, Calvin should have emphasized the positive and constructive meaning of marriage, in *Institutes* II.viii.41-44. He just mentioned, "Those who are troubled with incontinence and cannot prevail in the struggle should turn to matrimony to help them preserve chastity in the degree of their calling."[213] Of course it is true that Calvin's viewpoint of marriage is here almost similar to St. Paul's.

Celibacy was also not so natural, when we consider Calvin's regulation of a human being as "a social animal."[214] In that sense, Calvin basically objected to celibacy, except in some special cases. As regards celibacy, Calvin thought that God's calling should be considered to have priority over everything. To that extent it could be called God's special gift that was given to only a few members of the church. But basically Calvin objected to Catholic celibacy because he thought that it is not God's original plan and also

---

[211] *Inst.*, II.viii.42.
[212] See *Comm. on Gen.* 1:26-28.
[213] *Ibid.*

their celibacy was not well kept purely and chastely, but destroyed the church, namely Christian community by breaking God's regulations.

In this respect, Calvin proved himself to be a realist about marriage. He considered marriage as a natural and proper thing to those who could not cope with sexual desires of the flesh, and who cannot live without a wife or a husband. However, he asked celibates to be ready and prompt to do all the duties of piety. Because unless God's special grace, all people are without exception slaves of the lustful desires of the flesh. Calvin's understanding of human beings as slaves of "the lustful desires of the flesh" is quite similar to Augustine's view of human beings as slaves of "concupiscence," not to mention St. Paul's comprehension of human beings as slaves of "sinful desires of the flesh"(Rom. 1:24; 7:5; Col. 3:5). With this subject, Calvin was quite negative in his understanding of man's sinful state. So he judged hastily that "the greater part of men is subject to the vice of incontinence"[215] and prescribed marriage for the vice of incontinence, as the only shelter or corrective.

Thus, he brought our marriage or sexual problems before God's eyes and asked of us to obey God's enjoinment about marital purity and holiness. However, Calvin was well aware that there could not be any absolute standard regarding whether to marry or not. So Calvin advised people to judge realistically and reasonably according to their own callings. Therewith, Calvin, in addition argued that everyone should try to follow the principle of piety sincerely. Thus, he represented himself as a moderate realist, but not as a strict legalist. As regards this issue, we also have to consider sincerely that there were a considerable number of cases of adultery in Geneva, including adultery committed by Calvin's brother's wife, Anne Le Fert[216] and another adultery committed by his daughter-in-law, Judith Stordeur,[217] which incurred church discipline in the Consistory and a series of lawsuits in the Council. Robert M. Kingdon argued, on the basis of his research of the historical documents of the Genevan Consistory of Calvin's age, that in many adultery cases, Protestant religious leaders, including Calvin, supported the petitions for divorce, on account of the broken marriage caused by adultery, through moral consideration which they

---

[214] *Comm. on* Gen. 2:18.

[215] *Inst.*, II.viii.43.

[216] Robert M. Kingdon, *Adultery and Divorce in Calvin's Geneva* (Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England: Harvard University Press, 1995). This book is very realistic and historical research of adultery and divorce in Calvin's Geneva based upon Philip E. Hughes, *Registers of the Consistory of Geneva in the Time of Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1966).

[217] John T. McNeill, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

found articulated in the Bible.[218] Here we find that Calvin was a reasonable and realistic theological thinker (rather than a naïve speculative thinker) who fully considered the sinfulness and weakness of a human being. Kingdon depicted the situations in Geneva related to divorce cases caused by adultery as follows: "in the entire period of Calvin's ministry in Geneva, from 1541 to 1564, only twenty-six divorces, little more than one a year, were granted for adultery, not many more for other causes."[219] This was only the tip of an iceberg related to the moral, sexual depravity in Geneva. It means that Geneva was definitely in need of a strong ethical reformation in relation to people's moral relaxation, intemperance, and licentiousness. Lindsay explained the relaxed moral situations of Geneva during those days as follows:

> The young Protestant Churches of Switzerland, with the very doubtful exception of Geneva after 1541, refused to allow the introduction of the disciplinary usages of the primitive Church. ... It was universally recognised that the standard of moral living all over French Switzerland was very low, and that stringent measures were required to improve it.[220]

To that extent it also means that in other sense, the Genevan Reformation was in no way an easy thing. Because, for Calvin, reformation was correlated to the reform of people's immoral lives as well as of wrong systems and bad practices. In this sense, it seems true that the Consistory was asked to have a stronger power to discipline people's lives in order to restore the moral order and religious holiness in the city against opponents. The real fact, however, was that the Libertines did not like Calvin's strict regulations about people's moral and religious life. Nevertheless, it is also true that Calvin finally succeeded in the Genevan Reformation at least since 1555 on, by the help of his faithful supporters, many of whom were the French refugees. It was, on the one hand, the victory against the political Libertines, and on the other hand, the victory in spiritual warfare against people's moral depravity.

As regards marriage, Calvin asked of Christians to observe more than what the civil law asked. Calvin saw the marriage as "the rule which had been given them for a devout and holy life."[221] This can be, in fact, called one of the essential definitions of marriage which should be emphasised more positively. "Holy matrimony" as Calvin called

---

[218] Robert M. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 176-177.
[219] *Ibid.*, p. 176.
[220] Thomas M. Lindsay, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.
[221] *Comm. on Harmony of the Gospels*, vol.1, Matt. 5:31-32.

it so, was "a lively image of the sacred union which we have with the Son of God" and as well, "the covenant, which ought to stand more firm and indissoluble than any in this world."[222] Thus, Calvin made much of the sacred bond of marriage. He argued, "The bond of marriage is too sacred to be dissolved at the will, or rather at the licentious pleasure, of men. Though the husband and the wife are united by mutual consent, yet God binds them by an indissoluble tie, so that they are not afterwards at liberty to separate." However, when adultery was committed so that marriage could not any more be sustained, he admitted the petitions for divorce at the Council by way of investigation by the Consistory. So he argued, "an exception is added, *except on account of fornication:* for the woman, who has basely violated the marriage-vow, is justly cast off; because it was by her fault that the tie was broken, and the husband set at liberty."[223]

Here we find that Calvin followed faithfully not only biblical, but also realistic solutions to solve the problems incurred by violation of the marriage-vow, considering both people's sinfulness and the sacred bond of marriage. It is utterly different from the Catholic understanding of marriage, because even today they do not permit divorce. Kingdon depicted well the concrete situations happening in Calvin's Geneva: "John Calvin, the unquestioned leader of the Genevan church, explicitly and emphatically supported the petitions for divorce from Pierre Ameaux, his own brother Antoine, and Galeazzo Carracciolo. It was also true that Calvin supported a number of other petitions for divorce in his period. In this support he generally took with him his fellow members of the Consistory."[224]

Thus, Calvin opened the way for legitimate divorce to solve the broken marriage incurred by adultery. But in this situation, it is difficult to judge whether Calvin's attitude was right or not. Because we, today, are so much concerned about the rapidly growing rate of divorce, in fact, it is not so good news, because it means that many families are broken and many social problems related to divorce are taking place these days. Kingdon ascertained, on the basis of E. Monter's research, that it was only two hundred years after the Reformation that divorce became relatively common.[225] Is it, then, strange, if we

---

[222] Calvin, "To the Protector Somerset," in *Letters of John Calvin: Selected from the Bonnet Edition with an introductory biographical sketch,* (Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), p. 103. This letter was sent to the Duke of Somerset in Geneva, 22 October 1548, in order to encourge him to complete an evangelical reformation in England according to the instructions of the Bible.

[223] *Comm. on Harmony of the Gospels*, vol.1, Matt. 5:31-32.

[224] Robert M. Kingdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 177.

[225] *Ibid.*, p. 179; E. William Monter, "Women in Calvinist Geneva," *Signs,* 6 (1980), pp. 195-196.

emphasize the importance of the bond of marriage, alongside of sincere consideration of sexual purity, for the establishment and sustenance of the healthy family and society? We realize that God's judgment upon King David's adultery with Bathsheba showed us God's abhorrence of adultery. The fact that God sent Nathan the prophet to king David to deliver God's judgment upon him(2 Sam. 12:1-15) shows how seriously God considered King David's adultery. Consequently, we know that David's adultery was not individual sin, but very severe, social sin which affected his country and his descendents.

Expounding 1 Corinthians 10:8(cf. Num. 25:1-9), Calvin proved that adultery was severely abhorrent to God. Basically, for him, it was the sin committed against God's commandment. He commented, "the punishment of this vice, also, ought to alarm us, and lead us to bear in mind, how loathsome impure lusts are to God, for there perished in one day twenty-three thousand, or as Moses says, twenty-four (thousand)."[226] Thus, Calvin recognized that fornication is a deadly sin before God. It was *de facto* "a sacrilege"[227] which destroys the whole country. Thus, he clearly argued that adulteries and adulterers should be disciplined strictly to preserve the holiness and purity of church and state.

> More than this, Scripture clearly points out to us, that by reason of blasphemies a whole country is defiled. As concerning adulteries, we, who call ourselves Christians, ought to take great shame to ourselves that even the heathen have exercised greater rigour in their punishment of such than we do, seeing even that some among us only laugh at them. ... As for whoredom, it ought to be quite enough for us that St. Paul compares it to sacrilege, inasmuch as by its means the temples of God, which our bodies are, are profaned. Be it remembered also, that whoremongers and drunkards are banished from the kingdom of God, on such terms that we are forbidden to converse with them, whence it clearly follows, that they ought not to be endured in the Church. We see herein the cause why so many rods of judgment are at this very day lifted up over the earth. For the more easily men pardon themselves in such enormities, the more certainly will God take vengeance on them.[228]

In this sense, Calvin argued that God's punishment of it should be good instruction for us as well as for the Corinthians.[229]

Secondly, according to Calvin, fornication destroys marriage that God instituted; to the extent that it means to infringe and destroy God's sacred sovereignty above marriage and so necessarily incurs God's judgment upon those who committed adultery.[230] Thus Calvin took a serious view of the purity and holiness of marriage. According to him, the

---

[226] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 10:8.
[227] Calvin, "To the Protector Somerset," p. 103.
[228] Calvin, "To the Protector Somerset," pp. 102-103.
[229] *Comm. on* 1 Cor. 10:8.
[230] *Comm. on* Heb. 13:4.

purity and holiness of the heart as well as the soundness and rectitude of the outward behaviours should be respected before God's law because "the law of God not only has authority over the life, in a political view, to form the outward manners, but that it requires pure and holy affections of the heart."[231] In this context, Calvin criticised that religious leaders of the Israelites changed God's spiritual law about marriage, which had been given them for a devout and holy life, and which the Israelites had to obey faithfully before God,[232] into their relative civil law. To that extent, he then strongly put stress upon the necessity of strict discipline in his letter to the Protector Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, Duke of Somerset who was Regent of England, under the minority of Edward VI,[233] as follows:

> Wherefore, to prevent [God's] wrath, I entreat of you, Monseigneur, to hold a tight rein, and to take order, that those who hear the doctrine of the Gospel, approve their Christianity by a life of holiness. For as doctrine is the soul of the Church for quickening, so discipline and the correction of vices are like the nerves to sustain the body in a state of health and vigour. The duty of bishops and curates is to keep watch over that, to the end that the Supper of our Lord may not be polluted by people of scandalous lives.[234]

8) The eighth commandment (Exod. 20:15)

According to Calvin, the eighth commandment that "you shall not steal" implies the issue of justice related to the use and preservation of our possessions. Calvin, first of all, acknowledged the existence of the providence of God who distributes everything to man according to His will.[235] In this sense, a natural circulation of riches or a lawful distribution of possessions, without any unlawful monopoly or exploitation, means to follow God's dispensation of the world. Here Calvin seemed to deal with the rights of private property and free trade based upon God's freely dispensing will and man's stewardship of property. But it should not be misunderstood that, behind this kind of understanding, there also lies Calvin's obvious idea of equity and justice to consider vocational responsibility as a steward before God and the duty of love for neighbours.[236] Calvin was well aware of all absurd situations related to economic injustice like theft, monopoly, usury, and so on. Those economic sins were really sins against God's dispensation as well as against neighbours.

---

[231] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Vol.1. Matt. 5:27.
[232] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Vol.1. Matt. 5:31-32.
[233] Calvin, "To the Protector Somerset," p. 87. See footnote 1 in order to know Somerset more in detail.
[234] *Ibid.*, p. 103.
[235] *Inst.*, II.viii.45.

Thus, sincerely considering the problem of safety and order of society, Calvin dealt with social justice in relation to possessions. He called into question all unjust activities of extortion, fraud, oppression, false balances and damage inflicted upon the weak, the poor, and the good. Many prophets' instructions in the Old Testament were, as a matter of fact, against such robberies, extortions inflicted upon the weak and the poor. Calvin asked of us to exhibit justice and rectitude in our Christian lives before God and men.

However, besides criticizing wicked, unjust conduct, Calvin took seriously the Christian's duty as God's servant to do good for his neighbours. According to him, we Christians should live our lives in this world as debtors to our neighbours. In this sense, we have some rules of love to keep before God and our neighbours: as people who obey their rulers in the order of our Lord; as the rulers who have to rule people with God's Word; as the ministers who deliver God's Word to the people of God and care for them; as the believers who receive their ministers as God's messengers; as parents who nourish, care, and teach their children with affection and kindness; as the youth who treat the old with respect; as the aged who guide the youth with their wisdom; as servants who serve their masters faithfully; and as masters who treat their servants as their brothers with affection and tenderness.[237]

All these things enumerated actually seem like humanistic, ethical regulations of human relationships. In fact, as regards the second Table, it is difficult to find a substantial difference between the divine law and the natural law. But the most important difference between them is that for the former, Christians know clearly who gives the orders that, but for the latter, unbelievers act according to conscience and the coercion of the positive law related to the natural law without any clear knowledge of the Lawgiver. According to Calvin, for Christians, the natural law has actually the same function as the divine law, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. In that sense, we know that a good Confucian also would teach this kind of morality, and unbelievers would live quite morally in some cases. But we should not forget that there is a definite difference between this commandment and other humane morals, because in this commandment, contrary to other morals, we know and meet our Lawgiver who gave us this commandment. Thus, Calvin interpreted the eighth commandment as a positive social ethic, which encourages us to do good things for our neighbour's benefit.

---

[236] *Ibid.*
[237] *Inst.*, II.viii.46.

9) The ninth commandment (Exod. 20:16)

This commandment is a prohibition of false testimony. It demands from us to tell the truth before God and other people. Calvin made much of the reliability and truthfulness of words in our talk, because the truthful conversation can be a momentous basis to constitute a sound and reliable society. In this sense, two things should be cut off from our lives: The first thing was to "injure our neighbours' reputation by evil intent and vicious backbiting" and the second thing to "deprive them of their goods by lying and even by defamation."[238] Here Calvin included all the sayings that can be said, whether in a court of law or in a private discussion. Besides, Calvin also warned against false oaths made in the name of God in the court, because it could make society mistrustful and chaotic by destroying social order, reliance, and belief which compose the roots of society. Moreover, it is as a matter of fact, blasphemy against holy God, as we have seen in the section of the third commandment. We sufficiently dealt with this issue in our treatment of the third commandment, so it is unnecessary to deal with this issue again.[239]

In the meantime, we know that a truthful word can save a whole city, as Calvin showed in his *Commentary on Jonah*, but, to the contrary, a false testimony can destroy it. Therefore, it is a fact that a word is very important to establishing and maintaining a healthy society. Calvin criticized the evil intention of people's hearts before he reproached their evil words like lies, backbitings, or perjury, etc. He, furthermore, stressed that the principle of love should be kept in our conversations with others.

> Therefore, if there is any true fear and love of God in us, let us take care, as far as is possible and expedient and as love requires, not to yield our tongue or our ears to evilspeaking and caustic wit, and not to give our minds without cause to sly suspicion. But as fair interpreters of the words and deeds of all, let us sincerely keep their honour safe in our judgment, our ears, and our tongue.[240]

Thus, Calvin well argued that this commandment is also closely connected to the theme of Christian's sanctification and social ethics.

10) The tenth commandment (Exod. 20:17)

This last commandment is a prohibition against covetousness. Annotating this

---

[238] *Inst.*, II.viii.47.
[239] See our discussion of the third commandment above.
[240] *Inst.*, II.viii.48.

commandment, Calvin argued that we must expel "all desire contrary to love" from our hearts. The central motif of this commandment was a disposition to love our neighbours. To truly love our neighbours, we should turn down "a harmful covetousness that tends to our neighbour's loss"[241] and contrary to this, actively seek to benefit our neighbours. Because covetousness is in opposition to the true love of God, so "the heart, then, in so far as it harbours covetousness, must be empty of love."[242] Furthermore, it is 'idolatry' as well as 'sin' which incur God's anger and judgment.[243] Here we again find a motif of mortification of the flesh.

God asked of us a perfect, ardent love free from "one particle of covetousness." True love for neighbours could make it possible for us to have good neighbours. In this respect, perfect love(or charity) expels all falsehood and injustice, and brings a true justice in our society. So Calvin argued,

> Christ therefore shows, that every man may be a rule of acting properly and justly towards his neighbours, if he do to others what he requires to be done to him. He thus refutes all the vain pretences, which men contrive for hiding or disguising their injustice. Perfect justice would undoubtedly prevail among us, if we were as faithful in learning *active* charity, (if we may use the expression,) as we are skilful in teaching *passive* charity.[244]

According to Calvin, where there is this ardent love for others, covetous desire cannot find its place. Of course, our perfect love for neighbours comes out of our love for God based upon His prior love for us.[245] God showed, first, His love for us on the cross of Christ.[246] In addition, Jesus also showed God's love for sinful human beings by his perfect obedience on the Cross. Calvin expressed the love which Christ showed us on the Cross in order to make the heirs of Gehenna the heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom as follows:

> His task was so to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God; of the heirs of Gehenna, heirs of the Heavenly Kingdom. Who could have done this had not the selfsame Son of God become the Son of man, and had not so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace? Therefore, relying on this pledge, we trust that we are sons of God, for God's natural Son fashioned for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones, that he might be one with us [Gen. 2:23-24, mediated through Eph. 5:29-31]. Ungrudgingly he took our nature upon himself to impart to us what was his, and to

---

[241] *Inst.*, II.viii.49.
[242] *Inst.*, II.viii.50.
[243] *Comm. on* Isa. 57:17; *Comm. on* Col. 3:5.
[244] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Matt. 7:12.
[245] *Comm. on the Harmony of the Gospels.* Matt. 22:39.
[246] *Inst.*, II.xvi.2-4.

become both Son of God and Son of man in common with us.[247]

Thus, from flowing love of our hearts, into which the Holy Spirit pours Jesus, we can share the love with our neighbours; as Luther called a Christian a little Christ, thus, Calvin also emphasised Christian's practice of love positively.

Now we may conclude Calvin's exposition of the Decalogue with this last commandment. Calvin could combine these two Tables more concretely in his concern for sanctification, Christian life, and social ethics. At the centre of his discussion of the Decalogue, there was certainly his deep concern for the realisation of holiness in the world. Although he also knew well that the perfect realisation of holiness is impossible in this world, on account of human being's depravity and sinfulness, nevertheless, it seems me that he believed the possibility of realisation of holiness in the world penultimately when people obey faithfully the instructions of the two Tables in the grace of God.

The first Table was inseparably related to the second Table, in that true piety could not be separated from social life, and Christian's social life comes from his faithful relationship with God. In addition, if we do not presuppose the first Table, the second Table itself is indistinguishable from the natural law. On the contrary, if we neglect the second Table in Christian life the first would simply be a metaphysical, religious instruction. In this sense, Calvin made clear that the foundation of all Christian ethics should be a true piety and worship of God. At the same time, on the basis of the first Table, he also made much of the second Table. Thus, Calvin made clear that true religion is inseparably related to true obligation of life: "Religion is not to be estimated by the pomp of ceremonies; but that there are important duties to which the servants of God ought to attend."[248]

6. God's will, natural law, moral law, and positive law

1. God's will as the foundation of all other laws.

Calvin used several different terminologies in order to express God's moral instructions for man and his society: God's will, natural law, moral law, and positive law. Even though each expression connotes its own specific meaning, nevertheless all these

---

[247] *Inst.*, II.xii.2.
[248] *Comm. on* James 1:27.

terminologies are inseparably related to each other. Among them, God's will is the most comprehensive and foundational expression that includes all other categories.

In Calvin's theology, knowing God's will is the most important key to Christian life and social ethics. Christian life cannot be segregated from its social context, because, for Calvin, human beings are essentially social. Therefore, God's will should be addressed in itself both to human beings and to their societies. According to Calvin, God's will expresses itself in a twofold way: as hidden will and revealed will. God's hidden will belongs to God's providential rule over the whole universe, and His revealed will is found in the Bible as the law and the gospel. Calvin expressed clearly the importance of God's will in relation to Christian life in the third article of the *Genevan Confession*(1536) as follows:

> Because there in one only Lord and Master who has dominion over our conscience, and because his will is the only principle of all justice, we confess all our life ought to be ruled in accordance with the commandments of his holy law in which is contained all perfection of justice, and that we ought to have no other rule of good and just living, nor invent other good works to supplement it ..."[249]

We might divide the revealed will of God into two parts: natural law given in our hearts and written law revealed in the Bible. The will of God implanted in the human mind and heart in creation became obscured on account of sin and disobedience. The will of God is the Supreme Court and government, through which God not only rules and judges everything including human beings in this world, but also makes, constructs, and accomplishes His wonderful things.[250] In this sense, all other statutes, rules, and laws are under the regulations of God's will that they might be what they should be.

2. The natural law

Calvin identified natural law with the law implanted in people's minds and hearts.[251] It is basically not different in its content, from the moral law, which was given in the form of the two Tables. The function of the natural law is also the same as the written law, so that it also awakens us to realize God's existence and to understand what is right

---

[249] John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises,* ed. by J.K.S. Reid, *LCC* XXII, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1954), p. 27.

[250] *Comm. on* Isa. 66:1-2; *Comm. on* Jer. 33:1-6.

[251] *Inst.*, I.iii.1.

and what is wrong. As Calvin argued, "for our conscience does not allow us to sleep a perpetual insensible sleep without being an inner witness and monitor of what we owe God, without holding before us the difference between good and evil and thus accusing us when we fail in our duty."[252]

But the natural law is limited, especially in relation to people's capacity to understand it correctly, on account of man's sin. Thus, without God's special revelation, which exposes God's will clearly, and without the work of the Holy Spirit who illumines the mind, heart, and will, people cannot come to understand the secrets of God and to worship God aright. In addition, on account of their spiritual blindness, human beings prefer following the desires of the flesh to living according to God's will.

The natural law was originally complete and good, but now it became incomplete and obscure to human beings, on account of their sin. Nevertheless, it plays an important role in maintaining society in God's general grace and providence,[253] and by the general works of the Holy Spirit. In this regard, it is not strange to see many virtuous non-Christians who do good works, according to their conscience, although their virtuous life cannot be merits for their redemption. In this respect, as regards the value and efficacy of the natural law, Calvin was not so negative, but rather positive. Therefore, it should also be emphasized that he did not neglect cultural activities related to people's ordinary life, but he rejected strongly cultural activities related to idolatry. He argued clearly, "I am not gripped by the superstition of thinking absolutely no images permissible. But because sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I seek a pure and legitimate use of each, lest those things which the Lord has conferred upon us for his glory and our good be not only polluted by perverse misuse but also turned to our destruction."[254]

The natural law plays the same role for Gentiles, as the Mosaic law does for Jews. In this case, the natural law immediately points out man's conscience. Calvin argued that "for them conscience stands in place of law," so that "the purpose of natural law, therefore, is to render man inexcusable."[255] Thus, Calvin, in turn, defined the natural law as follows: "natural law is that apprehension of the conscience which distinguishes sufficiently between just and unjust, and which deprives men of the excuse of ignorance, while it proves them

---

[252] *Inst.*, II.viii.1.
[253] See the natural law in the context of God's providence. *Inst.*, I.xvi-xvii.
[254] *Inst.*, I.xi.12.
[255] *Inst.*, II.ii.22; also see *Inst.*, II.ii.24; *Inst.*, I.iii.1.

guilty by their own testimony."[256] Therefore, we know that where the moral law is not directly revealed, people's conscience, namely the natural law, rules people's understanding and activities, and further plays a substantial role to sustain the society in order.

In this sense, Calvin admitted the existence of "seed of religion"(*semen religionis*)[257] or "a sense of divinity"(*sensus divinitatis*)[258] which makes people religious. Religiously it becomes a contact point through which the word of gospel can be received into the heart and intellect by the works of the Holy Spirit. In this respect he did not deny *the point of contact* in a human being by which God delivered His Word to him in the Holy Spirit. At this point, it would be worth to be reminded of the famous struggle about "the point of contact," which took place between Emil Brunner and Karl Barth in the mid 1930s over the issues of general revelation and natural theology.[259] Both of them were, as a matter of fact, Calvin's theological heirs. Nevertheless, their viewpoints ran counter to each other. In this struggle, Brunner admitted the existence of the point of contact in man to which God delivers his revelation with a clear voice, but Barth strongly argued against Brunner's opinion because he was afraid that the acknowledgement of "the point of contact" could resultantly support the legitimacy of German liberal theology as well as the Third Reich of Hitler. Barth's point of view concerning this issue changed[260] in his later years after the publication of *Die Menschlichkeit Gottes(The Humanity of God)* in 1956,[261] in which he emphasised God's close relation to man far more than his any previous arguments. He defined "the humanity of God" as follows:

---

[256] *Inst.*, II.ii.22.

[257] *Inst.*, I.iii.1; I.iv.1.

[258] *Inst.*, I.iii.3.

[259] See Emil Brunner, *Natural Theology, Comprising 'Nature and Grace' and the Reply 'No!' by Dr. Karl Barth,* trans. Peter Fraenkel(London: Geoffrey Bles, The Centenary Press, 1946). Among Calvin's modern successors also two different streams exist. One stream follows Brunner's position, the other stream follows Barth's position. Among the former are there G.Gloege, *Theologia naturalis bei Calvin* (Stuttgard, 1935) ; Paul Althaus, *Die Christliche Wahrheit: Lehebuch der Dogmatik* (Gerd Mohn: Gütersloh, 1962) ; John Baillie, *Our Knowledge of God* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1959) ; D. Cairns, *The Image of God in Man*(London: SCM Press, 1953); Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954); Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1956); Gerrit C. Berkouwer, *General Revelation* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1955) ; and so on. On the other hand, among the latter are Wilhelm Niesel, *Die Theologie Calvins* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1938) and many Barthian theologians.

[260] Barth clearly confessed his change as follows : "Surely I do not deceive myself when I assume that our theme to-day should suggest a *change of direction* in the thinking of evangelical theology. We are or ought now to be engaged in this change, not in opposition to but none the less in *direction* from an earlier change. What began forcibly to press itself upon us about forty years ago was not so much the humanity of God as His *deity*-a God absolutely unique in His relation to man and the world, overpoweringly lofty and distant, strange, yes even wholly other." Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*(London and Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1961), p. 33.

[261] Karl Barth, "Die Menschlichkeit Gottes" *in Menschlichkeit,* Verhandlungen des Schweizerischen Reformierten Pfarrvereins, 90. Versammlung, vom 24.-26. 9. 1956(Arau : Biel, 1956), pp. 18-42.

> The humanity of God! Rightly understood that is bound to mean God's relation to and turning towards man. It signifies the God who speaks with man in promise and command. It represents God's existence, intercession, and activity for man, the intercourse God holds with him, and the free grace in which He wills to be and is nothing other than the God of man.[262]

In relation to socio-political context, in the meantime, Calvin maintained that human beings' consciences are also related to the governance and existence of "political government." By the instructions of their consciences, they come to recognize "the duties of humanity and citizenship that must be maintained among men."[263] Accordingly, men are by nature in a political existence. Thus, conscience is bound not only to spiritual worship, but also to civil laws. In this sense, conscience is the very place where man can meet God and find God's will for themselves and their society. Although man's conscience became obscure on account of sin, nevertheless, conscience is the court of God in man, in that it is always exposed to God's eyes and nothing can be hidden from His eyes. So Calvin argued, that "when they have a sense of divine judgment, as a witness joined to them, which does not allow them to hide their sins from being accused before the Judge's tribunal, this sense is called 'conscience.'"[264]

In addition, "conscience" is "a certain means between God and man, because it does not allow man to suppress within himself what he knows, but pursues him to the point of convicting him." In this sense, Calvin called conscience "a sort of guardian appointed for man to note and spy out all his secrets that nothing may remain buried in darkness."[265] The ultimate judge of conscience is God who knows everything which happens in human life. Therefore, "the conscience relates to God in such a way that a good conscience is nothing but an inward uprightness of heart."[266] In this sense, for Calvin, as Paul taught, "the fulfilment of the law is love from a clear conscience and sincere faith."[267]

On the other hand, the natural law is the basis of equity and inseparably related to love.[268] Calvin supported the rulers' lawful right to wage war in order "to execute public vengeance" when they are "under enemy attack," or in order "to restrain the misdeeds of

---

[262] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God*, p. 33.
[263] *Inst.*, III.xix.15.
[264] *Ibid.*: also *Inst.*, IV.x.3.
[265] *Ibid*: also *Inst.*, IV.x.3.
[266] *Inst.*, IV.x.3.
[267] *Inst.*, III.xix.16.
[268] See Guenther H. Haas, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-111.

private individuals by judicial punishment."[269] Here, the ground of Calvin's maintenance is not the written law, but the dictate of "natural equity and the nature of the office."[270] On the basis of his understanding of natural equity, Calvin maintained that this right of the government to wage right war has not been changed at all.[271] Thus, when he dealt with political government, Calvin gave considerable weight to the role and function of the natural law.

Constitutional law equally, in a broad sense, is related to the natural law.[272] So Calvin made much of the intimate interrelation between the magistrates and the laws, and also between the law and the commonwealth. Following Cicero's insistence, he argued, "next to the magistracy in the civil state come the laws, stoutest sinews of the commonwealth, or, as Cicero, after Plato, calls them, the souls, without which the magistracy cannot stand, even as they themselves have no force apart from the magistracy."[273] Thus, he called "the law" "a silent magistrate"; and vice versa "the magistrate" "a living law."[274]

Here we may conjecture that as regards the relationship between the civil law and the magistracy, Calvin was much influenced by the civil law, namely the Roman law which he learnt through humanistic jurists, Andreas Alciati and Pierre de l'Estoile, in the University of Orléans and the University of Bourges between 1528-1532, drawing on the substantial contents and corpora of the Roman law. *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia* was published in April 1532.[275] In this book, Calvin tried to tell the necessity and importance of political toleration, through the mouth of Seneca who argued for toleration before the tyrannical Roman Emperor, Nero(A.D. 37-68), to François I, who at that time was severely persecuting humanistic evangelicals and Lutheran evangelicals.

At any rate, it is not too much to argue that Calvin's humanistic concern for the classics like Plato, Cicero, Aristotle, and etc., (rhetorical humanism), alongside of his study of the civil law(legal humanism), to some extent, influenced Calvin's later theological thought, especially his political ethics, namely his thought of the law, the magistracy, and civil government. It is certain that Calvin's political thought shows there is much continuity

---

[269] *Inst.*, IV.xx.11.
[270] *Ibid.*
[271] *Inst.*, IV.xx.12.
[272] *Inst.*, IV.xx.16.
[273] *Inst.*, IV.xx.14.
[274] *Ibid.*

between his Commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia* and the first Latin edition of the *Institutes*(1536). Nevertheless, it is also true that Calvin increasingly made much of God's justice and equity over against the tyrannical king, and of man's political and civil freedom in his later time than in his earlier political thought.

Calvin did not deny that all countries could enact their own laws in order to rule and protect their people, because the foundation of the positive law was the natural law. He argued that the judicial laws of the Old Testament were just given to the historical Israelites, but not to all countries, so that they were abrogated by Jesus' coming. In this sense, all common laws of the nations are based on equity, which is related to the natural law, too. Thus, Calvin maintained, "it there does not matter that they are different, provided all equally press toward the same goal of equity."[276]

As a matter of course, in the sense that written law is a testimony to the natural law or to conscience inscribed upon the minds of men, the principle of equity also can be correlated with the moral law as God's law. In this context, Calvin stressed that "equity alone must be the goal and rule and limit of all laws."[277] Thus, based upon one common ground of equity, Calvin could acknowledge the diversity of laws. He alleged that "whatever laws shall be framed to that rule, directed to that goal, bound by that limit, there is no reason why we should disapprove of them, howsoever they may differ from the Jewish law, or among themselves."[278] Thus Calvin basically acknowledged the natural law as the foundation of the positive law, especially in relation to political ethics and civil government.

3. The moral law

In this section, we come to examine the usefulness and validity of the moral law. The natural law, in spite of its vital importance and usefulness, has its distinct limitations, incurred by man's disobedience and sin. Therefore, the natural law is epistemologically insufficient to let us know the will of God clearly. In this sense, we come to know why God gave his people the written law as moral law. It is because, with the natural law, they could not understand or follow God's will clearly. So this is the very place where God's

---

[275] The English version was published by Ford Lewis Battles and A.M. Hugo, *Calvin's Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*(Leiden: Brill, 1969).

[276] *Inst.*, IV.xx.16.

[277] *Ibid.*

[278] *Ibid.*

gratuitous grace exhibits itself. God provided His people with the written law so as "to give them a clearer witness of what was too obscure in the natural law, shake off our listlessness, and strike more vigorously our mind and memory."[279] Thus the moral law is clear in its contents and value epistemologically and is especially useful for Christians.

Calvin divided the law in the Mosaic Law into three different parts, following a tradition that goes back to Aquinas[280]: ceremonial laws, judicial laws, and moral law.[281] Ceremonial laws were abolished in their execution since Jesus came to earth. Jesus replaced and perfected ceremonial laws without the abandonment of their original purpose by his life and death. Judicial laws also were abrogated because they were directly instituted for the Israelites as an historical and geographical nation. In this aspect, Calvin acknowledged each country could enact its own laws or legislations to rule over her own people. But judicial laws need not necessarily be the same between different countries; rather they might be enacted differently according to the spirit of moral law, namely "in conformity to that perpetual rule of love."[282]

In addition, Calvin also assumed that ceremonial laws and judicial laws could be conformed to the moral law in connection with its doctrine of piety and precept of love. The moral law still holds true and is available, regardless of transition of times and variety of places. In a strict sense of the word, it can be identified with the Ten Commandments.[283] Because it is "the true and eternal rule of righteousness, prescribed for men of all nations and times, who wish to conform their lives to God's will."[284] Thus Calvin highly valued the usefulness of the moral law.

Finally, the moral law consists of two parts, "one of which simply commands us to worship God with pure faith and piety; the other, to embrace men with sincere affection."[285] Thus, the moral law as a matter of fact corresponds to Jesus' twofold new commandments in the New Testament' and as such is very valuable in making the Christian life and society holy.

---

[279] *Inst.*, II.viii.1.

[280] Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I. IIae. lxxxix. 4j; Melanchthon, *Loci communes*(1521), ed. Engelland, p. 46. quoted from John T. McNeill, ed., *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* n. 37.

[281] *Inst.*, IV.xx.14.

[282] *Inst.*, IV.xx.15.

[283] See Farley's thesis for good reference about Calvin's understanding of the Ten Commandments, Benjamin Wirt Farley, *John Calvin's Sermons on the Ten Commandments: Translated, edited, and critically introduced*(Richmond, Virginia: A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of Union Theological Seminary, 1976).

[284] *Inst.*, IV.xx.15.

4. The positive law

The moral law, together with the natural law, is *the* cardinal and capital foundation of positive law. The Ten Commandments, in particular, are the kernel of the positive law, according to Calvin. The foundation and core of the positive law should be the spirit of fairness, justice, and equity for the realisation of a just society. Equity is the most important element both in natural law(implicitly) and in moral law(explicitly). Calvin connected the establishment of the law with equity. He regarded equity as the foundation, goal, and also limit of the law. Haas developed his understanding of Calvin's ethics by centring upon equity in Calvin's exposition of the Second Table of the Decalogue. He remarked,

> the concept of equity is the theme of central importance in Calvin's social ethic, in a similar way that union with Christ lies at the heart of his theology. A commitment to equity in one's relations with one's neighbour is the manifestation of the transformed life flowing from union with Christ. For Calvin equity provides the essential meaning and criterion of justice in the various realms and relationships of life.[286]

Placing a high value upon equity, Haas extracted "the Golden Rule of Matt. 7:12 as a short and simple definition of equity." Thus, he solely focused upon equity as the key by which he interpreted Calvin's whole ethical thought. Haas added, "it is a rule of thumb which Jesus gives to His disciples to guide them in implementing the commandment to love their neighbours. Thus, it becomes Calvin's guide for interpreting, expounding and applying the commandments of the Second Table of the Law, and it permeates his writings and sermons on Christian social behaviour."[287] His argument is suggestive and challenging in understanding Calvin's theological ethics. In bringing out equity as the key to Calvin's theological ethics, Haas contributed much to the study of Calvin.[288] Furthermore, considering that for Calvin, the natural law is not much different from the moral law in relation to its content and purpose (but only its clarity and mode of deliverance), the

---

[285] *Ibid.*

[286] Guenther H. Haas investigated Calvin's ethics in close relation to and centring upon the concept of equity. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

[287] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

[288] Cf. But Haas failed to notice that Christian social ethics should be inseparably connected with understanding of God's sovereign will and the work of the Holy Spirit, alongside of his sole stress upon union with Christ. In other words, it means that he failed to notice the trinitarian aspect or dimension of Calvin's theological ethics. In the same context, by his sole concentration on equity in the context of the second Table, one might maintain that he did not notice the importance of the first Table which is actually the basis on which to deal with the second Table. It is because Christian ethics without true faith in and pure worship of God is impossible and further, true Christian ethics starts from our life of faith in and worship of Triune God.

concept of equity has important implications for Christian social life. As Haas argued, Calvin also did not deny this fact when he remarked, "equity cannot but be the same for all laws, ... whatever their objects."[289] However, it is a little bit regrettable that he did not touch upon the first Table to understand Calvin's ethical thought more comprehensively, because the two Tables of the Decalogue was inseparably correlated as the ultimate and penultimate in Calvin's theological ethics. Nevertheless, as the title of Haas' research shows it is undeniable that his study is very useful to understand Calvin's concept of equity in the Second Table.

The positive law, in the meantime, closely connected with Christian social ethics, also can gain substantial support and influence from the spirit of judicial laws and moral law in the Bible. Calvin delved into this subject in the last edition of the *Institutes* Book IV.xx. The positive law cannot be separated from other arguments about conscience, natural law, and moral law. Calvin maintained that, "the law of God which we call the moral law is nothing else than a testimony of natural law and of that conscience which God has engraved upon the minds of men."[290]

Thus, while he made much of the literary interpretation of the Bible, Calvin did not lose his humanistic composure and freedom in dealing with this matter. What Calvin devoted to the establishment and enforcement of the law in Geneva might be investigated in two big categories. The first category was his devotion to enacting church ordinances, namely his active participation in legislation related to the spiritual sphere; and the second was his devotion to civil law, namely his involvement in legislation related to the political sphere.

5. Calvin's activity of enactment

While calling political rulers (magistrates) God's vicegerents, Calvin acknowledged their rights to enact the law and evaluated the value and importance of the law in their governance of city or country. For Calvin, every state or country stands or falls by God's providence, and moreover, the foundation of every country is formally the

---

[289] *Inst.*, IV.xx.16.

[290] *Inst.*, II.viii.1 ; See also II.vii.3-4; II.viii.1-2; III.xix.15-16; IV.x.3,11,15,16. And also see his *Commentaries on* Romans 1:21-27; 2:14-15, Deuteronomy 19:14-15, and Job 28:1-9, etc.; Cf. J.T. McNeill, "Natural Law in the Teaching of the Reformers," *Journal of Religion* XXVI (1946), pp. 168-182; John *Calvin*

positive law, but in its basic nature, the natural law (implicitly) or the divine, moral law(explicitly) based upon God's will. Accordingly, no matter the form of polity, for Calvin, every government basically must be a constitutional government. In such a sense, he emphasized that the law is in inseparable conjunction with the magistracy in the civil state. Calvin acknowledged the validity and efficacy of the natural law, although it became obscure in relation to the knowledge of God. In this context, he did not limit himself to a spiritual dimension in his political thought, but regarded Christianity concretely in direct relation to society or the world. Thus, he was active in his participation in the legislation, especially in composing the ecclesiastical ordinances of Geneva.

When Calvin first came to Geneva as a young reformer, by Guillaume Farel's ardent request, he already had the first printed edition(1536) of the *Institutes*, which was a golden compendium of evangelical Christian faith. This book's sixth and last chapter on Christian freedom dealt with Calvin's socio-political ethics. In addition, Calvin already expressed some of his political thought in his *Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*(1532), especially concerning magistrates' toleration as a dialectical unity of both justice or equity and love. So Calvin was to some extent prepared to participate in the Genevan Reformation. However, to concretise the Genevan Reformation on the basis of biblical Christianity, Calvin commenced to draft an ecclesiastical ordinances right after his arrival in Geneva and presented a rough draft of *"Articles concerning the Organisation of the Church and of Worship at Geneva 1537"*[291] to the *Council of Ministers* on the 16th of January 1537. It contained not a few articles to reform the customary practice of Genevese religious, social life such as "a monthly celebration of the Holy Supper of our Lord," "the introduction of discipline," "the setting up of a disciplinary council," "the composition of a brief catechism confession for Christian education of children," "the introduction of the singing of psalms," and "the settlement of matrimonial problems according to the Word of God."

The '*Articles*' were virtually the reflection of Calvin's strong ardour for a thorough Reformation. Among them, Calvin's original article about a monthly celebration of the Lord's Supper was not accepted by the Council. Also, Calvin's request for the strict

---

on God and Political Duty, Introduction, p.xv.; J. Bohatec, *Calvin und das Recht*, pp. 3-32; *Calvins Lehre von Staat und Kirche*, pp. 20-35.

[291] The original title was *Articles concenant l'organisation de l'église et du culte à Genève, proposés par les ministres. CO.* 10a. Cols. 5-14; *OS.* 1. 369-377; For an English text, see *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, ed. by J.K.S. Reid(London and Philadelphia, 1954), pp. 48-55.

implementation of discipline to decide people's qualifications to participate in the Lord's Supper was also not observed in practice. In early 1538, the number of Calvin's opponents among the native Genevans, increased gradually in relation to the concrete application of the '*Articles.*' In addition, a little while later, a bellicose Catholic Pierre Caroli, who was once a pastor in Neuchâtel, then in Lausanne, criticised Calvin's faith as a heretic Arianism on account of Calvin's refusal of compulsory subscription to the three creeds of the ancient church like the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian creeds.[292] Calvin, however, did not reject these three creeds, but refused obligatory subscription to them in relation to the compulsory use of certain words. Thus, in many ways Calvin's first Reformation was severely attacked by anti-Reformational powers. Also Geneva's racial tendency did not like French pastors like Calvin and Farel. Moreover, at that time, Geneva was substantially under the religious and political leadership of the neighbouring city of Bern. What is worse, Calvin was severely threatened by rioters in the street, in his house, and in other places before he, together with Farel, finally left Geneva in April 1538. Before banishment, Calvin and Farel were prohibited from preaching sermons in the church. Furthermore, they themselves also refused to administer the Lord's Supper to those who did not express their explicit allegiance to a true Confession of faith.

The second enactment of ecclesiastical ordinances by Calvin took place in 1541, soon after his return from Strasbourg. He composed *The Ecclesiastical Ordinances of the Church of Geneva*[293] based upon his experience in a French reformed city. This draft of ordinances "were drawn up in conformity with the decision of the Council, and then was taken at the session of September 13, 1541 by Calvin and his ministerial colleagues with a commission of six councillors nominated for the purpose," and then through some revision and examination, finally it was passed by the assembly of the General Council on Sunday, November 20.[294] The ordinances first, dealt with four orders of office instituted for the government of Christ' church, and then in turn, the Sacraments, the Supper, marriage, burial, the visitation of the sick and prisoners, Christian education of children, and finally the maintenance of supervision in the church.

This second church ordinances reflected Calvin's theological maturation and his

---

[292] W. de Greef, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-173.

[293] The original French text was published under the title *Les Ordonnances ecclésiastiques: Projet d'ordonnances sur les offices ecclésiastiques* in 1541 in Geneva. *CO.* 10a. cols. 15-30; *OS.* 2. 328-361; For an English text, see *Calvin: Theological Treatises,* ed. by Reid, pp. 56-72.

[294] *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, p. 56.

moderation, and Bucer's influence upon him. According to François Wendel, Calvin's conception of the fourfold office of the church was not concretely explained in the first edition of the *Institutes*(1536) and also in the first "*Articles*"(1537). Therefore, Calvin's treatment of it in the second ecclesiastical ordinances can be identified with Bucer's influence upon Calvin during his three-year stay in Strasbourg between 1538 and 1541.[295] McGrath evaluated the importance of the second ordinances as follows: "if the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* were the muscles of Calvin's reformation, his ecclesiastical organization was its backbone. The *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*(1541) gave the Genevan church its characteristic shape and identity."[296] Parker emphasized the ministerial function of the ordinances, arguing, "The *Ordinances*, intended to legislate for the whole of Church life, were composed principally in terms of ministerial function."[297]

Calvin's industrious activity in enacting church ordinances might show us that Christians' activities should be performed through their active participation in Christ's threefold office, especially his prophetic office. Calvin stipulated what the organization and discipline of church ought to be, in church ordinances, which he played a pivotal role to enact. He made much of the four orders of office in the church, enumerated as the orders of pastors, teachers, elders, and deacons.[298] These four orders constituted his church government. According to the ordinances, pastors, first of all, delivered the Word of God, taught and admonished people with God's Word, administered the Eucharist, and also made 'fraternal corrections' in cooperation with elders. The duty of teachers (or doctors) was to keep pure and perfect doctrines, to educate and train well-prepared ministers, and to perform government and discipline with elders by constituting a Consistory.

Although Calvin wanted to follow biblical principles in stipulating the office of elders and electing elders, and so to secure church independence from Genevan authorities, he in fact could not help making a great concession to them in many ways. Thus twelve elders were elected in Geneva: two from the Little Council, four from the Council of Sixty, and six from the Two Hundred. While they were ratified by the Council of the Two

---

[295] Cf. H. Strohl, "La Théorie et la pratique des quatres ministères à Strasbourg avant l'arrivée de Calvin," in the *Bulletin de la Société de L'Histoire du Protestantisme français.* (1935), vol. LXXXIV, pp. 123ff; G. Anrich, *Strassburg und die calvinische Kirchenverfassung* (Tübingen, 1928); F. Wendel, *L'Eglise de Strasbourg,* pp. 189ff; quoted in F. Wendel, *Calvin: Sources et Evolution de sa Pensée Religieuse*(Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950), p. 50.

[296] Alister E. McGrath, *A Life of John Calvin: A Study in the Shaping of Western Culture*(Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1990, 1996), p. 111.

[297] T.H.L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1975), p. 82.

[298] *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, pp. 59-66.

Hundred, their activities and qualifications were investigated annually by the Little Council.[299] The office of elders, for Calvin, was not considered as apostolic ministry according to the Bible, but as church leaders who were understood in the Genevan context, namely as "commissioners and deputies of the Council of the Consistory."[300] At first, the Council of the Consistory consisted of 12 elders and 6 ministers and took action for the "fraternal correction" of the lawbreakers. For Calvin, Church discipline was vitally important in order to keep the church pure not as an ascetic sect, but as a church in the midst of the world.

According to Calvin, church was and should be a combatant church fighting spiritual warfare on the way to heaven in the midst of the world. So he did not like Catholic monasticism or asceticism, but the visible church in the world, through which God calls His people by the ministers' pure preaching of the Word of God and lawful administration of the Lord's Supper. Here we must remember that Calvin allowed almost 19 chapters of his *Institutes* to deal with the visible church(IV.i.4-IV.xix.37). However, we also must not neglect that Calvin made much of the invisible church, although he dealt with it only in three sections of *Institutes* IV.i.1-3. Because these two churches are correlated inseparably in Calvin's theology as the penultimate(the combatant church) and the ultimate(the whole of the elect, whether in life or in death, leading to the heavenly, triumphant church). In this sense, the church in the world was no less important to him than the triumphant, heavenly church. So he stressed the implementation of church discipline in the visible church, for the realisation of holy and pure church *even* in the world, as the congregation of the elect, as the nourisher of God's children, and as the institution of God's redemption, as the body of Christ, and as the temple of the Spirit, (although we live in the penultimate world). Therefore, his motto about church might be summarized as follows: *let church be the church in the midst of the world.* In this sense, Calvin tried to give due weight to church discipline, although it was not considered as one of the marks of church (*notae ecclesiae*). He thought that "in discipline, in accordance with 2 Cor. 2:7, severity ought always to be tempered with mildness."[301] However, in many respects, the Consistory of Geneva took the opposite direction, so that it became very intolerant and tyrannical. Calvin took a strict attitude toward people's intemperance and heretics, compared to his tolerant attitude toward

---

[299] John.T. McNeill, *Ibid.*, p. 163.
[300] *Ibid.*
[301] *Ibid.*, p. 164.

religious refugees who fled in order to evade persecutions. Thus, according as time flows, in Geneva, evangelical French refugees who supported Calvin's strict Reformation gradually increased in their numbers, while native Genevans (some portion of whom, including the Libertines) objected to Calvin's Reformation continuously until their almost perfect defeat in the 1555 election. In fact, the latter were antinomians who opposed Calvin's strict constitutionalism and his emphasis upon the third use of the law.

According to Calvin's understanding, the office of the deacons was divided into two different groups, which were not in the least different from those which were stipulated in the Bible(Acts 6:1-6): One group of them took charge of the funds of the church; the other group took the responsibility for caring for the sick and needy. For this purpose, poorhouses and free hospitals were provided, and ministers and deacons were appointed to be in charge of this service in Geneva. The Consistory managed to solve and judge doctrinal errors and heresies in its discipline and further meddled in spiritual and religious problems of Genevans.

The second Ordinances contained biblical regulations on sacraments, marriages, and funeral ceremonies. The regulation on marriage, which was again made out in 1545, was integrated into the Ordinances by approval of the General Council in November of 1561. Calvin already alluded to this issue briefly in the Ordinances, where he handled some biblical instructions about observance of customary prohibition related to marriage and treated how to organize courts to deal with marriage lawsuits.

The *Sumptuary Law* was not actually instituted by Calvin himself, but by ministers who followed him, and it became effective by the acknowledgement of the Genevan City Council in 1558.[302] The law was established in order to expel luxury and eliminate poverty from Geneva. Compared to people's way of lives in modern western society, this law was quite strict and ascetic. It is also true that church ordinances in whose institution Calvin participated was applied more strictly and was strengthened in his later life, when he came off politically victorious over the Libertines in Geneva.

In regards to civil law, there can also be listed the *Edict of Lieutenant* which was enacted and executed in 1542,[303] and the *Ordonnances sur les offices et officiers* of 1543,[304]

---

[302] Basil Hall, "John Calvin, The Jurisconsults and the Ius Civile," in *Studies in Church History* Vol. III, ed. by G. J. Cunning. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), p. 212.

[303] *Ibid.*

[304] R. M. Kingdon, "Calvinus Regislator: 1543 'Constitution' of the City-State of Geneva," in *Calvinus Theologus*, ed., W.H. Neuser (Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), p. 227.

which was considered as the constitutional law of Geneva. Originally the *Edict of Lieutenant*, which dealt with the procedures of civil trials, was instituted and used by the church in 1452, and then was revised by Calvin as the form of civil law in 1542.[305] Calvin amended simply and clearly some complex and cumbersome provisions of this *Edict*, so that trials might proceed more rapidly. In 1543, Calvin made out the *Ordonnances sur les offices et officiers* which could be called a political constitution of Geneva.[306] These were the documents of political customs and regulations that had already been enforced customarily in Geneva. Therefore, they cannot be regarded as Calvin's original work, in which, then, the details of the office of four mayors, the General Council, the Little Council, and the Council of the Two Hundred were described. Calvin's preference for the composite system of democracy and aristocracy over other polities was well reflected in these documents. This kind of representative democracy was reflected on his church polity, according to which church government consisted of ministers and elders.

Needless to say, Calvin did not institute all these laws by himself. But he participated positively in enacting the laws in Geneva, as a spiritual and religious leader, and as a systematic theological thinker and lawyer, where the separation between church and state was still not so distinct and clear. Calvin's participation in legislation was basically founded on his reformative spirit from his understanding of the law in the Bible. Although Calvin thought much of the moral law in the Bible, he, in establishing civil law and church ordinances, did not neglect or deny the traditional and customary laws and regulations, which Geneva had so long observed, but revised and supplemented them on the basis of the spirit of moral law and natural law.

But the spirit of observance of the law and the purport of legislation of church ordinances were very much changed by the Reformation, because in Calvin's Geneva there took place a too rapid, sudden change of religion, doctrine, and ways of thinking and also because there were rapidly increasing numbers of religious refugees. The principle of legislation in Calvin was the simplification of complicated procedures and the clarification of ambiguous articles. In this respect, Calvin might be called a realistic reformer (who tried to apply the biblical instructions concretely to Geneva in his consideration of Genevan concrete realities), rather than a radical revolutionary (who would try to reform all things radically), in that he did not abrogate, but changed the traditional law which Catholics had

---

[305] Basil Hall, *loc. cit.*
[306] R. M. Kingdon, *loc.cit.*

used before Protestants gained power in Geneva, to be matched with the spirit of his Reformation. Thus, in constituting the Consistory and deciding the frequency of sacraments although he wanted to accomplish his original intention, he, in fact, had to compromise with the magistrates. But this necessarily does not mean his failure in the Genevan Reformation. Rather, Calvin practiced his moderation with city authorities more positively until he and his adherents finally got the power to reform Geneva concretely.

7. The Christian and the Court of Law

As we saw in the first section, for Calvin, Christian freedom was the freedom for realisation of holiness: namely freedom for sanctification of individual, church, and society. Then in other sections, we delved into Calvin's viewpoint of the law, in connection with Christian ethics and sanctification. Based upon all previous considerations, now, we will look into the Christians' attitude towards lawsuits in Calvin's theology. Calvin dealt with Christian's attitude toward the law court in *Inst.*, IV.xx.17-21.

Here we will find Calvin to be a realistic Christian jurist. Calvin basically denied the naïve notion that Christians should not sue before a court, go to law, or to take revenge lawfully, and, as well, that the office of magistrate is superfluous and unnecessary. On the other hand, Calvin also rejected the people who, "with furious hatred or violent vengeance," are about to sue before a court or revenge other people.[307] In this respect, here we find that he tried to take quite a moderate and realistic attitude towards lawsuits. However, it also should be remembered that he connected all issues of the court of law with the themes of piety and of justice balanced by love. In this sense, he laid stress on the right use of lawsuits, calling the magistrates ministers of God (Rom. 13:3).

With regard to this, he underlined that the lawsuit should be accomplished through the spirit of love of God and neighbour. This point of view has something in common with his emphasis upon the magistrates' clemency argued for in his *Commentary on Seneca's De Clementia*. Clemency was one of the most important virtues, which magistrates had to pursue through their lifetime. Calvin applied this natural, classic virtue to Christian theology, and so he argued, "[Christians] should be far from all passion to harm or take revenge, far from harshness and hatred, far from burning desire for contention."[308] Of

---

[307] *Inst.*, IV.xx.17.
[308] *Inst.*, IV.xx.18.

course, for Calvin, it was also one of the biblical virtues, too. In this aspect, he called love and good will "a set principle for all Christians," "the help of the magistrate," and "a holy gift of God" (1 Tim. 2:2-3).[309] On the basis of this principle, he took a realistic, yet reasonable attitude toward a lawsuit, and so he argued, "as for those who strictly condemn all legal contentions, let them realize that they therewith repudiate God's holy ordinance, and one of the class of gifts that can be clean to the clean [Titus 1:15]."[310]

Calvin thought that "legal contentions" "do not contradict the fact that all Christians are forbidden to desire revenge, which we banish far away from Christian courts (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:39; Deut. 32:35; Rom. 12:19)."[311] Thus, he differentiated legal contentions from private revenge, in a constitutionalist sense. According to Calvin, the magistrates ultimately must execute the law for God. In that sense, he could insist, "we must consider that the magistrate's revenge is not man's but God's, which he extends and exercises, as Paul says [Rom. 13:4], through the ministry of man for our good."[312] Calvin seemed to believe the divine rights of the magistrates, thus giving the impression of being a conservative constitutionalist.

For Calvin, it was clear that, in an absolute sense, God is the Lawgiver and the Founder of all the countries in the world. Thus Calvin understood 'state' in relation to the sovereignty and providence of God. It is different from Karl Barth's or Bonhoeffer's Christological understanding of the foundation of the state. Thus, in relation to lawsuits, Calvin was neither a pacifist who denies any strategy except non-violence and non-resistance, nor a revolutionary who entirely resorts to a radical, violent resistance. Thus, when he interpreted the Sermon on the Mount, Calvin tried to correlate it with the Ten Commandments. In that sense, his vision of Christian society was not to erect a separated spiritual community, but to reform the established society responsibly, according to the reformative principle of the Bible. Thus, he on the one hand, stressed Christians' self-forbearance, self-denial, or mortification of the flesh, bearing the cross, and, on the other hand, made much of the lawful order of society. Furthermore, in relation to the realisation of social holiness or social sanctification, he emphasised equity and justice related to the law. Thus, he admitted Christian's realistic confrontations against social injustice or sinfulness by the lawsuits. In fact, the lawsuit was an important method to

---

[309] *Ibid.*
[310] *Inst.*, IV.xx.19.
[311] *Ibid.*

solving social injustice, unlawfulness, and complex social problems like adultery, theft, or murder.

In addition, Calvin's viewpoint of the law was also correlated to his understanding of God's nature. Thus, regardless of natural law or divine law, the moral law is inseparably related to God's just and equitable nature. In turn, God's holy nature was the substantial foundation of the court of law. Thus for Calvin, love also was not a sentimental or romantic love, but love considered in the context of God's equity and justice. This understanding made Calvin moderate and realistic in regards to lawsuits. In this sense, Calvin also did not interpret St. Paul's precepts about the lawsuits literally, but comprehensively and not extremely in consideration of the contextual situation of the church of the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:5-8). So he did not deny the believer's rights to appeal to the lawsuit. Thus, although he made much of Christian's practice of love,[313] he could not but be more strict and more puritanical in his teaching of Christian ethics.

Summary

In this chapter, first of all, we delved into the meaning of Christian freedom in Calvin's theology, in connection with his doctrine of sanctification and Christian social ethics. Here we could find that Calvin understood Christian freedom as thoroughly under God's sovereignty and as strongly related to his ardour for sanctification and social ethics, contrary to Luther's fideistic and theological understanding of Christian freedom. Distinguishing Christian freedom from antinomian intemperance or dissoluteness, Calvin positively clarified that Christian freedom is a kind of moral duty for his society before God and for his neighbours, in the sense that it is a civil freedom. In this sense, Calvin was much different from Luther in relation to their respective understanding of Christian freedom. Thus, Calvin's viewpoint of Christian freedom was more positive and more constructive than Luther's, because Luther considered it only as the spiritual and religious freedom itself in an individual, dogmatic, and theological sense.

According to Calvin's understanding, Christian freedom basically consists of three different, yet inseparable parts. The first was that *believers' consciences* should advance beyond the law. The second, that a Christian will be willingly obedient to God's law not

---

[312] *Ibid.*
[313] *Inst.*, IV.xx.21.

because it compels us, but because he loves God. The third part of freedom was related to Christian's responsibilities for their deeds considering neighbours' benefits. According to Calvin, a Christian is a free man emancipated from all kinds of outer things, except his duty of love for God and for his neighbours. Thus for Calvin, freedom was understood in two different aspects. On the one hand, it was our duty to God and on the other hand, it was our duty to our neighbours in the context of his socio-political ethics. In this sense, Christian freedom was actually regarded to be the prerequisite for the realisation of individual, ecclesiastical, and social sanctification (or holiness).

Besides, we found that Calvin understood law and gospel as the means and norm of sanctification and Christian ethics. Especially, we could find that in Calvin, law has the same value and efficacy as gospel does, because they are same in content and essence, except for their difference in practical dispensation. It was a very important difference in understanding law and gospel between Calvin and Luther. For Luther, law and gospel were contrary to each other and so law did not have an important and constructive value for Christian social ethics. However, contrary to Luther's relative indifference to the value of the law for Christian life and social ethics, Calvin emphasised its value for the concrete and positive realisation of God's holy will in the world very much. Luther and Calvin together made much of the first and second uses of the law in association with the protection of civil society and the beginning of faith. However, Luther neglected the third use of the law, which Calvin made so much of. Thus, Luther's theological ethics could not but be so weak in relation to Christians' responsible participation in the realisation of God's holy will in the world.

The threefold use of the law which Calvin argued for was as follows: first of all, the law reveals God's righteousness, making the people of God sure of His righteousness, and condemning them on account of it (II. vii. 6-9). It was the first, spiritual and theological function of the law, denoting mainly the pedagogic function which makes people realise their sinfulness and leads them to Christ. Secondly, the law, by arousing fear and dread of God's punishments, controls the people who have no sense of right and wrong. It restrains by controlling them as if putting a bridle or gag on them, not by changing their minds, so that their wickedness may not be intervened into their outward acts (II. vii. 10-11). It was the second and political function of the law to keep society orderly and secure. The third use of the law is the most important and useful function, because the Spirit of God dwells in believers' minds and rules over them. It

means that they have God's law inscribed on their minds. At the same time it is important, because they have the written law and through it perceive God's will, and furthermore can be instructed by the precepts of the law and control themselves profitably in order not to be led astray (II. vii. 12-13.). Thus, the third use of the law became an essential element in Calvin's ethics, because it is substantially related to his plan to establish a pure and holy society that is filled with lots of holy Christians reformed by God's Word in the Spirit.

Making clear the threefold use of the moral law which is the essential teaching of both Old and New Testaments (*Inst* II. vii), Calvin put stress upon the moral implications of the Ten Commandments in conjunction with the concrete realisation of God's will on earth. In the Decalogue, the first Table was made up of four commandments which are directly related to our spiritual and religious duty to God. The second Table composed of six commandments is mainly related to our duty to our neighbours and our society. As regards the latter, Calvin, above all, put stress upon the principle of love, equity, and fairness which are the moral foundations of civil society. In Calvin's theology, both Tables were closely correlated inseparably as the ultimate and penultimate. Calvin did not separate them by neglecting either of them, but combined them together within his theology of holiness, so he could make his theological ethics positively contribute to the success of his Genevan Reformation. Thus Calvin fully proved that the law is still the more useful and valuable in relation to the pursuit of Christian ethics in the world as well as in Christian society.

Subsequently we researched Calvin's understanding of variously classified laws and their reciprocal relations in association with Christian social ethics, especially in consideration of Genevan situations. So we could find Calvin's distinct understanding of the relations between God's will, natural law, moral law, and positive law of state. All the laws were, as a matter of fact, more or less, none other than the various representations of God's holy will expressed in a varied way, in Calvin's theology. So, for Calvin, all laws were considered important to maintaining society sound and to establishing an ordered society. In this respect, we could find Calvin's positive participation in the enactment of ecclesiastical ordinances and the civil law of Geneva for the realisation of his Genevan Reformation. Thus, Calvin proved himself to be a constructive and constitutional reformer.

Finally, we investigated Calvin's moderate attitude toward lawsuits. Here we detected that Calvin was neither a sentimental pacifist nor a radical antinomian, but a

moderate and reasonable Christian constitutionalist. According to Calvin, we Christians have to live responsibly according to God's will between the ultimate and penultimate, because the penultimate was no less important reality than the ultimate in relation to the realisation of God's holy will and so of people's holy lives in the world. He evaluated Christian's responsibility in the social reform so affirmative and positive. In this context, he also put stress upon the use of the lawsuit as an actual means to solve complicated problems proposed in the society, but nonetheless, stressed that it should be applied, according to responsible love, equity, and justice of the Bible. Thus, Calvin tried to solve all complicated problems proposed in Geneva most responsibly and realistically according to the instruction of the Bible. In this sense, we found that Calvin's reformation was an inner-worldly, responsible, and positive attempt to realise a holy Christian society according to God's holy commandments. So, we may call him a world-affirming constructive Christian reformer in association with his positive and concrete effort to realise God's holy will in Geneva.